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Johann Michael Reu and Inerrancy

Paul I. Johnston

As the Lutheran church in the United States heads into the next century, the issue of biblical inerrancy continues to crop up in lay and pastoral gatherings alike. One of the greatest minds in the history of American Lutheranism wrestled with this question earlier in this century. Johann Michael Reu provides an interesting case study of the doctrine of inerrancy in the Lutheran church. Contrary to what most of his modern interpreters maintain, Reu himself taught and defended the doctrine of inerrancy throughout his life. The goal of this study is to show Reu's own understanding of inerrancy using manuscript evidence from the four most important decades of his career (1900-1940) and so decide how accurately modern writers have assessed Reu's position on scriptural authority and infallibility.

I. Previous Assessments

A. *August Pieper*

There is a wide divergence among the various assessments which have been made of Reu's attitude toward Scripture in the formulation of the teaching of the church. On the one hand, the Old Testament scholar August Pieper could write these words in 1924 of Reu's concept of Scripture:

Here is unmistakable clearness in the position of the Confessions, here is true and veracious acknowledgement of the Confessions, here is utterly sound Lutheranism. . . . without any reservation [Reu] acknowledged that doctrine which is today despised by most so-called Lutherans, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible in its entirety.¹

Pieper's words are typical of contemporaries who shared Reu's belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

B. *Meuser and Liefeld*

On the other side, historian Fred W. Meuser portrays Reu as a nascent historical critic with a distinctly liberal stance on Scripture. Meuser writes:

J. Michael Reu of Wartburg Seminary led the opposition to the proposed wording [of the draft constitution of the American Lutheran Church prepared in 1928], not because

he personally thought Scripture contained error but on the ground that the Bible's own statements about its reliability always referred to matters pertaining to salvation, faith, and Christian living. According to Reu, therefore, the church had no right to make total inerrancy a *doctrine* of the church. . . . Reu . . . considered the infallibility of Scripture limited to its message of salvation.²

More recently David R. Liefeld, although he disagrees with Meuser's understanding of Reu's position in its final form, states that there was a point in Reu's career when he did not believe in the inerrancy of the Bible in all matters it treats. Liefeld writes: "One early critic of the Minneapolis Theses [of 1925] was Iowa Synod theologian J. M. Reu, who sought to show that inerrancy was foreign to Luther's understanding of Scripture. What he discovered, however, was exactly the opposite. Reu's change-of-mind was published posthumously in 1944 as *Luther and the Scriptures*."³ Clearly the various positions attributed to Reu cannot all be predicated of the same individual. Either Reu changed his belief about the basis of Christian teaching over the course of time, or else some scholars have misunderstood Reu's position.⁴

C. E. Clifford Nelson

As E. Clifford Nelson points out, Reu is the one who led the opposition to the proposed wording of the new constitution of the American Lutheran Church before and during its constituting convention in 1930.⁵ What he does not mention is that Reu had served as one of the commissioners to the Minneapolis Colloquy which had drafted the Minneapolis Theses and that Reu had voted at that time (1925) to adopt the theses in their totality.⁶ As time passed and union negotiations proceeded among the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo synods, Reu became wary of predicating the word "inerrancy" of the Scriptures which the church has today for two reasons. Firstly, Reu believed that the word should be reserved to describe the original manuscripts of the biblical books (none of which has come down to modern times) and, secondly, Reu disliked using a word not used by the Scriptures themselves. His hesitation to use the word "inerrancy" has been interpreted by most scholars as an

indication that Reu rejected the traditional Lutheran teaching of the verbal and errorless inspiration of the Bible. In actuality, however, Reu applied the concept of inerrancy to the very words of Holy Scripture, frequently used the term in print, and saw it as extending also to the historical, geographical, and personal statements contained in the Bible.⁷ The evidence stands in stark contrast to Nelson's judgment that Reu "considered the infallibility of Scripture limited to its message of salvation."⁸

At a later point Nelson makes this assessment of Reu's epistemological position:

In the American Lutheran Church the one theologian who had maintained some openness to the historical orientation of the Erlangen School was J. Michael Reu (1869-1943), professor at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. In the 20s and early 30s his views were deemed mildly "liberal" because he taught the infallibility of Scripture only in terms of its soteriological message. Before 1934, however, Reu had undergone a change that led him increasingly to sympathize with the viewpoint of the Missouri Synod. When, for example, Ralph H. Long tried to obtain a faculty appointment for Professor Otto Piper, a refugee from Nazi Germany, Reu warned against recommending him because he was not sufficiently Lutheran. Reu's metamorphosis was complete by 1943. His book, *Luther and the Scriptures*, in which he alleged that the Reformer was an advocate of "inerrancy," was the end-point of his theological back-tracking.⁹

As evidence of this characterization Nelson refers his readers to a piece written by Reu in 1930 (prior to his alleged "back-tracking") published in an anthology edited by Vergilius Ferm.¹⁰

A careful reading of this article, however, does not provide the proof which Nelson seeks. It is true that Reu's thesis in this piece is that the distinguishing mark of the Lutheran church is "assurance of salvation, assurance of communion with God," but at the same time he plainly states that "the Lutheran Church which desires to stand on the principles laid down by the Reformation can never give

up the doctrine that the Holy Scriptures alone are and must remain the source and norm for all Christian faith and life."¹¹ He even says that God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures "and He has fixed this revelation in Holy Scriptures and preserved it for all times."¹² It is true that Reu here contends that the Bible is "not a code of religious and moral laws, but the history of our salvation" (as he frequently does elsewhere), and urges that the Scriptures be interpreted in the light of the gospel of the free and universal grace of God which they contain. It is also true that the article in question does not use the word "inerrant" to describe the Scripture. Yet Reu nowhere sets up any opposition between normative function of the Bible (as the divinely inspired absolute truth by which all teaching in the church is to be judged as right or wrong) and the soteriological function of the Bible (as the means through which God leads people to believe in Christ and through which He imparts to them the forgiveness of sins).¹³ The article, to the contrary, shows Reu investing Holy Scripture with attributes of God Himself. The thought expressed here is that, instead of offering a mere human account of God's revelation of Himself, the Bible is intimately bound up with the nature of the deity.¹⁴ Reu here does not, as Nelson claims, teach that the gospel of the forgiveness of sins is the *norma normans* of Christian teaching.

II. Reu's Actual Bibliology

A. *Reu's Basis Consistency*

Previous citations have already shown how modern writers who charge Reu with "back-tracking" make constant reference to his *Luther and the Scriptures*, a work from the last year of his life, as evidence of a change in his bibliology. In actuality, Reu makes precisely the same claims as to Luther's understanding of the Bible in his *Thirty-five Years of Luther Research*, which was published in 1917, twenty-six years prior to *Luther and the Scriptures*. A few examples will suffice to prove this point:

[1917]

How the attempt has been made to get much capital for a freer position of Luther towards the Scriptures out of his expressions concerning James, Hebrews, the Apocalypse,

etc., is well known. But it is scientific levity to do so. Careful research will ever find, that the books recognized by him as canonical, under all conditions were regarded by him as the authoritative Word of God. . . .

[1943]

And as far as the statement is concerned that James is "a letter of straw," it certainly does not speak well of the scientific trustworthiness of all those Protestant writers who hold this expression up as a proof for Luther's changed attitude toward Scripture. . . . They not only forgot that James was not a canonical writing to Luther; they also overlooked the fact that according to the context the statement is not an absolute statement.

[1917]

What position did Luther take towards the writing recognized by him as canonical, did he merely assert their inerrancy in religious matters or also extend this to historical, physical, etc., matters? Walther in Rostock has shown that Luther's position here, too, was much more conservative than nearly all presentations care to admit."

[1943]

In the preceding study we already began to show that for Luther not only those passages which relate to our salvation are without error but even the secondary matters that have no direct relation to salvation and the faith of salvation.

[1917]

If time and strength permit, the writer will express himself in more detail on Luther and the Scriptures in the near future, in order on his part to preclude the attempt even of theologians of the American Lutheran Church to defend their own lax positions over against the Scriptures by appealing to Luther.

