Ratio Disciplinae
Ordinisque Ecclesiastici
in
Unitate Fratrum Bohemorum

Account
of the
Ecclesiastical Discipline and Order
in the
Unity of the Bohemian Brethren
Ratio Disciplinæ

(Account of the Discipline. . .)

Historical Introduction

The Ratio Disciplinæ or church constitution of the Unitas Fratrum holds a unique place in history. In its present form it was revised and adopted in 1616, though it described a church organization which in its main points had already developed by 1500. Following the destruction of the Unity in Bohemia and Moravia in the Thirty Years War beginning in 1618, the leaders of the Unity who were left in Poland published it in 1633 in hope for the future. Finally, Bishop John Amos Comenius, in hope against hope that this beloved Church might someday rise again, or at least leave a record of what it had been, had the Ratio printed in exile in 1660, and added a few annotations at certain points. A final printing of his Latin text was undertaken at the Pietist center of Halle in 1702.

In the Ratio Disciplinæ the Unity acknowledges the essentials of God’s good will for our salvation, the saving work of Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to which we respond in faith, love, and hope. It also speaks briefly of the ministerative things, such as Scripture, the Church, and the Sacraments, which help us come to the essentials. However, in an ecumenical spirit unusual for the time, it affirms that all Christians of whatever denomination share in those things. The Ratio therefore concentrates more on the particular way the Unity arranged its organization, discipline, and life, things that were important but could vary from place to place and from time to time. The Unity never claimed that its usages were the only way to organize a church, but it offered this account as a record of the way it made use of the grace, challenges, and opportunities God gave it, with the hope that this account may also be of some interest and use to others.

It is in this spirit that the present edition of the Ratio Disciplinæ is offered to the Church in the opening years of the 21st century. In the Moravian Church especially, we will find several things that differ from the way we do things
today, but an amazing amount of things that sound very familiar. This does not, however, say that the Church today must conform to the administration of the 17th century. Rather it seeks to make us more aware and appreciative of the heritage God has granted us, and to offer its insights to others who may find them interesting or useful.

If this document inspires all of us to greater faith, love, and hope in Christ, then its original intent will have been realized.

A Note on the Translation

The English translation given here was made by Moravian Bishop Benjamin Seifferth and was published in 1866 as Church Constitution of the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren. As such, it partakes of the literary charm and foibles of the style of that age. We have “cleaned up” some extraneous commas, and made a few necessary emendations, but in substance it is what Bishop Seifferth wrote. He also added a historical introduction, which again reflects the style and interests of his day. His introduction is given at the end of the document, after Comenius’ notes.

C. Daniel Crews, Archivist
Moravian Church in America, Southern Province
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
August 2007

On the title page: The “Moravian seal” of the conquering Lamb of God is from the title page of the Bohemian Brethren’s hymnal of 1615.
“Humaniter accipi, et benigne ab omnibus in quorum manus venerint hæc nostræ cognosci petimus: et hinc potius quam ex adversariorum aut vulgi sermonibus aut historicorum etiam quorundam et aliorum minime veracibus scriptis, de rebus nostris statuere.” [We ask for these things of ours to be known and kindly accepted by all into whose hands they may come: and thus they may at least form a more considered opinion about us from our true writings than they can get from common reports or the words of our enemies or histories of this one or that one.] — Proæmium ad Confessionem Fratrum Bohemorum, A.D. 1535.
History informs us that the Bohemian nation, after they had been happily enlightened with the Gospel by the ministry of John Hus and Jerome of Prague, were yet enticed back again into obedience to the apostate See by fresh devices of Satan at the Council of Basle, A.D. 1433, the cup, with a few other things, being all the concession they obtained. The city of Tabor alone, unwilling that the light which had been kindled should be hid under a bushel, held out for many years, defending with the sword its purity of doctrine and its constancy in the faith until it also fell, partly overreached by guile, partly overborne by force. However, as many as yet remained of the pious followers of Hus, being animated by a divine zeal, again took courage and seceding from those pseudo-Hussites, the Calixtines, in the year 1457 happily succeeded, with Divine assistance, in forming congregations in many places and also a consistency of their own. For shortly before that time, a body of the Waldenses, being driven from France, had settled with one or two of their bishops in the neighbouring part of Austria; and to them our people sent a deputation with the view of explaining their entire purpose as well as of seeking their advice and forming a Christian union with them.

The Waldenses applauded their object and advised that provision should be made against a deficiency of faithful pastors if those congregations now embracing the pure doctrine of the Gospel were to be kept together, and that therefore they should not wait until individuals who had received the Romish ordination, induced by love of the truth, might come over to them, but have an ordination among themselves, as the necessity of the case required. And since the Waldenses affirmed that they had regular bishops and a regular succession uninterrupted from the Apostles, they in a solemn manner created three of our
ministers bishops and conferred on them the power of ordaining ministers. But as the name of bishops had become odious through the anti-Christian abuse of it, they preferred to employ that of Seniors and antistites, which has been the practice up to the present day. As to the proposed union, before it could be carried into effect these good Waldenses were again dispersed and their chief bishop Stephen burnt alive at Vienna. Our brethren in Bohemia likewise endured many persecutions, yet by the protecting care of God they were preserved from extirpation. Indeed, the number of the faithful rather increased so that toward the close of the 15th century there were about two hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia, many of the nobility piously giving them countenance. But how much labour and blood it cost to lay the foundations of this orthodox fraternity appears from the histories which are in our possession.

With respect to the name of the Fraternity, it was derived from the circumstances of the case. These men were in truth the genuine offspring of the holy martyr Hus; yet the Calixtines had already appropriated the name Hussites; and moreover our people would not venture to take their title from a human being, contrary to the prohibition of the Holy Spirit.1 They therefore called themselves by the most commendable name of Brethren and Sisters, an appellation most suitable for Christians. But in their public Apologies and in their books they termed themselves “Brethren of the Law (or rule) of Christ,” with reference to the leading principle of Hus, “that the law of Christ is sufficient for the government of the church militant without the addition of human laws,” and being anxious to guard against a departure from this principle, either by themselves or their posterity. And because they had established a settled order among themselves for the preservation of unanimity in faith and charity, they designated their entire body “The Unity of the Brethren,” as it is applied at the present day.

And as the churches were everywhere occupied by the Romanists or by the pseudo-Hussites, the Brethren were under the necessity of erecting oratories of their own in different towns, and their pastors, having no regular incomes, had to support themselves by the labour of their own hands.

Afterward, when God in compassion to Germany raised up the great Luther, the Brethren sent several deputations to him and to other distinguished teachers of the Gospel in the Empire. They discovered that there was indeed a harmony of doctrine between them in the principal and in most points, but in regard to order and a stricter discipline, they bore away the palm in comparison with others, as is testified by the letters still extant of Luther and others, either addressed to the Brethren or having reference to them.

Now, although they would have preferred an absolute union with the other reformed churches in Germany and elsewhere, yet perceiving various dissensions springing up among them, they judged it to be their duty to stand

1 1 Cor. 1:12,13.
aloof from party disputes and cultivate Christian friendship with both sides, bestowing meanwhile the more solicitous care on their own congregations, especially with regard to discipline, the more they perceived that the prevalence of those contentions was the consequence of neglect or laxity of discipline.

Subsequently, when the Protestants in Germany were vanquished in the war of Smalcald, [King] Ferdinand inflicted punishment on his Bohemian subjects as confederates of the Protestants. Having confiscated the properties of several of the nobles, he ejected the congregations of the Brethren thence and in the year 1548 expelled them from the kingdom. These proceeded in three companies into Great Poland and Prussia, where they disseminated the doctrine of the Gospel and founded several congregations.

At length in the year 1609 the Bohemian States obtained from the Emperor Rudolph the free exercise of religion and proceeded to reduce all the evangelical churches that had diverse rituals. When the patrons and antistites of the Brethren were directed to explain what they had peculiar to themselves, especially with regard to discipline and order, they produced the following statement [the Ratio]. This met with approbation, but as it was not thought practicable at that time for the churches to be reduced to this form, the indulgence was granted to the Brethren (who were, moreover, admitted to the common consistory of the kingdom), to retain their own form of discipline and order “until Providence should offer something more perfect, which might be alike suitable to all.”

But that nothing might, in the meantime, be omitted which seemed conducive to the constant observance of this good order, and that remissness might be the more surely guarded against, which is apt to creep in gradually unless there be a watchful foresight in these matters, this formulary, containing, as it were, a recognized code of laws, was revised and completed in the General Synod held at Zerawich [Žeravice] in Moravia in the year 1616 and presented to the entire body of the ministry for perusal and thorough consideration in all its parts. This done, it was approved by all, and confirmed by the signatures of the Seniors and Conseniors present from Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland, to the end that not only a more certain account of this matter might be left to posterity, but also that the obligation of every individual to a careful observance of these regulations in mutual charity might be the more binding.

And moreover, as there were those who wished this formulary to be published, while some pious persons in other countries and belonging to other churches were understood to have the same desire, it was at length determined in the Synod, which was held by the dispersed Brethren in the year 1632 at Lissa [Lesna] in Poland, that it should be printed. During those times, indeed, God seemed to be chastising us with another kind of discipline, doubtless for our desertion of our first love and declension from our former zeal. Yet it was judged unfit that, through any negligence of ours, what had once after holy

\[1\ Rev. 2:4.\]
consideration been settled by our ancestors, and up to this time found in practice beneficial for the promotion of piety, should go into oblivion and be as it were buried in darkness. It was rather fitting to devise means that what is out of joint may be set right and entire distortion avoided, nay rather that perfect soundness may be restored. And that this may take place among us, as well as among all Christ’s faithful people, may God vouchsafe to renew and establish us with His heavenly grace, for the glory of His most holy name. Amen.

THE SENIORS AND MINISTERS
of the Unity of the Brethren

---

1 Heb. 12:13.
ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER
IN THE
UNITY OF THE BOHEMIAN BRETHREN

It is sufficiently evident from instances furnished by the world at large that no society of men, no kingdom, state, or family, yea, no created thing can subsist without a fixed order; but that all things would otherwise fall at once into confusion and ruin. So neither can the Church, which is “the house of God” and “the city of the Great King” and “the Kingdom of God,” 1 consist without a fixed order. [1; see Notes, beginning page 55] Hence the Apostle: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” 2 And although precisely the same order may not be found in all churches, yet it is certain that in proportion as any particular church is distinguished in this respect will be the degree of its stability and prosperity. Induced by this consideration, the original founders of our Unity, [2] having withdrawn themselves from the idolaters, had in view not solely, although chiefly, to restore purity of doctrine and simplicity of Christian life, but also by the bond of order to maintain these blessings among themselves and to promote their own advancement in them. Therefore, with the help of God, they both disposed themselves for that holy fellowship and adapted their regulations for the pure worship of God and the edification of the church, while considering how they might best effect this, either after the model of the apostolic and primitive church or as the conditions of their church, then exposed to persecutions, permitted. This we now proceed to describe, arranging it in seven chapters.

I. The order of the whole Unity in general will be set forth.
II. The order of the ministers and Synods.
III. The order of the church service, or the mode of publicly performing church rites.
IV. The domestic order of the ministers, or manner of the private life of the ministers.
V. The private order of the church members.
VI. The order of visitations, or of the inspection exercised by superiors over those placed under them.
VII. The order of discipline, by which all these are held together as by a chain.

1 1 Tim. 3:15; Ps. 48:2; Matt. 20:1.
2 1 Cor. 14:40.
CHAPTER I

CONCERNING THE ORDER OF THE WHOLE UNITY IN GENERAL

The order of the Unity of the Brethren in general consists partly in a certain distinction of things pertaining to the sacred worship of God in accordance with His word, and partly in a classification of persons who are with one accord engaged in the service of God in that congregation, and the connection and union of them with one another by certain duties.

ORDER OF THINGS

As the Brethren perceived that all things were in confusion and no distinction made between what was necessary and what was not, or at least between what was more necessary and what was less so, and, still worse, that the fundamentals of salvation were generally neglected while attention was bestowed on what was external, they commenced by laying down a distinction of the things which are comprised in Christianity:

1. Namely that there are in Christianity
   some things
   \{ Essential, Auxiliary, (ministerialia) Accidental.\}

2. Essentials of Christianity they termed those things in which the salvation of man is immediately placed: namely on the part of God, the grace of God the Father, the merit of Christ, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and on our part, faith, love, and hope. By faith, understanding an acknowledgment of the benefits of God and the especial application thereof to ourselves; by love, an ardent zeal to love God in return and to obey him in all things; by hope, an unshaken assurance of persevering in these graces and thus of attaining the end of faith. Without these they taught that no one could be saved.

3. As the Auxiliaries of Christianity they regarded those means divinely bestowed upon the Church by which the grace of God the Father, the merit of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Spirit become known to and are conferred upon us; that is, by which faith, love, and hope are enkindled, cherished, and strengthened in us. These are the word of God, the keys, and the sacraments. For the word of God reveals those essentials to us; the keys assign them; the sacraments seal them. Hence they teach that the ministry of the Church is

---

1 Jer. 15:19; Hos. 8:12; Matt. 7:9; Gal. 4:10.
2 Ps. 19:7-11.
3 John 20:22-23.
4 Rom. 4:11.
necessary, not on its own account, but because of those essentials; and that there is no other object to be sought in or by the ministry than the advancement of purity of faith, ardour of love, and firmness of hope — hope that, in life and death and in the midst of all temptations, may cling unshakenly to the mercy of God.

**Accidentals of Christianity** they called those things (termed by others adiaphora, or things indifferent) which relate to the time, place, and mode of exercising those auxiliaries; that is, *the ceremonies and external rites of religion*. These things, they were of opinion, should be used in accordance with Christian liberty and prudence, in such a manner as that they might not only prove no obstacle to faith, love, and hope (by withdrawing the mind from them, for instance, or by obscuring them, both of which effects follow from idolatrous and superstitious ceremonies), but rather that they might serve to illustrate and impress them.¹

Now it is these things that the order of our Unity has chiefly in view. For the **Essentials and Auxiliaries** of Christianity we have in common with all Christians if they were but aware of their own privileges and had a distinct understanding of them.² In the **Accidentals** we possess what is perchance diverse from others but yet derived from no other source than the Divine direction variously indicated in the Scriptures and drawn from the examples of the primitive church. [3] The nature of them, and their adaptation to the end proposed, we now proceed to explain in the presence of the Church, not representing them as involving what is necessary to salvation but as presenting a better order and one more conducive to edification, as our own experience has taught us. Yet we neither so pertinaciously maintain them, as that we would not give them up if anything better were offered in their place,³ nor on the other hand do we think it right to make any change on slight grounds.⁴ Hence it is that no one among us is allowed to introduce new senses or opinions or to perform new ceremonies or to write or publish books without previous examination and the general approbation.

**THE ORDER OF PERSONS**

**FIRST, AMONG THE PEOPLE**

*The order of Persons* is such a classification of all, that each one in the place assigned him may know exactly what authority he should exercise or what obedience he should yield, and what regard or duty he owes to this or the other person, as well in respect to *the people as the ministers.*

---

¹ Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 14; Col. 2:16.
² Rom. 10:12; Eph. 4:3-6.
³ Phil. 3:15,16; 1 Thess. 5:21.
⁴ 1 Cor. 11:2.
Our ancestors were accustomed to arrange *their people or hearers* in three classes according to the degrees of labour to be undertaken on their account, leaving the natural and political government in full force, as of husbands in regard to their wives, parents to their children, masters to their servants, and magistrates to their subjects:

Namely as *Beginners*,
*Proficients*, and
*Perfect*, or going on unto perfection.¹

*Beginners* are such as are learning the catechism and the first elements of religion, as the *children* who have been placed by their parents under the care of the pastors, also *adults* who have come to us from the idolaters or such as have been otherwise neglected and who, if they commit themselves to the care of the ministers among the Brethren, usually pass through a period of previous instruction and probation.²

*Proficients* are such as having become well acquainted with the elements of religion, being received under the pastoral care and admitted to a participation of all the mysteries of the church, exercise themselves more and more in the knowledge of the will of God and in its practical observance, and thus conforming themselves to the order of the church, maintain their sanctification.³

*The Perfect* [⁴] they termed such as had made eminent attainments in the knowledge of Divine things and had become so established in faith, love, and hope as now to be able to enlighten others and to exercise a superintendence over them for the preservation of order.⁴

From these are usually elected:

1. *The Civil Elders or Overseers*,
2. *The Curators of the Alms*,
3. *The Ædiles*.

**THE CIVIL ELDER**

These are respectable, grave, and pious men, chosen from the whole congregation in order to watch over the conservation of all the rest. To them is given authority to warn and reprove others in whom any impropriety is observed, to reconcile persons at variance, and to reduce to order whatever irregularity they may have remarked — and this either by themselves or together with the pastor to whom they are assigned as helpers.

Also in outward matters touching their domestic affairs, the younger men and youths are wont to seek their advice and are faithfully counseled by them:

---

¹ Heb. 5:13; 1 Cor. 2:6; et Isid. lib. 2; Ecclus. cap. 21.
² Heb. 5:11-14.
³ 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 6:1.
⁴ Rom. 15:14; 1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15.
a regulation which, judging by the examples and the practice of the ancient church, we think ought by all means to be maintained.\(^1\)

In like manner, from the females there are chosen respectable, prudent, and grave matrons to attend to their own sex, who are furnished with like authority.\(^2\) [5]

THE ALMONERS

The Almoners are prudent men distinguished for their virtue and faithfulness, to whom is committed the charge of the treasury, in which each of the hearers deposits his contributions whenever he pleases so as his left hand may not know what his right hand doeth.\(^3\) These, as often as is requisite, draw money from thence, insert the amount in the books, and distribute it amongst the poor, but with the cognizance of the pastor. As far as is in our power we guard against mendicity among our people, according to the command of God.\(^4\) It is their duty also to make provision for orphans, widows, the sick, and those who are in exile for the Gospel, that they may not be utterly destitute.

THE ÆDILES

The ædiles [trustees] are men of repute to whom is committed the care of the sacred buildings and those which the ministers occupy. Therefore they receive the collections which are usually made once a quarter;\(^5\) they enter separately the contributions of each and expend the money on repairs of the buildings and for other purposes of the church; and once a year they render to the congregation an account of their receipts and payments, when they are usually released from the office, which is somewhat laborious, and others are chosen in their place.

Such is the order among the Brethren as regards the hearers, to which all without reluctance conform as knowing, both from the word of God and their own experience, that it is conducive to edification. Nor does anyone obtrude himself into any office, as thereby he would be an object of contempt: but each one, being regularly elected by the whole assembly, undertakes the duty with as much confidence as the rest feel in committing it to him.

