
An Approach to the Legacy of Comenius' Theology

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With this paper I would like to approach the legacy of the theology of Comenius in a threefold way: 1) via its location within its historical context, 2) by its systematic development and 3) by a critical questioning of it from the point of view of the present. As a starting-point I have chosen an excerpt from *Panorthosia*, the 6th book of the *Consultatio*¹, the unfinished chief work of Comenius:

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We want a complete reformation of the Churches, for a such reformation has not yet occurred. There have been some attempts during the last centuries to reform the Christian Church, but these have only been particular and various for diverse occasions, without a universal idea or without the aim of having one. The Roman pope with his curio has attempted reformation several times, but reformation of what? Order and morals had collapsed. But the reformation was a superficial thing, without much effect, and was always followed by a collapse into even bigger confusion. More fervently Hus began to reform, but what? Mainly a stronger secular domination in spiritual things. And Luther? Mainly the doctrine of the article of justification and what relates to it. But he forgot about Church discipline as an antidote, which prevented the teaching of the Gospel from being abused. And what about Calvin, who came afterwards? Mainly the article about the Lord's Supper and the most superstitious ceremonies, which had still remained from the papacy. Neither did others, who considered it to be their duty to try to amend matters of the Church, achieve anything else than that they endeavoured to clean up some parts of religion. But until now there has been no more complete reformation: as God demands (Is 1,16.17). We have only wanted to break from evil, that is from error and superstition, without teaching the good. In Jeremiah 1:9 God ordered not only to exterminate and to abolish, but also to plant and to build up. But what has been done in the previous reformations? The hierarchy of the pope has been abolished: but the dominion of Christ has not been established, and so on...

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Up until now all the past attempts at reformation of the Church (by Wyclif, Hus, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Mennon, Socinius, and also sometimes by the pope himself) have been like the first act of the healing of the blind man by Christ (Mk 8,22f). It is now time to demand a perfect and universal reformation, which corresponds to the second act of Christ, through which the blind man received back such clear sight, that he could see everything perfectly (V. 24f); or at least reformation should come as close to this as possible, similar to the congregation in Philadelphia, bringing light, peace and health to the whole world, having the keys of David and an open gate to let the gentiles in - so that the people of the whole world gathered in it could recognize themselves as a common generation of God, and as sons of God, singing Psalm 133. Then the verse in the Song of Songs 6:9 will become true: My turtle dove is one...

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But who clothes her thus? Obviously Christ as the bridegroom, as is said in Ephesians 5:27; Isaiah 61:10 and also in Revelation 19. The wedding of the lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself (v. 7), because it is given her to clothe herself in

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1) *De rerum humanorum emendatione consultatio catholica (Cons)*, (Prague 1966) II: col. 599f.

fine and splendid raiment. Therefore this work is for both the bridegroom and the bride. The bridegroom as a magnificent giver, the bride as a thankful receiver of the gifts of her bridegroom. Therefore the Church has already to think, herself, of the glorious raiment. Therefore also must her friends and sons, the handmaidens of the bridegroom. Therefore also all of us, whom it is given to see this holy garment.

We are tempted to start the theological discussion straight away with Comenius' opinions about the different 'reformers,' or to have a look at his ecclesiological statements. But is this the most appropriate approach to the thinking of Comenius? I would like to suggest another method of acquaintance: let us have a closer look at the Bible quotations which Comenius uses in this text. Perhaps we will be able to arrive at the important subjects of his theology through the Scripture itself. The discussion of these subjects in their historical context shall be our second step.

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God calls us -as Comenius puts it - for an entire reformation with the words in Isaiah²:

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Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good! Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Is. 1:16f).

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In these verses deeds are stressed, not knowledge and cognition. "Learn to do good, seek justice." We do not only have to break with evil, but we also have to learn the good. We are born for an active life.³ Good we do, when we obey God and follow his Word (cf. Isa. 1:10). Wherever we are, we should always live for God, who gave us our lives.⁴

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The book of Isaiah plays an important role in the life of Comenius. In his *Letter to Montanus*⁵ he relates how in his despair in the sleepless nights of persecution he was suddenly grasped by a strange fervour. He called to the Lord, took the Bible into his hands, and stumbled upon the book of Isaiah. And as he began to read the book, the grief passed. He took his pen and started to write the dialogues of *The Sorrowful*⁶ and then continued with the reading of the other prophets until the last books of God's law. "Never in my life did I receive a sweeter meal than this collection of God's consolations." In the first two writings of *The Sorrowful* Comenius describes how neither Reason nor Faith are able to console the afflicted, but only Christ personally. In his writings Comenius again and again talks about personal encounter with the Lord, for example in the *Centrum Securitatis*⁷ and especially in his famous book *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*⁸.

2) Bible quotations according to the Revised Standard Version.