[1943]

Especially since Kahnis in his *Lutherische Dogmatik* (III, 142ff.), under his mighty array of proofs for Luther's freedom concerning Scripture, quoted this statement [of

James being "a letter of straw"], many Lutheran writers thoughtlessly or under the influence of their liberal bias adopted it until it became nearly a household word with them when they characterized Luther's attitude toward the Scripture.¹⁵

In *Luther's German Bible*, published in 1934, Reu explains from the text itself that Luther's comments about the Epistle of James do not indicate that Luther thought this book either valueless or a fraud. Reu writes: "And here he immediately adds the well known statement, 'Therefore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw.' But, as is so often forgotten, he qualifies this judgment not only through the connection in which it stands, but by the special addition, 'compared to them' [i.e., other canonical books of the New Testament]. He is not passing an absolute judgment but only a relative one."¹⁶ Additional testimony for the correctness of this view comes from an article published in 1921, "Luther und die Freiheit des Denkens," in which Reu provides numerous quotations from Luther's writings to show that Luther believed, not only in an errorless Scripture, but in one with an authority grounded in the divine majesty of God, its giver and author, and not in the degree to which it manifests the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.¹⁷

B. Meuser's Findings

The most detailed analysis of Reu's doctrine of Scripture prior to 1930 has been provided by Fred W. Meuser in *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, published in 1958.¹⁸ Meuser used the reports produced by the various church committees, examined private letters from Reu to various principals in the union negotiations within and without the Iowa Synod, and even conducted an interview with someone who knew Reu's plans to oppose an appendix to the constitution of the American Lutheran Church which defined inerrancy as a doctrine taught by Scripture itself. Meuser's research reveals that Reu continually changed his mind—first supporting formulations on Scripture worked out by joint committees of the Ohio and Iowa Synods, later backing away from these statements and expressing reservations.¹⁹ Meuser shows beyond reasonable doubt that prior to 1930 Reu did, in fact, believe in an

inerrant Scripture, but that at the same time he did not believe this teaching to be divisive of church fellowship, should another Christian profess the fundamental articles of the Christian faith as he saw them.

The reason why church fellowship should not depend on acceptance of this teaching, according to Reu, is that it is not unequivocally taught in the Scriptures themselves. Meuser provides this summary of his findings relative to Reu's position on the authority of the Scriptures:

Though [Reu] himself had come to believe that the Scriptures as inspired by God were inerrant, he recognized that this was a subjective conviction on his part which was produced in him by the over-all harmony of the Scriptures, by the confidence in them growing out of their effect upon his own life, and by the subjective conclusion that God probably would not allow His perfect revelation to be combined into a heterogenous mass with erring human records. Yet Reu recognized always that this was a subjective conclusion on his part, and that he had no right to demand that all other Christians had to feel exactly as he did on this matter before he could have full Christian fellowship with them.

To sum up his view: he did not believe that complete infallibility of the Scriptures was revealed so clearly that those who failed to affirm it could be charged with deliberate violation of the authority of the Scriptures. Any church which held to the clearly revealed truth, namely, the complete authority and perfect reliability of the Scriptures regarding things pertaining to salvation, was essentially correct in its view of Scripture.²⁰

On the basis of the evidence which Meuser provides in the book cited, as well as evidence gleaned from other sources, the author of these words would agree with the first of the conclusions which Meuser draws in the second paragraph above, but would disagree with his second conclusion.

In actuality, Reu himself believed that the Scriptures were inerrant

even when they spoke of topics not related to matters of faith or of salvation.²¹ Green has taken note of Reu's mild confessionalism,²² but Reu's allegiance to Scripture and to the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century was such that it would have been impossible for him to affirm that holding merely to the "complete authority and perfect reliability of the Scriptures regarding things pertaining to salvation" would be an "essentially correct" understanding of Scripture.²³ Meuser is correct, however, in saying that at this point in his career Reu did not believe that such a position would be divisive of church fellowship.²⁴ Here one can observe the old allegiance of the Iowa Synod to the theory of open questions and its idea of a gradual progress in the development of doctrinal formulations based on new exegetical insights through which God continues to be active in His church.²⁵ A thesis which is never even proposed in *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* is the idea that Reu limited the infallibility of Scripture to the message of salvation. It is, therefore, puzzling to see the inclusion of this idea in Meuser's assessment of Reu in 1975 (as quoted in the first section of this study).²⁶

C. Reu's Testimony in Ecclesiastical Meetings

Some of the most revealing testimony to Reu's view of the Bible in later years is preserved in the transcripts of the meetings of the Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, which met between 1936 and 1939.²⁷ Reu was one of the commissioners of the American Lutheran Church in these sessions. He also prepared the draft statement on the nature of Scripture for the ALC team and was challenged to defend his position by the ULCA commissioners.²⁸

1. April of 1936

The joint statement on Scripture which was to have been considered at the second meeting of the commission never materialized. Instead, the commissioners were faced with two statements, one authored by Reu and one by Jacobs.²⁹ Affirming that God's self-revelation throughout history could and did take forms other than literary proposition, Jacobs was not able to equate Scripture with

"Word of God" independent of the gospel.³⁰ It is at this second meeting that Reu spoke of a change in his own thinking regarding biblical inspiration. Is this change the "metamorphosis" or "back-tracking" on the doctrine of Scripture which contemporary writers ascribe to Reu?³¹ According to the official transcript of the meeting, Reu said the following:

Did you not mix up these two questions, how does Scripture become subjectively an authority to me? If that is the question, I am certainly at one with you because Scripture never does subjectively become an authority to me because we have that book we call the Bible. Subjectively, the Bible becomes an authority to me because here I hear the message of sin and my conscience tells me that is true. But here I have the message of salvation in Christ, the crucified and risen one, and my conscience again says to me that is true, and so I come subjectively to that conviction, as far as Law and as far as Gospel is in the Scripture. That is an authority for me and after that has become my conviction, that broadens out and by and by the whole Scripture becomes subjectively an authority for me. Perhaps there are different parts in Scripture concerning which I do not make the experience, but the whole Church before me has made its experience and supplements my own experience and so as far as subjective authority of Scripture is concerned, I can say subjectively the Bible is the Word of God. Now, after that has become true in my eyes, then I look into Scripture and the same Scripture that has become authority to me tells me now for instance that the whole of Scripture is divinely inspired, and because of that experience I have made of the truth of the Scripture then I cannot do otherwise than take those statements as a basis for my theological declaration of what Scripture is, and if I would not take the second step, then the first step would not be true. If the Scripture has really subjectively become to me the authority, the one authority for faith and life, then all those various statements in the Scripture concerning the origin of the Scripture are also the Word of God and authority.³²

At this same meeting Reu clearly distances himself from any mechanical theory of inspiration, but at the same time he strongly affirms that the "truth" taught by the Scriptures is fixed for all times in propositional form. Reu continues:

I am not defending the theory of dictation, I really myself don't have that, and I don't think it is expressed here [in Reu's statement on the Scripture], but at the same time if you say prepositions are not given by the Holy Ghost, I could not go along. If that is the case, in so many, many instances you would break out the heart of the meaning of sentences. I wanted to exclude the dictation theory by that phrase "who are living, thinking personalities, etc." By putting these words in I intended to exclude the mechanical theory, the dictation theory. But that is the miracle—those persons, those Holy Writers had their own individuality. Nevertheless, what they wrote is the Word of God. Here I stop and don't ask me myself how that is possible. . . . I cannot give up this clause "by which he supplied to the Holy Writers content and fitting word." Perhaps there can be an amplification but the method itself, as far as I am concerned, I could not change. Here I am bound by conscience. I don't like that in everything the conscience is called upon but here really is a point in which I am conscience-bound.³³

Such was the witness which Reu bore to the inerrancy of Scripture in April of 1936.

2. March of 1938

In another meeting between representatives of the two churches held two years later, Reu clarifies his notion of the "organic whole" in reference to the authority of Scripture—and it is a notion that includes inerrancy. He speaks in this way of proposed revisions to his statement:

When I made that proposal I understood "in all its parts" would be an equivalent for "without contradiction and error," a real equivalent, but I thought we would fare a little

easier by using that term "as a whole and in all its parts" instead of "without contradiction and error." Therefore it was left out in the next proposal, the next form. But the longer I thought of that phrase "in all its parts" I said to myself, that can be taken in various forms of sense. It could mean in all its books, it could mean in all its passages, larger passages, sections, etc. Therefore I come back to "without contradiction and error." . . . So that [in light of John 10:35] "without contradiction and error" means in the whole of the Old Testament there is no statement that contradicts another statement. . . . If we really have content and fitting word supplied by the Holy Spirit to the writer, then I believe that there is no error.³⁴

The transcript of this meeting in March of 1938 also reveals what Reu's "change" in regard to the inerrancy of Scripture actually entailed:

Years ago I believed that a phrase like this "without contradiction and error" would refer only to those things that have to do with the doctrine. Later on, I was convinced that there is really no contradiction and error in the original writing at all. But I did not deem this an essential point and that was the reason why I took the stand which I took in the negotiations which preceded the formation of the American Lutheran Church and I made a statement according to that fact before the meeting. But since in our own Lutheran Church the tendency became so strong against a phrase like this "without contradiction and error," I said to myself those brethren were right who said that it is an essential point and when I then proposed to Dr. Jacobs to use that phrase "as a whole and in all its parts" I took it in that sense meaning "without contradiction and error."³⁵

At one time, then, Reu believed it possible for a Christian theologian to maintain the possibility of errors of fact in Scripture because Reu at that time did not understand the Bible itself to say that it was without error; he came to see matters differently later. Reu does not say that there was ever a time when he himself thought any statement of Scripture as subject to error.³⁶

