

The Second-Generation Soteriology of the *Unitas Fratrum*

A Study in Luke's *Directives To Priests*, 1527

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Luther's position toward the *Unitas fratrum* in the 1520's is an unusual phenomenon in ecumenical history. In an age marked by acute theological controversies and hostility between disagreeing factions of Christendom, Luther, although at odds with the Bohemian Brethren over several crucial issues, publicly declared that they were closer to the Gospel than any others he had known¹ and maintained irenic relations with them.² His attitude toward the Brethren shows an openness, a willingness to suspend judgment and a humility which are striking.³ This is especially evident in his *Vom Anbeten*,⁴ in which he explained his position *vis-a-vis* the Brethren, exhorting them not to lay too much store by works. Yet, although the 1523 *Brethren's Reply*⁵ was equally friendly in tone, the *Unitas* considered Luther's theological orientation extremely dangerous and misleading. His preoccupation with the saving significance of the eucharist and his, as seemed to them, insensitivity to the problem of idolatry involved in the "adoration of the sacrament" were to them puzzling and irresponsible. But what appeared especially perilous to them was the claim of the all-sufficiency of "faith" for salvation, as it was a point affecting the hope or assurance of *salvation*, an issue over which not only Luther but earlier the Brethren had

¹ WA 11, p. 456, 7-8.

² See Jos. Čihula, "Poměr Jednoty Bratřík Martinu Lutherovi", *Böhmische Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Prague, 1897, p. 1 ff. for a detailed account of the various transactions between Luther and the *Unitas*. F. M. Bartoš, "Das Auftreten Luthers und die Unität der Böhmischn Brüder" ARG 31, 1934, p. 103 ff.; Erhard Peschke, *Die Theologie der Böhmischn Brüder in ihrer Frühzeit I*, Stuttgart 1935; Amedeo Molnár, *Boleslavští Bratři*. Prague 1952, p. 93 ff.; S. H. Thomson, *Luther and Bohemia*, ARG 1953, p. 160-181; Amedeo Molnár, *Českokobratrská výchova před Komenským*. Prague 1956, p. 69-74; F. M. Bartoš, *Jednota a reformátoři*, in: *Jednota bratřská*. Prague 1957, p. 109-146; Amedeo Molnár, *Evolution de la théologie hussite*, in: RHPR 1963, Strasbourg.

³ See especially WA 11, pp. 452, 7-18 and 456, 4-25.

⁴ Op. cit., esp. p. 452, 10-11: "yhr auch sollt recht haben . . . widerumb frisch anzuzeygen, worrynnen euch deucht, das wyr feylen . . ."

⁵ Odpověď Bratřie na spis Martina Lutera - see op. cit. p. 421 f. and also Čihula, op. cit. p. 21 ff.

broken away from Rome.⁶ The Brethren express in their *Reply* fear of the "Lutheran (concept of) faith and righteousness lest it be a deceptive opinion. We would not know this way *when* (*italics* throughout the article are ours) we acquire justification; from this comes uncertainty, yes, doubts and despair over our salvation".⁷

The *Reply*, evidently written by *Unitas'* chief theologian, Bishop Luke,⁸ shows that the Brethren were really not *sure* of Luther's position on faith and works and were afraid of it.⁹ Some of their statements in the writing could have been easily subscribed to by Luther while others would have been too ambiguous for him. Brother Luke's language was extremely involved and scholastic. Luther was never quite sure how much of his disagreement with the Brethren wasn't simply a matter of language. Even the Brethren themselves had trouble understanding Luke's style of writing sometimes and complained about its obscurity. The difficulty involved in disentangling Luke's style becomes especially acute in the process of translation. At this point the translator is confronted with a formidable problem of exegesis. It is especially Luke's syntax which poses the problem.¹⁰ The following excerpts

⁶ See, e. g., the 1468 apologetic "Letter to All In General", *Jar. Bidlo*, (ed.), *Akty Jednoty bratrské I*, Brno, 1915, pp. 262-3, where the founding Brethren name the "exigency of salvation" as the reason which drove them to their schism. Also, "... we desired to be established in the certainty of hope . . . and understood that under the pastoral care of the priests (available in Roman parish life) . . . we could in no wise become established in this". "The Brethren in Anxiety", 1468, *Akty I*, pp. 606-7. Cf. *I. Pal'mov*, *Cheshskiye Brat'ya v svoikh konfessiyakh*, vol. I, Prague, 1904, p. 95, et al. and *Akty I*, pp. 1-3 and 202 and 220.

⁷ Cit. in *Čibula*, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

⁸ *Luke, or Lukáš, of Prague*, b. ca 1458 and d. 1528, *Unitas'* greatest theologian and her unquestioned leader after the "old regime" of the first-generation Brethren was definitively defeated. Luke was of Utraquist background and studied at the University in Prague, which is reflected in his scholastic manner of thinking and speaking. He was among the new "learned men" who had entered the *Unitas* after its earliest years seeking salvation in it. His numerous works are all in Czech and none have yet been re-printed today. For a systematic analysis of this "theologian of the *Unitas*", see *Amedeo Molnár*, *Bratr Lukáš*, Prague, 1948. Cf., *Jednota bratrská 1457-1957*, (Festschrift) *Řičan* et al., Prague, 1956, *J. T. Mueller*, *Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder I*, Herrnhut, 1922 and *Amedeo Molnár*, *Luc de Prague*, a 1948 dissertation submitted to the Evang. Faculty of Strasbourg.

⁹ The Brethren objected to Luther's basing all of one's salvation on faith understood as *fiducia* only. Luther praised them for distinguishing "gleuben ynn gott" from "gleuben von gott", the mere belief that something is true. But since the former, as der "lebendige glawbe" involved works, he insisted that the saving faith is "nicht anders, denn eyn trostlich lebendig . . . verlassen auff Christus gegeben verdienst, das der mensch on alle seyne werck, sich von hertzen grundt drauff verlest . . ." WA 11, p. 453. Cf. the following definition of "faith in God", as distinguished from "faith about God", "which is given in the Appendix of the Brethren's *Directives To Priests*, (*Zprávy kněžské*) of 1527, folio 165 b: "To believe in God is to know him in the heart (*srdečně*), to be united with his will, to love him above all, to honor him, to serve him, to worship him, to hope (in him)". "To believe in the Son of God is to know him, to have a part in him, to love him, to be joined to him and really keep his words".

¹⁰ We shall try to reproduce Luke's manner of thought by remaining fairly close to his style of writing even in paraphrase.

from the *Reply*, greatly simplified by the process of translation, illustrate Luke's manner of thinking:

"To believe in God . . . is to attain through the Holy Spirit, by the gift of faith from the grace in Christ, a revivification and correction of spirit and the spirit's powers. This affects especially the will. Through it a man possesses love, readiness and willingness which make him, by God's power, sincerely believe . . . and faithfully desire to do and to follow everything commanded by the faith . . ." ¹¹ He who possesses this . . . has the *righteousness . . . of faith*, and if he remains in it he will attain joy in eternal glory. And this is the sum of all faith and of true Christianity. " . . . man is acknowledged righteous in Christ through his faith, so that he relies with hope and faith on this grace, without any of his works." Nevertheless, ". . . we do not separate the works from faith. And just as prior to the attaining of the righteousness of faith no works create the righteousness of God, so once the righteousness of faith is attained it does not subsist without works." ¹²

Faith and works in their relationship to salvation as explained here do not seem opposed to Luther's understanding. Why then did the *Unitas* under Bishop Luke feel Luther's position was so questionable? ¹³ Was their disagreement simply a matter of semantics, or was there a significant difference in their soteriologies?