3) Cf. *Regulae Vitae*, DJAK 13, 276: "Ad negotia nati sumus." The relationship between understanding, speaking and doing is described by Comenius e.g. in the *Triertium Catholicum*, DJAK 18, 239 – 347.

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4) *Regula Vitae*, DJAK 13, 278: "Ubiubi fueris, vive Deo, qui est dator vitae tuae:"

5) *Epistula ad Montanum*, DJAK 1, 20; cf. also M. Blekastad, *Comenius*, (Oslo - Prag, 1969) 98-112.

6) *Truchlivý I*, DJAK 3, 19-65; *Truchlivý II*, DJAK 3, 67- 111; *Truchlivý III* Comenius wrote 1650, *Truchlivý IV* around 1660, both of them are also in DJAK 3. When possible, I follow the translation of the titles suggested by Matthew Spinka in his biography *John Amos Comenius That Incomparable Moravian* (Chicago 1943).

7) DJAK 3, 475- 548.

8) *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce (Labyrinth)*, DJAK 3, 265-397.

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We also find the quotation of Isaiah at the beginning of the *Rules of the Brethren*⁹ together with three quotations of the Johannine literature¹⁰ as an illustration of the Brethren's conception of love. Love of men is always in response to the love of God. To love means to act according to God's will by refraining from doing evil and by striving to do good. To love means to strive through all one's deeds towards God. This concept of love is very close to the Augustinian concept of *caritas*.¹¹ Love, together with faith and hope, constitute within the theology of the Brethren the three things necessary for salvation, the *essentialia*¹².

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Let us have a look at the second Bible quotation in our text. Comenius stresses that reformation is not only a matter of destroying and abolishing, but also of planting and building up. As the Lord says to Jeremiah (Jer 1:9b.10):

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Behold, I put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

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Daily Comenius sees around him the terrible devastations of the Thirty Years War. On the other hand there is the positive abolition and destruction through Reformation of superstitious ceremonies and immoral customs of the papacy. Luther has torn down this Tower of Babel, as Comenius praises in the *The Bequest of the Dying Mother, the Unity of Brethren*.¹³ However, in our text Comenius points out that Luther, while having improved the doctrine of Justification, forgot Church discipline as an antidote to prevent the abuse of the teaching of the Gospel. Together with the Brethren he reproaches Luther and his successors for underestimating the value of works.¹⁴

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Planting, and particularly grafting,¹⁵ becomes a central concept in Comenius' theory of education. He compares the school and also the church with a garden, whose trees - the pupils! - should be grafted, watered, transplanted, cut and led.¹⁶ Our quotation from Jeremiah can also be found in the introduction to the *Didactica Magna*¹⁷, where Comenius compares men with the Garden of Eden and with a vine¹⁸, planted by God, which has become evil and wild. Is it not the duty of men to rebuild the Garden of Eden, with the help of the Lord, and thus to lead Creation back to its

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9) *Řád církevní* VSJAK 17, 28.

10) Jn. 13:35; 1 Jn. 4:11-16.

11) Comenius refers to Augustine's concept of *caritas* in his commentary to the *Rules of the Brethren*. He also notes, that Augustine in his *Enchiridion ad Laurentium* talks about the significance of the triad of faith, love and hope. (VSJAK 17, 30f). It has to be assumed, that the Brethren came to their concept of the *essentialia* through Augustine.

12) See VSJAK XVII, 28; the triad is mentioned in *Cons I*, 1027; 1031-1040; 1138; 1175; 1201; *Cons II*, 138f.; 515-521; 607; DJAK 4, 364; DJAK 13, 297; DJAK 15/I, 163 etc.

13) *Kšaft umírající matky, jednoty bratrské (Kšaft)*, DJAK 3, 601.

14) See Komenský, *Krátké dějiny církve slovanské*, §73- 83, especially §75 (in the edition of Prague 1893, 42-49 esp. 43); *Obráz Jednoty Českobratrské čili Jana Lasitského historie o původu a činech Bratří Českých*, (Prague, 1896) 198-217 (excerpt of the 4th book, XIII-XVII).

15) See "štěpování" cf. *Paradisus ecclesiae renascentis (Paradisus)*, DJAK 11, 15.

16) *Paradisus*, DJAK 11, 15; concerning the grafting see Rom. 11:17-24 and also the forward to *Didactica Magna*, DJAK 15/I, 42-49.

17) *Didactica Magna* (DJAK 15/I, 48, VSJAK IV/2, 37).

18) Jer 2:21, DJAK 15/I, 43 (VSJAK IV, 31).

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original, intended state? Would that not be the transition from the confusion of Babylon to the praising of the Lord in the new Jerusalem, at Mount Zion¹⁹?