Reu was at one time fearful that inerrancy would be assumed as a *doctrine* of the church on the same level as the doctrine of inspiration. The inspiration of the words of Scripture Reu saw as a clear biblical teaching; the inerrancy of Scripture he did not at that time see as a clear biblical teaching, even though he personally believed it to be true. He had already asserted at the meeting of the Joint Commission in April of 1936 that the inspiration of the Bible had to be propositional as well as verbal.³⁷ The "change of heart," then, which Reu had after 1930 was not from a position which saw Scripture as authoritative solely because of its saving content (the gospel) to a position which saw Scripture as authoritative because of its plenary verbal inspiration. Nor was it a change from "errancy" to inerrancy. It was a change from a position allowing freedom to contrary views to a position of conviction that the Scriptures themselves teach that they contain no error of any kind.³⁸ There was no change in Reu as to the *fact* of Scripture's inspiration or as to the *source* of its normative authority, or (as the evidence makes abundantly clear) as to the *reality* of its complete inerrancy. For Reu, the divine inspiration of a book automatically precludes error.³⁹

Reu sums up the reason for his "change" in this way (in the meeting previously mentioned as occurring in March of 1938):

You may be convinced that to me the Christocentric view of Scripture is the primary one. At the same time I find also those passages in the Scripture which I believe express the meaning that also, as far as the words are concerned, there is no error. That is for me not the primary thing. This is for me the secondary, but it is there and because it is there and because I am convinced that those passages express that I try to keep it up. If that would be the case, Dr. Knubel, that in that fundamentalistic way the Scripture would be looked upon in consequence of the standpoint taken by this section here [i.e., that some would predicate inerrancy of the present-day transmitted copies of the original biblical books rather than to the original manuscripts], then I would be very slow to go with them, but I believe that really both can be kept up at the same time, that Christological view which I never could give up and the

other one, the secondary one, resting upon these Scripture passages. If it would not be for these passages I would not care about this secondary view, and would defend only the other view, the Christological one. These Scripture passages seem to me sufficient basis for the secondary view. The change in my own conviction was not a little influenced by the fear whereto finally the other one without holding fast to the secondary might lead.⁴⁰

In summary, then, it is true that Reu underwent a "change" after 1930 in his view of the inerrancy of Scripture. He had always believed, however, that the Bible was divinely inspired and that it had its authority in the church by virtue of its being the Word of God. These were always constants in Reu's thinking.⁴¹ The "change" involved rather his coming to believe that Scripture itself taught that all its parts were free from error of any kind in the original manuscripts. Reu never doubted that the Bible was inspired by God Himself and that it therefore possessed such attributes of the divine majesty as the impossibility of error. Like Luther before him, Reu never once questioned the plenary divine inspiration, the unique normative authority, or the historical truthfulness of Scripture.⁴²

D. Reu's Testimony in Writing and Conversation

1. Historical Considerations

There are numerous indications of Reu's epistemology throughout the first four decades of this century. In 1921, for instance, in his obituary of Benjamin B. Warfield of Princeton Seminary, Reu wrote that Warfield's death was a great loss to conservative American Protestantism.⁴³ Warfield is widely recognized as one of the last great conservative Presbyterian theologians to teach at Princeton and as a champion of the doctrine of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture.⁴⁴ It would be strange for Reu to identify himself as closely as he does here with so well-known an advocate of an inerrant Bible, if Reu himself held a position on Scripture which was fundamentally different.

Again, Reu certainly saw an integral connection in Luther's thinking between the divine inspiration of Scripture and its complete

inerrancy. In regard to the list of the "Books of the New Testament" printed in Luther's Bible Reu states:

These 23, in spite of a difference in value, when compared with each other, were for him beyond question apostolic and canonical and thus were produced under the influence of the Holy Ghost so that the writers were raised completely above human fallibility. On the other hand, the remaining four were to be marked out as those whose apostolic origin was questionable and so their canonicity was in doubt, with the result that their content could not be regarded, at once, as absolutely inerrant.⁴⁵

Reu, of course, clearly wished to identify himself the position which he attributed to the reformer of the church.

2. *Dogmatic Considerations*

It is true that Reu held that the doctrine of inspiration could be properly treated solely in the light of its christocentric foundation and goal. Such a view is, however, a far different thing than somehow limiting, as Meuser and Nelson claim, the inerrancy of Scripture to the message of salvation. On the contrary, the evidence is unanimous that Reu at all times accepted and taught the doctrine of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture (the divine guidance of the authors in such a way that God Himself is the author of every single word of Holy Scripture). Nor did he base the authority of Holy Scripture on its proclamation of the gospel. For Reu, the Bible had normative authority in the church solely because of it being the word of God.

Reu provided a succinct explanation of his christocentric view of inspiration in an article which appeared in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* in 1929. There he states:

Inspiration is also not to be surrendered, but rather to be retained in its entire biblical extent. But we do not begin with it; rather we simply launch into the Scriptures and let them have their effect on the heart, on the perception and will, so that they lead to Christ, the Savior incarnate. If Christ first becomes great to the listener as He "who

redeemed us lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us," then with this he will also be more and more certain of the Scriptures, whose essence and star He is. Then also the declarations about the Scriptures themselves and their own origin become welcome and valuable. One has experienced the power of God in the Scriptures in one's own heart and now devoutly hears what they say about their own origin, accepts it in faith, and holds fast to it gratefully in its whole extent.⁴⁶

Reu expressed the same conviction in everyday conversation. Herman A. Preus, for instance, long-time professor at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul and a colleague of Reu's during the 1930s and 1940s, has testified to Reu's assertion, in private too, of verbal inspiration and so also of inerrancy.⁴⁷

It is true that Reu had no patience with any mechanical theory of inspiration whereby the authors to whom God gave His words are stripped of historical reality. He held instead a "dynamic" understanding of verbal inspiration, as the following sentences from one of his study papers make evident:

But what kind of verbal inspiration is taught by Scripture, is it the mechanical or dictation theory of verbal inspiration or the dynamic theory? According to the first, the biblical writers were mere machines writing down what was dictated to them, used by the Holy Ghost as the harp was used by David, or they were willing and knowing instruments, knowing and understanding what they were dictated and what they wrote down, but in no way participating in disposing the material and finding the fitting word. In contradistinction to this, the dynamic theory of verbal inspiration consists just in this that the biblical writers were in constant cooperation with the Holy Ghost and busied themselves to find the correct expression for the divine contents.⁴⁸

Reu, indeed, believed that "for the Lutheran Church the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God" and retain their position of divine authority "even when the question of inspiration remains unsolved."⁴⁹

Reu makes several incidental statements in a teacher-training volume of 1939 which again emphasize the unique nature of Scripture. He speaks of the Bible in this way:

We must, of course, not forget that what we teach in the Sunday school is the Word of God and that the Word of God does not depend upon the teacher's skill or holy living to make it a power of God unto salvation. It is, and at all times, under all circumstances, remains such a power in itself.⁵⁰

Reu understands the Bible to have an objective truth transcending all merely human testimony, whether historical or contemporary.

3. *Exegetical Considerations*

Reu published only one article in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* specifically depicting the state of contemporary exegetical theology and evaluating its trends.⁵¹ One can, however, clearly assess Reu's position on scriptural authority from the comments which he makes there. Observing that Ernst Sellin was one of the more "conservative" of the modern German Old Testament exegetes because of his opposition to those scholars who would assign little or no authority to the Old Testament, Reu nevertheless challenged Sellin's assertion that the Old Testament was merely "human literature which bears witness to a divine revelation which took place in the course of the history of a people."⁵² Reu took issue with Sellin's position in these pointed words:

We thank Sellin for sending Delitzsch and Harnack back into their proper bounds; however, with respect to his own position we only ask: Is 2 Tim. 3:16 with its *pasa grafée theopneustos* really speaking of this, that the *authors* of the Old Testament Scriptures, while they wrote, were *at certain times* filled with the Spirit of God (cf. p. 72), and how does John 10:35 agree with this?⁵³

In this same article Reu spoke warmly of research which would, in his opinion, "point to an entirely new return to a strongly traditional view of the Pentateuch."⁵⁴

While allowing some literary analysis of the Book of Genesis,

Reu could not approve the hypothesis by which originally independent accounts were subsequently woven into a unity by an unknown redactor. He wrote of the first of the Scriptures in this way:

But whoever regards Genesis as a unity and wants to understand it as such will hardly receive his due with this procedure. Whether such dissection does not hinder rather than further the understanding of the religious meaning of this "basic book" is another question. For the Apostle Paul Genesis appears to have been a unity from which he quotes, or which he uses as a point of contact, without asking from which source he borrows his quotation or his point of contact; moreover to him it is history, dependable history to the last detail.⁵⁵

Reu states explicitly that he "frequently rejects [Sellin's] datings, literary articulations, and textual emendations" of the minor prophets and implies a like rejection of Kittel's dating of most of the Psalms as post-exilic.⁵⁶ The Old Testament commentaries edited by Sellin were deserving of recognition and use for the "independence and intellectual effort" represented there. Reu had to conclude, however, that the series was "not what the believing congregation, the church, is waiting for in this difficult time, the waters of which wash about the foundation."⁵⁷