As the quest of the assurance of salvation in the life of the church was the very *raison d'être* of the *Unitas*, the entire structure of *Unitas'* life was an expression of its soteriology and soteriological concern. The most monumental expression of this is Bishop Luke's major and last work, the *Directives to Priests (Zprávy kněžské)*, ¹⁴ the most exhaustive and systematic exposition of the Brethren's theology. It is a writing explaining the work of the ministry and its theological basis. It is here that we propose to search for a more adequate understanding of the Brethren's soteriology and so come to

¹¹ Cf. the earlier statements to this effect cited in *M. S. Fousek*, "The Perfectionism of the Early Unitas fratrum", *Church History* XXX, No. 4, 1961. pp. 405 and 407.

¹² Cited in Čihula, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.

¹³ After Luke's death the *Unitas* opened its doors wide to Lutheran influences and immediately experienced a serious spiritual crisis, due to a misunderstanding of the "*sine, absque and ante operibus*" principle and a consequent relaxation of the spiritual demands made upon the Brethren in the chaos-swept *Unitas*. Only the official rehabilitation of the indigenous heritage, and specifically of Bp. Luke's *Directives*, in 1546 (see *Dekrety Jednoty bratrské*, ed *A. Gindely*, Prague, 1865, p. 164) restored spiritual order and balance in the Brethren's pastoral practice again.

¹⁴ This work of Luke's, much as it is marked by his own characteristics of thinking and speaking, was not a private enterprise of his own. It was an official document of the *Unitas*, commissioned and issued by her governing Council. Although commissioned already in 1518, it was completed and printed only in 1527. The only extant copy is kept in the University Library of Brno in Czechoslovakia (F IV 25). A critical edition of it is awaited soon. Its editor has been most gracious in letting the author of the present study use the results of his critical labors in establishing and making available the text. No extensive analysis of the *Directives* in any of its aspects or as a whole has yet been written. For a brief report on it and evaluation see *Fr. Dobiáš*, "Vznik a osudy Zpráv kněžských", *Křestanská Revue*, Prague, 1953-4, pp. 12-17: 84-90. The *Directives To Priests* is, as Dobiáš points out, the first attempt at erecting a systematic practical theology throughout on dogmatic foundation (*op. cit.*, p. 87).

understand Luke's caution and reserve *vis-a-vis* the Wittenberg movement. It is our thesis that although the Brethren and Luther sought the assurance of salvation quite differently, they were both talking about grace and only grace as its basis. In this sense they were a „Reformation Church“ before the Reformation. However, their differences were not entirely only a matter of language. A different approach and a different situation were involved, and this is what our study will attempt to portray. The relationship between the Brethren's soteriology and Luther's becomes significantly clarified already in a preliminary study of their concept of “righteousness”.

Salvation and Righteousness

Salvation, justification and righteousness, or justice, are almost synonyms for Luther. He is faithful in this to the Bible, where the words speak of a relationship, an act and a status rather than of the abstract principle of equity or an accumulation of virtues, and all belong to the vocabulary of deliverance. *The same holds true for the Bohemian Brethren.* To them, too, the question of salvation turns around the question of righteousness (*spravedlnost*) and is basically a question of a relationship. This is so even though they do not understand justification (*ospravedlnění* or, rather, *ospravedlňování*) as a verdict of acquittal, as Luther does, but as an inner process, a gradual acquiring of “righteousness” understood as the right relationship to God and his gift.

The knowledge of the “required righteousness” (*povinná a dlužná spravedlnost*), the righteousness required by God, is the first part of the faith and the basis of all the rest,¹⁵ according to the scheme of Luke's soteriology. This righteousness, just as justification for Luther, is the sum total of the Gospel. “And so briefly, the preaching of the Gospel . . . comprehends the required righteousness redeemed by the Lord Christ and . . . given by grace and actually observed in Christ and the Church. And about this are the Scriptures of the whole Bible”.¹⁶ The “righteousness” itself is described by Luke as a knowledge of God from the heart, a cleaving to him, loving him above all things, keeping his commandments and hoping and doing everything in his name.¹⁷ It is a word encompassing the right relationship to God in all its aspects. Strangely enough, it is rather close to Luther's understanding of faith and almost parallel to Luke's definition of “faith in God” which we have given above.¹⁸ Because of its being *the* word for the saving relationship to God for the *Directives*, a study of its scheme of salvation turns out to be a study of the nature, the loss and the acquisition of righteousness. What needs to be remembered throughout is its above definition. “Righteousness” to Luke is not some static state or quality of the soul.

¹⁵ *Zprávy kněžské (Directives to Priests)*, folio 5 b/6 a.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 8 b.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 a.

¹⁸ See latter portion of n. 9.

I. THE SCHEME OF SALVATION

The entire Christian faith is divided by Luke into five different parts. The first explains the nature of the required righteousness, described by us above. Its knowledge is basic to the entire "catholic Christian faith", the *Directives* explain, because it helps men to an understanding of their great need of the grace of God the Father, of the merit of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the Church and of the righteousness of [or rather from (z)] faith.¹⁹ The knowledge has partially the same function as the "Law" for Luther, and comes from the Law, whether the natural or written law, or the "law of grace".²⁰ It is the same righteousness in all the dispensations. The "law of grace" shows it only more abundantly and perfectly in its "righteousness of faith".²¹

The Impasse of Fallen Man

The second part of the Christian faith according to Luke's division shows the utter hopelessness of fallen man. Man, as Luke explains, was made in the right relationship with God, "the required righteousness", and lost it with the fall. With the latter he became subject to the "law of sin" and received its fruit: blindness, powerlessness (with regard to the required righteousness) and all the rest. This shows that the knowledge of the required righteousness in itself, without Christ and the Holy Spirit, cannot help in the least, for, after all, the first man knew what the required righteousness was. Knowledge by itself makes things only worse, by creating a bad conscience.²² The *Directives* refer to the impasse described in Romans 7: the law cannot put anything right; it even multiplies sin.²³ Yet the knowledge of the required righteousness, as we have seen, does have a positive function: it points to Christ. As it is the right relationship to God, and Christ made satisfaction for our loss of it and restored it to us, man cannot attain a good conscience without the required righteousness, and it is impossible to have a valid hope in Christ without having a part in it.²⁴ He "earned" and prepared it for us, and we receive a part in it by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ It was Christ who had to do this if we were to be saved, for Adam's fall was of such consequence that man could not make up for sin, nor merit grace and truth. All our righteousness is, as Isaiah says (64, 6) only like the rags of a woman in her impurity.²⁶

¹⁹ *Zprávy*, 5 b/6 a.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 b. The "law of grace" seems to be synonymous with the "new law", the law of the Spirit in the heart, as contrasted with the "Written Law", the law engraved upon tables of stone. See *infra* p. 7 f. The *Directives* juxtaposes also the "new law" with the "old law". 7 a. The term "law could" perhaps also be translated as "dispensation" in this context. — In Czech usage, the Old and New Testaments are called the Old and New Law, *Starý a Nový Zákon*.

²¹ *Zprávy*, 7 a. For the "righteousness of faith" see *infra* p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 6 a.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13 b/14 a.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 b.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61 a.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 a.