With the first act of the healing of a blind man by Jesus in Mark (c.8), Comenius illustrates the reformations attempted so far. Of what does this first act of healing consist?

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And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." (vv.22-24)

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Through Reformation – says Comenius - the blind have learnt to see, but they still see everything blurred. Through Reformation light has come into the eyes of the blind.²⁰ The Reformation has led the blind out of the darkness into the light of seeing. But still men do not see the entire light, as the blind man is not yet healed completely.

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Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. And he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village!" (v.25f)

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The *Way of Light*²¹ is the title of the programmatic writing Comenius prepared for the Parliament of England. Through God's mercy we can already see how the great light foreseen by Isaiah (Is. 9:2) arises above Zion.²² This universal light is the light of panharmony and its aim is threefold: that in it everything may be seen completely by everyone.²³ This is the aim of "e-ducation": to lead man out of the darkness to the light of the truth, in which all things of creation can be recognized.²⁴ Everybody will be able to see how the light of God streams into the farthest corners of his creation and how the glory of God is the core of all things.²⁵

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The coming reformation should be universal and perfect, not only partial and piece by piece as hitherto.²⁶ Like the community of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) it should spread light, peace and salvation to the whole world, and have the keys of David and the open gate to let all people enter,²⁷ so that they may gather under it

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19) See among others *Kšaft*, DJAK 3, 601, *Haggaeus redivivus*, DJAK 2, 363; *Clamores Eliae*, DJAK 23, 188; *Cons II*, col. 497 ('Imň destruamus jam Babylonem, ut jam aedificetur Sion!' and the series of quotations in *Cons II*, col.251 (Gen 11:7f; Is 66:18f; Zef 3:9; Rev 10:11).

20) See Dagmar Čapková: "La métamorphose de la lumière dans la conception coménienne de cultura universalis," in: *La visualisation des choses et la conception philosophique du monde dans l'oeuvre de Comenius* (Paris, 1994).

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21) *Via lucis*, DJAK 14, 281- 370, see *Panaugia*, *Cons I*, col. 122-245.

22) *Via Lucis XIII*, 15; DJAK 14, 330.

23) *Ibid.*, 331; cf. *Cons II*, col. 4ff.

24) See *Pampaedia*, *Cons II*, col. 8f; *Via lucis*, DJAK 14, 337-339.

25) See *Labyrinth*, DJAK 3, 376 "[vnitřní jádro], jenž jest všudy rozlitá boží sláva".

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26) See also *Cons I*, col. 1332-1334.

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27) In Rev. 3:7-13 these actions are done by "him, who is holy and true". "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." Comenius here puts the stress on the deeds of men, while he does not mention the following response of God, which in Revelation is the true

and recognize themselves as being all from the same family of God, and as being brothers and sons of God, and sing together Psalm 133:

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life for evermore.

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The Brethren consider the keys, together with the Word of God and the sacraments to the *ministerialia*, which serve the things necessary for salvation, the *essentialia*. By the keys they understand Church discipline, which Comenius also calls the "sacred discipline"²⁸. The keys of David are the keys to open the gate of Heaven. The image of the gate appears often in the titles of Comenius' works: *The Gate of Languages, the Gate of Things*.²⁹ Comenius talks about the gate to the Temple of God, to his Wisdom.³⁰ The way of man to the light is also the path to the Temple of God. The temple of God is not only the Church, but the Creation as a whole and the heart, the innermost part of man. At these three places man can meet the Lord. He can, if he wants, perceive the light of God.

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With the Community of Philadelphia and with Psalm 133 Comenius also alludes to the Unity of Brethren. We find the same psalm at the beginning of the short writing *Some Questions about the Unity of Czech Brethren*³¹, where Comenius talks about their spirit of community. A community like that of the Brethren, in which purity of teaching, unanimity concerning ceremonies, and piety in life and church community are preserved, is a jewel in the Church. But we also find Psalm 133 in *The Bequest of the Dying Mother, the Unity of Brethren*³², where Comenius ends his plea for German and Helvetic Unity with the wish, that at least once the time may come for the Church and for the angels to sing: "Lo, how fine ...is it, when brothers live together in peace!"

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The love of Christ to his Church is most deeply expressed by the Song of Solomon:

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There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and maidens without number. My dove, my perfect one, is only one, the darling of her mother, flawless to her that bore her. The maidens saw her and called her happy; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" (6:8-10)

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In the whole Hussite movement the traditional interpretation of the Song of Solomon as an image of the love of Christ plays an important role. Already Hus

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action. What is truly our action, and what is truly the action of God? Again and again Comenius tries to find answers to this question, although knowing, that in the end we can give no precise answer.