Conclusion

Reu maintained that the special intervention of God in the minds of the writers of the Bible served to "lift them above the possibility of human error. . . . That which the writers of the Bible have produced—and that alone—is truly dependable and inerrant."⁵⁸ Such must be the case, Reu argued, because the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament as the Word of God, and because they presupposed "that it was God or the Holy Ghost who used the human writers and spoke through them."⁵⁹ Reu explains what he means by verbal inspiration in these words:

The prepositions used [in the books of Matthew and Hebrews] are *dia* and *en*; they make it evident, the Lord or the Holy Ghost is to be considered as the real author, man

only the instrument used by Him. If, therefore, Church Fathers or some dogmaticians of our own church called the human authors *notarii, calanixi, amanuenses, instrumenta*, this is not [to] be considered wrong in every respect. It is wrong, if by the use of these terms the writers are degraded to merely mechanical instruments or machines that wrote without participation of their soul life. It is correct, however, as long as these terms are used merely to designate human instrumentality without any definition of the latter. The prepositions used give us the right of speaking of a cooperation of the divine and human factors in the formation of the Old Testament Scripture.⁶⁰

Reu believed that in the New Testament "we have direct statements," such as 2 Peter 1:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16, which explicitly teach the doctrine of verbal inspiration.⁶¹ Clearly, Reu viewed this teaching as much more than an historically-conditioned pronouncement of the church. It is scarcely surprising, then, that Reu saw no contradiction between the *doctrina evangelii* and the inerrancy of Scripture.

Endnotes

1. August Pieper, quoted in Theodore Graebner, "Death of Dr. Michael Reu," *Lutheran Witness*, 26 October 1943, 352.
2. Fred W. Meuser, "Facing the Twentieth Century 1900-1930," in *The Lutherans in North America*, ed. E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 448, 443.
3. David R. Liefeld, "Inerrancy Is Not Just 'Fundamentalist,'" *Dialog*, 27 (Spring 1988), 145-146. See also his articles "Inerrancy: The Roots Run Deep," *Lutheran Witness*, May 1987, 4-6; and "Inerrancy: It's Not Enough," *Lutheran Witness*, June 1987, 4-5.
4. The author of this essay has discovered only one place in which Reu talks about a change of mind regarding his epistemological position—in the transcription of a meeting held in March 1938 of the Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. See note

34 below for the citation of this passage and an account of Reu's position in these negotiations.

5. E. Clifford Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 29.
6. Article I of the Minneapolis Theses states: "The synods signatory to these Articles of Agreement accept without exception all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole, and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life." Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 146.
7. The manuscript of Reu's English address concerning his impressions of the first Lutheran World Convention meeting in 1923 contains the word "infallible." Although it is not ascribed directly by Reu to his own position, yet, in his typical manner of making a modest general statement which is to be understood as applying to himself, Reu means the word to apply to his own position. He notes: "It was of importance against the liberals in theology and church, who scoff at everything that is called confessions and who, especially at Eisenach, the seat of the new government of the liberal Thuringian Church, and at Jena, the seat of the most liberal university of all Germany, [who] just two years ago boastingly declared, that the Lutheran Church should cease to exist in Thuringia; and against the liberals all over the world who speak and act as though only their views and beliefs could find adherents in this modern age. It gave them food for thought when at Eisenach they saw and heard men, men of position and intellect, take their stand for the old confessions, and some of them even for an infallible Bible." J. M. Reu, "The Lutheran World Convent at Eisenach," p. 62, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque. Reu very plainly distances himself from those delegates at this convention who believe something else: "To the vast majority of those present at Eisenach, the Scriptures are a literary monument that *contains*—not *is*—the Word of God, and in *so far* only it is to them the only source and infallible norm of all church teaching and practice, but a literary document that likewise contains many statements, the trustworthiness of which is questionable or their incorrectness even proved and undeniable,

and it is an object of scientific investigation to draw the line between both elements; some restrict the latter elements to geographical-historical statements and the like; some even do not stop there, and do not regard even the moral and religious statements of the Bible as infallible. Still what has been accepted at Eisenach is at least a valuable demarcation line against all those who deny or endanger the strictly supernatural character of the revelation upon which our religion and doctrine rests." *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56. It should be noted that Reu wrote these words in 1923 or 1924—at least a full year before the adoption of the Minneapolis Theses and more than five years prior to his objection to the new constitution adopted by the American Lutheran Church.

8. Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 31.
9. *Ibid.*, 86.
10. J. M. Reu, "What Is Lutheranism?", in *What Is Lutheranism?: A Symposium in Interpretation*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: MacMillan Company, 1930), 102-115. Except for its last three pages which deal with the subject of textual criticism, this chapter in Ferm's book was published a year earlier as "Die Eigenart des Luthertums," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 53 (October 1929), 563-572.
11. Reu, in *What Is Lutheranism?*, 104, 103.
12. *Ibid.*, 105. See p. 110, where Reu refers to Scripture as "an absolutely faithful image of the essence of God and His will. . . ." As Fred Kramer has noted, it was common among the more conservative Lutheran dogmaticians of the first half of the twentieth century to identify divine revelation with Scripture over against an understanding of revelation as divine activity or *Tatwort*. See his analysis of the respective positions of Adolf Hoenecke and Francis Pieper in Fred Kramer, "The Christian Faith and Revelation," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 40 (April 1969), 197-198.
13. The entire article makes repeated reference to what Reu regards as the false sacramental and sacerdotal understanding of the Roman Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the false symbolic and immediate understanding of the character of the means of grace of Reformed theology, on the other hand.

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14. "But the Bible is not only a message from God or information concerning Him; in this word of Scripture as well as in every word that grows out of it, God Himself dwells and works. . . . through the Bible He Himself comes to us; the Bible . . . is the bearer of His own presence." Reu, in *What Is Lutheranism?*, 110.
 15. J. M. Reu, *Thirty-five Years of Luther Research* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1917), 77-78; *Luther and the Scriptures* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1944), 45, 91, 45. Although the latter book appeared posthumously, its preface by Reu bears the date January 1943. See also Reu's comment in his final article in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*: "There can be no doubt that to them [i.e., Luther and Melancthon] all the generally recognized canonical books of the Old and New Testament in their totality as well as in their individual parts were the Word of God. They believed that what the prophets and the apostles dictated or wrote down was, in virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Spirit upon them, without contradiction and error. . . . to all theologians of the 16th century the result of inspiration was the same. They were all convinced that what the prophets and the apostles dictated and wrote down and what thus became a part of canonical Scripture was the pure Word of God without contradiction and error. The Augsburg Confession was written with this conviction, and it is this conviction concerning which all should be agreed who intend to establish church fellowship." J. M. Reu, "Minimum Requirements for the Establishing of Church Fellowship," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 67 (December 1943), 595-596.
 16. J. M. Reu, *Luther's German Bible: An Historical Presentation Together with a Collection of Sources* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), 170.
 17. J. M. Reu, "Luther und die Freiheit des Denkens," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 45 (April 1921), 193-211. Here Reu says: "Insonderheit führte die Disputation mit Eck im Jahre 1519 Luther weiter auf dieser Bahn. Als er hier die Unfehlbarkeit der Konzilien bestritt, stieg er von deren Fehlbarkeit auf zu der *unfehlbaren Schrift* als der allein entscheidenden Norm für alles, was als göttliche Wahrheit angesehen werden will, und identifiziert dabei ohne weiteres Schrift und Wort Gottes" (the emphasis is in the

original). Ibid., 200. Reu also quotes Luther as having written: "Ich habe gelernt, diese Ehre allein den Büchern zu geben, welche kanonisch genannt werden, sodass ich aufs Festeste glaube, dass keiner ihrer Verfasser geirrt hat, . . . Die Heiligen haben in ihrem Schreiben irren und in ihrem Leben sündigen können; die Schrift kann nicht irren" (all emphases are in the original). Ibid., 201, 207. See also his quotation from Luther on p. 208: ". . . Hie stehe ich, hie trotze ich, hie stolziere ich und sage: Gottes Wort ist mir über alles, göttliche Majestät stehet bei mir [d. i. in und mit dem Wort]; darum gebe ich nicht ein Haar drauf, wenn tausend Augustinus, tausend Heinzen Kirchen dazu wider mich wären, und bin gewiss, dass die rechte Kirche mit mir hält an Gottes Wort und lässt Heinzen Kirchen an Menschenworten hängen" (all emphases are in the original). Reu notes: "Da ward ihm [Luther] die Majestät Gottes klar, die in und durch dies Wort mit seiner Seele, seinem Gewissen handelte. Da erkannte er es innerlich, dass Streiten wider die Schrift nichts anders ist als Streiten wider Gott selber. Gewissensfreiheit—er hat selber das Wort 'libertas conscientiae' geprägt—ist ihm von da an identisch mit der Gebundenheit an Gottes Wort." Ibid., 210.