\(^{1}\) Exod. 18:21,22; Deut. 1:13; 1 Cor. 6:2,4,5; 1 Tim. 5:17.
\(^{2}\) Rom. 16:1,3,12; 1 Tim. 5:2,9,10; Titus 2:3,4.
\(^{3}\) Matt 6:3.
\(^{4}\) Deut. 15:7-11; Rom. 12:8.
\(^{5}\) 2 Kings 12:10,11.
THE ORDER OF THE MINISTERS IN THE UNITY OF THE BRETHREN

The ministers of the Church are with us priests\(^1\) or pastors of the congregations, ambassadors for Christ to the people.\(^2\) Their office is to administer the word, the keys, and the sacraments.

From these priests our ancestors were accustomed to require neither the knowledge of languages nor of philosophy, more especially as, through want of scholastic institutions, this could not be obtained. But if they saw a man well nourished in the words of faith with ability to teach, sober, prudent, and possessing the other qualifications which the Apostolic Canon requires in a minister of the church\(^3\)—content therewith, they recognized such a one as a true ambassador of Christ. This practice met with the approbation of Doctor Luther at the same time that he advised them to add, as far as was in their power, the study of languages, which from that time, where practicable, has been done.

These have under them novitiates destined for the service of the church as their assistants, and above them, for the maintenance of order, their bishops or antistites.

Those who are under their authority and care are the acoluths and deacons.

ACOLUTHS

Acoluths [i.e., acolytes] are youths admitted by the pastors of the congregations into their households, that they may be trained for the future service of the church in learning and morals with more care than they could be with their parents or elsewhere. Thus Samuel was trained under Eli,\(^4\) Elisha under Elijah,\(^5\) and the company of the sons of the prophets under their elders.\(^6\) Thus also Christ fostered and trained the disciples before He entrusted them with the ministry. So Paul had Timothy, Titus, and Luke as his attendants and companions; whence also ἀκολουθία (acoluthia) is expressly ascribed to them.\(^7\) And hence this degree has obtained in the Church ever since the apostolic times.\(^8\)

---

1 The Brethren do not object to the term priest as far as it denotes a person dedicated to sacred things and not one who offers sacrifice. Yet the Bohemian word Kněz is better, signifying a person set over the people, for like the Hebrew Cohen, it means both a priest and a prince. Yet as they are not ignorant that some others are offended with the Latin term sacerdos, they generally avoid it and (as they do) call them the ministers of the Church. However, in this place, where the ministerial degrees are spoken of, it is needful to employ a distinct appellation.

2 2 Cor. 5:20.

3 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1.

4 1 Sam. 3:1.

5 1 Kings 19:21.

6 2 Kings 4:38.

7 In the Greek text; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10; [2 Tim. 4:11].

8 Vide Cyprian, lib. iii, Epist. xxiii.; and the Canons of the Councils.
THE BRETHREN ASSIGN THESE DUTIES TO THEIR ACOLUTHS

1. That while they distinguish themselves beyond other youths by an orderly, modest, and pious deportment, they should be accustomed to show alacrity in obedience and in the spontaneous service of God and the Church and so exhibit the gentleness which becomes disciples.¹

2. That they should exercise themselves in the rudiments of theology by reading and committing to memory the larger catechism, the Gospels, and the shorter Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and those of Peter, also Psalms and spiritual hymns.²

3. The reading of Scripture at family prayers is committed to them and sometimes an exhortation on the same occasion from the passage read — and this both in order to prove the measure of aptitude for teaching that God may have conferred upon them and for the gradual attainment of that boldness of speaking in the power of God, the exercise of which in the presence of the church will in due time be needed.³ It is their office (when it is not otherwise provided) to call the people to the public service by tolling the bells, to open and close the church, and to light the church at the early services before daylight — thus fulfilling these, the inferior ecclesiastical functions.⁴

4. To teach the catechism in the schools to the children of Christian parents.⁵

5. To attend their superiors on their journeys, both for the purpose of rendering them service and that they may everywhere be witnesses of their seemly manner of life and so learn to conduct themselves everywhere with propriety.⁶

6. In case of necessity, the reading of the Scriptures, together with some commentary, is entrusted to them also in the smaller public assembly or even, if they are capable of it, the delivering from memory of a short address and prayer. This the pious hearers receive with indulgence.

THE DEACONS

The deacons are elder acoluths, now in the course of preparation for the ministry. These the ministers of the Brethren employ as their assistants, after the example of the Apostles.⁷ For although they were originally ordained by the Apostles for the service of tables, yet it is evident that they both preached and

¹ 2 Tim. 3:10,14.
² 2 Tim. 3:15.
⁴ 1 Sam. 3:1,15.
⁶ 2 Tim. 4:11 and 2:3.
⁷ Acts 6:2, &c.; Phil. 1:1.
baptized (as Stephen and Philip),\(^1\) and were advanced to a higher degree, namely of the ministry or presbytery.\(^2\) Hence this degree of the diaconate was uniformly maintained in the primitive church as is evident from the Canons of the Councils; on which account, although like many other things it has been turned to abuse by Antichrist, it ought not to be banished out of the church.

**THE BRETHREN ASSIGN THESE DUTIES TO THEIR DEACONS**

1. To apply constantly and intently to the study of sacred theology and prepare themselves suitably for the ministry.\(^3\)

2. To instruct the youth in church and school in the fundamentals of religion.

3. To exercise themselves in delivering discourses to the people.

4. To administer baptism whenever directed by the pastor, for Christ also allowed his disciples to baptize before he committed to them the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.\(^4\) So also Peter allowed his,\(^5\) and we have already shown that the deacons of the Apostles administered baptism.

5. When the Holy Supper is celebrated in a large congregation and there are not sufficient ministers present, the deacons are also employed in distributing not only the cup but the bread. Yet the minister alone, having the power of the keys, may pronounce the absolution to the people and solemnly deliver the words of institution.

So the acoluths and deacons are the assistants of the ministers. The bishops and coadjutors, or Seniors and Conseniors, are the rulers of the ministers, or watchers and overseers, who jointly form the ecclesiastical Senate or as others denominate it, the Consistory of the Unity.

**CONCERNING THE ANTISTITES OR SENIORS**

To us the antistites or bishop is a person distinguished by his age and divine gifts, elected by the suffrages of all the ministers for the maintenance of order in the whole Unity, confirmed by the solemn rite of ordination, and then supported by public authority, taking care that all the rest, each in his place, may discharge their duty, and that the work of God may proceed everywhere free from scandals and confusion.\(^6\) There are four, five, or six such bishops, as necessity may require, and each is assigned a diocese or a certain number of churches and pastors.\(^7\) [7] Their eminence, in comparison with the other

---

\(^1\) Acts 6:10 and 8:5,12,35,38.
\(^2\) 1 Tim. 3:13.
\(^3\) 1 Tim. 3:13.
\(^4\) John 4:2.
\(^6\) Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1; Council. Carthag. 4.
\(^7\) 2 Cor. 10:13-16; Gal. 2:9.
ministers, consists in no distinction of honours or revenue, but of labours and cares for others: “He that is greatest among you,” saith Christ, “let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.”\(^1\) And according to the Canons of the Apostles, \textit{presbyter} and \textit{bishop} are one and the same save that the term bishop signifies \textit{inspector} or \textit{superintendent}. And thus also the bishops of the Unity are of equal rank, save that one of them has the presidency for the sake of order. All these, having been once elected and appointed, remain in office during life, unless anyone should conduct himself unworthily.

THE DUTIES WHICH THE ANTISTITES HAVE IN COMMON ARE THESE

1. To watch over purity of doctrine and efficiency of discipline throughout the whole Unity in accordance with the command of Christ, “who hath given authority to his servants, and to every man his work, \textit{and hath commanded the porter to watch}.”\(^2\)

2. To provide that youths of good parts may be carefully trained for the future service of the Church, as the prophets instructed their sons and Gamaliel brought up Paul at his feet.\(^3\)

3. To ordain acoluths, deacons, ministers, and Conseniors to their respective degrees.\(^4\)

4. To exercise faithful care over all the ministers, deacons, acoluths, widows, and orphans in his diocese.

5. To keep lists of the churches in his diocese and to acquaint himself with their wants, and with the members, at least the principal of them.

6. To assign suitable pastors to the churches and to change them as circumstances may require yet not without the cognizance of the other bishops.

7. To make an annual visitation of the churches of his diocese (concerning which we shall treat hereafter).

8. To administer reproof to ministers and pastors who overstep their office. (But the excommunication of a minister is competent only to a whole Synod: all things “according to the power which the Lord hath given to edification, not to destruction.”)\(^5\)

9. If any persecution or danger is impending, either over the whole Unity or some particular church or individuals, it is their duty to consider how the peril may be met or how at least some comfort and relief may be furnished to those who are the subjects of it.

10. Each antistites of the Unity is bound to care for the Library and to increase it as much as he can with useful books.

\(^{1}\) Luke 22:26; Matt. 23:11; Mark 10:44.  
\(^{2}\) Mark 13:34.  
\(^{3}\) Acts 22:3.  
\(^{4}\) Titus 1:5.  
\(^{5}\) 2 Cor. 13:10.
11. The care of the printing office of the Unity devolves upon all alike, but the oversight of it falls to the one who lives nearest.

12. And since it is hazardous to commit absolute power to a single individual or to a few, each is bound to defer to the judgment not only of his colleagues but also of the Conseniors, and to receive their admonition, advice, and reproof. From this decision, as the legitimate judgment of God, there is no appeal except to a General Synod, from whence an appeal cannot be made except to Him who hath conferred the power of giving judgment upon the Church.

**THE DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT**

One of the bishops has the office of *president*; his duties are:

1. To convene the ecclesiastical council (*senatum* [i.e., Inner Council]) as often as he thinks it needful yet with the knowledge and consent of his colleagues.

2. When they are met, to explain the occasion of their assembling and after reminding them of the uncertainty of all human deliberations without Divine assistance, to excite them to prayer and thus consecrate the subsequent transactions.

3. To inquire whether the decisions of the preceding Synod or assembly have been carried into effect, then to state what is proposed to be done in the present assembly and to request each to mention what he thinks should form a subject of deliberation, the secretary immediately recording all the propositions. Afterward they deliver their sentiments in order, beginning with the younger members. The president collects the opinions, weighs them, and according as the chief reasons preponderate, forms the conclusion, which is entered by the secretary in the minutes.

4. It is also the president’s duty to convene a General Synod when needful, to appoint persons to provide all things requisite for the occasion, and to take the lead in maintaining good order at the Synod.

**THE DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITY**

The office of secretary is usually entrusted to one of the Seniors. His duties are:

1. To record the Synodal Acts in the church documents.
2. To possess a thorough knowledge of the acts and writings of the Unity.
3. To see to the writings published by our adversaries, and if an answer be required and the Council give directions, to compose answers and to submit them to their judgment.
4. To apprise the Council if he perceives any defect in the writings of the Unity, and to supply it, in accordance with their unanimous judgment previously signified.

5. To take care that no individual in the Unity publish anything of his own will, in a word to make himself acquainted with the causes and purport of all the books published and intended for publication. [8]

DUTIES OF THE CONSENIORS

To every Senior are added two or three Conseniors for the purpose of assistance, whom the ancients termed Chorepiscopi. [9] Their duties are:

1. To constitute, in conjunction with the Seniors, the ecclesiastical Council or Consistory.

2. To attend, beyond the other ministers, to the maintenance of good order everywhere and to apprise their superior of whatever they have anywhere observed to require correction.

3. By word and example to lead others to the observance of the laws, statutes, and praiseworthy customs.¹

4. To look out for persons fit for the several degrees of the ministry.²

5. To determine where, in what department, and how each minister and assistant may labour with advantage and what may therefore be committed to each.³

6. In conjunction with their antistites, to exercise discipline over the ministers.

7. To visit the churches in company with him or without him in case he directs, and those churches which he does so direct.

8. To examine the acolyths, deacons, and ministers called up for ordination and after examination to present them with a faithful testimonial to the Seniors.⁴

9. To watch over the neighbouring pastors of their own district (especially such as are immediately committed to their oversight) and observe in what manner they discharge their duty. If they remark a slight irregularity, it is their duty to correct it; but in the case of graver and scandalous offences, they must as soon as possible apprise the Senior.⁵

10. To maintain inviolable secrecy respecting the deliberations of the conferences.⁶ [10]

---

¹ Phil. 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:2.
² Titus 1:5.
⁴ 1 Tim. 3:10.
⁵ 1 Thess. 5:14.
⁶ Prov. 20:19.
CHAPTER II

CONCERNING THE SYNODS AND THE RITE OF ORDINATION

For weighty reasons (namely to provide for the necessities either of the whole Unity or of some one diocese) we hold either General or Particular Synods.

A General Synod is usually held every three or four years, at which attend all the Seniors and Conseniors, the pastors and ministers, also thedeacons and acoluths, nay even the patrons of churches, especially those living near. This is

1. For the purpose of renewing and confirming brotherly love and concord.\(^1\)
2. To stimulate and strengthen the minds of all in the work of the Lord.\(^2\)
3. To restore the vigour of order and discipline, if laxity should be anywhere detected or apprehended.\(^3\)
4. Occasionally also, that scandalous individuals may be expelled from the ministry or that the penitent may be solemnly readmitted.
5. To ordain ministers in whatever degree may be required.

These General Synods were not held in one fixed place but in different places as well in Moravia as in Bohemia. Poland, on account of its distance, only sent delegates to the Synods as was at times the case from Bohemia to the Synods in Poland. [11]

This is the order of the Synods:
1. All who are summoned appear on the day and at the place appointed.
2. Each takes up his abode in the place assigned to him, which is usually arranged in good time. [12]
3. In the evening at the sound of the bell, all assemble in the church; thanks are offered up to God, and the Seniors give a paternal welcome to their guests.
4. After this they go to supper, according to the arrangement of the tables and the attendants, which is conducted (as it is also on the following days) with moderation, in the fear of God, and seasoned with pious and friendly conversation.\(^4\) Some of the Conseniors are appointed to regulate all, as also daily afterward to visit and salute them when sitting down at table.
5. The following morning a sermon is delivered by one of the Seniors or Conseniors, and so every day while the Synod lasts. There are also prayers in

\(^1\) 1 Cor. 16:14; 1 Pet. 4:8.
\(^2\) Rom. 1:11,12.
\(^3\) 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-4.
\(^4\) Eph. 4:29, 5:4.
the afternoon and evening with an admonition always from Scripture on a topic suited to their common edification or to the present state of things.

6. The ministers remain the whole day assembled in the church (as do also the deacons and acoluths in the place assigned to them), occupied with the subjects laid before them by the Seniors. [13]

7. The Seniors also in a separate room deliberate and determine regarding the positions of ministers, churches, or patrons, or whatever may be before them, yet in affairs of moment not without the consent of the ministers. [14]

8. Whenever it is needful to supply a vacancy in the Council, after prayer and fasting they all severally write down the names of the persons for whom they vote and deliver their papers sealed to the Seniors.

9. Also persons suitable for the degree of the ministry are selected from the deacons, regarding each of whom the ministers state in writing whatever they have remarked, whether praiseworthy or otherwise, and send it under seal to the Seniors.

10. Such as are accredited by favourable testimonials are examined by the Seniors and Conseniors.

11. Ordination to each degree is publicly performed, concerning which hereafter.

12. Moreover, at a General Synod the Holy Communion is always celebrated\(^1\) in order to renew mutual love and joy in God, when all the ministers of the Church who are present together with the patrons and the believing people commune with joy and thanksgiving.

13. Toward the conclusion of the Synod various exhortations are delivered.\(^2\) For example: “That each would apply all that had been done in this Synod to the glory of God and his own edification; that each would walk worthily in the vocation wherein he has been called and set a good example to all under him, so that the ministry be not evil spoken of in any respect.” Sometimes also special warnings are added against this or that vice and scandal, intermixed with the Divine threatenings and promises. Finally, the Synod is dismissed in peace with benediction and thanksgiving, with the prayer that God would henceforward grant a period of peace to the Church and cause His work to prosper to His glory. An admonition is added that they should all conduct themselves devoutly, modestly, and in concord on their journey,\(^3\) and at their return home salute their churches, patrons, and domestics in the name of the Seniors and assure them of their faithful pastoral and paternal solicitude, their remembrance of them in prayer before God, and their unabated zeal to promote their welfare.\(^4\) [15]

---

\(^1\) Acts 20:7.
\(^2\) Acts 20:25.
\(^3\) Gen. 45:24.
\(^4\) Rom. 16 throughout; Heb. 13; Eph. 1:16; Phil 1:3,4; Col. 1:3.
14. The Synodal Acts are registered for future reference, and each of the Seniors has a copy of them.

*Particular Synods*, consisting of a smaller number of Seniors and ministers, are called on account of sudden emergencies which cannot be delayed till a General Synod, the business also not concerning the entire Unity but a particular district or a single church or individual. Yet the acts of such a Particular Synod are immediately communicated to the absent bishops for the sake of holy unanimity.

As the ordinations of the ministers take place at the General Synods, we now proceed to describe them.

There is an ordination

I. of Acoluths,
II. of Deacons,
III. of Ministers,
IV. of Conseniors,
V. of Seniors.

I. THE ORDINATION OF ACOLUTHS

Every pastor among us is under obligation to board one, two, three, or more boys of good parents in his house, to bring them up with a view to the ministry and to take care for their instruction. In order to stimulate their love for the ministry, the elder of these youths are taken to the Synods; and after undergoing an examination for the purpose of ascertaining which of them may seem worthy of further care and promotion and also that they may feel themselves bound to the Church, they receive the first degree of their vocation, that is, as acoluths.

Their ordination is conducted thus:

1. A discourse is delivered on a suitable topic, for instance on *the imitation of Christ, the calling of the seventy disciples, the sons of the prophets, etc.*
2. They are called out in succession by name and present themselves before the Church.
3. They are interrogated before the whole Synod, whether they are willing to devote themselves to the service of the Church? whether they promise obedience?
4. Their duties are read to them (as stated above).
5. These they promise to observe by giving their hands.
6. The former acoluths receive them into their company by giving them their right hand.
7. The whole is concluded with prayer, the benediction, and singing.
II. THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS

The deacons are chosen from the elder acoluths in this manner:

1. They are examined by the Seniors whether they have now surrendered themselves entirely to Christ and the Church and as to what degree of progress they have made in the study of theology.¹

2. They are called by name before the whole Synod, when their duties are read to them from 1 Tim. 3:8, etc.

3. They bind themselves by a vow to Christ and the Church.

4. Prayers are offered for them, and the Ordainer confirms them with the imposition of hands.²

5. The new deacons present the right hand to the Seniors and ministers in token of holy obedience, and the former deacons do the same to them in token of fellowship.