28) "Kázeň svatá," VSJAK XVII, 266

29) *Janua linguarum reserata sive seminarium linguarum et scientiarum omnium*, DJAK 15/I, 257-301; *Janua linguarum vestibulum*, DJAK 15/I, 305-322; *De astruendo comenianae Januae latinitatis templo*, DJAK 15/I, 325-351; *Latinae linguae janua reserata*, DJAK 15/III, 19-24; *Janua rerum sive Totius pansophiae seminarium*, DJAK 14, 11-47 (*Praecognita pansophica* I); *Janua rerum reserata*, DJAK 18, 149-221.

30) See *De astruendo comenianae Januae latinitatis templo*, DJAK 15/I, 325-351; *Pansophiae praeludium*, DJAK 15/II, 53; *Conatum Pansophicorum dilucidatio*, DJAK 15/II, 57-79.

31) *Otázky některé o Jednotě bratří českých*, VSJAK 17, 267.

32) *Kšaft*, DJAK 3, 602.

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wrote a detailed commentary on the Song of Solomon,³³ and in the hymnbook of the Brethren, published by Comenius in 1659, we find it in the first part, following the Psalms and other songs of the Old Testament.³⁴ In many didactic writings of Comenius we find quotations from the Song of Songs.³⁵ He quotes it not only as an image of the love of Christ, but also as an illustration of the paradisiac beauty of the garden which men can rebuild in the devastated fields of the Thirty Year War.

Another image of the love of Christ to his Church we find in Ephesians:

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Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (Eph. 5:26-28)

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These verses of Ephesians we also find in *Haggaeus redivivus*³⁶, where Comenius calls for saintliness in life within the Church. They have a parallel in the words of Isaiah (61:10), to which Comenius refers too in his explanations of the complete reformation:

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I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

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The third reference for the illustration of Christ as bridegroom is Revelation 19. This chapter begins with the jubilation over the destruction of Babylon and the joy over the marriage of the lamb with its bride:

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Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure - for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Rev. 19: 7f)

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Out of the Revelation Comenius gathers fresh hope that the present wars and devastations are inevitable steps towards the heavenly Jerusalem. The time is near, when the lamb will marry its bride, all people will gather at Mount Zion, and from a new heaven the new Jerusalem will be lowered to a new earth:

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And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day - and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. (Rev 21:23-26)

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33) *Výklad piesniček Šalomúnových*, in: *Magistri Iohannis Hus Opera omnia, IV [Drobné spisy české]* (Prague, 1985) 51-131.

34) *Kancionál, to jest Kniha žalmů a písní duchovních* (Amsterdam, 1659) 217-228. The hymnbooks of the Brethren together with their catechisms give the best overview of their theology. See J. Jireček, *Kancionál bratrský*, ČČM 1861; J. Th. Müller, *Geschichte der Böhmisches Brüder* (Herrnhut 1931) II, 25-36; *ibid. Die Deutschen Katechismen der Böhmisches Brüder* (Berlin 1887) 336; Rudolf Říčan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren* (Bethlehem PA and Winston-Salem NC, 1992) 103f.; Amédeo Molnár "The Brethren's Theology," in *ibid.*, 390-420.

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35) See the quotation from the Bible (S of S. 4:16) added to the title of *Paradisus ecclesiae renascentis* b, DJAK 11, 15; *Didactica Magna*, DJAK 15/I, 43.

36) *Haggaeus redivivus*, DJAK 2, p.291-368.

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Starting with an excerpt of the *Consultatio* and the quotations from Holy Scripture which it contains, I have tried to show some characteristic features of the theology of Comenius. Now I would like to sketch the relation of Comenius to different theological and philosophical traditions. I can only give a short and rough sketch, not only because of the enormous number of such relations, but also because only certain of them have so far been the object of further studies.

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We have already touched upon the theology of the Brethren³⁷, primarily on their central distinction between *essentialia* and *ministerialia*. The *essentialia* are the things necessary for salvation: faith, love and hope. The *ministerialia* are the things serving the *essentialia*: the Holy Scripture, the keys, or church discipline respectively, and the sacraments. The third category of things is the *accessoria* or *accidentalialia*, which simply serve as decoration and can vary from church to church. The distinction between *essentialia*, *ministerialia* and *accessoria* can be considered as an important contribution of the Brethren to the unity of churches.³⁸ Comenius has used it repeatedly in his irenic efforts, while today we discover them again in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

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Faith, love and hope constitute the core of the theology of the Brethren and are therefore also the hermeneutical key for their understanding of the Bible. Comenius writes in the *Didactica Magna*: "What is learnt from Scripture should be related to faith, love and hope, for these three are the highest things, to which everything that God had wanted to reveal through his word must be related."³⁹ (XIV,21) The reasons for this principle of understanding are noteworthy: because some things God reveals, in order that we know them; some things he orders, so that we do them; and some things he promises us, in order that we can expect them from his goodness in this and the future life.⁴⁰ The understanding of faith as "knowledge, revealed by God [through Scripture]", as well as the connection between love and the commands of God and the strongly eschatological concept of hope⁴¹ show important aspects of the theology of the Brethren. Their understanding of faith and love is strongly influenced by the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament⁴², while their concept of hope is shaped by the prophets. But the basis is always the New Testament, which is understood in a christocentric way and as the description of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. To love God means to