18. Fred W. Meuser, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church: A Case Study in Lutheran Unity* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1958). Meuser devotes an entire chapter to Reu's pivotal role in the union negotiations among the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo synods as they struggled to produce a mutually acceptable formulation of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture during the years 1926-1930.
19. Meuser notes that Reu voted in favor of adopting the formulation on Scripture which included the word "inerrant" proposed in the Minneapolis Colloquy in 1925—he was even a delegate to the colloquy which produced this statement—but later objected to the concept of inerrancy which he believed this statement implied. Similarly, the statement on Scripture produced by the inter-synodical (Iowa-Ohio-Buffalo) commission and proposed for inclusion in the constitution of the merged church body also included the word "inerrant" when it described the Bible. In subsequent haggling over the wording of this statement, the Iowa Synod Executive Committee adopted an *Erklärung* on Scripture written by Reu which specifically teaches the inerrancy of the

original text of the Scriptures. In a later vote of the Iowa Synod Executive Committee Reu voted to approve the original wording of the proposed constitutional paragraph on Scripture which included the full inerrancy of the Bible, "but Reu's approval was conditioned by the statement that he could vote for the recommendation only if the assertion of the *Erklaerung* that the unexplained difficulties in Scripture do not affect the faith would be applied to the question of church fellowship." Reu later withdrew even this qualified approval of the constitutional paragraph. In 1929 Reu first approved a revised long form of the proposed confessional paragraph of the church constitution, but later rescinded his approval. Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 209-211, 221-223. In a conference paper presented in 1927, Reu again changed his views on the relation of inerrancy to church fellowship. Meuser writes that Reu "modified somewhat his previous opinion that those who posited errors in the original could be fully recognized as long as they retained the full Scriptural authority in matters of faith. At the conference he stated that it is wrong to say things not pertaining to salvation are subject to error, for this violates the principle that Scripture as a whole is God's Word." *Ibid.*, 213.

20. *Ibid.*, 229.
21. J. M. Reu, letter to C. C. Hein, 13 October 1926, quoted in Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 202. Reu says strongly in this same letter, however, that in his opinion "Scripture does not with unmistakable clarity claim complete inerrancy . . . [if] this point is elevated to the level of a confession, then it must be taken seriously and church fellowship severed with everyone who does not confess the same thing. I am not ready to do that." *Ibid.*
22. Lowell C. Green, "J. M. Reu and Reformation Studies," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, 42 (November 1969), 154. Reu himself wrote in 1926: "I could wholeheartedly approve the statement: 'The Scripture is the inspired Word of God and the only and inerrant source, guide and norm for Christian faith and life.' This I would defend to my last breath against any opponent in Germany or here, as God would give me grace. For the testimony of the Scriptures would support me. . . . But Scripture itself does not say that it is inerrant in all other things

that neither directly nor indirectly pertain to faith and life; therefore, I cannot elevate such a claim to an article of faith or a confessional paragraph. If I did, I would exclude from church fellowship those who say that this or that historical reference is incorrect or questionable." Reu, quoted in Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 186. Meuser quotes Reu in a letter written later in the same year when he comments that Reu "immediately hastened to assure Hein that the great majority of Iowans, including Reu's pupils and Reu himself, 'personally hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures even in matters not pertaining to faith' and regard any theory that speaks with impunity about errors in the Scriptures as dangerous. However, Iowa does not want this personal conviction expressed in a confessional statement." *Ibid.*, 202. Reu at every time of his career considered the whole matter of scriptural inerrancy as a non-fundamental doctrine of the Bible, but later [i.e., after 1930] changed his mind to believe that it was nevertheless necessary to insist upon it in church fellowship negotiations. Meuser makes it clear in his account of Reu's actions at the 1926 convention of the Iowa Synod that a large part of his apprehension over the proposed wording of the paragraph on scriptural inerrancy in the constitution of the new church was his fear of its being understood as endorsing some kind of mechanical theory of verbal inspiration. See Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 193.

23. Meuser cites Reu's article, "Die Eigenart der Amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 50 (August 1926), 690-708, as proof of this statement. Assuming that the third of the three positions held in American Lutheranism which Reu chronicles here is in fact his own (the evidence is circumstantial; Reu never once in these pages specifically tells the reader that his position is the same as that of the third group), all that Reu says is that this group's position on scriptural infallibility is wide enough for it to have church fellowship with those who "in solchen und ähnlichen Fällen von der Möglichkeit oder Tatsächlichkeit eines Irrtums redet" [in such and similar matters speak of the possibility or reality of an error]. The "matters" Reu mentions here are such things as chronological discrepancies in various biblical accounts and differences which appear in parallel accounts of the same events—not all things in Scripture

unrelated to Christian faith and life. To regard all such matters as subject to error is the position he predicates of the first group in his essay. It is a position that Reu himself does not share, even in 1926, that is, to ascribe inerrancy only to matters pertaining to salvation, and . . . *from the outset [vornherein]* see the possibility or the probability of errors in all other parts of Scripture. ("Da scheinen die einen zu betonen, die Irrtumslosigkeit der Schrift beziehe sich bloß auf alles, was zur Heilswahrheit gehört, und darum von vornherein mit der Irrtümlichkeit der Schrift in den anderen Dingen als mit einer Möglichkeit oder gar Wahrscheinlichkeit zu rechnen.") Reu, "Die Eigenart der Amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche," 705; Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 189-190. Yet, judging from Meuser's account of an interview which C. C. Hein had with Reu on January 26, 1927, Reu did at one time teach in his seminary classes that "the possibility of errors in secondary matters" treated by Scripture had to be permitted in the church. *Ibid.*, 208-210.

24. The maddening thing about Reu's position is the consistency of his inconsistency. At the end of his life, after Reu is supposed to have accepted the necessity of agreement even in those articles of faith not dealing directly with matters of salvation in order to enter into church fellowship, Reu urges the practice of "selective fellowship" among those conservative Lutherans who are pledged to different public confessions of faith as concerns the non-fundamental articles of faith but who personally share all fundamental truths. See his comments in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, both written during the last months of his life: "About a week before his [Dr. Boe's] death I wrote him that selective fellowship might be the common ground for us and the solution of the difficulties lying in the path to a unified Lutheran Church. And I do not see anything in Scripture that makes selective fellowship impossible." See also Reu's opinion of a unionistic communion service held in New York City among pastors of different Lutheran church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with one another: "We must say that all this is outside of the rules and canons of the Church as they were understood during the last century of Lutheran development in our country. Here the official relation from church body to church body was held decisive for the respective pastors and congregations. Five

years ago I would have seriously advised against such a procedure which does not wait until official action from church to church has been taken. The experiences of the last five years taught me to judge milder. I am still slow to advise such procedure because it can be terribly misused and I do not see any controlling factors in which one can really trust. But such action as that on this year's Ascension Day in New York should tell those in authority and in convention assembled no longer to hinder or stop the movement towards unity with reasons not based upon the Word of God but upon human traditions. Where the Word of God separates us, there and only there we are separated." J. M. Reu, "Dr. Lars Wilhelm Boe," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 67 (February 1943), 127; id., "Toward Lutheran Union," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 67 (September 1943), 528; quoted in Emmanuel Poppen, "Dr. Reu's Work in Behalf of Lutheran Unity," *Wartburg Seminary Association Quarterly*, 7, 15 December 1943, 11-12. One may contrast what Reu says in his dogmatics, which was being used in classes at Wartburg Seminary at this same time: "When a Christian learns which [denominational] confession agrees most closely with the Scriptures, he is in conscience bound to join that church even though leaving his mother-church may cause him grief. He must, however, conduct this examination on [the] basis of the commonly accepted official confessions of the church body and not on the basis of the teaching of individual members. . . ." J. M. Reu, "Dogmatics," pp. 190-191, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque. In the last month of his life Reu wrote that "an agreement concerning doctrine is, indeed, necessary before church fellowship is established, whether this agreement is set forth in a number of theses or a confession, or brought about by some other doctrinal negotiations. This is necessary in the interest of the church, in the interest of truth as well as of love." Reu, "Minimum Requirements," 601. What would seem to be a recommendation based on his earlier understanding of the place of inerrancy theology is, in fact, a product of the time of Reu's most intense rapprochement with Missouri and its theology. It is probably safest to say that Reu remained an Iowa Synod theologian in the stamp of Wilhelm Loehe and the Erlangen school throughout his life.