6. The solemnity is concluded with the benediction.

III. THE ORDINATION OF MINISTERS

1. When ministers are to be ordained at a Synod, every pastor who is about to take with him his deacon or deacons gives notice to his church, that is, to the presbytery or civil elders, who in a letter addressed to the Synod furnish a testimonial of the life and conversation and proficiency in preaching of their deacon or deacons, stating whether they consider them worthy of the ministerial degree. Public testimonies are also wont to be required of the legitimacy of their birth, that they may in every respect be free from reproach.

2. Then follows in the Synod the examination of the persons to be ordained, which is threefold.³ First, the names of the candidates for ordination are submitted to the consideration of the ministers assembled in the church, where the testimonials regarding each, with the votes for or against this or that individual, are sealed up by secretaries chosen for the purpose and transmitted to the Seniors.

3. The second examination is conducted by the Conseniors, who, admitting three or four at a time, inquire into their individual proficiency in theology, how far they have been “nourished up in the words of faith,”⁴ the purity of their intention in serving Christ and the Church,⁵ lastly respecting their age and stability of judgment.⁶

4. After this, each who has passed his examination thus far is sent to a bishop for an examination of his conscience, where the greatness and weight of

¹ 1 Tim. 3:10; Luke 9:62.
³ 1 Tim. 5:21.
⁴ 1 Tim. 4:6.
⁵ 1 Tim. 3:3.
⁶ 1 Tim. 3:6.
the pastoral office are set before him, and he is asked if he can give himself up as a servant to Christ with a pure conscience and without any view to gain, honour, and earthly advantage. If anything censurable had been remarked in the morals of any one of them, the correction of it is earnestly urged upon him.

Finally, they are encouraged to hope for Divine assistance by various consolatory assurances.

5. Next day the ordination takes place, a fast having been observed on the day previous, and solemn supplications offered up on behalf of the necessities of the Church.

6. The Synod being assembled, after singing, a solemn discourse is delivered on the pastoral office. This being ended, the Ordainer comes forward, and

1. Reads a passage of Scripture.
2. He gives notice to the whole congregation that certain persons are to be called to the holy functions of the ministry and confirmed therein, and directing his address to the candidates themselves, requests that when called upon they would obediently present themselves in the presence of God and the Church.
3. Afterward one of the Conseniors comes forward and repeats from a list the names of those who are to be ordained, who present themselves in order.
4. The Ordainer inquires whether they bring a ready mind for serving Christ and the Church.
5. On their giving a modest assent, then are read from the Apostolic Canon certain portions applicable to this rite of consecration, that seeing they are treading in the footsteps of the Apostles they may have the firm persuasion of their heavenly calling.
6. The Ordainer goes on to inquiry whether they are worthy of so important an office lest the Church should incur reproach or disgrace through them. On which two of the Conseniors come forward and declare before the whole congregation that these men are of honest descent, are imbued with sound doctrine, and are of blameless life and worthy of being entrusted with the office of evangelists.
7. Kneeling down, they are directed to call upon Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd, after which all the congregation on their knees offer up supplications for them.
8. The duties of the pastoral office are read over to them.
9. They bind themselves with an oath of fidelity to God and the Church, that they will continue within these prescribed limits to the end.

---

1 Tim. 3:9.
2 1 Tim. 2:14; Tit. 1:7,8; Col. 3:8.
3 Heb. 3:1; 1 John 3:21.
4 Acts 13:2,3.
5 1 Tim. 3.
6 1 Tim. 3:7.
10. They are ordained by the imposition of the hands of the bishops present, with invocation over them of the name of Christ that He may vouchsafe to admit them into the number of His faithful servants and to fill them with the gifts of His Spirit. Meantime the Conseniors, ministers, and all the people kneel and sing “Come, Holy Ghost,” &c.

11. The new ministers are exhorted to the exercise of patience in trials, from which they will not be exempt, and are encouraged with the promises of an eternal reward after their labours have been faithfully fulfilled. Then they cheerfully offer the right hand to the Seniors and Conseniors in token of obedience, and to the ministers in token of fellowship; while the deacons do the same to them as a mark of respect. Meantime the Church sings a hymn composed from the hundred and thirty-third Psalm.

12. This solemnity is wont to be concluded with the Holy Communion, all joining therein with thanksgiving.

ON THE INAUGURATION OF MINISTERS

Ministers ordained among us do not rush into the administration of the sacred office where and when they please, but soon after the Synod, visitations are held in those churches which have new ministers. There the visitor

1. Treats on the care which Christ the chief Shepherd exercises over His Church and exhorts them to a grateful acknowledgment of the favour.

2. He informs them that N. N. has been regularly chosen, called, and ordained, in order that it may appear that he has not obtruded himself but has come on being called, and that the believing people may acknowledge such as labourers whom the Lord sends into his harvest.

3. He signifies that he will now make a commencement of his sacred office, in the plenary administration of the keys of Christ and of the holy Supper, and he directs him to come forward and address the Church.

4. The minister, after a profession of humility in following the Divine vocation and having commended himself to the prayers of the Church, kneels down, as do also the whole congregation, at the monition of the visitor, and prayers are offered for him.

5. The minds of all being now animated with confidence that their prayers are heard, the visitor takes the minister by the hand, and leading him to the altar or table of the Lord, presents him with the Ritual, and directs him to enter upon the administration of the keys and of the sacraments of Christ, the people meantime looking on and often shedding tears. (For these ceremonies are not retained from an idea of their necessity but to shadow forth in some

---

1 2 Tim. 2:3; Dan. 12:3; 1 Pet. 5:4.
3 Jer. 17:16.
4 Matt. 9:38.
5 Eph. 6:19,20.
measure the dignity of the ministry and to excite reverence for this economy\(^1\) of Christ’s.) [19]

6. The Communion is then celebrated by the new minister, after which the visitor pronounces the benediction on him and the whole church, and thus concludes the solemnity. Yet the entire management of any church is usually not committed at once to new ministers, but they remain for the space of a year or two as assistants to pastors, till they have acquired greater experience for the direction of conscience, and till the need of any particular church may require their services. And if meantime anyone should purpose marrying, this can only take place under the advice and with the consent of the Seniors.

**ON THE MANNER OF APPOINTING MINISTERS AS PASTORS OF CHURCHES**

When the time arrives for appointing someone as pastor to a church, as also when pastors are on account of circumstances changed, the transaction takes place in this manner:

1. No magistrates or churches among us seek or call pastors for themselves, as neither do the ministers canvass the parishes; but each one goes where he is appointed, and that church acknowledges him as its pastor. For it is the business of the Seniors to consider what kind of ruler each church may need and in what situation every minister may be able successfully to carry on the work of the Lord. [20]

2. Hence whenever a presentation to a church takes place, after the new pastor has preached a sermon the visitor comes forward and informs them that this individual is assigned by the Seniors as pastor to this church, after mature consideration, and entreats that he may be received as a servant of Jesus Christ.\(^2\) He likewise exhorts the minister to the zealous discharge of his duty and to watch over this flock of the Lord committed to him. A protestation is then made by both parties, of the pastor to the people and of the people (by one of the lay elders) to the pastor; the former promises pastoral care, the latter obedience as to a minister of Jesus Christ;\(^3\) which is also confirmed by the elders giving their hands to the minister in the sight and in the name of all the people; and the whole is finally sealed by prayers and the expression of mutual wishes for the Divine blessing.

3. The sacred assembly having been dismissed, the minister about to retire delivers to his successor, in presence of the visitor and the elders, a list of the hearers together with the furniture belonging to the church and to the minister’s dwelling; an amicable agreement is also made regarding other goods in case a division is requisite.

\(^1\) *New Century Dictionary, 1940 ed.: Economy: “in theol., the method of divine administration of the world.”*

\(^2\) Phil. 2:29.

\(^3\) Heb. 13:17.
CASES IN WHICH THE MINISTERS ARE BOUND TO SEEK
THE ADVICE OF THEIR SENIORS

Every pastor set over a church has power over the flock committed to
him in regard to all that the pastoral care requires, except that:

1. In more difficult cases and such as are less usual (which sometimes
present themselves to those engaged in the direction of conscience), they are
instructed to do nothing without consulting the Senior, both that they may be
accustomed not to depend on themselves alone and also that what is done with
the consent of several persons may be more calculated to promote edification.

2. Also, besides cases of this kind, each minister is bound to furnish his
Senior from time to time (at least once in half a year) with an account of himself
and of his congregation, either personally or by letter, that the latter may be the
better enabled to discharge his office of superintendent, as not being ignorant of
what is everywhere going on.

3. On the death of a magistrate or minister, the Senior is usually
informed, that by his direction several ministers with one of the Conseniors may
be able to attend the funeral as a mark of respect.

4. And as visitations (concerning which we shall treat hereafter) generally
take place in the summer, every pastor usually makes inquiry of his Senior
before Easter, Whitsuntide, and in autumn, whether he should celebrate the
Holy Communion or wait for the presence of the visitors.

IV. ORDINATION OF THE CONSENIORS

Whenever necessity requires that the Council of the Church should be
filled up, there are chosen from the ministers as many men as may be wanted,
distinguished for their knowledge of affairs, their piety, and their exemplary
lives. This is done by the votes of the ministers and Conseniors, each of whom,
according as he regards this or the other equal to the duty, delivers his name
under seal to the Seniors, or if at a distance sends it. They, after opening the
votes and ascertaining who have the majority, confirm these the next day among
the number of the Conseniors in the following manner, after the delivery of a
charge from Scripture on the intent of this office or other needful topics:

Being called upon severally by name they stand forward before the
Synod. They are asked whether they will engage to present more abundant
service to God and the Church. On their expressing their determination to do so,
the duties of the office about to be committed to them are read. Then the prayers
of the whole church are offered up for them, and they receive the imposition of
hands. After this they present the right hand to the Seniors in token of sub-
mission and to the Conseniors in token of fellowship, and the other ministers do
the same to them as an assurance of obedience. Finally, after prayer for the Divine blessing, the assembly is dismissed.

V. ORDINATION OF THE ANTISTITES

On the death of one of the Seniors a General Synod is called as soon as possible, or if one has been held lately, then a Particular Synod. However, all the Conseniors assemble and a part of the ministers, the rest sending their votes. [21] On this occasion,

1. A day is first spent in prayer and fasting that God may vouchsafe to “close up the breach” and “show whom He has chosen.”

2. In a special meeting the account of a good bishop is laid before them from the Scriptures, and they are exhorted to seek out such a one from the midst of them, laying aside every other consideration.

3. The assembly having separated, each writes down his vote, as well ministers as Conseniors and Seniors (yet without comparing or communicating their sentiments but each as conscience dictates), and these votes when sealed are collected.

4. The bishops alone in private open the papers and firmly believe that he who is designated by the votes of the majority is pointed out to them by God. However, they do not reveal the result to anyone.

5. At length, on the following day, the company being again assembled and having invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Ordainer coming forward before them announces that their prayers have been heard and that God has now shown in what manner he would have the vacancy of the church filled up.

6. While all are intent, waiting to know who it may be, the Ordainer gives the admonition that whoever may have been nominated should not refuse obedience to God, who calls him, but present himself with confidence in the presence of God and of the Church. Afterward another of the bishops comes forward and calls on the individual by name.

7. Thus called upon, he presents himself and is asked whether he acknowledges and admits this as being truly the call of God? and whether he offers his services to God and the Church promptly and with a willing mind?

8. On expressing his assent, the duties of the office are read over to him from the Apostolic Canon.

9. He then distinctly pledges himself to God and the Church that he will discharge the duty faithfully, sincerely, and constantly.

10. The whole assembly fall on their knees and beseech God that He would ratify in heaven what is done in His name on earth, that He would bestow increase of gifts upon His servant and fill him with the spirit of wisdom and power for so great a weight of cares.

---

1 Amos 9:11; Acts 1:24.
2 Isa. 6:8.
11. The bishops then ordain him with imposition of hands and invocation of the name of God, while the congregation continue kneeling and sing “Come, Holy Ghost,” &c.

12. The ordination being over, the bishops present admit among them this their co-bishop by presenting to him the right hand of fellowship and by a mutual embrace before the whole church, but the Conseniors and ministers promise obedience by pledging the hand both for themselves and in the name of their absent brethren.

13. At length the assembly is dismissed after singing a hymn with joy and thanksgiving.
CHAPTER III

ON THE ORDER OF THE MINISTRATION, OR THE FORM OF PUBLICLY PERFORMING CHURCH RITES

Here will be stated the form used by us,

I. Of preaching the word of God.
II. Of administering baptism.
III. Of receiving novitiates under pastoral care.
IV. Of celebrating the Holy Communion.
V. Of marrying.
VI. Of burying.
VII. Lastly, our customs regarding festivals, fasts, and alms.

I. THE ORDER REGARDING THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Since it is evident that the word of God is the principal part of the ministry, to which the sacraments are annexed only as seals, the ministers of the Unity also bestow their principal care in teaching it, not only on Lord’s-days and anniversary festivals but also on weekdays and as often as an opportunity is afforded by occasion of a funeral, a marriage, or otherwise.

On Lord’s-days, as being entirely set apart for divine worship, the people assemble four times to hear the word of God, twice before noon and twice after. In the first meeting select passages from the prophets are explained, in the second (which we term the great service) passages from the Gospels, in the afternoon from the apostolic writings, and in the evening the Holy Bible is read in order, accompanied with instructive remarks. In the summer season also, beginning at Easter, there is added a fifth meeting at noon when the youth are assembled and for their benefit catechetical instruction is given in as public a manner as possible, and they are also individually questioned. However, the parents and others likewise attend, both that they may return thanks to God after having taken refreshment and that they may be present at the instruction of their children and domestics.

The mode of conducting our sacred assemblies is this. When the people are met, a hymn or sacred song is sung (in the great service and at that in the afternoon also a psalm); then the preacher (after having prayed in the pulpit either with the people or only mentally) reads his text and explains it, reference always being made to the common-place of that week. For all the chief points of

1 Mark 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:17; Rom. 4:11.
2 [The lectionary or assigned Scripture.]
religion are so distributed for explication on the Lord’s-days that they may be
gone through annually, as is shown by the published index of such common-
places and of texts serving to elucidate them and of sacred songs. The object
for which this was prepared was to preserve unanimity throughout the
congregations; not that it should be like a law from which it is not allowed
to deviate; for the faithful pastor is at liberty, as often as he sees necessary,
either to choose for himself a text better suited to the place, time, persons,
and occasions, or prudently digress from the ordinary texts to other points of
instruction, dissuasion, or consolation. It is rather to be regarded as a law that
prolixity in preaching should be avoided so to avoid weariness in the hearers.
Hence it is ordered that the morning meeting should not last above an hour
including the singing, so also that in the afternoon and meetings on week-
days. But in the great service an hour is allowed for unfolding the text from
the Gospels. The meeting at noon and that in the evening are limited to half
an hour each. Each sermon concludes with a prayer followed by the blessing
and singing. [22]

At the conclusion of the noon and afternoon service, the elder youths and
girls remain and are examined by the preacher (one of the elders assisting him
with the former and one of the matrons with the latter) to ascertain what
attention they have paid that day in hearing the word of God and how much
each has retained. Moreover, during the Lent season, on Wednesday and Friday
evening, meetings are held, termed *salva* (from the hymn *Salva nos Jesu, rex
cæli*, “Save us, Jesus, heavenly King”) in which the mystery of redemption is
diligently inculcated, especially upon the young.

The manner adopted by us of preaching the word of God is simple,
without the colouring of human eloquence and chiefly in the terms of Scripture,
*for the preserving of sound and unblamable doctrine, that every man may be
presented perfect in Christ Jesus, in those things which pertain to righteousness,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.1 Hence our ancestors held separate
addresses to the different classes, the beginners, the proficients, the perfect;
also to the single, and again to the married by themselves: which practice it is
evident was not without its advantage.

II. THE FORM OF BAPTISM

We administer baptism according to the example of the primitive Church.
1. The children of believers, a few days after birth, are presented to be
implanted in Christ and the Church by baptism.2

2. A portion of Scripture is read, since all things are sanctified by the
word of God and by prayer, especially the sacraments.3

---

1 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Pet. 4:11; Titus 1:9, 2:7; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 3:17.
2 Gen. 17; Mark 10:13,14.
3 1 Tim. 4:5.
3. It is shown that the covenant of grace extends also to the seed of believers.¹

4. To this covenant the parents and sponsors assent in the name of the infant by a public profession of faith.²

5. At the inquiry of the minister, the parents take certain witnesses who have been invited to be present, as godfathers and godmothers, conferring on them the right of instructing their offspring in the Christian faith and religion, and in all that relates to the covenant entered into with God, and also of admonishing and reproving themselves if they should be found negligent in the duty of training their children. The sponsors also in their turn give assurance of their promptitude in this matter and bind themselves actively to discharge their duty toward the infant to be baptized, especially in case of the death of the parents.

6. Then turning to God the Father, all pray that the child may be cleansed from its native taint by the blood of Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, receive the seal of this internal grace by baptism, and be chosen to the lot of the elect.

7. Prayers being ended, the minister, after giving the child a name according to the choice of the parents, baptizes it in conformity with Christ’s command, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with simple and pure water.

8. An exhortation is then addressed to the parents and sponsors that being mindful of their obligations, they may diligently continue to educate the child until they can present him with credit before the church as being piously trained and well taught and thus commend him to the pastoral care of the ministers. Lastly, the transaction is closed with prayer for the Divine blessing.

III: THE MODE OF RECEIVING NOVITIATES

The pastoral care of our ministers extends only to those who of their own free will submit to the Unity and its order and commit themselves to the care of the pastors, in accordance with the direction of the Apostle, “Feed the flock of God which is among you.”³ Therefore, in order that the ministers may know the persons who are specially committed unto them and may act with the greater boldness and faithfulness toward those who have entrusted themselves to their charge, the rite already used by the primitive Church on the admission of new persons has been revived with advantage among us, since the Apostles received such only as “first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to them by the will of God.”⁴ But when receiving adults who come to us from other quarters, we use

---

¹ Gen. 17:19; Acts 2:39.
² Acts 8:37.
³ 1 Pet. 5:2.
⁴ 2 Cor. 8:5.
different rites from those which we observe on the admission of those born and
baptized among us who have been instructed in the Christian religion.

As to the adults, we inquire: “Why they wish to join us? whether they are
fully convinced of the truth of our doctrine and of the utility of our order and
discipline?” If we find the individual properly acquainted with our doctrine and
discipline, having a correct understanding of the essentials of salvation, and
being of a blameless life, he is at once admitted; if not, his reception is deferred
that he may gain a better knowledge of us and we of him. These persons are not
received publicly (except there be special reasons for it) but in private before the
elders. They are moreover asked:

1. Whether they promise obedience to God in this Church? that is, doing
all the will of God by virtue of the covenant of grace.