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37) Rudolf Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren* 103f.; Amédeo Molnár "The Brethren's Theology," 390-420; for Comenius and the Brethren cf. A. Molnár: *O Komenského jako teologa*, in: *Sedm statí o Komenském*, Praha 1971; A. Molnár: *Zum Theologieverständnis des Comenius*, in: *Comenius -Erkennen-Glauben -Handeln* (ed. Kl. Schaller), Herborn 1984, p. 61-72; Jan Patočka: *Les antécédents hussites de Comenius*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bochum 1981, p. 276-286.

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38) Before the Brethren Jan Hus had already stressed the outstanding importance of the triad of faith, love and hope (cf. Mistr Jan Hus, *Výklad víry*, Jablonec n. N., L.P. 1947, p. 18f).

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39) DJAK 15/I, p. 163; cf. the complete title of the *Manualnik* from 1623: 'Handbook or core of the whole holy Bible, that is the sum of all, what God has I. revealed men to believe, II. ordered men to do, III. promised men to be expected.'

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40) Ibid.. This hermeneutical key is very close to the fourfold scholastic understanding of Scripture, which Luther in an early writing summarized in the following way: "Littera gesta docet; quid credas, allegoria; moralis, quid agas, sed quid speres, anagoge." (WA 57,2, quoted in: Hans Martin Müller, *Homiletik*, Berlin 1996, p. 95).

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41) See Amédeo Molnár "The Brethren's Theology," in Rudolf Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren* 408.

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42) Especially by the Apocryphes; cf. Sir. 1:11ff; 2:18; Wisd. 6,18; Deut. 10:12f; Ps. 119:126ff.

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follow his commandments (cf. Jn. 14). To love God means to fulfill what the *lex Christi* requires of us. The triad of faith, love and hope is found - according to Comenius - already in the words of God to Abraham⁴³ "*Believe in me: thereon faith is founded. Love me and obey me: thereon love is founded. Expect from me all good, here and in eternity: thereon hope is founded.*" The basis of faith is the Apostolic Creed, the norm of love is the decalogue, the fundament of hope is the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁴

The triad of faith, love and hope is just one example of the deep ties between Comenius and the Unity of the Brethren. We also find him considering thoughts of his predecessors as seniors of the Unity, Brother Lukáš and Jan Blahoslav⁴⁵, as well as of Petr Chelčický. It is remarkable, however, that he seldom mentions them by name nor does he quote them explicitly. Furthermore one cannot investigate the theology of the Brethren without also considering Jan Hus, John Wyclif and above all: Augustine⁴⁶! Traces of all the important works of Augustine are found in the writings of the Brethren. Not only his concept of the history of salvation, but also his understanding of language and of the relationship of reason and faith have deeply influenced the Brethren.⁴⁷

For a deeper understanding of the theology of Comenius, his reception of the Reformation must also be studied. In our text Comenius enumerates the following "reformers": Hus, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Mennon, Socinius and even the Pope on some occasions. The order of the names seems to be partly dependent on the importance of the reformers and partly on their chronological succession. Hus stands for the first Reformation, the Bohemian Reformation, to which the Reformation of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli followed. Among these three it is Calvin to whom Comenius owes most.⁴⁸ In our text Comenius mentions Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper and the removal of the remaining elements of the superstitious ceremonies of the papacy. Calvin's understanding of Creation and of sanctification has considerably influenced Comenius. Furthermore the calvinistic conception of the law as expression of pacts⁴⁹ and of the Church as the circle of the elected finds its parallels in the thinking of Comenius. However, Comenius took up these ideas by adapting them to the theology of the Brethren. Incidentally, on the basis of their similarities, the Brethren and Calvinists struck up close relations during the 16th century.⁵⁰

43) Gen. 17:1 [f]: "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. [And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.]" Gen. 15:1 "Fear not Abraham, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." *Sacra exercitia tironum*, DJAK 13, p. 297.

44) *Ibid.*

45) Emanuel Havelka: *Blahoslav předchůdcem Komenského* (Praha 1924).

46) Cf. *Křesťanská Revue* 21 (1954) c. 9, esp. (k Augustinova výročí J.B. Jeschke.: Augustin v díle Husové, *ibid.* 262 – 267; Amadeo Molnár: Augustinus a postoju Bratří ke světu, *ibid.* 281 – 284.