“The Redemption of Righteousness”

The third part of the faith is both the promise of redemption and salvation and its fulfillment, through the pure grace of God the Father, namely the giving of his only Son to be a sufficient mediator of the required righteousness.²⁷ He, Luke explains, was the mediator of the required righteousness by all he did and was “in the state of innocence and in the state of fallenness”. In the former because he was holy and righteous, and in the state of mortality (i. e., in the state of fallenness) because he accepted what is ours in human nature. He fulfilled in everything the required righteousness, went to preach it, and with it the “faith of the Gospel” and repentance and the “covenant of the faith of the new testimony”. When he finished the message, or embassy (*poselství*) of righteousness he shed his blood in order to “redeem the righteousness” from the devil’s power and seduction, save us from sins and damnation, make satisfaction to God’s righteousness for the loss of innocence, holiness and truth on our part, merit these for us, as well as the worthiness to be forgiven and released, and offer the righteousness to us in the food of his body and the drink of his blood, in all sufficiency for eternal life.²⁸

The Gift of Participation

The fourth part of the faith is the “new law” and the “covenant” and sanctification of the “law of the new testimony”, by which Christ gives us a part in the grace and reality (literally, truth, *pravda*) of righteousness. For, prior to his return to the Father after his resurrection, he ordained (*zřídil*) servants (ministers), entrusting to them his mission (or embassy, *poselství*) and testimony in all the work of the ministry (*služebností*). He went to heaven, to send the “promise of the Father”,²⁹ “the Spirit of truth”, with power and gifts for the ministry and for “participation”, and so to “issue in Zion the law of grace, of the covenant and sanctification and of the new testimony”, to which *Mark 16, 16 and John 3, 16 refer*.³⁰ This law of grace and of the covenant is what teachers (priests) must teach, the law through which God issued the promise and testimony to be *merciful* and to make righteous and to save, and to which all the following biblical references bear witness, according to Luke’s scheme: Jeremiah 31, 31–34; Romans 10, 10, 5, 1 and 3, 25–27; Galatians 2, 20 and 2, 16, as well as other Scriptures, showing “the right mid-point (*prostředek*) between (our) participation and Christ’s merit”,³¹ thus guarding us, in Luke’s view, against an unbalanced stress on Christ’s vicarious work.

The Resulting New Life

The fifth and last part of the faith, the consequence of parts three and four, is our actual fulfilling of the “law of faith” and of the “covenant” and “sanctification” in self-abnegation and commitment (*přivíkaní*), for we are

²⁷ Loc. cit.

²⁹ Loc. ci.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8 a–b.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 b.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

not to be "empty" in the grace and truth received, but, on the contrary, in gratitude work with it. Fulness of faith involves a (gradual) acquiring³² of the garment of righteousness by the power of God, "to the certainty of our calling and election".³³ It means a life of faith and truth and love, and so also of hope, in the keeping of the covenant for the eternal life in Christ. And in this, according to Luke, consists the actually carried out "righteousness of faith". It is a righteousness evoked and produced by faith, by the working of the Holy Spirit. It is maintained by much and constant help and a gradual justification, i. e., by a gradual process of being made just, or righteous,³⁴ more than by perfection and virtue. "Justification by faith" in the Brethren's use of the term involves a continuous "correcting" of the spirit by the Spirit. The process is so slow and partial, the *Directives* explains, that exaltation might be seen as coming not from man but from God's grace in Christ Jesus. Everyone can see this way that he is saved "first of all" (*prvotně*) by grace in Christ, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and will more likely do everything to attain the "certainty" (*jistota*) of that grace and carry out the obligation it implies to both God and men.³⁵

II. THE LAW OF SIN AND THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

The foregoing scheme makes clear that the Brethren would have been fully on Luther's side in his dispute with Erasmus over the ability of man to comply with the demands and admonitions of the New Testament. Perhaps Luther sensed the difference between the Brethren's emphasis on "works" and Erasmus' humanistic optimism about man. His diatribe against Erasmus, *De servo arbitrio*, almost contemporary with his *Vom Anbeten*, is certainly written in quite a different spirit.

The *Directives* warns the priest not to confuse what Scripture says to the "corrected spirit" with what it says to the "flesh" or to the spirit void of Life.³⁶ What the Scriptures say about the duties of virtues, Luke explains, applies only to the spirit whose will has been corrected; it applies to the flesh only secondarily, insofar as the regenerated spirit can have power over it. This power is limited because of the "law of sin" to which even the faithful are partially subject. And it is completely misleading and vain to demand the Christian life of those who do not have a part in Christ and his gifts,

³² Nabývání. The gerund here is formed from the imperfective aspect of the verb, which in a Slavic language connotes a prolonged, gradual or repeated action, somewhat like the Greek imperfect or present.

³³ Zprávy, 8 b.

³⁴ Ospravedlňování. The aspect is again imperfective. The Brethren had always understood justification not as being pronounced just by God, but as being actually made just (righteous) by him, that is, receiving a different subjective relationship to God and to one's neighbor. The Brethren's doctrine of grace was that of Augustine, who understood by grace, preëminently, the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit by which men received both the will and ability to do God's will. Cf., M. S. Fousek, "The Perfectionism of the Early *Unitas fratrum*", p. 400 f.

³⁵ Zprávy, 8 b.

³⁶ Loc. cit.

and are thus "dead". Only the spirit which has been made *alive* (by God's Spirit) is meant to will and exert itself, aware that it must complete (*dokónati*) the work by humble faith, seeking grace in Christ.³⁷

Life within the spirit is defined by the *Directives* as a revivification and correction of the powers of the soul by the Holy Spirit, through an infusion (in-pouring, *vlití*) of (new) laws, by the grace of God in Christ. This gives rise to (new) understanding and love, and to a will which is set (*ustavená*) to exert itself in the "covenant of the law",³⁸ that is, in the new law of the Spirit.

The *death of the soul*, on the other hand, is present where a spirit has not been corrected and is thus dead in its powers, living only according to (its corrupted) nature and its inclinations or according to the senses and human ordinances. This has as its result death, blindness and the perversion and insubordination of the will.³⁹ The "*free will*" which has not been corrected by the grace of God or which has departed from that grace wills evil; the free will which has been corrected by grace wills what is good.⁴⁰

Mortal Sin

Luke's definition of the "death of the soul" seems to be identical with his definition of "mortal sin", a category which the Brethren retained as separate from that of "ordinary", or "venial sins." Mortal sin is a will not corrected in Christ by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and hence turned aside from righteousness . . . , or a conscious and voluntary deed or desire born of this uncorrected will.⁴¹

"Apart from the grace in Christ and the gift of living faith . . . , every infringement (*zrušení*) of righteousness, whether conscious or unconscious, whether belonging to one's nature or effected by an actual deed, whether voluntary or involuntary, is mortal, or deadly, that is, causes the death of the soul. By Christ's merit, however, it is made forgiveable (venial) Where the *faithful* are concerned, God accepts the will he has corrected in Christ as if it had been actually carried out by a deed when they are incapable of the deed itself because of the law of sin. And here the grace is greater than under the Old Law . . . , for where a good will does not suffice (to carry out its intention) God makes up for it (*doplnuje*) in Christ."⁴²

Although the Brethren retained the traditional list of the seven mortal sins, pride, envy, anger, sloth, misery, gluttony and lust,⁴³ they transformed the meaning of the general category. The *Directives* point out to confessors (the greater part of the *Directives* is addressed to priests in their role as either preachers-teachers or confessors) that, just as apart from Christ every sin is mortal, for the faithful, none of the seven sins named above is necessarily mortal, as God's commandments are sometimes transgressed without knowledge or without the acquiescence of the will, but only involuntarily, by an impulse.⁴⁴ "And because of this, even the strictest commandment can in Christ be transgressed without mortal sin, as it is acquiescence (permission,

³⁷ Loc. cit.

³⁹ Loc. cit.

⁴¹ Ibid., 39 b; cf. 55 a.

⁴³ Ibid., 39 b.

³⁸ Ibid., 55 b.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 55 a.