25. Meuser's assessment of the fundamental difference between the

hermeneutical approaches of Iowa and Ohio is an excellent one. He notes: "The point above, that the inerrancy of the Scriptures must be deduced from its inspiration, is not a minor one for Iowa's case. In fact, behind it lies the whole argument of Reu, which is simply the application of Iowa's 'open question' concept. If it is true that inerrancy is only a deduction drawn from Scriptural claims to divinity and not a doctrine clearly revealed by Scripture itself, then according to Iowa's approach to doctrine, inerrancy can never be elevated to the position of a doctrine essential to church fellowship. It seemed to Reu's group that Ohioans were deciding for themselves which doctrines were fundamental and then proceeding to try to find evidence for them in the Scriptures. To the average delegate the difference between inerrancy based upon Scriptural proof and inerrancy deduced from Scripture's divinity was probably so subtle as to appear sophistic. . . . Iowa held that the Scripture's claim to divine inspiration *implied* inerrancy; Ohio believed that Scripture itself *asserted* inerrancy. Since inerrancy, to the followers of Reu, was only a deduction, they held that it could be believed but could not be made an article of faith or a prerequisite for fellowship." Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 214-215.

26. Reu himself observes: "We stated advisedly that Scripture is the source and norm of religious doctrine and saving faith; not in order to take back what we said about the inerrancy of Scripture in the preceding, but in order to emphasize the purpose for which Scripture has been given." J. M. Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 425.
27. Nelson gives a lengthy examination of these meetings and highlights Reu's position in them in his *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 97-106. The actual transcripts of these meetings themselves provide much more insight into Reu's position in defense of biblical inerrancy than Nelson attempts in his book. Nelson notes the locations and dates of the meetings of the Joint Commission in the order in which they took place: Pittsburgh, February 6-7, 1936; Columbus, April 2-3, 1936; March 1938; Pittsburgh, February 13, 1939.
28. It is obvious from his letter to Jacobs of 8 June 1937 that Reu believes the fundamental truth following from the divine

inspiration of Scripture is that it is, in fact, the word of God—not that it contains the gospel, or that all the books of Scripture form an organic whole, or that the Bible speaks infallibly concerning matters having to do with Christian faith and life. See J. M. Reu, Dubuque, to Rev. Prof. Dr. Ch. Jacobs, Philadelphia, 8 June 1937, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque.

29. "At the next meeting of the Joint Commission . . . it was explained that, due to illness [Jacobs'] and the brevity of time, Reu and Jacobs had worked independently. Consequently, the members of the commission were faced, not with a joint production on 'The Scriptures and the Word of God' (as requested by the February meeting), but with two statements. The one by Reu placed the emphasis on 'The Scriptures'; the one by Jacobs stressed 'The Word of God.'" Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 100. The original statements submitted to the Joint Commission by both Reu and Jacobs as well as their correspondence and subsequent draft revisions are found in appendix 40 of this research project. As Nelson points out, Jacobs' statement was adopted essentially intact by the United Lutheran Church in 1938 as the Baltimore Declaration, while Reu's statement was adopted nearly verbatim by the American Lutheran Church as the Sandusky Declaration. *Ibid.*, 104.
30. Nelson is correct in observing that, for the ULCA commissioners, "justification by faith in Christ became both a hermeneutical principle and an authority principle." Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 99. He also gives a succinct and accurate summary of Jacobs' position when he writes: "Commencing with a quotation from the *Epitome* (Formula of Concord), Jacobs pointed out that the authority of the Scriptures rests in their being the Word of God. Since, however, the term 'Word of God' is used in more than one sense, it is important to understand these different senses. First, the Word of God means the gospel; second, the Word of God is the historical self-revelation of God completed in Jesus Christ and interpreted by men chosen and inspired by God; third, because God continues to make himself known in the Holy Scriptures of which Christ is the center, the Bible is properly called the Word of God. The Scriptures have their more important and less important parts, the measure of their importance being the closeness of their relation to the gospel, which is

the Word of God in the primary sense." *Ibid.*, 101. Reu challenged Jacobs' contention that "the classical period of Lutheranism knew nothing of a verbal inspiration" by proving from the historical sources that Flacius and Andreas Osiander taught a dynamic theory of verbal inspiration and that Justus Menius and other Saxon Lutherans in the first (1549) Lutheran confession containing a separate article on the Scriptures even taught divine dictation. See J. M. Reu, "Verbal Inspiration," pp. 15-18, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque.

31. In addition to those authors already cited in this chapter, Nelson remarks on this supposed "change of heart": "By way of explanation he recounted a metamorphosis which had occurred in him. In the years leading up to the 1930 ALC merger he had fought the Ohio Synod doctrine of inspiration. Since that time he had come to accept the inerrancy of the original writings, but had not deemed it an essential point. But over against recent tendencies in the Lutheran church he believed it necessary to insist on such a doctrine." Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 104.
32. J. M. Reu, quoted in Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, "Minutes, Joint Commission, United Lutheran Church in America and American Lutheran Church, April 2, 1936, Deshler-Wallick Hotel, Columbus, Ohio," pp. 36-37, typewritten, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois. In a letter written to Jacobs in 1937, Reu says, "Here, it seems to me, as I said at Columbus, you do not distinguish between the subjective and the objective element. Subjectively there is no other way to personal conviction of the truth of the Scripture than by faith in Christ; but the Scripture is truth before I make this subjective experience; it is the truth because of its own testimony of its divine origin being the result of the cooperation of the Holy Spirit." J. M. Reu, Dubuque, to Rev. Prof. Dr. Ch. Jacobs, Philadelphia, 8 June 1937, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque.
33. Reu, in "Minutes, Joint Commission, April 2, 1936," pp. 51-52.
34. J. M. Reu, quoted in Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, "Transcript of Meeting of the Commissioners of the

United Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Church, Deshler-Wallick Hotel, March 11, 1938," pp. 16-17, 20, typewritten, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois. In a subsequent meeting of the Joint Commission on Fellowship, Reu elaborates his meaning as follows: "All statements in the Scriptures, not only those that pertain to our salvation, are correct. I do not want to use the expression authoritative. There is a difference between correctness and authority. The Bible is no authority on matters of geography, common world history, etc.; for those I go to other sources; but from this it does not follow that a casual statement made in the Bible about these things is incorrect." J. M. Reu, quoted in Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, "Minutes of the Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1939," p. 2, typewritten, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois. See also Reu's statement that "God has given them [i.e., the Scriptures] to His Church, not in separate parts, but in their totality and organic unity." J. M. Reu, *Homiletics: A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Preaching*, trans. Albert Steinhäuser, fourth ed. (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1934), 301. In another place Reu observes regarding his understanding of the meaning of John 10:35: "The Old Testament Scripture cannot in such a way be dissolved into fragments, that by doing so its unified structure is destroyed and its individual parts lose their validity." Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 410.

35. Reu, in "Transcript of Meeting of the Commissioners, March 11, 1938," pp. 23-24. On page 35 of this document Reu says that it was his reading of Herbert C. Alleman's commentary on the New Testament (published by the ULCA publishing house) that prompted him to return to the words "without contradiction and error" in place of the wording proposed by Jacobs, "the Bible as a whole and in all its parts." See J. M. Reu, "A New English New Testament Commentary," *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*, 3 (February 1938), 7-29; originally published in German as "Ein neuer englischer Kommentar zum Neuen

Testament," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 61 (August 1937), 453-467. In this criticism of Alleman's commentary Reu characterizes as "startling" the claim made by several of the contributors to the work. For instance, Reu is disturbed by the claim that St. Paul, St. John, and even Christ Himself mistakenly understood the apocalyptic sections of the Book of Daniel as being genuinely prophetic rather than as embellished historical narrative written after the fact; by the assertion that the dating proposed for Psalm 110 contradicts that given in Matthew 22; by the claim that "the Jewish hope of a life after death . . . evidently does not rest on divine revelation, but has simply grown out of the experience of the Jews. . . ."; by the contention that the miracle of the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead was not a literal happening but merely "mental suggestion" in the mind of the evangelist Mark; and by the assertion that Christ's own conception of His messiahship cannot be determined definitively on the basis of the scriptural texts themselves. Reu, "A New English New Testament Commentary," 11-13, 23-25. The entire review is worth reading because it shows Reu's apprehension and even alarm concerning the extent of compromise in the ULCA ministerium with the hermeneutical assumptions of historical criticism—a compromise the extent of which Reu, by his own admission, does not seem to have appreciated prior to the publication of this officially-sanctioned exegetical work. It is his conviction that several of the expositions and historical introductions contained in Alleman's commentary "contain so much that is untenable, and exhibit a point of view which can not be tolerated in the Lutheran Church of this country. . . . What stands between a Church with such an official commentary and many other Lutheran Churches as a separating wall is now no more only the question of verbal inspiration, which now—without being more closely defined—is disavowed at every opportunity; it is now the question of the authority of Scripture itself, not only in antiquarian things and matters of natural science, but even in religious things." *Ibid.*, 19, 29.