47) Among the Fathers of the Church also Irenæus, the Cappadocians and John Chrysostom have to be mentioned. All of them we find quoted in the writings of Comenius.

48) This opinion of mine has to be proven yet through more research. Cf. Marta Becková: *Zur Calvinisierung der Brüderunität in Hinblick auf J.A. Comenius*, in: *Comenius -Erkennen -Glauben -Handeln* (Hrsg. Kl. Schaller) (Herborn 1984) 73-81.

49) Cf. Johannes Coccejus (1603 – 1669) and his *theologia foederalis*.

50) Cf. R. Řičan, *Die Böhmischesen Brüder* (Berlin 1961) 178-189.

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Of less importance for Comenius is the influence of Luther⁵¹. Comenius did not follow his doctrine of justification and his distinction between law and Gospel - although he mentions the former at the beginning of our text! The Brethren always had a much more positive attitude towards works, and their conception of the Gospel as *lex Christi* made them reject the negative Lutheran conception of law. However, it is interesting to see that in the Lutheran teaching of mandates, which stood in connection with the discussion about the *tertius usus legis*, we find a number of similarities to the Brethren's conception of law! We find a considerable influence of Luther in Comenius' understanding of the Word of God. In his earlier works he understands the Word of God primarily in the framework of the Augustinian teaching of signs (*signa*) as pointing towards the true things of salvation, while in his later writings he stresses its character of addressing, thus reflecting Luther's fundamental insight, that man becomes a person only through the addressing word of God. But again we find similar thoughts among the Brethren, though they were covered over by the current sober Protestant orthodox theology. In the more popularly written spiritual works Comenius often gives way to the addressing character of the word, while in his philosophical and didactic writings he follows the path from things to words and from words to things.

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Among the successors of the Reformers mainly Melancthon⁵², the Praeceptor Germaniae, has to be mentioned. Melancthon and Comenius both were strongly inclined to humanism as well as to antique culture and to education. Comenius builds a bridge between these subjects and the Gospel through the conception of wisdom as found in the Old Testament and the Apocrypha⁵³, out of which he develops his concept of pansophy. Incidentally, the Brethren have always considered the apocrypha as an integral part of the Holy Scripture!⁵⁴ On the frontispiece of the *ManuálNIK*, Comenius' summary of the Bible, he places a verse of the apocryphal book of Baruch: "Blessed are we Israel! for God has revealed us his will." (Bar 4:4)⁵⁵

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In the list of reformers Comenius has also mentioned Wyclif, Zwingli, Mennon, Socinius and even the Pope on some special occasions! Comenius hardly ever mentions or quotes Wyclif, Zwingli and Mennon in his writings, so that it will always remain a question of interpretation where to fix a possible influence. On the other hand the relation of Comenius with the Socinians, who defended an anti-trinitarian view, is documented in a whole series of polemic writings between the two parties.⁵⁶

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51) Cf. H.F. von Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theolog* (Leipzig 1881) 196-225.

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52) Cf. my paper: *Ich will Geist in euch bringen*. Prague 1998 (unpublished) 43-49.

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53) Cf. the use of the book of Sirach already in the early writing *Theatrum universitatis rerum*, DJAK 1,102-105.

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54) Cf. the use of quotations out of the book of Wisdom and the book of Sirach in the Confession of the Brethren of 1608/09 and 1662 (published by Comenius in Amsterdam)

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55) *ManuálNIK, aneb jádro celé bible svaté*, VSJAK XVIII, p. XXIII. The English translation according to the Oxford Study Bible (1992) is: Happy are we, Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God!

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56) Cf. Erwin Schadel: *Die Sozianismuskritik des J.A. Comenius und die Genese des neuzeitlichen Selbst- und Wissenschaftsverständnisses*, in K. Schaller (Hrsg.), *Comenius. Erkennen-Glauben-Handeln*, (St. Augustin 1985); Marta Bečková: *Die polnischen Arianer und Descartes (im Vergleich zur Beziehung zwischen J.A. Comenius und Descartes)*, Dokumenty a prameny, (Přerov 1969).

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The attitude of Comenius towards the Pope is a story of its own and shows the inner struggle of Comenius towards ecumenical openness.⁵⁷

From the orthodox theology of his time, Comenius adopts not so much its content as its instruments and methods, which had been developed by rediscovering⁵⁸. Together with orthodox theology Comenius shares the vision of a systematic system on the basis of the doctrine of Holy Scripture including all relevant things which concern God, man and the world. Comenius shows the most parallels with orthodox theology in his antisocial writings⁵⁹, while in his pansophical writings he applies the instruments of orthodoxy, though by considerably widening the range of objects: to the totality of all things!⁶⁰ Also his teacher in Herborn, Johann Heinrich Alsted⁶¹, had collected with tireless diligence the entire knowledge of his time and published it arranged in voluminous encyclopaedias⁶². Comenius focused more deeply on dealing with the dynamics of life and of change. For this purpose a trinitarian way of thinking, stressed already by Brother Lukáš, turned out to be very fruitful. It would be worthwhile to investigate how much Comenius here also refers to other thinkers.