⁴² Loc. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 52 a.

povolení) which first of all (*prvotně*) makes for a sin. Therefore, pride and other sins are not always mortal but sometimes (only) *ordinary* (*všední*) sins.⁴⁵ Pride is always a mortal sin when it has been consciously acquiesced in (*rozmysl a povolení*). Such conscious assent is always understood when something is termed a "mortal sin".⁴⁶

"When disobedience comes from infirmity it is a different matter".⁴⁷ "Envy sometimes comes from a natural impulse . . . which is not within our power (to control). The same is to be understood about all impulses which we have from the corruption of our natural inclinations, which is the penalty of the greatest (original) sin, as long as the impulse is not coupled by consent".⁴⁸ Even when envy, e. g., is entertained consciously, but not thought through completely (*skerze rozmysl nějaký, ale ne celý dokonalý*) but, on the contrary, begun to be disliked within, it is not a mortal sin for the faithful in Christ.⁴⁹ Moreover, for the faithful, even consent to something which is only an ordinary sin does not make it mortal. "So spiritual sloth which arises from discouragement over some difficult spiritual labor is only natural, for our nature flees work, and this in itself is not sin".⁵⁰

Luke's understanding of "mortal sin" is extremely close to the Reformation view of sin as a rupture of the relationship between man and God, or its expression. Viewed as such, sin could no longer be distinguished as being either mortal or ordinary by the Reformation. Luke's retaining this twofold category was due to his extremely strong sense of what it means to be "in Christ". This relationship was the primary and continuous given for the faithful, as far as he was concerned. Evil pulls and actions, which the Brethren did take very seriously, could not break the tie by themselves. Thus the category of an "ordinary sin" becomes a possibility – a transgression which does not break the bond between Christ and those who belong to him. The Brethren's highly psychological and analytical "science of sin" reflects their rich pastoral experience and understanding, as well as the thousand years' cultivation of Western self-consciousness and introspection in the piety of monasticism. Yet coupled with this is their strong sense of the givenness of salvation "in Christ" which shows them remarkably close to the mentality of the New Testament – its soteriology and ecclesiology.⁵¹

Sin's Origin

"The origin of all sins is the greatest sin . . . and the law of sin, which darken the mind . . . and twist the will".⁵² The "*greatest sin*" is the loss of grace and righteousness by conception and birth, the acquiring of God's wrath and the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 42 b.

⁴⁶ Loc. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 43 b.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 46 b.

⁴⁹ Loc. cit.; cf, 37 b–38 a: "such a man has sufficient redemption and forgiveness by the passion of Christ and the spirit of living faith".

⁵⁰ Ibid., 48 a.

⁵¹ Cf. *Krister Stendahl*, "Justification and Last Judgement", *Lutheran World* VIII, No. 1/2, 1961, pp. 6–7.

⁵² *Zprávy*, 36 a. *The Directives* do not speak of "original sin". "Greatest sin" is used instead. Its "law" corresponds to "concupiscentia".

inability to escape from it as far as human abilities are concerned. The "law" of this sin (Rom. 7, 23 ff.), also variously called "inability" (to do good), inclination to evil, or corruption, a "turning away" and "natural sin", is a passionate and impulsive (*náruživá a klopotná*) drive (power, *moc*) which disrupts the right and given order in inclinations or desires, bringing thereby blindness, and weakness or lack of power, (*nemoc*) and every error and sin; "desires take precedence over the judgment of reason and the command of the will and the reminder of the memory".⁵³ Yet in Christ everything which originates simply from the law of sin can be only an ordinary sin, i. e., it does not mean spiritual death for him; but for the man who is not in Christ it can mean death.⁵⁴

"Natural sin", explains Luke, is both a sin and a penalty received at birth (hence the name "natural", i. e., birth sin, for in Czech the words birth and nature come from the same root, as in Latin) on account of the penalty of the parents.⁵⁵ As a sin it is taken away by God's grace, Christ's merit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As a penalty it remains temporarily until the "death of the law of sin", when the inclination to evil is removed in Christ by grace by "the law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8, 2 ff.⁵⁶ However, Luke is not as radical as this sounds. The "law of sin" continues to exist in the lives of the faithful. Yet, although *all* are aroused by the law of sin to evil, those who are "good" (i. e., those in Christ) differ from the "wicked": they have a greater resistance to the pull of evil and a more sensitive conscience. They fight the evil, flee it and resist it when they see that it goes against God, or at least mourn and plead for deliverance and are delivered by God's grace.⁵⁷

The needed correction of spirit is impossible without the forgiveness of the "greatest sin" and the restoration of grace and righteousness by God. As we have seen, man can in no wise merit grace or prepare himself for it. He can only come to see his total spiritual destitution without it. As the *Directives* flatly states, apart from the correction and the righteousness given by God in Christ man can will only evil. *Good deeds (works) and avoidance of evil by themselves are of no significance for salvation.* The natural powers and their goodness cannot save man. Yet, just as the natural powers are of no avail without the renewing gift of grace, so grace does not work apart from the natural powers, but rather renews these.⁵⁸ Hence salvation means, among other, the restoration of creation, and not its violation or superceding.

⁵³ Ibid., 36 b; cf. 37 b.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38 a.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36 b. Here Luke seems to stand in the tradition of Anselm and Occam, who understand original sin primarily as the loss of original righteousness, resulting in concupiscence as God's punishment of man. See Heiko A. Obermann, *Harvest of Medieval Theology*, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, p. 122 ff.

⁵⁶ *Zprávy*, 38 a.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 37 b.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 55 a.

III. THE GOD-ORDAINED MEANS OF SALVATION

We have now surveyed *Unitas'* understanding of sin, with its deadly consequences and powers, the absolute powerlessness of man to extricate himself from his predicament and dependence upon the saving actions of God in the incarnation of Christ and his gaining the Spirit for us. We are therefore ready to pose the question which the Brethren had answered not only by erecting their schismatic community in the first place,⁵⁹ but also by maintaining its independence *vis-a-vis* the rising Reformation churches in the sixteenth century. The question is: how is the salvation, or righteousness, made possible and available in Christ, *actually* given and acquired, secured and ascertained as present? God wishes this to happen through the ministrations of his Church, which he himself ordained, is the answer of the *Directives* and of all of the Brethren. These, in their opinion, have been carried out irresponsibly or neglected completely in the life of the "Roman Church".⁶⁰ It is for this reason that dogmatic and pastoral, or "practical", theology interpenetrate in *Unitas'* textbook for priests. God,

"Having effected salvation in Christ ordained (*zřídil*) it as to its source (*puvod*), substance and administraton (ministry – *službě*). He gives men part in it in an orderly (*zřízeníě*) way; first of all through the essential (literally, substantial, *podstatné*) gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . then, having ordained ministers and ministrations (*služebnosti*), he administers (*přislubuje*) the salvation according to the order (*řád*) found in the Word of faith, in order that salvation might become known, (gradually) acquired (*nabýváno*) and partaken of in an ordained (*zřízeníě*) way, according to order (*po pořádku*). For, what things are of God are orderly (or ordained, *zřízené*), and "all have believed who have been foreordained". "And he who attains this (salvation) in the *Unitas* according to the instituted (or ordained, *zřízené*) authority, (or power, *moci*), and truth (or reality – *pravda*)⁶¹ and participates in it in the ordained manner is called by us a person saved in the ordained (*zřízeníě*) manner."⁶²

A historian or theologian attempting to describe in English the concepts involved here encounters considerable difficulties. The Brethren use here a family of words which does not seem to have a parallel in English. The key concept is the word *zřízeně* (cf. the above expression "a person saved" *zřízeně*), from the root *řád*, or "order" in Czech. The Brethren do not use this root word and its near-synonym *pořádek* much, but rather its cognates: the adjectives *zřízený* (*masculine*) and *zřízené* (*neuter*) and the adverb *zřízeně*. The cognate verb *říditi* means to direct, *zaříditi*, to arrange, and *zříditi*, to institute, or ordain something (or somebody). This last term is not used by them chiefly for the sacramental ordination of clergy; it is, nevertheless, the word used for this rite. A favorite word-combination of the Brethren's is the expression *zřízené spasení*.⁶³ The word *spasení* means

⁵⁹ See n. 6 supra and M. S. Fousek, "The Pastoral Office in the Early *Unitas Fratrum*", *The Slavonic and East European Review* XL, No. 95, 1962, pp. 444-6.

⁶⁰ See n. 59.