2. Whether they are prepared to submit also to the ministers of the Church,
in the place of Christ? that is, giving them full power to teach, advise, reprove,
and punish them, especially in case of gross misconduct.

3. Whether they have made up their mind to suffer ignominy and
persecution for Christ and his truth? “since all that will live godly in Christ Jesus
shall suffer persecution.”

4. They are then admonished steadfastly to adhere to the truth they have
acknowledged even unto death, and on pledging their hand in token of obedi-
ence (not to the minister as a man, but to Christ and His word), they receive
permission to enter into sacred fellowship with the other believers and to have
recourse in all difficulties of conscience, with confidence, to their pastors.

But young persons who have been instructed in the chief points of
religion at home by their parents and sponsors or at school by their teachers
are publicly committed to the care of their pastors in the church before the
celebration of the Lord’s Supper, most commonly at the time of a visitation by
the Seniors, after this manner:

1. The words of Christ are read, “Come unto me, all ye that labour,” etc.,
accompanied with a brief exposition.

2. The boys and girls to be confirmed and who have already been
repeatedly examined by the pastor are placed in order in the middle of the
church.

3. They are then asked if they are willing to renew the covenant made
with God in baptism?

4. On expressing their assent, the chief points of the covenant are
explained after the form prescribed by the Apostle, Titus 2:11-13, and they are
desired openly in the presence of the church to renounce Satan, the world, the
flesh, etc.

---

1 1 John 4:1; Rom. 12:2.
2 2 Tim. 3:12; Acts 14:22.
3 Rev. 2:10; Phil. 3:16.
4 Matt. 11:28.
5 Deut. 29:10; Josh. 24:22; Isa. 44:5.
5. A profession of faith is required of them, at which they repeat the Apostles’ Creed, all together and in an audible voice.

6. Then kneeling down and repeating after the minister, they pray to God that He would forgive the sins of their youth and strengthen them by his Holy Spirit to do all the good pleasure of his will; the same is also done by all the congregation, supplicating on their behalf.

7. After prayer, a declaration of absolution is made to these new members, as also to the whole church, and of their privilege as children of God to partake at the table of the Lord.

8. Lastly, the apostolic rite of imposition of hands follows with the invocation of the Divine name over them for the confirmation of their hope of Divine grace.²

IV. THE FORM OF CELEBRATING THE LORD’S SUPPER

We ordinarily celebrate the Lord’s Supper four times a year, not that it may not be held more frequently, for such is the case when the advantage of believers calls for it, but as a general rule for the sake of unanimity. On the approach of the Communion especial care is taken to prepare for a worthy participation.

1. Two or three weeks previous, notice is given of this sacred rite and all are admonished of their duty to “prove their own selves.” A discourse is also delivered on the object, the dignity, and the use of this mystery with various exhortations; and it is frequently alluded to in the discourses delivered during the intermediate time. Moreover, during these days a careful inquiry and examination is instituted with reference to the state of consciences after this manner:

Before notice is given of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the pastor sends for the civil elders and inquires, “whether the Holy Communion can be appointed for this or that time? or whether there are impediments in the way?” He then inquires into the life and conversation of the members, “whether anything of a scandalous nature has anywhere arisen? or whether they think that anyone requires reproof, admonition, or instruction regarding any matter?” Accordingly therefore as it is settled, the pastor appoints the Communion and institutes his examination of consciences. Every head of a family with his household waits on the pastor on the day and hour appointed, and they are there examined as to “their diligence in attending Divine worship publicly and privately? whether they keep up daily prayers at home preceded by psalmody and the reading of the Scriptures?” They are then questioned, especially the

1 Mark 10:16; Heb. 6:2; Acts 8:16,17.
2 The opinion of Erasmus regarding this rite of confirmation may be seen in the preface to his Paraphrase of Matthew.
3 Heb. 12:12,13; 1 Cor. 1:11.
younger, “how they understand this or that?” Then regarding their conduct, “whether they adorn the doctrine of our God by an honest conversation? how the children obey their parents and servants their masters?” In like manner the masters and mistresses of families, “whether they set a good example to their household? whether they diligently train them in piety and good morals?” On these occasions opportunities readily occur of giving useful admonition, instruction, and warning. If anyone is found to have misconducted himself, the privilege of coming to the Communion is not granted to him unless he seriously promises a thorough amendment. But if he shows himself stubborn, he is altogether suspended and set aside until he yields an obedient neck to the yoke of Christ. This mode of procedure we learn from the example of the Apostles, and the power conferred by Christ on them and their successors.\footnote{2 Cor. 10:4-6,8.}

2. Before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper all are stirred up to spiritual hunger and thirst by the preaching of the Divine word.\footnote{Acts 20:7,11.}

3. Then earnestly imploring the mercy of God in prayer, they seek the remission of their sins and a worthy participation of the Lord’s table.

4. Afterward, in the name of Christ, the forgiveness of sins (absolution) and the right of the children of God is most solemnly declared to them in the name of the most Holy Trinity.\footnote{Acts 13:38,39; 1 John 2:12; 2 Cor. 13:14.}

5. The minister recites the words of the New Testament, breaking the bread in the sight of the people and taking the cup in his hand. He then adds a brief explanation of the words; and having made a declaration of this mystery, according to the mind of Christ, he teaches them not to cleave to the elements but to raise their hearts on high. At length, in the name of Christ he invites to the sacred feast all who are worthily prepared.

6. On this, with due reverence, they approach: first the pastor with the ministers of the church as many as are present, next the magistrates, then the elders or presbyters of the church, and lastly the rest of the people according to age, as first the men, next the young men, and then the boys approach with one or two elders to take care that no disorder may occur or any stranger or profane person should rashly intrude. Afterward the women draw near. When partaking of the holy supper we kneel, not from idolatrous superstition but because the circumstances of the times have not permitted us to act otherwise (for our ancestors in the year 1494 had introduced the Communion standing but were compelled to give it up by the fierce persecution which was excited on that account). Moreover, this very posture of kneeling, being used by pious persons religiously, tends to deepen their devotion itself and their humility before God, and thus the more incites them to “rejoice with trembling.” During this time the whole congregation join in praising God in hymns treating of the Passion of Christ and its saving benefits.
7. Lastly, thanks are offered to God while the whole assembly again fall on their knees. An exhortation is delivered inciting them to the pursuit of piety, and with the Divine benediction the assembly is dismissed in peace, testifying their gratitude by alms to the poor.

V. THE FORM OF MARRIAGE

1. We advise and exhort those who intend to marry to do nothing in that respect without consulting their parents, relatives, and the pastor, who may unite with them in imploring of God a happy result.
2. We entirely prohibit clandestine engagements; discipline is enforced on those who are guilty of them.
3. The marriage ceremony is performed in public; after a passage of Scripture has been read and useful admonitions on the marriage relation founded thereon, the parties are called forward before the congregation present (who are to be the witnesses of these transactions) and are asked whether they freely and lawfully unite. Hereupon they mutually bind themselves to each other with the conjugal vow in an indissoluble bond of love and fidelity. The minister then taking their right hands pronounces them lawful man and wife, and confirms this with the words of Christ, “What God hath joined together let not man put asunder,” in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
4. Prayer is put up to God on behalf of the newly married pair.
5. The parties are encouraged with the hope of the Divine blessing, which is confirmed to them in the name of God; and all present are admonished to observe piety, modesty, and temperance in their feasting, avoiding drunkenness, buffoonery, dancing, and all other offensive things.

VI. THE FORM OF VISITING THE SICK, AND OF BURYING THE DEAD

1. When any of our people is seriously ill, he commends himself to the prayers of the church, which are offered up for him.
2. Being visited by the minister, he is reminded of the need of penitence according to the word of God and then is encouraged to exercise confidence in God’s mercy and salvation. He is, moreover, admonished that whatever it may please God to do with him he should be prepared for it and should rest assured that after having lived in the faith of the Son of God he will not pass from death to judgment but into life eternal.

1 Gen. 24:57,58.  
2 Matt. 19:5,6.  
3 James 5:14,15.  
4 Matt. 25:36.  
5 Isa. 38:1.  
6 Phil. 1:23.
3. If he still wishes to be strengthened in spirit by partaking of the Eucharist, this is not refused him; yet some other persons are invited to join so that it may really be a communion of saints.

In conducting funerals a pious custom is observed, which is also in use elsewhere, namely that the minister and the school-children accompany the faithful dead to the place of sepulture with singing, and then a funeral address sets before those who are present what, out of the Word of God, may serve for instruction, consolation, or warning.

VII. CUSTOM REGARDING FESTIVAL DAYS

Of all festivals we assign the chief dignity to the seventh or Lord’s-day, when we consider it unlawful for anyone to employ in outward or servile works under any pretext, even of Christian liberty, and for this reason: that we acknowledge the institution of it not as a ceremony but as part of moral law, forever inviolable.

1. It was instituted before the written law, even from the very creation, and was proclaimed, as it were, to all the world and consecrated with a special blessing.¹

2. Moreover, in the law we find the seventh day not among the ceremonial institutions but in the very Decalogue, which was published not by Moses, the promulgator of ceremonies and shadows, but by God himself from heaven with the voice of majesty and written by the finger of God on tables of stone.²

3. We do not find any precept so often repeated in the law and the prophets and so strongly insisted on as the precept respecting the Sabbath. It is not probable that God would have attached such weight to a ceremony, especially as he protested that he required not ceremonies.³

4. On no occasion does God so often appeal to his own example as in this precept, namely that because he himself rested from his work, even so should we rest.⁴

5. The anger of God against those who violate this commandment is so great that he will have them put to death;⁵ on the other hand, to those who observe it he promises the rewards of this life and of life eternal.⁶

6. Nor does God conceal the reason he so earnestly desires this of his people: “For,” saith he, “it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that I am Jehovah, who doth sanctify you.”⁷

¹ Gen. 2:3.
² Exod. 10:8,22, 31:18.
³ Ps. 50:8; Jer. 7:22,23.
⁴ Exod. 20:11.
⁵ Exod. 31:14; Num. 15:35.
⁶ Isa. 56:2, 58:13,14.
⁷ Exod. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12.
7. Thus Christ, although Lord of the Sabbath, yet observed the Sabbath, not, indeed, in a pharisaic ceremonial way but so that his custom was to teach the Word of God on Sabbath-days and to perform works of mercy as restoring the sick. In like manner the Apostles, having transferred the glory of the Sabbath to the first day, carefully observed those days by convening, for instance, their sacred assemblies and celebrating religious services in them, so that they often continued their meetings till evening and midnight and have designated it the Lord’s-day.

We hallow the Lord’s-day after this wise:

1. By resting from outward labour, for example from carrying goods, from bearing burdens, and from those pursuits which relate to subsistence, to manufactures, and to trading, in order that the domestics and the cattle may enjoy a season of repose, but still more by shunning the works of the flesh, drunkenness, dancing, gaming, journeys of pleasure, and trifling, also avoiding nuptial festivities, fairs, and markets. It was also the custom, especially when under a magistrate who was patron of the Church, that on the Saturday preceding the Lord’s-day, early before sunset, all laid aside their secular employments and with the approach of evening commenced the sanctification of the day dedicated to God.

2. By occupying ourselves with things spiritual and divine, singing hymns, for instance, and reading the Scriptures on the Saturday evening itself, and on the morning and during the whole of the Lord’s-day frequenting the public services, meditating on and attending to sacred things, not once only or twice but as before mentioned four or five times. For since God has set apart this day from the rest and has claimed it for himself alone as his own sacred day, our ancestors thought it most suitable that the greater part of it should be spent in the common assembly of believers, and that this would be the means of avoiding unnecessary journeys, idleness, and other follies, which God prohibits on his holy day. So also we disapprove of the revision of income, the making up of accounts of receipts and expenses, and demanding payment of debts, so that all may rather be forgetful of the things of time and learn to meditate on those which are eternal.

We also celebrate the memorial of the principal works of Christ on certain days, namely his Advent or Nativity, his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, the Sending of the Holy Spirit, also his Circumcision, Epiphany, and Transfiguration. We moreover celebrate the days of the Apostles and of some

---

1 Mark 2:28.
3 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 20:7-10.
4 Rev. 1:10.
5 Exod. 20:10; Neh. 13:15.
6 Exod. 20:9-10; Isa. 58:13.
7 Isa. 58:13.
8 Heb. 4:9.
martyrs, but these we regard with the same Christian liberty as others do, for
the sole purpose of keeping alive their memory and as an occasion of placing
before our people examples of constancy and patience in the martyrs and of
giving suitable admonition thereon. For as soon as the sermon and prayers are
over, all return to their work as on other days.

RITES REGARDING PRAYER DAYS,
OR DAYS OF PUBLIC AND SOLEMN SUPPLICATION

Four times in the year or once a quarter, we observe certain days for the
purpose of stirring up a penitential spirit in the people. At these seasons, on the
Wednesday and Friday, the assembled people are diligently instructed out of the
Word of God, according as the times may require. Confession of sin is then
made, and the mercy of God, with depreciation of judgment, is implored that God
would grant peace, faithful labourers, and pious nursing fathers to the church
and would direct with the spirit of wisdom and counsel those whom he had
given, that he would convert and raise up the fallen and the straying, and
having compassion on unbelieving nations would add them to his Church. And
since these are called by us days of penitence, the people are admonished to the
exercise of true repentance, fasting, sobriety, and almsgiving, and that through
the whole day they should be addressing their prayers and sighs to God in
their houses, and more especially at the several hours of noon, afternoon, and
evening each head of a family should be thus engaged with his household.

RITES OF FASTING

1. We teach that fasting consists not in the selection of food but in
abstinence from all eating and drinking and also from sleep for a certain time,
till evening at least, unless the health of anyone cannot sustain it.

2. We do not adopt this from a notion of merit or as a part of divine
worship but as a means of mortifying the flesh and of exciting humility and
contrition for sin and that the mind may be more calm for meditating on sacred
things.

3. We are accustomed to appoint such fasts
1st. On solemn prayer days as already mentioned.
2nd. At the approach or outbreak of any danger from war, pestilence, or
persecutions, even of a single congregation or person.
3rd. When ministers of the church are to be chosen and ordained at the
Synods.

---

1 Heb. 13:7.
2 Exod. 20:9.
3 Matt. 5:44,45, 9:38; 2 Thess. 3:1.
4 Zech. 7:5; Isa. 58:5.
We are moreover encouraged in the observance of fasts of this kind by
the exhortations as well as by the examples furnished in Holy Writ.¹

ON ALMS

1. The members bring these as voluntary oblations to the church
treasury according as they think fit for the benefit of the poor believers.²

2. But as everyone is at liberty to do this whenever he pleases, general
collections are usually made only on days of prayer and fasting and Holy
Communion and in case of some unusual necessity.³

3. These alms are expended and distributed among the poor according to
their individual necessities, whether by feeding and clothing them in the poor-
houses or otherwise rendering them help in sickness or old age.

4. Each congregation has its alms by which it relieves its own poor; but if
any congregation should be unable to do this adequately it is assisted by other
congregations so that, according to the Apostle’s direction, “the abundance of
some may supply the wants of others.”⁴

5. Not only does that which is put into the treasury of the church pass
among us under the name of alms, but also all works of mercy, that is, every
service of humanity in the name of Christ which a man discharges to his
neighbour by furnishing meat, drink, clothing, dwelling, medicine, and other
necessaries of life.

6. To the exercise of this charity the people are excited by the doctrine of
the Scriptures, which exhort and instruct us thereupon and promise thereto the
most ample rewards.⁵

¹ Joel 2:12-15; 2 Cor. 6:5; Ps. 35:13; Jon. 3:7-8; Acts 13:3.
³ 1 Cor. 16:1.
⁴ 2 Cor. 8:14.
⁵ Deut. 15:7,8; Prov. 19:17; Matt. 6:3,4; Luke 14:12-14; Heb. 13:16.
CHAPTER IV
CONCERNING THE DOMESTIC ORDER OF THE MINISTERS

The pastors of the brethren, according to ancient custom, bring up under their roofs a number of youths of good parentage who have previously been well educated and who, there is reason to hope, will give their attention to the ministry. These they imbue with scriptural knowledge and piety, and train in good morals, modesty, and obedience. Sometimes they also employ them in external labours, as they do likewise the elder acoluths, deacons, and new ministers, as well for the purpose of avoiding sloth as from the pressure of want. These occupations proceed in regular order so that there is a fixed hour for rising, for prayers, for engaging in study and labour, for dining, supping, and retiring to rest. At the signal of the bell all rise, and having washed and dressed, praise God on bended knees. Then each betakes himself to reading and meditation on sacred things. About an hour after, a signal is again given, and now all the household meet, including the domestics. After the singing of a psalm or hymn, a portion of Scripture is read and expounded and useful remarks are deduced from it. And they are encouraged to praise God and call upon him, either by the minister or the one whose turn it is on that day (for all who are destined for the ministry are employed in these exercises, even the boys). Prayers being over, everyone returns to his work, reading or writing, or committing to memory, or even hearing Latin lessons where schools are kept. Some of these are afterward sent out to foreign schools at the expense of the parents or Seniors, according as either necessity may require or their own narrow means may admit. The afternoon, being less suited to study, is usually spent in manual labour till suppertime, excepting by those employed in teaching the young people of the place. Yet at two in the afternoon they again assemble to prayers after the apostolic example, and when these are over, all return again to their work. The time after supper is spent in practicing music or psalmody. At length the evening prayers conclude the day, and each retires to rest, nor is anyone allowed to sit up at night much less leave the house. Hence the house is closed in good time, and the keys are delivered either to the master or to the overseer for the following day. The time at dinner or supper is spent neither in silence nor in trifling conversation, but the boys recite from memory either moral precepts or the catechism or hymns or psalms, which they have been directed to learn, but the elder ones repeat some portion of the Scripture, in order. During

\[1\] 2 Kings 6:1-4; 1 Cor. 4:12.
\[2\] Ps. 55:17; Eccles. 3:1.
\[3\] Ps. 5:3.
\[4\] Ps. 88:13, 119:147,148; Prov. 8:34.
\[5\] Acts 3:1.
the time that is left, a theological discussion is proposed, usually having reference to the Bible lesson for that week, in explaining which everyone tries his powers, beginning with the youngest and concluding with the pastor. Sometimes also, instead of this question, something is directed to be read. They all have the domestic duties distributed among them in order that all, from their youth up, may be accustomed to attention and to a sort of skill which is requisite for their fitly going through the duties of their vocation and that no one may eat the bread of idleness. To the elder youths the more important duties are committed, to the younger such as are of less importance. The latter, for instance, have charge of the articles for washing, laying the tables, sweeping the rooms, &c.; the former of the house door, the cellar, the granary, the gardens, the clock, the library, and general cleanliness, so that no one may be left without exercising his attention for his own and the common benefit.