While the main success of orthodox theology lay in its systematic development of the concept of *loci communes*, the practice of faith was in danger of becoming "overintellectualised". Already in the beginning outstanding members of orthodoxy faced this problem, but they could not prevent a one-sided development. Later on it became one of the main reasons for the split of pietism from orthodoxy. Subsequently, those men who had tried to prevent an unbalanced "intellectualisation" were seized on by the pietists and considered as their predecessors, while more neutrally we might call them reform orthodox. In reform orthodoxy the orthodox concern for a systematic development of the teaching stood equally next to the realization of this teaching in practice, while in pietism this balance was often shifted towards a dominance of practice. Within this movement between reform orthodoxy and early pietism⁶³ Comenius was mainly influenced by

57) In connection with the Reformation there is another topic which again becomes of great importance: the discussion about the primacy of will or being, as it is already encountered in the different teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Comenius here stands close to English and calvinistic conceptions. He primarily understands Creation as an act of will of God and not as a sort of emanation of higher levels of being. On the other hand he also integrates the neo-platonic gradation of being in his worldview.

With Thomas, Comenius shares the wish for a general view of all aspects of faith and reason. But in drawing the border between the two areas he repeatedly takes up concepts of Cusanus. The *docta ignorantia* of Cusanus we find again in the thinking of Comenius as *sancta ignorantia!* (*Pansophiae praeludium*, DJAK 15/II, 48)

58) For a comparison of Comenius with orthodoxy cf. Emidio Campi: *Jan Amos Comenio e la teologia protestante del suo tempo*; in: *Eredità di Comenio* (Roma, 1995); dt.: *Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) und die protestantische Theologie seiner Zeit*, Zwingliana 12 (1995).

59) *Antisozinianische Schriften I-II*, ed. Erwin Schadel, Hildesheim - Zürich - New York, 1983 (part IV of: *Ausgewählte Werke I-IV*, gen. ed. D. Tschülow und K. Schaller)

60) Cf. the widening of the concept of the *loci communes*: *Didaktika* DJAK 15, 127: "Všecko (pro plnější jistotu) do knih (locos communes) zapisováno".

61) Cf. H.F. von Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theolog*, (Leipzig 1881) 365-373.

62) The most famous is the *Encyclopédia septem tomis distincta* (Herborn, 1630); cf. W. Michel, *Der Herborner Philosoph J. H. Alsted u. die Tradition*, Diss. phil., (Frankfurt/M. 1969) 184

63) To Comenius and his relation to (early) pietism cf. Martin Brecht: *Johann Amos Comenius im*

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J.V. Andreae⁶⁴, the author of writings of the Rosicrucians, and Lewis Bayly, the author of the puritan classic *Praxis pietatis*⁶⁵, which Comenius freely translated into Czech. From both Comenius takes the strong emphasis on a personal encounter with Christ and the attitude to life resulting from it.

His efforts for reaching a total view of all things and a new approach to nature⁶⁶ brought Comenius close to the circles out of which grew modern science⁶⁷: **Campanella**⁶⁸, Bacon⁶⁹ and Descartes⁷⁰ and besides this also to the representative of a 'theologia naturalis', Raymundus Sabundus⁷¹. With Campanella and Bacon Comenius shared the conviction that the time had come for reformations of all things concerning man, not only in the field of theology.⁷² This reformation should be the answer of men to the Creation of God, which had been corrupted by the sin of men. God has chosen men for collaboration in Creation, when he created them as the image of himself. After having created men, God does not want to do anything without them. Men should finally take God's call seriously and thus fulfill the visions of Daniel and the Revelation.

We have arrived at the end of our short tour d'horizon. And we have to state sadly that most of the areas we have touched still lie unexplored before us, not to talk of their interdependence. But we can also express it in a positive way: There is still a lot to do!

Let us now turn to the difficult task of a systematic development of the theology of Comenius. In our discussion so far we have touched on an enormous

Zusammenhang der prot. Theologie seiner Zeit, in: K. Gossmann (Hrsg.), *Jan Amos Comenius 1592-1992, Theologische und pädagogische Deutungen* (Gütersloh, 1992) 70-84.

64) Cf. H.F. von Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theolog* (Leipzig 1881) 335-365; Dagmar Čapková, *Erasmus Rotterdamský, J.V. Andreae a J.A. Komenský v úsilí o mír a lidství*, SCeH 18, 1988, č. 35, příloha, p. 207-217 and other articles in that edition of SCeH.