⁶¹ A word used also as the equivalent of the Latin "res" in the language of sacramental theology.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 198 a.

⁶³ "(The)ordained (way and state of) salvation".

salvation. The work of salvation is never confined by the *Directives* to Christ's redemptive life and death. In harmony with this, Luke defines salvation in another writing as liberation: "Salvation means liberation, and is in Holy Scripture a common word, referring both to bodily and spiritual salvation".⁶⁴ As used in the *Directives*, it is evidently the total process of man's liberation from the consequences of original sin. The adjective *zřízené* in this connection describes the orderly process which God has ordained for the attaining and ascertaining of the state of salvation, as well as the state itself already here on earth when obtained in the ways prescribed by God. The concept involved here is extremely important for the Brethren's soteriology and ecclesiology, as well as pastoral theology and practice. Luke explains that the Brethren do not limit God's power to save to the means ordained by him for this purpose. God can save anyone whom he pleases, even if this person has not attained the ministrations ordained (*řádu služebnosti*). The *Directives* cites Isaiah 59:1 for support. Actually, one of the reasons given by Luke for speaking of the *ordained* way of salvation is that there is also a way of obtaining salvation which has not been chartered, being left to the free, almighty and gracious hand of God.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, God *has* ordained the way of salvation for man and it would be neither obedient nor safe to spurn or neglect it where it is known and available. Thus, the Christians who do not receive the ministry which awakens, maintains and guides the new life in Christ in them are in the same predicament as the Jews and heathen: they are outsiders to the salvation God has provided in his Church.⁶⁶

The Ordained Beginning of Salvation

For the Brethren, salvation as ordained by God is a process, although they of course do not use the term. There is a beginning, a progress and a completion, or perfection in it. There is a continuity and development in it, as well as a stated beginning, interruptions and set-backs. The beginning, in the Brethren's scheme, is twofold: one for young children and another for adults. In the Early Church, Luke points out, the beginning took place primarily with adults in their hearing the Gospel and receiving the "law of the covenant" (at baptism); however, the children of the faithful were also led to it. Hence the beginning among the faithful ought to take place with their young children brought to baptism, the children being brought up in the "covenant of (their) baptism" so that they might learn the faith and be brought into the truth.⁶⁷ The beginning stage lasts until the child's confirmation, when an account is rendered (for the child) by the responsible adults as well as by the child himself and the "ratification" (or confirmation, *potvrzení*) and renewal of the "covenant of participation in Christ" takes place.⁶⁸ With converts the beginning of the ordained way of salvation involves a sincere desire to learn the truth which leads to salvation and a submission to

⁶⁴ Cited in *Amedeo Molnár*, *Bratr Lukáš*, p. 62.

⁶⁵ *Zprávy*, 198 a.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 198 b.

⁶⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 199 a.

instruction and guidance on the part of the teacher-pastor-confessor.⁶⁹ In order to attain the beginning of the *zřízené spasení* the convert must undergo an inner renewal through faith and repentance – a turning away from his errors and evil ways. He must seek grace in Christ and a part in the righteousness of faith through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. When he has attained the “substance of participation in Christ” in the judgment of the confessor, he is absolved and receives “the covenant and sanctification and the testimony (God’s testimony) of baptism of his having obtained the righteousness of faith, to the enjoyment of a good conscience and of peace with God.”⁷⁰

Progress In the Ordained Way of Salvation

Progress (*prospěch*) in *zřízené spasení* with confirmed children means that they set their mind and will on the renewed covenant and genuinely exert gress for the baptized convert begins when he “sets his mind (on the covenant effort to use the given grace (*k požívání milosti*) and gain virtues. Pro-nant), receives ratification (confirmation) of it, conducts himself virtuously, and, being in the covenant, makes use of the ministry of preaching, pastoral direction (*zpráva*)⁷¹ and the sacraments, stands free from mortal sin, corrects his lacks with humility, and receives (gradual) justification to his peace.”⁷² If a person thus progressing in salvation falls into mortal sin or heresy, he is to be brought back to salvation (*zřízené spasení*) through repentance, in the renewing of the covenant made at baptism and confirmation; his repentance having been ascertained by his confessor, he is to be absolved and so brought again to the possession of a good conscience and hope. Then, back at the place from where he fell off, he can continue to progress.⁷³

All this presupposes genuineness and understanding on the part of people and priest, especially of the latter. What about the salvation of a penitent who lacks a true understanding of repentance, with his pastor not being aware of it? Although such a situation, the *Directives* explains, certainly cannot be considered a state of *zřízené spasení*, the greater part of those who have not been set straight by their priest (by the latter’s negligence) will be saved. Nevertheless, pastors are of course not to rely on God himself effec-

⁶⁹ Ibid., 16 a–17 b.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 199 a; 16 a–16 b. Cf. the directives how to examine converts 19 a–27 b.

⁷¹ “Zpráva” in the Czech of this period means direction, administration, directive, supervision and government in general. The Brethren used the word both as a general term for pastoral care and guidance of conscience, as well as for confession, as the confessor “governed” the conscience by his guidance and verdict. The word the Brethren used for their priests was “priests” (*kněží*) or “zprávce”, the latter being a general designation for any superior in the Czech language of the time. They lacked the word “pastor”; the expression “shepherd” (*pastýř*), although occasionally used by them, never became a technical designation for the pastor. Their equivalent of the English “pastor” was *zprávce*.

⁷² Ibid., 199 a. The word “justification” here is, as usual, in its imperfective aspect.

⁷³ Ibid., 199 b. Cf. 35 a–36 a for directives how to judge the cases and repentance of the fallen.

ting the salvation where they have fallen down on their job. Ministers are not to ask whether God accomplishes his work among the people but whether he is doing it *through their ministry*. "For God has ordained that his work be accomplished through ministerial means".⁷⁴ The shepherd is to examine his ministry and judge it by its fruits, the *Directives* points out. If a person is to be saved in the way ordained by God he must receive the ministration of God's Word in the public service and individually, with the Word geared to his personal needs in private pastoral care.⁷⁵ Everyone needs to renew his spirit in the acquired grace frequently by such means and recognize that the more he will work at it the better he will see the lacks which require correction on his part. This, the *Directives* claims, will – far from bringing discouragement, as the modern reader might think – bring the faithful more and greater spiritual security, they being more firmly established this way in hope (of eternal victory). For nothing discourages more from work than an evil conscience caused by the failure to attain the truth (about oneself), and nothing encourages better than the solidity of a good conscience.⁷⁶

Perfection In Salvation

As we have indicated, the Brethren spoke not only of those who were beginning and those who were progressing in the salvation offered by God in his Church but also of perfection, or completion (*dokonání*) in and of *zřízení spasení*, a perfection, moreover, which can be ascertained. This, likewise, Bishoup Luke explains, has its origin in God as its ultimate source and in the ministers and faithful souls as its instruments.⁷⁷ He sees many instances of the New Testament speaking of perfection. Sometimes it mentions perfection, he says, in connection with the following of Christ, sometimes it refers to perfection of understanding; at other times "perfection" refers to an ability or power above that of others, who then in contrast are called by Scripture "imperfect" or "small". The *Directives* cites the following passages as bearing on the matter: Phil. 2, 13; Col. 1, 28; Hebr. 6, 1; Phil. 1,6; Eph. 4, 12; Matth. 5, 48 and 19, 21.⁷⁸

How does Luke define this "perfection"? His definition is far less "perfectionistic" than the existence of such a classification would suggest. The *Unitas* was here radically different from the perfectionist sects, although the category of the "perfect" may have originally been derived from them, via the Waldensians.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the *Unitas* was apparently convinced that the New Testament warranted a very high expectation regarding the possibilities open to those led by the Spirit. Luke's description of the state of perfection reminds us of the struggle over the issue of perfection and its reso-

⁷⁴ Ibid., 200 a.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 200 a.