**OFFICES HELD IN COMMON BUT WHICH REQUIRE REGULAR ARRANGEMENT ARE TWOFOLD**

Some *domestic offices* are common to the ministers, deacons, and acoluths, which one discharges one day, a second on the next, a third on the following, and so on to the last. You may call him an overseer or guardian of order. His duties are, first to give the signal for rising with the bell, second to light the lamp, third to lead the singing before prayers, fourth to read the Scripture, fifth to deliver the exhortation, sixth to note if anyone is absent from prayers or study, seventh to furnish a question for discourse at dinner (which is likewise to be understood as applying at supper and at evening prayers), eighth and lastly at night to lock up the house and to deliver the keys to the pastor or whoever has charge of them.

There are other *offices of a public nature* belonging to those only who are employed in delivering addresses to the people, that is on weekdays. This also is conducted in order, so that each may be able to prepare himself in good time and all may gain proficiency in the gift of prophesying.\(^1\) It also promotes this object, that whenever there are members in the vicinity who on account of either distance or illness cannot easily attend the common assembly, the pastor sends out deacons or acoluths (either every Lord’s-day, or at stated intervals) to declare the word of God to them. This is of advantage to both: to the people, who are by this means nowhere neglected, and to the candidates for the ministry, who are everywhere and constantly receiving improvement. Hence all are accustomed to apply themselves to the study of the Sunday\(^2\) texts in good time, at least three days before. For on Saturday, after morning prayer, the pastor inquires of each what he has thought upon the text of the morrow? They then state their ideas, first the acoluths, afterward the others in succession. Finally,

---

\(^1\) Num. 11:29; 1 Cor. 14:31.
\(^2\) [*Dominical*: also meaning Scripture of or relating to Jesus Christ as Lord.]
the pastor concludes and points out what they all should chiefly have regard to
or what they should urge (according to the diversity of times and occasions), also
whither everyone should go and where he should teach.

All who have given their services to our fraternity are also bound to
submit themselves to the following regulations in order to avoid various evil
consequences, that is, not to attempt anything on their own judgment as by
going abroad (without the knowledge of the pastor or assistant) or by purchasing
articles for their private use or by sending anywhere letters of importance or by
giving up any part of their property to another person or by taking the money of
others in charge, much less by lending themselves to the signing of contracts,
wills, bonds, or, in a word, to any political transactions.

The juniors, that is, the boys and the acoluths, are examined every week
in what they have done and learned and how they have conducted themselves.
Moreover a re-arrangement of all the domestic duties is made annually about
the beginning of the year, not only because the inmates are often changed and
transferred, as occasion requires, from one pastor to another, but also that there
may be a renewal of good order and that the love and observance of it and a
conscientious pursuit of it may be stirred up in all. At this time also an account
is usually given in of the author which each has studied during the year and the
profit thence derived, and some new task is assigned for the following year.

Lastly it is a rule of the Unity that a pastor or assistant does not leave
home without necessity, and, as far as practicable, without the consent of his
senior, and that when on a journey he stop and lodge only at the houses of
Brethren unless there are none near. By them such guests are hospitably
received and entertained according as their means allow. On the other hand,
addresses delivered at family prayers or to the people from the pulpit are the
returns which the hosts receive, and these serve to prove and to confirm their
harmony in doctrine and in spirit, so that in this respect also the footsteps of the
primitive church are followed.¹

¹ Acts 13:15.
CHAPTER V

CONCERNING THE DOMESTIC ORDER OF THE HEARERS

The ministers of the Brethren do not confine the observance of order to themselves but are also instrumental in inducing the people of their charge to follow the same in their own families. Namely

1. That according as God hath called and placed each individual, whether as the father or mother of a family, or as free or in service, so each should maintain his station in the fear of God.¹

2. That all should allot time for divine worship, morning, noon, and evening, before and after meals, by praying to God, singing hymns, and reading the Scriptures.²

3. That they should not forsake the sacred assemblies but diligently attend them and bring their household with them.³

4. That they should carefully instruct their children and domestics in religion, especially on the Lord’s-day by diligently inquiring at dinner time and supper how much each one has observed of what had been spoken at church.⁴

5. That the heads of families should be careful to set their households a good example and lead them to imitate it.

6. Worldly diversions of drunkenness, dancing, swearing, loose discourse, gambling, and the like they should neither tolerate in their houses nor allow elsewhere.

7. They should daily employ their servants and children in suitable work and teach them to shun idleness as the poison of youth.

8. All should be most observant of piety according to the moral law.

9. Fathers of families should not frequent taverns and public houses nor spend their time in idleness, drinking, or playing nor be absent from home at night, but being occupied with their proper business, keep watch over their dependants.

10. They should avoid disreputable and suspicious modes of gaining a livelihood, altogether abstaining from interest and usury on account of the threatenings of God against it and the various iniquities concurring therewith.⁵

11. No one should hastily appeal to courts of law, but disputes which arise between those who are partakers of the faith should rather be amicably settled either before the lay elders or else by chosen arbitrators.

¹ 1 Cor. 7:20; Eph. 4:1.
² 1 Tim. 2:1, 4:5; Deut. 8:10.
³ Heb. 10:25.
⁴ Deut. 6:7; Eph. 6:4.
⁵ 1 Thess. 4:6; Exod. 22:25; Ps. 15:5.
12. The custom was also observed by our ancestors that members journeying from home on business, or such as were about to take up their residence in another place, made it known to their pastors, requested the prayers of the church, and received a testimonial to other pastors, so that if they should anywhere need advice, instruction, or assistance they might be the more surely credited. And for the due maintenance of order, neither ought the members betake themselves to the ministry of other pastors nor pastors to minister to members of other congregations, lest this irregular freedom should be abused to the serious injury of discipline.

The people, being accustomed to such goodly regulations, keep themselves without reluctance within these bounds, and if any irregularity occurs it is reduced to order by timely admonition.¹

¹ 1 John 4:6; 2 Cor. 7:15; 1 Cor. 16:16; 2 Cor. 2:9.
CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING VISITATIONS

It is certain that no order, however skilfully designed, can endure without careful supervision.\(^1\) For this end it is that the teacher often inspects his scholars, the master his workmen, the general his soldiers; since it is impossible that men should be held to their duty without exhortations and cautions. And on this account there has been introduced into the Unity of the Brethren not only the inspection of the members exercised by the pastors, as already mentioned, but an inspection of the pastors themselves and of all the congregations by the bishops; and this after the example of the Apostles, who visited and confirmed the churches which they had founded.\(^2\)

Regarding the visitations of the congregations, we have therefore to state,

1. When they usually take place.
2. By whom they are conducted.
3. What are the proceedings of the visitors.

1. The visitations are so arranged that every congregation may be visited once a year, which usually takes place in the spring, summer, or autumn, but in winter also if the necessity of the case demands it, as when a pastor is to be presented to a congregation or some scandal requires to be checked. If there be not visitors enough for all the congregations during the same year, those which appear to have less need of visitation are deferred to the following year.

2. The charge devolves properly on the bishops, who each visits the congregations in his diocese in company with the Conseniors, his colleagues. But if he is prevented by lawful impediments, he sends his Conseniors, after the apostolic example.\(^3\) One or two of the neighbouring pastors also are usually associated in the visitation to create greater confidence in the people, who are thus witnesses of the unanimity of their pastors in regard to all that is done. The pastor to whom a visitation is intended receives timely notice.

3. Some duties of the visitors are ordinary, others extraordinary.

Those of an ordinary kind are either transacted privately with certain individuals or publicly in full assembly as soon as the visitors reach the place or before Saturday noon.

1. They make inquiry of the pastor himself in private, as to the state of his congregation? and what there is which chiefly requires attending to? They then inquire regarding himself, whether he is “a faithful servant” and “a work-

---

\(^1\) Eph. 4:16; Heb. 12:11.
\(^2\) Acts 14:21,22, 15:36,41.
\(^3\) 1 Thess. 3:1,2.
man that needeth not to be ashamed”\(^1\) whether he “gives attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”\(^2\) whether he sets a pious example?\(^3\) Next, in what manner he maintains himself? in what manner he brings up the students of the Unity? how each of them conducts himself? what obedience he pays? what proficiency he makes? Afterward regarding the people, whether the flock is increasing or decreasing (when they require to inspect the catalogue)? whether he has any scandalous persons among them to whom some means of correction should be applied? in what manner the lay elders, male and female, and the almoners perform their duties?

2. The assistants of the pastor and the students are sent for (ministers, deacons, and acoluths) and are asked whether they continue firm in the purpose of their dedication? what progress they are making in piety? whether they cultivate concord and brotherly love?\(^4\) in what manner they are treated by the pastor? whether they suffer any serious want? how much time is allowed them for study? and how they employ it? what each has done during this time? (Sometimes also works are furnished by the visitors for the reading of the pastor as well as of the family under his care; hence it is made a subject of inquiry whether this has been done and with what benefit, and some other task is prescribed to be read, written on, and gone through.)

3. Then the lay elders are called up, of whom, after a salutation has been delivered to them in the name of the absent Seniors and the churches, inquiry is made regarding the pastor: In what manner he discharges his office? whether he edifies the flock in word and deed? whether any offence has arisen either through him or any member of his household? in short, whether they have any thing to mention which the interest of the congregation requires to be publicly taken in hand?

4. The female elders also are sent for and spoken with as to the manner in which they discharge their office in attending to the younger sisters? whether there exist among any of them hatred, envyings, disagreements, evil speaking, extravagance in dress, &c.?

5. The inventories also of the furniture of the minister’s house are usually examined in company with the ædiles and the lay elders, and the buildings likewise, whether anything is allowed to go to ruin?

6. When the magistrate is of the same faith as the congregation the visitors wait upon him also and ascertain if he is satisfied with his pastor?

The public duties of the visitors in the church are:

1. By preaching the word of God to kindle fervent love to God.

2. By the administration of the Lord’s Supper to confirm all in the faith and love of Christ.

---

\(^1\) 2 Tim. 2:15.
\(^2\) 1 Tim. 4:13.
\(^3\) 1 Tim. 4:12.
\(^4\) Col. 4:8.
3. By various exhortations, adapted to existing circumstances to excite them to the ready discharge of their duties hereafter.

Extraordinary labours of the visitors occur only occasionally and are either the reconciliation of parties at variance which the pastor was not able to effect (if, for example, a dispute should arise between the congregation and the pastor or the magistrate), or the initiation of a new minister (concerning which ceremony, see above), or the introduction of a new pastor, or the ordination of lay elders, or lastly the dedication of a new church.

I. THE ORDINATION OF LAY ELDERS

When the ordination of elders is needful, it is performed in the following manner. All the men are directed to assemble early before the evening meeting, when after some words of advice from the visitors, they freely elect to the office those whom they consider worthy. Those, therefore, who are marked out by plurality of votes are called forward by the visitor after the evening meeting, and the duties of this office are read to them in the hearing of the whole assembly; when they promise fidelity and diligence to the antistites of the Unity, the pastor, and their congregation, both by making a declaration to that effect and by giving their hand in token. And that they may be able to discharge their office of overseers also in church, they are accommodated with special seats for the more convenient oversight of the congregation.

Similar is the proceeding when the female elders are elected, except that it takes place in presence of the women only.

II. DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

The dedication or consecration of churches is conducted amongst us in the following manner.

1. The congregation being assembled, a hymn is sung, when the visitor declares for what purpose this house has been erected, viz., that it may be a Bethel, “a house of God and a gate of heaven,” and therefore that it is now to be given over and consecrated to that use.

2. He reminds them that the one, only, perfect Sanctifier of all things is God, who says: “I am Jehovah that doth sanctify you,” and concerning the tabernacle raised by Moses, “I will sanctify the tabernacle,” and “it shall be sanctified by my glory,” and to Solomon regarding the temple when built, “I have heard thy prayer, and I have hallowed this house to put my name there.”

2 Exod. 31:13.
3 Exod. 29:43,44.
4 1 Kings 9:3.
Therefore he exhorts that they should all now direct their eyes to God and most humbly pray that he would put his name here.\footnote{Deut. 12:5,11.}

3. The whole assembly then fall upon their knees and in prayer in imitation of Solomon\footnote{1 Kings 8.} fervently call upon God.

4. An admonitory address is delivered with a solemn charge that this sacred place be used for no other purposes than holding their sacred assemblies and for the sacred worship of the most holy God in the presence of the elect angels.

5. And since all things are “sanctified by the word of God and prayer,”\footnote{1 Tim. 4:5.} the preaching of the Divine word follows and then the Holy Communion.

6. Finally the name of God is again invoked and the solemnity is concluded by prayer for the divine blessing to rest on all who shall wait upon God in this place with an upright heart.

\footnotesize{\footnote{Deut. 12:5,11.} \footnote{1 Kings 8.} \footnote{1 Tim. 4:5.}}
CHAPTER VII
ON THE ORDER AND DEGREES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

It has been stated in what manner the custody of order is upheld in the Unity by various kinds of inspection; moreover, reason tells us that it is not enough for a gardener to notice his plants or the teacher his scholars or the master his workmen, but that the first must prune away suckers, the second correct faults, the last reprove and punish the indolent. Hence church discipline is necessary, by which the irregular may be corrected, the disobedient put to shame, the obstinate punished, and finally that corrupt and offensive members may be cut off and cast away. Thus Christ says, “Salt is good. Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another,”1 also, “if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault,”2 also, “if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee.”3 And the Apostle bears witness that discipline is the test of the children of God: “If ye endure discipline,” (says he) “God dealeth with you as with sons. But if ye be without discipline, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”4

For these reasons from the very commencement of our Unity all who have entered into this holy fellowship of faith and charity have submitted to this divine and most salutary institution, even discipline: the highest and the lowest, the Seniors and Conseniors, the ministers and the assistants, all the members, noble and of the commonalty, even the magistrates themselves. They regarded it as a preventive of sin to know that there were those watching their life and conversation who had authority to warn and recall them from a perilous course.5 Hence up to this time all in the Unity are subject to discipline, from the child to the old man, from the subject to the civil ruler, from the acoluth to the bishop; and this, both for their own benefit and that of others. For a man, whoever he may be, is liable to fall.6 But that he may not continue in this lapsed state and thus languish, die, and perish, a remedy, even discipline, is provided, as we have seen, by Christ, the chief Physician of souls; and when it is carefully administered it is of advantage not only to him who is the subject of it but also to others. Hence the Apostle: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”7

---

1 Mark 9:50.
2 Matt. 18:15.
3 Matt. 18:8.
4 Heb. 12:7,8.
5 Ps. 119:71, 141:5; 2 Cor. 8-10.
6 Prov. 24:16; James 3:2.
7 1 Tim. 5:20.
The degrees of discipline, agreeably to Christ’s direction,¹ are three:

1. **Private admonition or reproof.**
2. **Public reproof and exposure.**
3. **Excommunication and entire exclusion from the church.**

1. In the first place, all are here taught that this right is conceded by Christ, nay, is enjoined as a law *that each one should exercise a care over his brother, and if he sees him commit a fault he should admonish him of his error in a brotherly spirit.*² Hence they advise that a brother should venture to admonish a brother, and a sister a sister, more especially the senior his junior. But if anyone should pay no attention to such admonition, someone else of greater authority must be called in who may take up the matter with the individual in the spirit of kindness, which office belongs especially to any one of the lay elders or to the pastor himself.

### 2. CONCERNING THE Milder PUBLIC DISCIPLINE

If no amendment follows, he is brought before the lay elders and is repeatedly admonished to acknowledge and forsake his sin. If he yields, he is dismissed with admonition and encouragement; but if he continues refractory, his conscience is bound with the power of the keys, and he is suspended from the communion of the Holy Supper until he returns to himself and amends his conduct.

Such is the mode of proceeding in lighter cases, but in cases of more serious and public transgression it is different. For the guilty person is summoned before the pastor and lay elders as often as is necessary, and his sin is fully set before him. If he acknowledges his guilt and is filled with real shame and sorrow he is encouraged with the hope of pardon;³ yet on certain conditions, namely

**First** that he exercise himself for some time in true penitence, calling upon God to forgive him his sin, crucifying his flesh, and exhibiting a real amendment of life. This exercise is continued either till the next Communion or still longer according as the fruits of penitence are perceptible, while the congregation during this time neglects not to offer up prayers to God on behalf of the fallen.

**Secondly** that he afterward make satisfaction to the congregation which he had grieved by publicly asking pardon of all who had been offended, either doing this himself or through the minister, and thus reconcile himself to it. But if his sin is not at all publicly known, his asking pardon before the lay elders is sufficient. All which regulations have this object in view, that the convinced

---

¹ Matt. 18:15,&c.
² 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13.
sinner may be brought to a more thorough repentance, and to a more cautious conduct hereafter, while the rest may learn wisdom through another's experience.¹

3. OF THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THE INCORRIGIBLE

If the crime is of a very flagrant nature or the guilty party shows contumacy instead of penitence, recourse is had to the extreme power of the keys, excommunication, which Christ and the Apostles direct to be used in the church.² By this the sinner is totally excluded from the communion of the saints and is delivered unto Satan unless he repents. The excommunication is publicly pronounced, and all the people, in order to put, as it were, their seal to what has been done in the name of Christ, exclaim Amen, not without the sighs and tears of the pious. These obstinate sinners, being excommunicated, are accounted as publicans and heathen, as Christ has commanded. Yet the hope of grace is not denied to anyone, if by sincere repentance he is willing to return from the way of damnation into that of salvation. And if they perceive that the grace of repentance is given to anyone, they rejoice; and after sufficient probation of the sincerity of his repentance, they again publicly receive him, to the joy of the whole congregation.³ And thus they administer the second part of the keys, by opening heaven to the penitent.

This ecclesiastical discipline in all its degrees is enforced neither in a hypocritical nor in a violent and tyrannical manner, but as the Apostle has advised, “in the spirit of meekness”⁴ and with deep compassion,⁵ “in the name and authority of Christ,”⁶ “to edification and not to destruction.”⁷ It is enforced on delinquents but removed from penitents.

¹ 1 Tim. 5:20.
² Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5,&c.
³ 2 Cor. 2:7.
⁴ Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 4:21.
⁵ 2 Cor. 2:4-7.
⁶ 1 Cor. 5:4.
⁷ 2 Cor. 10:4-6, 13:10.
THE CONCLUSION

These then are the rites of our ecclesiastical order, which as being derived from the word of God our ancestors adopted and have observed now for two centuries in much persecution and suffering, but to their own great profit and that of the people of God. And in like manner we, since we have hitherto discovered nothing that is more conducive to our edification, endeavour with the help of God to observe them. If any other churches are pleased to adopt the same plan of order or a similar one, we are not disposed to grudge but rather to commend them; only let the apostolic maxim be attended to: “Let all things be done decently and in order.”¹

May our merciful God establish, strengthen, and perfect that sacred order of things which is pleasing to himself, both among us and everywhere throughout Christendom, to the wholesome edification of His church and the praise of His name! Amen.