36. Reu wrote in 1924: "No matter what inspiration theory the German theology will 'work out' in the future, according to our conviction each one would be mistaken which does not unmistakably bring to expression that the Scripture of the Old and the New Testament is God's Word in its entirety, so that we are thus

able to reach into it indiscriminately as the New Testament authors do into the Old Testament, and in each individual case may be able to have the firm conviction that we have God's Word before us." J. M. Reu, "Zum Unterschied in der Theologie und kirchlichen Praxis zwischen deutschem und amerikanischem Luthertum," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 48 (April 1924), 218. In his speech detailing his experiences at the Lutheran World Convention of 1923, Reu says that he reminded the delegates that their historic position on the Scriptures includes the teaching of "the peculiar inspiration of the Scriptures in their entirety. . . ." See Reu, "The Lutheran World Convent at Eisenach," p. 49.

37. Meuser points out that Reu already insisted on the *suggestio verborum* as being part of the scriptural doctrine of inspiration at the Eisenach conference of the Lutheran World Convention in 1923. See Meuser, *Formation of the American Lutheran Church*, 180. An examination of Reu's comments on the Scripture printed in the convention proceedings finds him describing them as "in their totality the authoritative, sufficient, absolutely dependable, sure and vital presentation of the revelation of God once given for our salvation, as they were formed through a peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers." J. M. Reu, discussion of "The Confessions—The Indispensable Foundations of the Lutheran Church," by A. Joergensen, and of "The Confessions as the Indispensable Foundation of the Lutheran Church," by S. J. Sebelius, in *The Lutheran World Convention: The Minutes, Addresses and Discussions of the Conference at Eisenach, Germany, August 19th to 26th, 1923* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1925), 89. Reu himself describes how he views the orthodox terminology on inspiration in an article written in 1924. He says: "Even less did our doctrine concerning 'verbal inspiration' among us grow out of the old dogmatics. . . . We do not consider the *impulsus ad scribendum* in any way to be as external as the old dogmatics for the most part had represented it. For us it is something of many facets, something mediated historically and psychologically, as certain as if one can say for example with a certain right concerning the letters of Paul, that these were occasional writings, and Luke could write his well-known *edoxe moi* (Luke 1:3). And the *suggestio rerum* like *verbi* we take thus, that they took place under intensive spiritual collaboration of the holy

writers. . . . In dealing with the divine factor in the origin of the Scripture (we do not deny the human, rather we claim it, but are not speaking of it now), we take the threefold together (*impulsus ad scribendum, suggestio rerum, suggestio verbi*), not because the old dogmatists did that, but because it is for us a useful summarization of that which according to our conviction the Scripture itself expresses concerning its origin and its essence." Reu, "Zum Unterschied," 215, 217. He also states in this article that it is his understanding that not a single one of the dogmatists of the age of orthodoxy presents the doctrine of verbal inspiration in such a way that they "let the holy writers be *calami* and *notarii* without will or personality." *Ibid.*, 218. For more information on how Reu viewed the necessity of using the above three Latin terms or rather the meanings they denote in "describing the extent of the divine factor in inspiration," see Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 418-422.

38. At no time did Reu believe that only certain portions of the Scriptures were inspired, while other portions were not. Reu makes an important biographical statement in an address to the Luther Academy in 1938 which throws significant light on his personal stance on the authority of the Bible. Here he says, "A certain holy awe kept me always from the assumption of errors in the original copies of the Scripture and its parts; even the mere possibility of errors seemed to me excluded by this reverential fear. However, this reverential fear alone should not hold one back from a serious reckoning with this possibility. It may be the result of training, and this training may have been wrong. . . . These are serious considerations, but none of them is decisive. The testimony of Scripture alone is decisive. And here II Tim. 3:16 and John 10:35 again stand before our eyes. If in II Tim. 3:16 of 'all the Scripture' is said that it is *theopneustos*, brought forth by the Spirit of God, does this not exclude every error from the original copy to which the term *theopneustos* alone can refer? If in John 10:35 the general rule 'The Scripture cannot be broken' is applied to a single, one might say, incidentally written word—if in Scripture we may term anything at all as casual and incidental—which was, indeed, important for the understanding and time of theocracy, but has nothing to do with *our* salvation, have we then a right to assume errancy for any

part of Scripture? I know some answer that Jesus and Paul in speaking or writing these passages were subject to the tradition of their times and assumed in these things what was common among their Jewish contemporaries. Some point as an explanation even to the state of *kenosis* in which Jesus lived when He spoke John 10:35. I must confess this assumption makes me all the more careful. Where does Scripture speak of such a *kenosis* that made Jesus subject to the errors of this time concerning the nature of Scripture?" Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 422-423. He remarks in his *Homiletics* as well: "Again, within the canonical books themselves, we must distinguish between those portions which are and those which are not adapted to serve as source of materials for the sermon. Not, indeed, that we distinguish between what is and what is not inspired, for no such distinction exists even on the theory of grades of inspiration, as worked out, e.g., by Philippi in his 'Glaubenslehre.'" Reu, *Homiletics*, 254.

39. That this was Reu's understanding of Luther's own position is evident from *Luther's German Bible* (1934), where Reu writes: "Of one thing, however, he [Luther] was certain even then, that Scripture was the Word of God and the only final authority. . . . he identified Holy Scripture with the Word of God. Thus it was credited with sole authority in matters of faith. . . . Its authority he saw established in its freedom from error." Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, 103, 123. Two other telling sentences from this book demonstrate that, for Reu, Luther's understanding of the Bible as word of God is derived not from its evangelical content, but rather from its divine origin: ". . . for in his eyes the Bible was the inspired Word of God and behind each statement was the majesty of God whose avenging zeal and whose inviting grace alike dare not be diminished. . . . He bowed in awe before the majesty of God that was behind the word of Scripture." *Ibid.*, 257, 261. Reu himself notes: "The question about the truth of the Bible is not identical with the question about its divine origin, but by proving the first we immediately prove the second; our subjective certainty about the divine origin of Scripture is based upon and given with our subjective certainty about the truth of the Bible. One follows the other of inner necessity." Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become

Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (August 1939), 477.

40. Reu, in "Transcript of Meeting of the Commissioners, March 11, 1938," p. 30. F. H. Knubel, president of the United Lutheran Church, had previously remarked that in his opinion the phrase "without contradiction and error" "has no direct Scriptural support" and "appears nowhere in any Scriptural text in any language." *Ibid.* In a later comment at this same meeting Reu continues to clarify his own thinking on the fact of inerrancy: "I want to emphasize one point. For me it is not a logical deduction that brings me to the statement that the Scriptures originally were errorless. To me it is only those passages in Scripture. Together with you I hold fast to this statement, the Bible as a whole is the Word of God. Then also those passages of which I think that they prove that the inspiration is the Word of God, and only that is for me the reason why I think that beside that Christological view we should not forget the other one. No logical deduction. If I would not find it expressed in Scripture itself, the logical deduction would not bother me. Who gives me the right to say God must have acted so and so. I have no right to prescribe His ways of action. That is entirely up to Him and since He has in the Word of God stated also what is expressed in those Scripture passages, I think we should not ignore that." *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32. As early as 1924 Reu wrote that he accepted both the terminology by which the dogmatians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries expressed the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures: "In dealing with the divine factor in the origin of the Scripture (we do not deny the human, rather we claim it, but are not speaking of it now), we take the threefold together (*impulsus ad scribendum, suggestio rerum, suggestio verbi*), not because the old dogmatians did that, but because it is for us a useful summarization of that which according to our conviction the Scripture itself expresses concerning its origin and its essence." Reu, "Zum Unterschied," 217. And in 1939 Reu explained further: "We do not want to emphasize at present the fact that without verbal inspiration we lack every guarantee that the divine contents is [*sic*] expressed in Scripture correctly and without abbreviations; we rather stress the fact that Scripture itself demands it. It is demanded by the form of the quotations: 'The Holy Spirit speaks,' 'God says';

furthermore, it follows from the fact that Jesus as well as Paul drew important conclusions from the wording of Old Testament passages, a few times even from a single word. . . ." Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 420-421. Reu goes on to remark in this latter document: "Faith does not close its eyes to what has been called the 'Knechtsgestalt' (*morphee doulou*) of Scripture; it recognizes what is human in Scripture not less than its critics; but at the same time faith keeps an open eye for its glory and, therefore, holds fast to Scripture as the word of God. It is the art of faith to see both and to ascend above both in order to find and hold their unity." *Ibid.*, 424.