⁷⁶ Literally, "reality", or "truth" (*pravda*) of a good conscience. Loc. cit. Cf., 200 b, 198 a.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 200 b.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 201 b.

⁷⁹ Cf. *A. Molnár*, "Počínající, pokračující, dokonalí / Incipientes, progredientes, perfecti". *Jednota bratrská 1457–1957*, p. 147–169.

lution in the *Unitas* in the 1490's.⁸⁰ He defines perfection on the part of the faithful as consisting in "the humble *correcting of faults* and lacks" – not their absence – "and in the fruition of justification (*užívání spravedlnosti*");⁸¹ that is, the becoming factually righteous, as we will remember. "Such a man having the intention of remaining in the work of his calling (this is not a reference to a person's "calling" in Luther's use of the term, but in the New Testament use of the word, the call to be saints) can be called "perfect", according to the saying "he who looks into the law of perfect liberty . . .", for in Scripture "imperfection" refers only to the infirmity of the will or mind or deed, not to the infirmity of the flesh (which even the "perfect" have to bear), to which the Apostle refers when he says "The will is mine but I cannot carry it out".⁸² For, from this infirmity, originating from the law of the flesh, the grace of Christ frees, and the faithful are not called "imperfect" on its account.⁸³

The *Directives* names the following as marks of perfection: perfect adherence to the faith in the heart and sincerity in the obedience established in the *Unitas* (i. e., obedience to the decisions of the *Unitas* and to one's spiritual superiors), perfect will and intention, steadfastness of mind and perfect patience, readiness of spirit, a peaceful spirit toward God and hopefulness in God's promises and testimonies, unhesitant work in the covenant and in sanctification, the correcting of infirmities and imperfections, and perseverance until death.⁸⁴ Moreover, it is important to know, the *Directives* points out, that there are *degrees* in perfection, depending on the measure of faith given to a man. For it is God who perfects a man as he wills and he fills up what is lacking on the part of his perfect ones or on the part of those ministering to them.⁸⁵ It is clear that to the Brethren perfection is certainly not a human achievement in any way, nor does it depend for them on men's actual perfection in their work. The second-generation *Unitas* was not a perfectionist "sect" and lacked any concept of "merit" before God.

The Ministerialia

God effects his salvation in men, according to the Brethren, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit which he as a rule conveys through *ministerial means* (*věci služebné*). This conviction is expressed in the entire history of the *Unitas*; the Brethren were not "Spiritualists", the "Schwärmer" of Luther's nightmare. The working principle of Luke's entire theological system is the distinction he makes between what he called *věci podstatné*, those "things" (*věci*) which are the underlying "substance" (*podstata*), and *věci služebné*, the "things" which are the ministerial (*služba* meaning service, or ministry) means of salvation. Erhard Peschke points out that this distinction in Luke's system does not have a "philosophical" but "religious" significance. "Wesentlich" oder 'dienlich' bedeutet immer zum *Heil* wesentlich oder dienlich" as

⁸⁰ See, M. S. Fousek, "Perfectionism of the Early *Unitas fratrum*".

⁸¹ *Zprávy*, 200 b.

⁸² (Rom. 7:18) *Zprávy*, 201 a.

⁸³ Loc. cit.

⁸⁴ Loc. cit.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 201 b.

he says.⁸⁶ Everything in the life of the Church belongs, according to the Brethren, into one of three categories: the *substantialia*, the *ministerialia* or the *accidental*,⁸⁷ the latter referring to forms and ceremonies in which the *ministerialia* are clothed and which are contingent on times and circumstances, somewhat analogous to the "adiaphora" realm of Lutheran theology. Luke inherited the threefold division from the founder of the *Unitas*, Gregory the Taylor, who, in turn, took over the distinction between "essential" and ministerial" from the Hussite theologian Jacobellus of Střibro who used it in trying to find a reconciliation between the conservative Utraquists and Taborites on questions concerning the Mass. Gregory transformed the use of the terms, applied them to the entire Christian existence and substituted the term "accidental" for matters of form. "Substantial" according to him are "faith, love and hope". Everything else must be considered in relationship to them and must serve them, since they alone are absolutely necessary for salvation. Luke's merit was to apply the distinction between what is essential and what ministerial to all theology and to transform the category of the *substantialia* from Gregory's subjective "faith, love and hope" on the part of man into the objective work of God for and in man.⁸⁸

The *Directives* thus explains that there are two means by which God effects our salvation: first, the *substantialia* and second, "those things which are the ordinary means of the first".⁸⁹ In view of this clear statement and other statements to this effect with which we have dealt above, and in view of the already-cited fact that the Brethren's anxious care to have the right ministry was rooted in their concern about salvation, it is hard to see how Peschke could say that in Luke's theology, "die wesentlichen Dinge . . . niemals durch die dienlichen Dinge vermittelt werden. Die wesentlichen Dinge, die unbewußt⁹⁰ dem Menschen gegebenen, unmitttelbar von Gott gewirkten Gnaden, gelangen niemals durch sinnliche Mittel in die Seelen".⁹¹ If some-

⁸⁶ Erhard Peschke, "Der Kirchenbegriff des Br. Lukas", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Univ. Rostock*, V, 1955/6, *Gesellschaftliche und Sprach. Reihe*, Heft 2, p. 274.

⁸⁷ *Věci podstatné, služebné a případné*. Since there does not seem to be a satisfactory English equivalent to the term "věci", we shall make use of the Latin equivalent of the Czech terms here.

⁸⁸ *Molnár*, *Bratr Lukáš*, pp. 104 and 31; *Molnár*, *Die eschatologische Hoffnung der böhmischen Reformation*, in: *J. L. Hromádka*, *Von der Reformation zum Morgen*: Leipzig 1959, pp. 63-72.

⁸⁹ *Zprávy*, 60 b.

⁹⁰ Why "unbewußt"? One of *Unitas'* chief claims was that God's work in man could be ascertained by the faithful with the help of good priests. We could only speak of the precise *timing* being "unbewußt", if Luke had thought of the action of God as taking place "punctiliarly", i. e., at some specific instant. But we have no evidence of his thinking this way, and, as a matter of fact, have seen that he habitually uses the imperfective aspect of verbs to describe the action of the Spirit upon the spirit of man.

⁹¹ *Peschke*, op. cit., loc. cit. It seems likewise inappropriate to speak of "graces" in Luke's conception of the life of salvation. This scholastic plural seems to be avoided by Luke, who exhibited great sensitivity to the biblical use of words, even though he made also use of non-biblical terms in his writing.

thing is "dienlich zum Heil" how can it be said that the things which are "wesentlich zum Heil" are not communicated through them? It is true that the Brethren sometimes spoke as if the sacraments of baptism and of Christ's body and blood were not means of grace. What they were fighting, however, was an *ex opere operato* conception of grace given through the sacraments, and not sacraments as bearers of grace in *any sense*. Moreover, the category of the *ministerialia* (in Peschke's translation, "dienliche Dinge") involves much more than just the sacramental services. If the ministry of the Church did not communicate what was essential to salvation in their view, there would have been no reason for the Unitas to *exist*, as we have seen.