¹ 1 Cor 14:40.
NOTES

N.B. To the Notes taken from the “Annotations” of Comenius, his name alone is attached.

NOTE [1]
Order. Comenius quotes Origen and Chrysostom on the importance of order and then adds: “Why give more quotations? There are none of the ancients who do not speak in praise of order. It is plain that any particular church is the less liable to be broken up the more order it has within it, although it be weak enough in other points, as may be seen in the Greek and Roman churches. It is therefore a matter of astonishment that some persons in our time, on account of the abuse of order, have come to dislike order itself and wish to have its bonds removed and to try this in their churches — certainly with no better reasons than if a person should desire to remove the props and pillars of some large house in order that they might not assume conspicuous positions in comparison with the timber or walls.” — Comenius.

NOTE [2]
“No individual was the founder of our church but many pious men acting together. For Hus had been removed; and as to Rokycana, they were not able to induce him to add his authority to a secession from the prevailing confusions, although he had recommended it. They therefore acted on the Apostle’s injunction, ‘endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that there may be one body, etc.’ Eph. 4:3,4, and adopting their title solely from the sacred motive, that they might give the name of Fraternal Unity¹ to this their gathering in the Unity of the Spirit.” — Comenius.

NOTE [3]
“No one can doubt that apostolic traditions are the purest fountains and the customs of the primitive church the nearest streams from them. No one, therefore, ought to doubt that those things which have crept in since the Apostles should be reduced to these rules and that the better things are nearer the fountains.” — Comenius.

In their Apologia² the Brethren speak of their adherence to the following three canons, which Rokycana had borrowed from Hus and had often repeated, although he declined to act upon them: “There are three things,” said he, “on which the whole existence of a pure Gospel depends: first and before all things,

¹ [Unitas Fratrum or the Czech name, Jednota bratrská.]
² [Of 1532, published initially in Czech, followed by an incorrect German translation in 1532 with Zwinglian tendencies, followed by a corrected German printing in 1533 (with a preface by Martin Luther), and finally an official Latin version in 1538, printed at Wittenberg by Georg Rhaw with the Confession of 1535.]
the holy Scriptures; next, the example of the Lord Christ; lastly, the vestiges of
the primitive church, after which all should strive who are desirous of their own

NOTE [4]
“In this life no one is perfect, yet all ought to aim at perfection, according
to the direction of Christ: ‘Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is
perfect’ (Matt. 5:48), and other like exhortations often occurring in Scripture.
Hence the Apostles termed those hearers perfect, who had advanced far beyond
the rest (1 Cor. 2:6, and 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:14, etc.), and there is no
temerity in imitating their aim and style.” — Comenius.

NOTE [5]
“Other reformed churches also have their civil seniors, men who assist
the pastors in the preservation of church discipline; but the employment of
matrons for this purpose has obtained only among the Brethren. This, as the
places cited show, was in imitation of the apostolic churches, and experience
has proved its value. Grotius remarks that in the ancient church there were
matrons who encouraged the other women to a virtuous life, and whom they
termed πρεσβύτιδες [eldresses], and because they sat before the other women in
the churches προκαθηµέναι [those sitting before others]. The eleventh Canon of
Laodicea set them aside, for they had continued up to that time, as Balsamon
observes. But why set aside? For what abuse? We have seen none among us.
Whatever serves for edification ought to be restored.” — Comenius.

NOTE [6]
“The juniors among us were trained with peculiar care to render prompt
obedience to all the commands of their superiors, in order that being accust-
tomed to live according to the will of another rather than their own, they might
the more readily understand the fundamental principle of Christianity —
abnegation of self — and might become the better qualified for hereafter
directing others. For he knows not how to govern, who has not learned how to
obey.”

Acoluths (Ἀκόλουθοι). “Every pastor was required to have under his roof
and to board and train one or two youths of good disposition and abilities, with
the consent (more frequently at the urgent request) of the parents. When the
antistites came round on their visitation, they either confirmed these youths in
their purpose and transferred them to their own care for the better opportunity
of improvement, or if anyone did not appear suitable for the work, they sent him
away. For the antistites could sustain these students of the church in greater
numbers and aid them with greater means in the prosecution of their studies.”
— Comenius.
“When a youth has given sure indications of his suitableness and deliberately and of his own accord (liberrimē) chooses a function so useful yet the most difficult of all to discharge, and is eager to dedicate and consecrate himself entirely to it, we first of all receive him into the order of the subdiaconate. This we do also after the example of the primitive church, which, it is certain, observed this order and custom in selecting and constituting ministers, and when so constituted committed to them these most sacred functions.” — Apologia [of 1532], Lydii Waldensia, p. 199.

Dr. Buddeus, in the preface to his edition of the Ratio, has the following observations on the arrangement regarding acoluths: “I am particularly pleased with the placing of youths intended for the service of the church under the domestic discipline of pastors, that they might not only be trained by them in learning, but in conduct befitting the teacher or head of a congregation. These they called acoluths, who both had certain duties in the church and were always present at the more important functions of the pastors, and so were gradually trained for the pious and prudent discharge of them. With us the students of theology are indeed furnished with learning, but preparation for ecclesiastical functions is generally passed over in silence; or if precepts are delivered in theological schools, they commonly go off in mere speculations and are of little use as regards practice. And no wonder. For most of those who teach theology never had the charge of a church, nor ever felt what it is to have the care of souls; and what they have derived from books or from what others say, they inculcate with much confidence on their pupils. But as a politician, a soldier, or a merchant deserves credit for practical skill in politics, war, or mercantile affairs, not according to the books he has read, but according as he shows his qualifications in action, so I regard as worthy of the name of theologian and of the office of pastor, not the man who has pored over many works on pastoral theology or many compendiums of moral theology, but who, having first experienced in himself what it is to be a true Christian, has afterward been an attendant on wise and faithful pastors in the discharge of their functions, whether when the rude are to be admonished or the tempted lifted up or the afflicted consoled or the wandering brought back, and has learned by practice to discharge these duties with prudence and propriety. Such was the object of this truly excellent institution of the Brethren.”

NOTE [7]

“There were ordinarily two bishops in Bohemia, two in Moravia, and one (sometimes two) in Poland.” — Comenius.

NOTE [8]

“Lasitius remarks on our custom in regard to the publishing of books, c. 22: ‘Nothing appeared except it was first examined by persons selected for this purpose from the Seniors and ministers, and for this reason: because the
things which several sensible men had thoroughly considered were the more reliable. Nothing would be there that was false to mislead the reader, nothing that was violent to offend him.’ To this I add that we have not been wont to occupy ourselves with polemical writing, partly because it did not comport with our simplicity to engage in disputes, and partly because little advantage was seen of this practice in others but rather the most palpable damage. For what tragedies has not this rage for disputation occasioned! And with what result? Discords have not been put down but increased; matters of strife have not been lessened but subdivided into the most minute minutæ, so that there is no numbering the questions and sub-questions. But when will that saying of Hilary be found attended to, ‘God does not call us to heaven through subtle questions’? And I wish they had not, among these subtleties, been forgetful of that which in the work of faith is of first importance, mutual charity and meekness, which Christ commanded us to learn of Him, promising therewith rest for the soul, Matt. 11:29. But our times have seen strange things. How men, professing evangelical truth, have acted toward each other in a way contrary to evangelical meekness? And into how many bitter factions they have split? Hence ours would be neither leaders nor followers of parties, thinking it better to aim at being good than learned, and, as Seneca says, ‘content with that more rustic title,’ rather to promote the conservation of peace, concord, and order among themselves than to attack others.

“They indeed wrote Apologies in defence of the truth of their doctrine and the blamelessness of their life, yet without invectives against others and only with a view of procuring peace. Nor always when they were attacked, sometimes taking silence as a shield; nay, even some apologies were suppressed after being printed, and of such I have in my possession more than one, of solid character. But when they had to do with an insolent antagonist who could abuse but had not the power to hurt, they preferred to punish his insolence with silence and to let his quarrelsome sheets become food for the moths.” — Comenius.

NOTE [9]

“Jerome says, ‘It was universally decided that for the removing of schisms and dissensions, one should be chosen from the presbyters to preside over the rest. But if the district round a city was so large and the number of pastors so great that the bishop could not attend to all the duties, chorepiscopi were appointed to officiate for the bishop in minor affairs.’ Nothing, therefore, was done by our people, even in this matter, without the warrant of antiquity.” — Comenius.

It is worthy of notice that Æneas Silvius (afterward Pope Pius II) in his letter to Cardinal Carvaial giving an account of his visit to Tabor and of the disputations he held with some of the Taborite ministers, refers to this statement of Jerome in support of his argument that the church has power to make new regulations for itself: “Sic prelati, presbyteri, episcopi, quos olim
Hieronymus æqualis fuisse potestatis affirmat” [thus the prelates (ministers), presbyters, and bishops, who in former times Jerome affirmed to be equal in power].

After giving from Comenius the narrative of the consecration of bishops of the Brethren by the Waldenses, Jablonsky remarks on the moderation of their views regarding episcopacy. “From this account of the transaction,” says he, “the prudence and moderation of this new Bohemian Church shine forth; for without finding fault with any other on the mode of church order and policy, it adopted that which appeared most conformed to primitive times, condemning no other yet preferring the most ancient. For it had in view not only what might be done legitimately but also with the greatest safety; and it carefully guarded, lest while separating from the Romish church it might seem to have left the Catholic church. It is of the same mind to this day, and although but few instances have occurred when the Unity of the Brethren, which was furnished with its own nursery (seminarium), and this sufficiently stocked, has employed pastors of foreign ordination, yet there have been some such instances where she kindly received into her bosom and set over her congregations presbyters of foreign ordination, driven to her by persecution or exile. This also took place in the Anglican Church up to the year 1661, when re-ordination was required by Act of Parliament.” — Letter to Archb. Wake, §. 10.

NOTE [10]
“The rule prohibiting the divulging of conferential matters was strictly enforced, being needful for the maintenance of respect for its decisions and to prevent the inconveniences arising from gossipping, so that persons have been removed from the conference for having prematurely made known its plans.” — Comenius.

NOTE [11]
“The place for holding the Synod was fixed upon by the bishops; whereupon he in whose diocese it was informed the pastor of the place and told him in what manner the things required were to be provided. The other pastors were invited only a few days before and enjoined to silence.” — Comenius.

NOTE [12]
“The Seniors stopped at the house of the pastor, the rest with pious citizens in the vicinity who received them with joy as angels of God.” — Comenius.

NOTE [13]
“Propositions are presented by the Seniors to the pastors for their consideration, and they are also themselves advised to collect matters for deliberation, and to present proposals respecting them to the Seniors. That this may not be done confusedly, they elect out of their number a president and a secretary. The
deacons and acolyths are not admitted to their councils; but lest meantime they should be idle or roam abroad, some work is given them for reading on which they are afterward examined. Someone is also appointed by the Seniors to direct them and keep order.” — Comenius.

NOTE [14]

Synods. “Something should be said on the order of asking and delivering the opinions of the members and of thence forming the conclusions, in order that we may remark in these respects also the traces of good order alike in the assembly of the pastors and of the Seniors.

“1. The president moves that the business for which they are met should be commenced, in the first place by collecting the propositions so that they may have in view from the beginning the points calling for deliberation.

“2. These being collected, someone announces the heads of the subjects, giving explanations of them if required, when that which demands attention is fixed upon and that which is less pressing is set aside for consideration hereafter.

“3. The former are first taken in hand for discussion, all the members being asked their opinions in order so that each may open his mind in as few words as he can and support it with reasons.

“4. The opinions are delivered in order, proceeding from the younger to the elder, not the contrary, so that the president speaks last. And experience has proved that this order is more suitable than if it should take place otherwise. For when the leading men give their opinions first, it is scarcely possible to secure freedom from prejudice and that the questions be properly considered by all. For the younger men, after having heard the sentiments of their seniors, are either influenced by the idea of their wisdom and do not narrowly scrutinize the matter, or although entertaining a different opinion, are hindered by a feeling of modesty from stating what they think, out of deference to the authority of their elders. On the other hand, should a young man advance something of importance, which had not occurred to the minds of his seniors, there is a two-fold disadvantage, for the seniors may feel it unbecoming to retract their opinions, or if the suggestion be adopted, it places a dangerous snare in the way of the young men. These disadvantages are avoided by our practice. For while the juniors know that they are to state what they think, they get a habit of reflection and of engaging in business with attention and reverence and with silent prayer to God, and each is at liberty freely to utter what he thinks. The elders, on the other hand, can take up and improve whatever has been advanced to the purpose, while at the same time their own authority remains unchallenged.

“To prevent the discussions from wandering no one is allowed to speak on any other subject than the one in hand until it is brought to a conclusion.
Nor is a speaker allowed to be interrupted unless he be too diffuse or speak with bitterness, when he is checked by the president.

“The secretary notes down the judgments of all and the arguments by which they are supported, adding also his own if he differs in any respect from the rest.

“Lastly, the president sums up, weighing the different opinions, whether they tend to the same point or go in opposite directions, and whether they can be reconciled. If they can, he shows how one common conclusion may be arrived at, so that all the reasons adduced hold good. If they cannot, he points out the two results, and explains the reasons that make for each. In case the matter be of great importance, he presents it for renewed discussion, as to the reasons which may be thought to preponderate, and the manner in which disadvantages may be warded off.

“Therefore everyone is again permitted to speak freely yet in order and in few words, and by comparing the different reasons together, to reduce the points of difficulty until each is content. Then the conclusions, as being common to all, are inserted in a book. The effect of this rational proceeding is that all can see the mind of the whole Church, can speak of matters as with one mouth, and can act with unanimity.” — Comenius.

NOTE [15]

Comenius quotes the following from the minutes of an old Synod:

“It had been observed that some brethren, with a view to appear gentlemanly, had got into habits of facetiousness. This must be amended.”

“The Apostle forbids jesting to all Christians, and much more should it be shunned by the teachers themselves. ‘Trifles,’ says Chrysostom, ‘are trifles in the mouth of a layman, but blasphemies in the mouth of a priest.’

“The frequenting of fairs and banquets is prohibited.”

“Ministers should not meddle with political matters nor matrimonial matches, nor practice medicine.”

“A pastor should not possess more than 200 thalers; what he has above this sum, he should give to pious uses and to the poor.”

“All should avoid the pomp of titles, being satisfied with the lovely appellation of Brethren.”

“No one should interfere with his advice in the drawing up of wills, but everyone should have his own will ready.”

In a letter of the Brethren to Doctor Augustinus Käsebrod, A.D. 1508, who had, among other things, ridiculed the poverty of their ministers and their having to labour for their subsistence, they say: “We will briefly remark, let him consider the commencement of the primitive church, whether there were many of the noble, powerful, wise, or rich in these offices and what sort of living they had, and this ought to shut his mouth. We are not ashamed of our priests because they labour according to their ability with their own hands to procure
their food, for both apostolic teaching and example so lead us, and indeed we
would rather see this, than that giving away to indolence, they should frequent
taverns and follow vanity and vice.” — Fasciculus Rerum Expetendarum et
Fugiendarum, fol. 88.

NOTE [16]

“This intimate examination of the conscience was very strict, in imitation
of the Prince of pastors when examining Peter, John 21:15,&c. Thus an occasion
was given to the candidate for the ministry of thoroughly proving himself,
whether he proposed to follow Christ from pure love or for a livelihood? John
6:26. Whether he sought the flock or the fleece? Whether he was ready to impart
to his hearers not the Gospel of God only but his own soul also? 1 Thess. 2:8.
This last trial of the conscience was sometimes so affectingly conducted that
instances are not wanting of persons having shrunk from the office through
alarm of conscience or their age or inexperience, feeling more disposed to work
out their own salvation than to be engaged in caring for that of others. In the
last place, they are encouraged with the Divine promises and enter upon their
high vocation with fear and trembling.” — Comenius.

NOTE [17]

“The form of the testimonial is after this manner: ‘Venerable brother in
Christ, the Bishop, we bear witness before God and this church that these men
are of worthy parentage and education, and that their lives have hitherto been
honest and unblameable, also that having been examined by us they have been
found to be sound in doctrine and faith and of a sincere intention to serve Christ
and the church. We therefore request, in the name of the congregations they
are to serve, that you would confer on them the pastoral office, by the power
committed to you by Christ and the church, and that you would confirm them in
the same.’ The Ordainer replies: ‘This testimony of yours, given in the presence
of the church of Christ, is admitted; and your petition shall be granted in the
name of God.’” — Comenius.

NOTE [18]

“Between this engagement on the part of the candidates and the subse-
quent ordination, a solemnity usually intervenes which ought not to be passed
over in silence. The Ordainer, again addressing them, says, ‘Beloved brethren,
that you may entertain a firm hope of Divine assistance, listen to Christ, the
eternal High Priest, interceding for you, who when about to sanctify himself as a
victim for the sins of the world most fervently commended to his Father all his
followers who should proclaim this redemption to the nations, &c.’ Then another
of the bishops solemnly reads to them from John 17 that last prayer of Christ so
that it is seldom heard without tears.” — Comenius.
NOTE [19]

“Books of Ritual, that is, forms for conducting the sacred ministry, called Agenda, are not with us appended to the catechetical books so as to come into the hands of the people, but are printed separate and given to the pastors alone, not privately in a corner but in the presence of the church, which rite is here described. On the death of a pastor these books are returned into the hands of the Seniors.” — Comenius.

“In their sermons a certain series of subjects is gone through which they have received from their ancestors, so that all the things of which no Christian should be ignorant are reduced to twelve articles of the Catholic faith, the explication of which may come round in the course of a year.” — Lasitius, De Ecclesiasticā Disciplinā, &c., Fratrum Bohemorum, cap. 13.

NOTE [20]

“If ever in this age the saying of Christ obtained, ‘As the Father hath sent me, so send I you’ and ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,’ we are assured that it obtained among us that no one sought for the ministry without being called, no one sought for a flock without being sent, and no one looked for a vocation or a mission save from those who had themselves been both called and sent. Hence there was no congregation among us where the lord of the place or the magistrate fixed upon the pastors, but they committed this care with confidence to the principal pastors of their souls. This was in accordance with the practice of the apostolic church in which the suffrages for the persons to be ordained were received from the people, but their destination, when ordained, was for the consideration of the elders, Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 1:5. Hence Grotius remarks, ‘There is no appearance in the whole New Testament history of pastors having been chosen by the people.’