41. "If we *love* God, we will *show* it by deeming it holy, that is, separating God's Word from all the words of man and recognizing in it the voice of God, which alone can save and help us. . . . We deem the name of God exalted and holy when we . . . teach the Word of God in its truth and purity, that is, do not mix it with error and sin as the heretics and profane persons do, but teach it just as it reads. Only by the *pure* teaching of the divine Word do we rightly know God." J. M. Reu, *Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, Together with Three Supplements*, trans. C. G. Prottengeier (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1904), 39, 103.
42. It is interesting to note in the transcript of the last meetings of the American Lutheran Church Section and also of the full Commission on Fellowship of the two bodies held in Pittsburgh in 1939 that both Reu and President Knubel of the ULCA are aware that the two sides actually do not agree on the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Reu comments in the minutes of the American Lutheran Church Section meeting that ". . . the United Lutheran Church commissioners could not accept 'without contradiction and error.' There is clearly a difference between us. They do not understand these two expressions as we do. . . . The United Lutheran Church 'of which Christ is the center,' does not mean the same as our statement. . . . As far as extent is concerned, we believe that all Scripture, also geographical, historical, etc. statements are inspired. This the United Lutheran Church men deny. . . . If the question were: 'Is the Bible as we have it today inspired?' I would say, 'No.' But the question is: 'Were the

original writings inspired?' We must say, 'Yes.' But the United Lutheran Church men are not ready to go that far." J. M. Reu, quoted in American Lutheran Church Section, Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, "Minutes, Meeting of the American Lutheran Church Section of the Commission on Fellowship with the United Lutheran Church in America, William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1939," pp. 2, 4, typewritten, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Illinois. Of the final statement adopted by the Joint Commission, Knubel observed: "I personally would be willing to introduce the word 'errorless,' although I know that we would not understand the word in the same way." The final statement as adopted by the entire Joint Commission on Fellowship (and later adopted by each church body in general convention in 1940 as the Pittsburgh Agreement) reads: "Nevertheless, by virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Spirit . . . by which He supplied to the Holy Writers content and fitting word . . . the separate books of the Bible are related to one another, and, taken together, constitute a complete, errorless, unbreakable whole of which Christ is the center. . . . They are rightly called the Word of God." See Reu, in "Minutes of the Joint Commission on Fellowship of the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, February 13, 1939," p. 4. As Nelson points out, Reu and others on the ALC side believed that the acceptance of this formulation meant that the United Lutheran Church had publicly confessed its adherence to the doctrine of verbal inspiration, even though this was, in fact, not the case. See Nelson, *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, 106; 115, n. 129. Reu himself says, "At Pittsburgh, Feb. 13, 1939, verbal inspiration was adopted." Reu, "Verbal Inspiration," p. 18. The accuracy of Nelson's assessment is nowhere made clearer than in a letter Reu received in 1943 from Abdel Ross Wentz, president of the seminary of the United Lutheran Church located at Gettysburg. Wentz writes in regard to Reu's understanding of the Pittsburgh Agreement:

I write to ask the source of your quotation at the top of page 760 [*Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 66 (December 1942)] as follows: "errorless Scripture." One might judge from the manner in which you make the quotation that

this phrase is to be found in the "third point of the Pittsburgh Agreement," to which you have made reference just before you make the quotation. But no such phrase occurs there in the third item of the Pittsburgh Articles of Agreement. There is indeed the mention of "separate books of the Bible" as being related to one another and taken together constituting a complete "errorless unbreakable whole." But nowhere do we find any phrase like "errorless Scripture."

You see, Dr. Reu, there are many of us who believe in the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God but who hold that the "inerrancy" of the Scripture is both un-Lutheran and contrary to the Bible itself. We certainly could not commit ourselves to any such thing as "errorless Scripture." This quotation implies some kind of verbal inspiration, and that is precisely what the third point of the Pittsburgh Articles of Agreement repudiate when they say that the unique operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers is named inspiration, and then add "We do not venture to define its mode or manner, but accept it as a fact."

I know that you would not purposely mislead your readers. And I have such confidence in your scholarship that I am sure you understand the seriousness of quotation marks. That is why I write to ask why you ascribe to the Pittsburgh Articles of Agreement such a thing as "errorless Scriptures"?

Abdel Ross Wentz, Gettysburg, to Dr. M. Reu, Dubuque, 11 January 1943, J. M. Reu Collection, Dubuque. Reu responded to Wentz's charge in the February 1943 issue of the theological journal, saying that he saw no "material difference" between describing the Scripture as an "errorless whole" and using the term "errorless Scripture" to describe the Bible. See J. M. Reu, "Note," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 67 (February 1943), 128. Neither organic union nor altar and pulpit fellowship between the two church bodies was established as a result of the adoption of the Pittsburgh Agreement.

43. J. M. Reu, "Professor Warfield," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 45 (March 1921), 172-173. Reu commends Warfield for his "determined conservative standpoint," as well as for his scholar-

ship and his staunch conviction. He believes Warfield was "the best judge of the new German systematic theology that America had" and laments, "Sein Tod ist ein Verlust für die ganze konservative protestantische Kirche unseres Landes." *Ibid.*, 173. Reu also quotes Warfield approvingly in "The Purpose of the Seminary," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 41 (December 1917), 601-604.

44. For example, Warfield describes Scripture as ". . . so pure a record of His will, God-given in all its parts, even though cast in the forms of human speech, infallible in all its statements, divine even to its smallest particle! . . . Revelation is but half revelation unless it be infallibly communicated; it is but half communicated unless it be infallibly recorded. . . . the Scriptures are the very Word of God, to be trusted as such in all the details of their teaching and promises." Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1967), 441-442, 123. Reu distances himself, however, from Warfield's use of the expression "through the prophets" in Hebrews 1:1 as proof of the divine inspiration of the whole Old Testament Scriptures. See Reu, "What Is Scripture and How Can We Become Certain of Its Divine Origin?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 63 (July 1939), 412.
45. Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, 171. Reu also equates "apostolic" with "inerrant" on page 175.
46. J. M. Reu, "Die lutherische Kirche in einer Krisis?" *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 53 (February 1929), 134-135. That this is no occasional or chance remark by Reu, but in fact a statement broadly representative of his position on biblical inerrancy, is shown by this comment he makes in a review of his instruction manual for adult catechumens: "The most that can be achieved by putting such a chapter [about the Bible] at the beginning is a superficial bending underneath the Scriptures. It is much more evangelical just to go right into the Scriptures themselves, so that the heart receives some sign of their strength and truth. Then after this it will be that much more willing to acknowledge them as the only standard and guiding principle for Christian faith and life (chapter 16)." J. M. Reu, review of *Lutheran Faith and Life: A Manual for the Instruction of Adults*, by M. Reu, in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 59 (July 1935), 430.
47. Preus writes: "I find Reu's position on inerrancy stated very

clearly in his little *Luther and the Scriptures*, and in conversation he confirmed his position very clearly. . . . I believe . . . that he agreed with Pieper on inerrancy." Herman A. Preus, St. Paul, to Paul I. Johnston, Champaign, 3 July 1988.

48. Reu, "Verbal Inspiration," pp. 12-13.
49. J. M. Reu, "General Discussion," in *The Second Lutheran World Convention: The Minutes, Addresses and Discussions of the Convention at Copenhagen, Denmark, June 26th to July 4th, 1929* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1930), 136-137. It is true that Reu calls the law-gospel distinction the "main content" of Scripture, but it is clear from the gist of his remarks that the authority of Scripture is to be understood as extending to every teaching, not just to those passages preaching the message of salvation.
50. J. M. Reu, *How to Teach in the Sunday School, A Teacher Training Course* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1939), 111.
51. Reu, "Aus der Arbeit der exegetischen Theologie," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 46 (June 1922), 321-335; 46 (July 1922), 399-404.
52. Reu, "Aus der Arbeit der exegetischen Theologie," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 46 (June 1922), 324. The respective positions of Delitzsch and Harnack on the authenticity of the Old Testament are discussed briefly in Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, third ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 160.
53. Reu, "Aus der Arbeit der exegetischen Theologie," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 46 (June 1922), 325.
54. *Ibid.*, 328.
55. *Ibid.*, 329.
56. *Ibid.*, 334. On Sellin's works during this period and shortly afterwards, see Delbert R. Hillers, "An Historical Survey of Old Testament Theology Since 1922," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 29 (August 1958), 582-585. Hillers remarks that "Sellin's work reveals a thoroughly critical, historical method. . . . along the lines of Wellhausen and his school." *Ibid.*, 583-

584.

57. Reu, "Aus der Arbeit der exegetischen Theologie," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 46 (June 1922), 335.
58. Reu, *How to Teach in the Sunday School*, 120. In his adult instructional manual Reu refers to the Old Testament as "a trustworthy record of His revelation and an unerring guide for [Israel's] faith and life." See J. M. Reu, *Lutheran Faith and Life: A Manual for the Instruction of Adults* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), 31.
59. Reu, "Verbal Inspiration," p. 4.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
61. *Ibid.* Indeed, Reu maintains that 2 Timothy 3:16 "does not speak of the writers, but of that what these writers wrote and says it was Spirit wrought, brought forth by the Holy Ghost. If the Scripture was brought forth by the Holy Ghost as a whole, then certainly also her [*sic*] individual parts [are inspired], not only the thoughts found therein, but also the expression of these thoughts by means of the words." In commenting on how Christ and St. Paul used single words of the Old Testament Scripture to draw "far reaching conclusions from single statements," Reu asks: ". . . how could they do that if these words were human words and not written under the cooperation of the Holy Ghost [?]" *Ibid.*, p. 6.