The *Directives* define the *substantialia* as these: "on the part of God: the grace of God the Father, the merit of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit effecting the inner revivification, renovation and correction of man". "On the part of man: faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ his Son and in the Holy Spirit . . ., for salvation necessitates the acquiring through faith of the knowledge and love of God, participation in the merit of Christ Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit".⁹² "This encloses within itself the knowledge of the threefold righteousness⁹³ . . . and sums up the substance of all salvation and the substance (literally, "the *res* of the substantial *esse* – *pravda bytu podstatného*") of all ministries."⁹⁴

The *ministerialia*, explains Luke, include ministers and ministries of the word of the Gospel and of the law of the covenant, the sacraments, and the people joined to these. And

"this is what creates . . . the community of the Church, which is the ordained gathering of consecrated (*posvěcených*) ministers and people, gathered for the dispensation of the ministries (*služebnosti*), to the attaining of the communion of the holy for the forgiveness of sins or the justification (that comes) from faith, in the hope of the blessed life after death and in the day of the resurrection".⁹⁵

The *sacraments* (the Brethren continued to speak of seven) have, according to Luke, the specific function of declaring visibly or "sensibly" the substantial, spiritual and invisible truth (the *res-pravda*) accomplished in Christ, in the Church and in the faithful soul, and a person's participation in it. But Christ not only declares a fact through them; he also brings the faithful soul thus to the reality which the sacrament declares. The sacraments are both a declaration and a means of participation in the spiritual reality (*res-pravda*) which they bear.⁹⁶ They are both a means of spiritual assurance and of hope and an aid to the faithful in the work of justification (*ospravedlnování*).⁹⁷ Because of the sacraments' declaratory function, the *Directives* warns, the sacraments should never be given to those who do not have a part in the spiritual reality to whose presence in a person they testify. Baptism

⁹² *Zprávy*, 60 b.

⁹³ *Zprávy*, 60 b. The "threefold righteousness" is the one and the same righteousness which is required by faith in God the Father, redeemed, merited, and prepared in Christ Jesus and given to be participated in by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *Ibid.*, 61 a.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61 a.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72 a.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61 b.

⁹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

of children is justified, according to the *Directives*, only if there is good hope that the child to be baptized will have a part in this spiritual reality as it is nurtured in the faith by guardians who have proven themselves earnest Christians.⁹⁸ A person should be given the sacraments only if the priest has the hope or belief that he is "near the truth" (the *res* of the sacrament), for "if he receives the spiritual reality (the *pravda*, i. e., the *res*) and its testimony unworthily . . . he receives it to his judgment".⁹⁹ Hence, for the Brethren, the inner relationship between sacraments and salvation is essential, and from this springs for them an obvious need for careful pastoral guidance and supervision in the receiving of the seven sacraments.

The Church and Hope of Eternal Salvation

The priest, in the Brethren's view, is ordained, or appointed, by God to judge the conscience and so ascertain the "hope" of the persons under his care.¹⁰⁰ As a preacher and teacher of the truth, he is to judge whether or not the truth he has set forth has been accepted by his hearers.¹⁰¹ A priest is a judge especially for the sake of being able to confirm the faithful and the repentant in the hope of eternal blessedness (or arouse such a hope in them), as he testifies to them that they possess a "good conscience".¹⁰²

A person has a cheerful and peaceful conscience (*svědomí*), the *Directives* explains, when he is conscious (*vědom*) that he believes and does what he has received as the will of God or has repented if he had failed to do so, and has it certified in the manner ordained by God (*pojistění toho zřízení má*).¹⁰³ For this he needs the ministers of the Church, those who carry the message of the Gospel and the "law of the covenant". They are to bring peace to his conscience by means of the word and the sacraments.¹⁰⁴ The word, the *Directives* continues, ought to be announced by the confessor in secret, whether it be to the convert, the faithful or the fallen member who has come to repentance.

"For the priest is first to declare the Gospel, then to teach . . . repentance and the law of grace, and only then examine (hear out – *vyslýchati*) the consciences and (only then can he) assure them of their having part in the substantial *res* (literally, *v pravdě podstatné ustavovati*) . . .; for when the herald is finished, the teacher should begin, and when the teacher is finished, the confessor begins his work, and when the confessor is finished, the true shepherd begins, etc."¹⁰⁵

The hearing out of consciences in the *Unitas* was evidently not confined to the consciences laboring under the burden of guilt, as the *Directives* describe a confessional service (private confession) "*For the Preserving of a Good Conscience*". Confession was both a means of forgiveness (via absolution) for the penitent and a means of assurance for the faithful. In both cases its aim was to bring peace, "hope" and a "good conscience" to the con-

⁹⁸ Ibid., 76 b and 97 a–102 a, especially 98 b, concerning the "hope" in which the child is baptized.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 76 b.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 182 b and 10 a, b.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 13 a.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 15 b.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 182 b and 4 b.

¹⁰² Ibid., 10 b.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15 a.

essant, when the confessor saw this warranted, of course. The Brethren considered the word of hope and assurance from the mouths of their confessors valuable precisely because absolution upon confession was not at all automatic for them.¹⁰⁶ As the confessor was not only the judge of the conscience but also its shepherd, he was to give confessional counsel and direction to those whose consciences had been unveiled before him. He was to advise the confessant how and encourage him to "progress" and persevere in the "righteousness of faith" and "to give thus evidence of a good conscience . . . and the certainty of his calling of election to an assured hope".¹⁰⁷ The guidance and encouragement of those who possess a "good conscience" (that is, have a right to it) is especially necessary, the *Directives* points out, because the good conscience is not only hard to gain but even harder to preserve. For this reason the confessor must care not only for the converts and the fallen but also for those who "labor in the covenant of the new testimony to attain the hope of the crown of blessedness".¹⁰⁸

The word "hope" (*naděje*), with its object usually taken for granted and therefore not stated, is used again and again in the material. This is not some vague hope that one *might* receive the object of one's desire. The way the Brethren's literature uses the word "hope" is rather close to the biblical concept of hope, which involves an *assurance*, and has an eschatological direction in the New Testament. It is actually synonymous with "expectation": ". . . hope is the secure (*jisté*) expectation of eternal blessedness on the basis of the promises . . . of grace and of good deeds".¹⁰⁹ The expectation that one *will* receive the fulfillment of God's promises through the ministrations given in the *Unitas*, Luke asserts, is a hope ordained by God and nothing less than a consequence of the catholic faith in the New Covenant.¹¹⁰

Though the *Unitas* considered such a teaching catholic and not a new invention of their own, it was new to medieval Catholics. The offer of such a "living hope" was the chief original contribution of the *Unitas* to the late-medieval believer, to whom the security of salvation was simply not available, in spite of the *ex opere operato* system, which was never intended to give such security. As Heiko A. Oberman's study *Archbishop Bradwardine* points out, traditional late-medieval theology considered an assurance of salvation during this mortal life impossible, for one or the other of the following reasons: either, as in Thomism, "quia pendet creatio nostrae salutis et

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 27 b, 30 b, 35 a, etal. Cf. M. S. Fousek, "The Pastoral Office", loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 27 b, 28 a, b.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 28 b.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 104 b. The good deeds, of which the confessor is the judge, are actually only the fulfillment of God's promise to write his law on the hearts of men, and thus only evidences of God's not promising anything in vain. They are no more man's supplement or addition to God's promises than they are a supplement to God's grace. For Luke, no less than for Luther, grace was the sole ground and source of salvation. "God promised to pour out the Holy Spirit in substantial and ministerial gifts, to create laws of grace for the elect and to place them in the heart and write them on the mind". Ibid., 183 a.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 183 b.

damnationis ex arbitrio nostra libertate“, our future actions being of course unpredictable for us (Thomas' *certitudo coniecturae* is of quite a different order than the Brethren's "secure expectation"), or, as in Bradwardine, the heir of the Nominalist tradition, because of the unknowableness of God's will due to the distance between creature and Creator.¹¹¹ To Thomas, the Brethren would have answered that the expectation is faith in God's promises and their fulfillment in Christ, in whose righteousness we have a part by means of the Spirit. Our salvation, in other words, does not depend on the fickleness of our nature but on God's faithfulness and his action upon the will of those joined to Christ by faith.¹¹² To Bradwardine they would have answered that God's will, his will concerning our salvation, was of course manifested in Christ and in the life of the Spirit available to us in the well-ordered Church, in the "ordained way of salvation". Our security of salvation, the *Unitas* was saying, lies in the God-given, *tangible* life of grace *here and now*.