“This itching to choose for themselves teachers after their own tastes (2 Tim. 4:3) did indeed attempt to creep in among us, but with no good issue. For those mutual canvassings were among the causes of relaxed discipline and neglected order. I remember an illustrious Baron who acknowledged with sorrow his error in this respect. For he had refused to receive the appointed pastor and importunately urged that another might be assigned for him whose gift of eloquence he greatly admired, but finding the man elated with self-confidence and harsh manners, he petitioned for his removal, declaring he would not again hesitate to acquiesce in the judgment of those to whom he had entrusted his own spiritual interests and whose care is the common edification.” — Comenius.

NOTE [21]

“That the superintendents of the Unity should be chosen by the pastors alone, not by the people or by the magistracy, need not seem strange; for it was the practice of the primitive church. This passage of Jerome is well known: ‘At Alexandria from the time of the Evangelist Mark until the bishops Heracles and
Dionysius, the presbyters always named as bishop one whom they elected out of their own number and placed in a higher degree.’ When in process of time this custom was departed from and the people obtained equal suffrages with the clergy in the election of bishops, ‘Nazianzen desired that the election might be committed solely or chiefly to the clergy, because thus less harm would come upon the Church than if the votes of the wealthy and powerful should prevail.’

“The question may be put whether, although at the time of the Apostles the Church was in its birth supported by no secular power (as was the case with the Church of the Bohemian Brethren), God did not afterward fulfill his promises and give kings and queens as nurses to the Church (Isa. 49:23)? And is not the same right to be conceded to them over the Christian Church as was exercised by the Hebrew kings over their Church and its officers? Grotius, who thoroughly treats of this question, answers it in the affirmative, ‘so that the Church be not deprived of her liberty.’

“Another question is, whether pastors elected to the episcopate should be ordained by some special rite? I reply: What harm, if new labours are commended to them by a new solemnity with invocation of the Divine name? We have an express example in apostolic men who when they had set apart certain of their number for a special work of the ministry (to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles) added a new ordination. Acts 13:3.” — Comenius.

NOTE [22]

“Regarding the psalmody in our congregations, we may quote the testimony of the learned and pious Esrom Rudiger: ‘I know not,’ says he, ‘if the congregations of the Bohemian Brethren do not in this respect surpass all others. For I do not know any who sing more or so much of praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and doctrine; I will add also, who do it better, &c.’ The same writer, in his preface addressed to Baron Zerottin, says: ‘You also sing all the things which are the subjects of instruction, and your hymns are like homilies,’ alluding to the Apostle’s admonition, Col. 3:16. He continues: ‘Such songs are the voice of the congregation, which thus expresses itself in union, one and all, and in this lies the efficacy of prayer.’ For all sing, young and old, as with one mouth.” — Comenius.

NOTE [23]

“The objection of Illyricus Flacius, to the rite of confirmation, that it is a repetition of baptism, is of no weight. ‘I see nothing wanting to baptism,’ says he, ‘except water.’ I answer, ‘Then you don’t see baptism, to which water is essential, but a renewal of the covenant.’ This rite we adopted for the sake of our own conscience and to set aside the scruples excited by the Anabaptists among themselves and others. They oppose pædobaptism, because infants thus initiated into the Church either do not know or forget or do not understand that they have entered into a covenant with God; but allege that this cannot happen
when, being grown up, they knowingly and willingly devote themselves to Christ. This is granted, but a remedy is applied, the rite of confirmation, derived from ancient times before it came to be abused and which is still suitably observed in some churches. Then young Christians about to be admitted to the Holy Communion, when renewing the covenant entered into at baptism, with their own mouth renounce the flesh, the world, and Satan, and promise entire obedience to God.

“This is beautiful and in accordance with God’s command to Moses that he should teach anew the people, who were children or infants when present at the promulgation of the law and had no recollection of what took place, and that he should renew the covenant between God and them when they were about to fight with their enemies, Deut. 5:29. Mention is often made of renewing the covenant with those with whom it had been entered into. Why should not this have been a type to us and our children?” — Comenius.

NOTE [24]

The moderation of their views in regard to ceremonies is worthy of notice. In the Apologia of 1532, they say: “Whatever there is in those customs and rites, and human ceremonies which is not opposed to the Gospel, to sacred Scripture, and to Christian charity, we observe, and with all care we avoid giving offence in matters of this kind, but more especially lest we should, on account of them, be the occasion of any schism or disturbance; since to fight for ceremonies is no aid to piety, but rather irritates men’s ill-will and multiplies their sins, and particularly so when this occurs for things indifferent.” — Apologia, p. 103.

NOTE [25]

[by Benjamin Seifferth]

The following references to the Ratio, made by two distinguished divines of the English Church, will find a suitable place here, as showing their judgment of the ecclesiastical system therein set forth.

Bishop Hacket, in his Life of Archbishop Williams, has this passage:¹ “Among the poor distressed Protestants in Bohemia, many of them were braziers by occupation. These sent some messengers from them with a petition to his Majesty (James I, 1621) that they might transplant a colony into England (London especially), men, wives, and children, and their full families; signifying that they would bring with them to the value of two hundred thousand pounds in coin and materials of their trades; that their substance and labour should be subject to all customs and taxes for the king’s profit. They desired to live in a body of their own nation, and to serve Christ Jesus in that church discipline which they brought with them from Bohemia. Though they had inclined his Majesty to admit them, being a great swarm of people, and bringing wax and honey along, yet the Lord Keeper” (Williams, then Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of

¹ Part I. p. 96.
Westminster) “diverted it, from the example of the Dutch and French that were settled among us. These brought commodious manufacture into the realm; but they brought a discipline with it, according to the allowance of their patent, which was a suffocation of the temperate crisis of our own church government: which peril of distemper would be increased by the access of the Bohemian congregation; a great forecast to keep our hierarchy sound from the contagion of foreigners. And he was more religious to keep the Church of England in its sabbath and holy rest, than to help out the neighbour’s ox that was fallen into the pit. Yet I have somewhat to allege in behalf of the Bohemians. I have in my little library a book printed 1633 (eleven years after the Lord Keeper appeared against their petition) called Ratio Disciplinæ ordinisque Ecclesiastici in Unitate Fratrum Bohemorum. Their platform in that piece comes so near the old Protestant Church of England, above all the Reformed, that, for my part, I wish we had had their company.”

Our other quotation is from Dr. Maurice’s Vindication of the Primitive Church and Diocesan Episcopacy, in answer to Baxter.1 “Before the Lutheran Reformation was that of the Bohemians, not that of the Calixtines only, but of the Unitas Fratrum Bohemorum, whose churches were governed by diocesan bishops, and whose discipline was so far from being impossible, notwithstanding the dioceses were very large, that they were perhaps the best governed churches in the world. Bucer, speaking of this government says, ‘Hæc vero est cœlestis potius quam ecclesiastica in terris hierarchia.’ [This in truth is more a heavenly than an earthly church order.] And Calvin was so taken with this government as well as discipline, that he looked upon their governing and ordaining pastors as no inconsiderable blessing: ‘Neque vero parvo est estimandum, quòd tales habent pastores a quibus regantur et ordinentur’ [nor is it to be considered a small thing that such people have pastors by whom they are regulated and governed]; and these were their bishops, as may be seen in the account they gave of themselves in Ratio Disciplinæ, &c., printed at Lesna [Lissa], 1633, and afterward at the Hague by Comenius, 1660. Whoever would know more of these episcopal diocesan churches may consult Lasitius, or the short account of Comenius, the then only remaining bishop of those churches.”

The following passages are extracted from Comenius’s treatise, De Bono Unitatis et Ordinis, Disciplinæque ac Obedientiæ in Ecclesiâ rectè constitutâ vel constituendâ [Concerning the Good of the Unity and Order, Discipline, and Obedience rightly constituted or being constituted in the Church].2

After adverting to the excellencies of the church constitution of the Brethren, he remarks, § 12, “Does anyone ask, what I am seeking by commending these things? I answer, if they are good and suitable for adoption, there

---

1 Page 373.
2 This was addressed ad Ecclesias, nominatim Anglicanam [To the Churches, Anglican by name. Comenius’s Latin treatise was translated by Joshua Tymarchus and published in London in 1661 under the title An Exhortation of the Churches of Bohemia to the Church of England.]
is nothing invidious in desiring that they should become common property. If it is well with my own soul, I cannot but say with Paul: ‘I would to God that all were as I am, except the bonds of my affliction [Acts 26:29].’”

§ 14. “I know that it is in human nature to be pleased with what is ours, and to think little of others in comparison. The cedars value themselves on their loftiness, the oaks on their strength, the palms on their elegance, the figs and vines on their fruits; but the bramble is despised for its weakness, and is trodden down by the very beast of the field. (Judg. 9). Be it so: let the Bohemian nation be the least of the nations, and the Bohemian Church the least of the churches, and the Bohemian Fraternity the least portion of the Church of its nation. What then? Is there nothing which the great may learn from the little? Listen to Christ, the Eternal Wisdom. What did he, when the great Apostles were contending about the precedence of greatness in the kingdom of heaven? He called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matt. 18:2,3.) Let the application be made, and you, great doctors, will be your own teachers. For I hope you all believe that Christ is yet with us even to the end of the world, that He sees our doings and hears the constant disputes about superiority, and that He must needs have some little ones whom He may set in the midst of the great ones and direct to be an example to others.”

We close with the concluding words of Comenius’s *De Bono*, in which that noble-spirited man breathes forth the earnest yearnings of his heart on behalf of the Church of the living God. That portion of the visible Church to which he had himself belonged, and whose memory he so fondly cherished, seemed destined to be obliterated, but the cause of Christ on earth was not the less dear to his heart, and he longed for the reunion in the bonds of harmony and love and order, of those who held the common faith:

“Come, Lord Jesus! Renew us according to thy good pleasure. Restore to thy Church the bond of unity; restore the beauty of order; restore reverence for thy sceptre; restore fervour of spirit, that the kingdom of God, as in times past, may suffer violence. Or if this last age is incorrigible, remove the stage of the world, and commence that blessed reign, when there shall be unity without distraction, order without confusion, love without intermission, and God shall be all in all, forever and ever. Amen.”
INTRODUCTION

[by Benjamin Seifferth]

It is an interesting fact that there existed in Bohemia and Moravia a reformed Christian Church, distinguished for the purity of its faith and worship and for its scriptural constitution and discipline, in the century previous to the commencement of the Reformation, sixty years before Luther began his work. It was formed among the more spiritually minded of the followers of Jan Hus after the subsidence of those internal commotions which were consequent on the death of that faithful martyr of Christ. These men felt in conscience bound to withdraw from the Calixtines, who, with the exception of giving the cup to the laity in the Communion, retained the unscriptural dogmas and usages of the Papal church. Having obtained permission from George Podiebrad, the Regent, they retired in the year 1457 to the Barony of Lititz, situated in the northeast of Bohemia. Here they were served in the word and sacraments by ministers who had seceded from the Calixtines or from the Papists. Their numbers were soon increased by the addition of persons from the neighbourhood and from other parts of the country who were like-minded with themselves. At an early period of this association it assumed the name of “Unitas Fratrum,” or Unity of the Brethren; rules were laid down for its regulation, and elders were chosen to preside over it; and as congregations in connection with it were formed in other places, Synods consisting of the elders, ministers, nobles, and representatives of the people were held from time to time. And thus long before the adoption of the Ratio Disciplinæ, that measure which was to give them a distinct existence as a church, they had already declared their adherence to those doctrines of the Christian faith which they maintained to the last and had laid the foundation of that church constitution presented here.

It was in the year 1467, ten years after their secession from the Calixtines, and after they had in vain inquired for a church holding the faith in its purity with which they could unite, that the resolution was solemnly taken by them in Synod assembled to seek episcopal ordination from a congregation of the Waldenses at that time situated in the neighbouring country of Austria. For this purpose three of their number were deputed to visit the Waldenses, who welcomed them as brethren and willingly acceded to their request.¹ The episcopal element, which was now introduced, led to a modification of their church constitution. The bishops had seats in the governing Council (in which the

senior bishop always presided), while the office of ordaining to the different degrees of the ministry was of course discharged solely by them. The whole organization presented a combination of presbyterian and episcopal government. The executive power was lodged in a board, consisting of bishops and presbyters, while the ultimate authority lay in the Synods, which were convened at stated intervals.\textsuperscript{1}

That the system described in the \textit{Ratio} must have been gradually developed, according as circumstances required, may naturally be supposed. Yet in all its main features it existed at an early period. Before the close of the fifteenth century it had assumed in its outline that definite form which is delineated in the \textit{Ratio}, although, in regard to the minor arrangements, alterations were subsequently introduced. Anton Gindely, a Roman Catholic historian, fixes the period of this permanent settlement at A.D. 1496-1500.\textsuperscript{2}

When the Brethren sent their several deputations to Luther, it was this that especially struck with astonishment the great Reformer. “These Brethren,” said he, “do not surpass us in purity of doctrine, but they far excel us in the regular discipline by which they blessedly govern their churches: and in this matter they have the greater praise, which it behooves us to yield to them for the glory of God and for the sake of truth.”\textsuperscript{3}

The outlines of this system may be found in those confessions of faith which on several occasions the Brethren presented to their rulers or other men of authority for the purpose of removing prejudices and warding off persecution. In the confession addressed to King Vladislav in 1504 and two letters in answer to the charges of a certain Doctor Augustine Käsebrod in 1508, traces of their church regulations are met with.\textsuperscript{4} But they are, of course, brought out with much more prominence in those documents intended for a friendly eye. When the Reformation began to shine on northern Germany and some of the neighbouring lands, the Brethren found among the newly awakened minds men who could sympathize with them in spiritual matters and who felt an interest in becoming acquainted with the regulations as well as with the doctrine of their church. Their \textit{Apologia} [of 1532; see note, page 55 above], which was presented in the year 1533 to the Protestant nobleman George, Margrave of Brandenburg,

\textsuperscript{1} Comenius remarks, with reference to the adaptability of the constitution of the Brethren’s Church to different forms of political government: “It suits a monarchy, because it has a bishop; an aristocracy, because it has a senate; and a democracy, because it has a synod. Hence Calvin and Bucer, who both highly approved of the order of the Brethren, when invited to diverse places for the reformation of churches, so applied it severally as suited the political government. Calvin instituted presbytery in the republic of Geneva, and Bucer left the episcopate in the kingdom of England. Whether they acted rightly in thus separating the things which work better in union, is shown by the strifes which have thence arisen, and which have with so much injury been agitated among brethren.” — \textit{De Bono Unitatis}, § 8.

\textsuperscript{2} Gindely, \textit{Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder}, vol. i, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{3} Lasitius, \textit{De Ecclesiasticā Disciplinā, etc. Fratrum Bohemorum}.

\textsuperscript{4} These documents seem to have been first printed in a folio volume entitled \textit{Fasciculus Rerum Expetendarum et Fugiendarum}, A.D. 1535, Coloniae.
with a preface by Martin Luther, gives an account of all these matters in full accordance with those presented to us in the *Ratio*.

It may be taken for granted that a system so complete and which had been so long in operation would at an early period be found described in written documents. And so besides the references at less or greater length made to it in the confessions of the Brethren, already adverted to, we have in a printed volume by Lasitius a minute account quite in correspondence with the one before us and which was drawn up by him about the middle of the sixteenth century. A Polish noble and member of the Reformed Church, Lasitius derived his knowledge of these matters from the Brethren themselves, some of whose written documents he was permitted to consult. In addition to this, we have the testimony of Wengiersky in his *History of the Slavonic Churches* that at the Synod of Koźminek in 1555 in Lesser Poland, which consisted of representatives of the Lutherans and Reformed as well as the Brethren, the latter laid before the Synod their confession with the *Apology* and the *Ratio Ordinis et Disciplinarum Ecclesiasticæ*, that is, the “Account of their Church Order and Discipline.”

The preface to the *Ratio*, now reprinted, relates the circumstances that gave occasion to its being laid before the States General of Bohemia. The object of the ruling power was to unite the several religious communities holding Protestant opinions under one board of general superintendence. The powerful Calixtine party, which was originally bitterly opposed to the Brethren and had instigated or seconded the persecutions that were directed against them, had been happily influenced by the reformation in Saxony. Many of them renounced the Compactata or Articles agreed on at the Council of Basle, called themselves “Evangelicals” (the designation of the Lutherans), and in short adopted the Protestant faith. Stransky, one of themselves, informs us that this conduct was laid hold of by the Roman Catholics, who pleaded that they had thereby forfeited their claim to toleration, so that in 1568 King Maximilian was induced to issue an edict against them. In 1575 Maximilian came to Prague and held a convention of the States General, when the leaders of the Reformed faith complained of the treatment to which they were subjected and requested permission, in order that they might free themselves from the charge of heresy, to present to the king their confession of faith. This the king declined, alleging that there were several sects among the Protestants, and he should like to see them join in one confession. This was the occasion of bringing fully about that good understanding between the Calixtines and the Brethren, toward which some steps in advance had already been made. “They mutually recognized each other as brethren, and of the household of faith, and unitedly sought and obtained of the king the publication and confirmation of the confession they had recently drawn up. Peace and liberty were granted by the royal word to all who held to that

---

1 *De Ecclesiasticâ Disciplinâ Moribusque et Institutis Fratrum Bohemorum Memorabilia.*
2 *Systema Historico-chronologicum operâ Adriani Regenvolsci. a.d., 1652, p. 77.* The author’s name was Wengiersky, which is given in the second edition.
confession.” The king put off to another time the request for permission to constitute an ecclesiastical consistory and to establish a college, giving, however, a solemn promise that it should be attended to either by himself or by his son Rudolph, whom he had already designated his successor.

Maximilian died the following year, and although Rudolph partook of the liberal [sic] spirit of his father, upwards of thirty years elapsed before the permission was granted. The cause of this delay is to be traced to the influence of the Romish party and especially the intrigues of the Jesuits, who even induced the king to renew the edict of Vladislav against the Brethren as Picards. Subsequently, when he was about to make the required concessions to the other Protestants, the Jesuits led him to propose that the Brethren should be excluded from the privilege. This attempted injustice was, however, successfully resisted by the States General, and on July 11, 1609, letters patent were issued by the king granting “the free exercise of their religion to all who receive the sacrament in both kinds, that is, the Evangelicals and those who adopt the Bohemian confession of faith, and conceeding to them the Lower Consistory at Prague for superintendence of their united churches in conformity with their own principles and without any interference by the Archbishop of Prague,” moreover restoring to them the direction of the University of Prague. The king declared that this decree shall be binding on all his successors and that all former laws or edicts in opposition thereto shall be null and void.

The States [the nobility], who were entrusted with authority to carry out the privileges thus conceded, at once set themselves to the task. In constituting the Consistory they resolved that it should consist of twelve members, of whom three should be ministers of the Calixtines or Hussites, three of the Brethren, and the same number of the other Protestants, together with three professors of the university. To this board was committed the general superintendence of the ecclesiastical affairs of the entire kingdom, exclusive of the Romish church. One main object they had in view was to bring about unity of spirit and action among the different bodies they represented; uniformity, however apparently desirable, was not considered attainable, at least for the present.

Meanwhile, the Brethren claimed permission to retain their own church discipline and government. On being required to give a precise account of it, the Brethren presented this *Ratio Disciplinæ*. The claim of the Brethren was granted,

---

1 Republica Bohemiæ, a M. Paulo Stransky descripta, c. 6. § 9.
2 Comenius, Historia, § 118.
3 Maximilian was wont to say “those who attempt to rule men’s consciences, seemed to him to invade the throne of God.” Comenius, Historia Persecutionum, c. 39.
5 So-called, because it was situated in the lower part of the city.
6 The decree is given at length by the Jesuit Balbinus in his Miscellanea Historica Regni Bohemiæ, vol. i, p. 120.
7 Comenius, Historia, § 122.
and it was agreed that their senior bishop should hold the next place to the administrator or president of the Consistory as long as its diversity continued.\(^1\)

Such is the history of the little work now reprinted, containing an account of the ecclesiastical order and discipline of the Ancient Church of the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren. It is difficult to conceive how any statement of this nature could be presented to us with a stronger guarantee for its authenticity and truthfulness.

With regard to the church system which is here unfolded, few thoughtful Christians, it is presumed, will withhold their admiration of it, whatever hesitation they may entertain as to the expediency of some of its parts except under peculiar circumstances. There is evident throughout a simple adaptation to the arrangements of the early church, as they are discernible in the New Testament and in the post-apostolic period.\(^2\) Experience proved that this system was well suited to the people amongst whom it was in operation and to the state of things which then existed. It was greatly conducive to the end which all church rules and institutions should have in view — the promotion of holiness, the building up of believers in faith and charity and good works.\(^3\)

The character of the Brethren in a moral and religious point of view bore witness to its excellence. Even their enemies at times made this concession. One Lielensten, a Dominican, who wrote against them about the middle of the 16th century, after adducing various charges ingenuously says: “I grant that in regard to morals and life they are good, in speech truthful, and in brotherly love of one mind.”\(^4\) A Romish writer of later date, the Jesuit Balbinus, remarks: “Many of them had the sacred Scriptures off by heart, and all were wont to boast that they were well acquainted with their meaning.”\(^5\) And the historian Pubitschka, a Romish priest, when endeavouring to account for the continued existence and even increase of the Brethren notwithstanding the edict of Vladislav for their extirpation, ascribes it to the protection of some of the nobles, “whom they had

\(^1\) Ibid. The articles drawn up for the direction of the Consistory are found in Reformation and Anti-reformation in Bohemia, vol. i, p. 197, &c.

\(^2\) With regard to human institutions, they openly avowed the principle on which they acted. “When we find them useful, or not hurtful, and not contrary to the word of God, we willingly conform to them, as sacred feasts and fasts, and other things of that kind; so that we may avoid giving offence, and study peace with all men.” — Ad Doctorem Augustinum, A.D. 1508.

\(^3\) Comenius relates that in one of the principal cities of Germany he was in conversation with the head clergyman of the church, when the latter said, “that he had long wished to know whether a little book which he had once read, entitled Ratio Disciplinæ, &c., contained a true account of that church or merely the idea how a church should be constituted? I inquired why he doubted the fact? ‘Because,’ said he, ‘I cannot imagine that there now exists such a church in the world.’ I answered that it was a history, not a fiction, that they were actual regulations. ‘Happy men,’ exclaimed he, ‘who had both the keys! We have lost one. Although stewards in the house of God, we are compelled to leave everything open, to lock nothing up, and so have to give what is holy unto dogs, and to cast pearls before swine.’”

\(^4\) Camerarius, Historica Narratio, p. 98.

won over by their apparently innocent conduct, by the love of righteousness which they expressed, by their alleged innocence and true faith, which they grounded precisely on the Gospel.”

Camerarius, a learned Reformer, and an intimate friend of Melancthon’s, whose life he wrote, drew up a brief history of the Brethren about the year 1570, toward the conclusion of which he gives his estimate of their character. Among the rest, he says:

Certainly they who will give their mind to the subject and confess the truth, will not be able to deny that the church of Christ among them (the Brethren) is maintained, administered, and conducted not only in truth and reality, but also visibly, so that those who find fault with them scarcely seem able to avoid the suspicion of envy and calumny. No ambition will be found among them, no aiming at superiority. There is no quarrelling or altercation, no malevolence, persecution, or strife against others. There are no traces apparent of avarice, cupidity, lust. They make no gains either by usury or by taking advantage of another person. There is among all an entire and striking affection of sincere charity to all. There is no place for idleness and slothful inactivity. They render whatsoever services they can, and to whomsoever. They permit no discord to arise in their Union, but at once put it down. Injuries and violence inflicted on themselves they sustain with fortitude; nor are any indications of anger or indignation given by them, either in the way of resistance or self-vindication.

In that remarkable era of the universal church’s history, the Reformation, when the conviction of Gospel truth spread with unparalleled rapidity and men of God eminent for their learning and intellectual power appeared in various countries as though prepared and called forth for the crisis, it was to be expected that the spectacle of a reformed church already in existence would speedily attract their attention. And such was the case. Not only the Reformers of Saxony with Luther (already mentioned) at their head, but those of Switzerland came in contact with the Brethren, eagerly sought information regarding their church, and in one way or another expressed their opinions of it. Hence we have the testimonies of Luther and Melancthon, of Bucer, Calvin, Capito, Musculus, Beza, Peter Martyr, Peter Paul Vergerius, Ursinus, Chrytaeus, and others, all concurring in the same judgment. Such a combination of testimonies, spontaneously rendered by the distinguished men of all parties, is of itself sufficiently striking and cannot but give a deep impression of interest and importance to the fact on which it bears. From these various testimonies we can do no more than select a few extracts.

1 Franz Pubitschka’s Chronologische Geschichte Böhmens, VI Theil, Iter Band, p. 276. See also Usher, De Christianorum Successione et Statu, c. 6, § 15.
2 Camerarius, Historica Narratio, p. 142.
3 These testimonies will be found at large in one or another of the following works: Camerarius, pp. 273-281. Lasitius, pp. 154-173. Comenius, Historia, passim. “Confessio Fidel” of the Brethren. Vitebergiae, A.D. 1573.
Luther writes to the Brethren in 1523: “Although you are aware that you are regarded as the worst of heretics, I bear witness that in the Gospel you are far before any that I am acquainted with. I know that by making this avowal I shall gain myself ill-will, but to that, thank God, I am now accustomed.”

The “Confessio” [of 1535; see www.MoravianArchives.org] and Apologia [of 1532] of the Brethren were published at Wittemberg in 1538 [see note, page 55 above] under the eye of Luther, who wrote a commendatory preface. In that preface he says, among other things:

I have found among them (the Brethren) one great wonder (miraculum), almost unheard of in the Romish Church, namely that laying aside the doctrines of men, they meditate according to their power day and night in the law of God, and that they are skilled and ready in the Scriptures, whereas the very Doctors themselves among the Papists utterly neglect the Scriptures while boasting of a title derived from them.

At a subsequent period he declared that, “since the times of the Apostles no Christians have appeared whose church has approached more nearly to the apostolic doctrine and rites than that of the Bohemian Brethren.”

Bucer, in his reply to Latomus, remarks: “That is certainly the best method (viz. of church reform) which is observed by the Brethren called Picards, who alone of all Christendom have, with purity of doctrine, also retained the discipline of Christ.”

Calvin, in a letter ad Bohemum, writes:

I heartily congratulate your churches, on which the Lord hath conferred so many excellent gifts in addition to purity of doctrine. For it is no slight blessing that they have such pastors to govern and direct them; that they are so distinguished for good morals and order; that they are formed on so excellent a plan, and are furnished with so commendable a discipline, which may be justly called the only bond for maintaining obedience. We, to our grief, know its value by the want of it, and strive for it in vain.

Hieronymus Zanchius thus writes to his friend Crato:

The Brethren in their work of reformation seem to have aimed, not as many do, to throw down and tear up from their very foundation all that is found in the Romish Church, but to construct their churches after the true and apostolic, and therefore salutary rule of piety, rejecting what is bad, correcting what is faulty, and retaining that which is good: which is the true and legitimate way of reforming churches. Would that we had all done the same, after the example of these worthy Brethren! We should then have among us more piety, peace, harmony, and charity (by which God is glorified and the kingdom of Christ promoted), and we should discern more of these excellencies in others.

---

1 Quoted by Lasitius (p. 156) from Lutheri Opera, Tom. ii.
2 Comenius, Historia, § 82.
3 P. 106 of appendix to the edition of the Ratio, A.D. 1633.
4 This letter was written while Calvin was residing in Strasburg. The quotation is from Comenius, Historia, § 80.
5 Crato was physician to the Emperor Maximilian.
6 Lasitius, De Ecclesiasticâ Disciplinâ, &c., p. 164.
Lasitius, before mentioned, having made himself personally acquainted with the congregations of the Brethren in Bohemia, drew up an account of them and sent it to Theodore Beza in the year 1570. In returning the manuscript, Beza writes: “There are many things in your narrative which I greatly admire. Would that there were any hopes of their being introduced into our own churches! Some things, however, seem to me not suitable for imitation, as being rather adapted to peculiar times and circumstances.”

Our object in giving the preceding details has been to prepare the reader for an intelligent perusal of the Ratio. We have explained its origin and purpose, and shown from the testimony of eminent and unbiased contemporaries the nature and the operation of the system which it unfolds.

It now only remains for us to notice the subsequent history of this little work as a printed book, and to state the reasons which have induced the Editor to undertake the present edition.

We are informed by the original preface that at the Synod held at Zerawich [Žeravice] in Moravia, in 1616, this account was carefully revised, and being approved of by all the members of the Synod, was confirmed by the signature of the Seniors and Conseniors present from Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. Four years subsequent to this the fierce persecution of Ferdinand II began, which effected the complete elimination of the Brethren’s Church from the two former countries. Many refugees found an asylum in Poland, where a branch of the church already existed. By these a Synod was held at Lissa [Lesna] in 1632, in which it was resolved that a Latin translation of the Ratio Disciplinæ, &c., should be printed. This took place the following year at Lissa, with a preface in the name of the Seniors and ministers of the Unity.

In the year 1660 the work was reprinted at Amsterdam by John Amos Comenius, the sole surviving bishop of the Bohemo-Moravian branch. In order to render the subject more intelligible, he prefixed to it a brief history of the Brethren’s Church and subjoined an address to the Church of England, which was then being re-established, on the excellence of the ecclesiastical order therein set forth, presenting it as a legacy from his own extinct Church. He also added “Annotations” or notes to the work. A third edition, comprising also the other portions of Comenius’s volume, was published at Halle, in 1702, by Dr. Buddeus, who prefaced it with an interesting dissertation on the importance of church discipline, and the excellence of that of the Brethren, recommending the Lutherans, among whom the want of it was so greatly felt, seriously to consider if some parts of this system might not be advantageously adopted among themselves. With this view, he says, he had been induced to reprint a book which

1 Appendix to Ratio Disciplinæ, &c. A.D. 1633, p. 109. The testimony of Paul Vergerius, who had been bishop of Capo d’Istria and papal legate in Germany, is very striking but too long to allow of insertion here. It is found in his preface to the Brethren’s Confession, printed at Zurich, A.D. 1556, and in his letters quoted by Comenius (Hist. § 95-97). He was on the point of entering the Brethren’s Church when he was removed by death.
exhibits so clear an image of the holy discipline of the Bohemian Brethren, regarding it as a matter of duty, nay, of necessity at that time, to draw it forth from the obscurity in which it lay hidden.¹

The present Editor may repeat the concluding sentiment just quoted as expressing his motive for undertaking this edition. Upwards of a century and a half has elapsed since the former was given to the world. The book has become very scarce and is so little known that in an age when the subject of church regulation and government is one of much inquiry and discussion even writers who have professed to treat on the Ancient Brethren seem to have been unacquainted with it. A reprint, therefore, seemed desirable. This is accompanied with a translation; for these are not the days wherein the learned alone are to be addressed on such matters, nor is the value or interest of the work confined to them. It is believed that there are many thoughtful minds which may derive useful instruction from the study of a system that, under the Divine blessing, was attended in its practical working with such excellent results.

If we bear in mind also the spirit of Christian charity which ever distinguished the Brethren, the perusal of this account of their church constitution may teach us that the most enlarged love for our fellow Christians is perfectly compatible with a decided predilection for that part of Christ’s fold on earth, in which His Providence has placed us, and His grace has blessed us. It may lead us to consider whether the diversity that obtains among the different sections of Protestant Christendom be inconsistent with oneness of spirit and unity of action; and if not, to look forward in our prayers and our efforts to the time when, notwithstanding the variety which will still exist in the different parts, all shall form one combined and beautiful whole. That the Brethren yearned for communion with kindred spirits, their entire history bears witness. From Rome, indeed, they stood aloof. They regarded her as an apostate church, the great realization of the predicted Antichrist, and they bore an unwavering testimony against her at the risk, and often at the cost, of all that man holds dear on earth.² But they looked eagerly around for fellow Christians who were guided by the word of truth. Hence in the midst of that palpable darkness which overhung the world at the close of the 15th century, they once and again sent out their messengers, as Noah his dove, to ascertain the state of things, and see if a truly Christian people with whom they might unite could anywhere be found.³ But the search was fruitless; and the Brethren saw that nothing remained for them but to raise their sighs to God on behalf of His people, and with constancy and patience endure their own trials.⁴ Yet, at a Synod, held in the year 1486, they adopted the resolution, “that if God should anywhere raise up pious teachers

¹ P. 20 of preface, “Diligenter ergo consideremus hanc pulcherrimæ Ecclesiæ imaginem,” &c. [Let us therefore diligently consider this image of the most beautiful Church, etc.]
² Mr. Elliott considers the Bohemian Brethren as raising the last testimony against Rome previous to the death of the witnesses. Horæ Apocalypticæ.
³ Camerarius, pp. 119, 120; Comenius, Historia, § 66.
⁴ Comenius, Historia, § 68.
and reformers of the church, they would join them.”¹ Their joy was great when 
the Reformation began in Germany. They watched its progress with intense 
interest. “This is that,” said they, “which our fathers foretold, but saw not. To 
us, their descendants, and to the litany of Christ’s faithful people, it is given to 
rejoice therein to the glory of God.”² The Brethren soon entered into a cordial 
intercourse with Luther and the other Reformers, and were ready to profit by 
their advice as well as to impart counsel, the result of their own experience. That 
they did not come into closer union with the churches of the Reformation 
was owing to the fact that the Brethren considered them materially defective 
in point of order and discipline.³ Subsequently, when union with other bodies 
of Christians was practicable, as in Poland, and again, as we have seen, in 
Bohemia in the reign of Rudolph II, they willingly associated with them, at the 
same time retaining their church constitution.⁴ This catholic spirit of the 
old Brethren’s Church breathes in the writings of its latest representatives. 
Comenius, in his De Bono Unitatis, § 11, stating his reason for setting forth its 

history and order, remarks:

“...I seek no advantage for my Church, which is now no more; nor for 
myself, who am just entering the tomb: but for thee, O Catholic Church, 
the common mother; whom I so love and reverence, that I should desire 
thy profit in whatever way. Aloof from all party spirit or strife, I was born, 
have lived, and die, adhering to Christ alone, along with those whom He 
had given to me as guides, or to whom He had given me in that capacity. 
O that all who call on the name of Christ were persuaded to be of the 
same mind, namely to take Christ and Christ alone as their Leader, 
ignoring other leaders whosoever they may be, and, while having solely in 
view salvation and eternal life, to dismiss all trifles, contentions about 
primacy, precedency, titles, revenues, as worldly rubbish, altogether out 
of place.

Dr. Jablonsky, who had been attacked in an anonymous writing on 
account of his advocacy of Christian union in his History of the Consensus of 
Sendomir, says in his reply that as a youth he had been educated among the 
Bohemian Brethren, where honourable mention was made of Luther by pious 
men, many of them venerable for an honoured old age. They regretted that the 
good understanding with him had been broken off by his successors, and

¹ Ibid, § 67.
² Apologia [of 1532]. See Lydii Waldensia, p. 280.
³ The Brethren were jealous of any connexion which tended to relax their discipline. “And 
truly,” says Jablonsky, “if we consider the constitution of the Bohemian Church and 
its transactions with Luther and other Reformers, it will be evident that the real cause 
why those good men were unwilling fully to unite and form one body either with those 
of the Augsburg or those of the Helvetic Confession was, that in these churches 
reformed from Popery, they thought there was too lax a discipline, and that more 
attention was given to science than to conscience and serious piety.” — Historia 
Consensus Sendomiriensis, § 10. See also Lasitius, p. 214.
⁴ This spirit was acknowledged and cordially responded to by the gentle Melanchton, 
whose letter addressed, A.D. 1535, to the Brethren, is well deserving of attention. It is 
given in Camerarius’s volume, p. 277.
lamented the dissensions that subsisted. He remembered a remark in a book by one of the Brethren, “that the doctrine might be reconciled, if the doctors could”; and he had heard one of their distinguished men declare: “If these two confessions, the Augustan and the Bohemian, should meet in free air, they would join and embrace like affectionate sisters; but here below on earth, where they lodge among men swayed by their prejudices and feelings, they are reluctantly compelled to engage in civil war.”

With regard to the translation of the Ratio here given, the Editor begs to state that his aim has been to make it as literal as was consistent with the idiom of our language, being of opinion that in a document of this nature accuracy is the first requisite. The Notes, which are added with a view to give information on various points adverted to in the work itself, are partly selected from the “Annotations” of Comenius, and partly derived from other sources.

[N.B. For the benefit of the 21st-century reader a further distillation of Br. Seiffert’s translation was made.]

THE END

---

1 Epistola Apologetica, p. 7.
2 Köppen, Lutheran clergyman at Bienowitz, who published his German translation of the Ratio in 1844, closes his preface to it with these words: “In conclusion, it need scarcely be remarked, that the Renewed Brethren’s Church still retains essentially this church order. Perhaps their choir arrangements are peculiar and new; but that which is specially so, is that Missionary activity so richly blessed by the Lord of the Church, by which she puts to shame far richer church communities.”