It is interesting to note that although the Brethren attacked the assurance of grace which the people were deriving from the sacramental system of the "Roman (Utraquist) Church", they did not attack it because a security regarding salvation was considered illegitimate by them. They criticized the Roman system for exactly the opposite reason, namely, because it *failed to give true security*, whether from the pastoral-subjective or theological-objective view. The Brethren's claim to be in a position to have and to offer a justified "hope" of salvation is a genuinely pre-Lutheran "discovery of the Gospel", of the truly good and reliable news of the gift of salvation in Christ. Their disagreement with Luther on the necessity and importance of "works" for salvation unfortunately obscured this both for Luther in the 1520's and for historians in the 19th and early 20th centuries.¹¹³ Without realizing it, Luther was more a "Bohemian Brother" in his theological breakthrough than a "Hussite", as he like to call himself. Whatever their kinship with the "Saxon Hus", Hus and his followers did not have as their main concern soteriology, the chief thrust of both the *Unitas* and Luther. The soteriological thrust on the part of the *Unitas*, so fundamental in its litera-

¹¹¹ Archbishop Bradwardine, Utrecht, 1958, p. 154. Cf. *Oberman's* Harvest of Medieval Theology, p. 217 ff. — The Brethren's hope of salvation seems to have something of a predecessor in Bernard of Clairvaux's *testimonia salutis* given by the blood of Christ, true repentance and the new life of the Spirit. See, *Gustaf Ljunggren*, Zur Geschichte der christlichen Heilsgewißheit, Göttingen, 1920, pp. 170–1.

¹¹² A similar answer would have been given by Luke to Gabriel Biel's fear of presumption on the part of the Christian in this matter, a fear which was justified in his case, however, in view of his rejection of the *sola gratia* principle. See *Oberman*, The Harvest, p. 227 ff.

¹¹³ E. g., *Mueller*, op. cit., esp. pp. 514–6, where the Brethren are not seen as bringing anything essentially new in doctrine, *Čihula*, op. cit., who sees the Brethren as teaching the necessity of works for meriting salvation, and *Jaroslav Bidlo* who, according to *Molnár*, Bratr Lukáš, p. 8, criticized Luke for retaining the scholastic *fides formata caritate*, while Luke's actual teaching was *caritas fide formata* instead.

ture, has strangely been almost completely overlooked by most modern historians.

As there is a beginning, a progress and a perfecting in the "ordained state of salvation", there is, as a result of its different stages, a corresponding gradation of "ordained hope" (*zřizená naděje*). The ministers play the decisive role in all its stages, admitting a person to the "hope", the "covenant" and all the sacraments, guiding his conscience and judging its condition.¹¹⁴ Both the gift of salvation and security with regard to it — the "good" or "peaceful conscience" and "good hope" — are inextricably tied together with the ministry of the Church for the Brethren. This was another peculiar characteristic of the *Unitas*. It was derived from its understanding of salvation not only as a decree concerning a person's ultimate destiny but also as a present and tangible reality, the "ordained state of salvation" which God provided as a way of life in the Church. The gift of salvation was, of course, always intimately connected with the Church (as the dispenser of the sacraments) for the medieval catholic Christians. But, as the state of salvation had become to them synonymous with blessedness after death,¹¹⁵ the early-Christian near-equation of the status of salvation, of being "in Christ", etc. with membership in the Christian congregation (from which to be severed would therefore be equal to being "delivered to Satan" — I Cor. 5, 1–5) became disjoined. This tendency to distinguish outward from spiritual membership would have been a very natural result of the influx of the masses into the Constantine Church. It must have though been reinforced by Augustine's speaking of the Church as the number of the Elect, the sum of predestined individuals, with the salvation status of the members of the empirical body of the Church left quite uncertain. The Brethren, heavily influenced by Wycliff, of course retained the category of the scattered "Elect" and never equated their communion ("*unitas*") with the more inclusive "Church". Yet their highly original category of the "ordained state of salvation" in the empirical Christian communion restored the original Christian near-identification of salvation with life in the church, while skillfully leaving place for God's power to save in extraordinary ways. Their conviction that they possessed *zřizené spasení* set them apart from all others, and proved the main magnetism of their church.

The Brethren's understanding of the gift of salvation and its security came from their "relationship-theology", if we may borrow a modern term. Salvation, just as righteousness, was seen by them as synonymous with becoming joined to Christ by the bond of the Spirit, and the life resulting from it. The saving relationship was attained, fostered and verified by means of the Church's ministry (*ministerialia*). Hence the coordination and intimate relationship of soteriology and ecclesiology, for which Bishop Luke provided the needed theological system. The *Directives* to Priests are his final testament to the *Unitas* regarding it.

¹¹⁴ See above, pp. 14–18, and *Zprávy*, 184 a, b.

¹¹⁵ In contrast with the New Testament, where being saved can refer to the past or present, as well as future.

It is beyond the scope of the present study to examine the details of the pastoral care which the *Directives* prescribe for the "ordained way of salvation", fascinating as it is in both its rigor and compassion for human frailty. The rigor and compassion both had their source in the Brethren's matured understanding of the working of God's grace and the nature of salvation.¹¹⁶ Its soteriology provided the *Unitas* its fundamental and distinguishing life-forms.

Salvation for both Luther and the Brethren was solely a work of grace, but their accent and preoccupation focus on a different aspect of its work. This appears to us as originating in the difference between the situations which had led Luther and the Brethren despair over salvation. While Luther had despaired over the requirements which the monastic piety seemed to lay in the way of salvation, Luke and the Brethren had despaired precisely over the opposite, namely the "cheap grace", to make use of Bonhoeffer's coinage, available to repentant and unrepentant alike in the parish life of the Roman-Utraquist communion. The misuse and misunderstanding of the sacraments as almost magic means of grace made the Brethren question their validity and deny them as means of spiritual security when no new life was in evidence on the recipients' part. Thus while Luther's spiritual revolution was caused by his discovery of free grace as forgiveness – an acquittal understanding of justification, the Brethren's schism was caused by their discovery of "costly grace", the gift of a new kind of life in terms of the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. Augustine seemed to be Luke's most influential teacher and his looking upon grace primarily as a power of transformation was well reflected in Luke's theology.¹¹⁷ In the understanding of grace, Luke, not Luther the Reformer, seems to be the Augustinian.

The fact that church discipline was the weakest and most neglected part of early-Lutheran church life, and that it was not an integral part of normal pastoral care shows most graphically the difference between *Unitas'* way of looking at grace and Luther's. To both, confession was a treasured means of spiritual security. Yet the treatment that the confessant expected to receive was very different in the Brethren's and Lutheran systems. The Lutheran confessor would direct his confessant's attention presumably to the objective work of God in Christ, in baptism and in the word of forgiveness. The Brethren's confessor would of course also speak of that – the *Directives to Priests* gives many directions how to comfort and encourage the "slow" and the "anxious" who cannot believe that God is not angry with them in spite of their failings¹¹⁸ – but he would put an almost equal emphasis on the work of grace upon a man's heart and its evidence in the "corrected will" and life. The Brethren's understanding of salvation primarily in terms of the "law of the Spirit", which transforms man and liberates him from the "law of

¹¹⁶ For its earlier stages see M. S. Fousek, "Perfectionism".

¹¹⁷ Molnár, op. cit., pp. 64–5.

¹¹⁸ Zprávy, 28 b–29 b; cf. 31 a–34 a.

sin“, without the Spirit’s magically doing away with it or with the “flesh“, gave the *Unitas* its distinctive stamp as a church. This pneumatic soteriology preserved *Unitas*’ independence *vis-a-vis* the new churches of the Reformation. This – not any merit-theology nor just a linguistic misunderstanding – was the reason why it was so difficult for the second-generation leaders of the *Unitas* to rejoice over Luther’s crusade in Germany and why they stayed on guard against the Luther an movement beginning to show itself at home.