65) *Praxis pietatis, to jest O cvičení se v pobožnosti pravé* (Praha, 1877); a recent but too 'pious' translation into modern Czech has been made by Ladislav Kopecký: *Praxis pietatis, čili jak se cvičit v pravé zbožnosti* (Prague 1992).

66) Cf. Dagmar Čapková: *Die Beziehung zur Natur und die Bildungskonzeption Komenskýs*, in: *Colloquia Comeniana*, Januaris 1969 Volumen II, (Přerov, 1968); Gertrud Britschgi: *Naturbegriff und Menschenbild bei Comenius* (Zürich, 1964).

67) Jaromír Červenka: *Die Naturphilosophie des Johann Amos Comenius*, (Praha, 1970); Jan Patočka: *Comenius und die Hauptgedanken in der Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Bochum, 1981) 79-92

68) Cf. *Physicae synopsis*, DJAK 12, 76f; 80; 83.

69) Cf. *Physicae synopsis*, DJAK 12, 76; 80-83; Ad amicos, DJAK 14, 114 ff.; J. Patočka: *Bacon Verulamský a Komenského Didaktika*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften* (Bochum, 1981) 45-49.

70) Cf. e.g. *Cartesius a mechanicis eversus*, DJAK 12, 295-306; Josef Tvrđý: *Komenský a Descartes*, AC, 17 (1959). 1-15; and also: Jan Patočka: *Několik poznámek k článku Jos. Tvrđého "Komenský a Descartes"*, in: *ibid.* 16ff resp. in: *Gesammelte Schriften* (Bochum, 1981) 457-459; Pavel Floss: *Komenskýs Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus in seinen naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften*, in K. Schaller (Hrsg.), *Erkennen-Glauben-Handeln*, (St. Augustin 1985).

71) Cf. H.F. von Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theolog* (Leipzig, 1881) 373ff. Comenius shortened and "corrected" his *Theologia naturalis* and published it in 1661 in Amsterdam under the title *Oculus fidei - Theologia naturalis sive liber creatorum*.

72) Cf. the excellent study of the relation of theology and natural science in the 17th century by Eugene M. Klaaren: *Religious Origins of Modern Science - Belief in Creation in Seventeenth Century Thought* (Grand Rapids MI, 1977).

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number of different topics. Which of these should we now choose as the central one? Out of which concept can we develop the other concepts of Comenius? It is a feeling similar to the one we would have, were we given the task of arranging the whole content of encyclopaedia according to different topics and then of developing all of the topics out of a central one. This comparison seems bizarre at first glance. But it gets quite close to one central intention of Comenius' educational ideas and pansophia! And indeed Comenius repeatedly tried to show to his pupils the universe as a whole. Also in his most famous school book, the *Orbis pictus*⁷³, we can discover this intention, and, more systematically, in the *The Gate of Languages Unlocked*⁷⁴. It bends a bow from Creation over the elements, the lifeless things, plants and animals to man and continues from the handicrafts and trade to the constructing of houses, from couples and parents to cities, the church, the jurisdiction, war and peace, from school over arts to ethics and virtues and finally to cultivated (!) conversations and games. At the end are death and burial, the Providence of God and angels.

↓ "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen." (Rm 11:36) All things are from God, through God and to God. This movement of all things is in the conception of Comenius a movement through seven worlds: from the Mundus Possibilis in God over the Mundus Idealis and the Mundus Angelicus to the Mundus Materialis and within it to man, the image of God, and from man back over the Mundus Artificialis, the Mundus Moralis and the Mundus Spiritualis to the Mundus Aeternus back in God again. The movement of things, which always requires their relation among themselves and with God, is most easily described by triades, the images of trinity. Man is jointly responsible for the return of the entire Creation to God. The falling-away of Creation from God had begun with the Fall of man, its return on the other hand with Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection. For his task man is given the three books: the world, the human spirit (*mens*) and the Holy Scripture. These books show humanity the path to Mount Zion, to the light of God. As God has created the world, man is called to reform it after the Fall. With this reformation we help to prepare the return of Christ and the erection of the new Jerusalem. Soon the Lord will come. "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb." (Rev. 21:23)

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↓ These are some of the most important elements of the worldview of Comenius. It is a concept, which in a very simple manner takes into account the whole variety and dynamics of Creation and of human culture. Comenius has tried to create on the basis of the Bible a worldview, which should replace the neo-platonic and aristotelian worldviews of the Middle Ages and early modern times. Unfortunately much less balanced conceptions of reality have pushed their way through.

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↓ In Comenius' worldview the specifically theological topics can be integrated. In doing so, one should consider that Comenius, in analogy to the triad of Mundus Artificialis, Mundus Moralis and Mundus Spiritualis, speaks of erudition, virtues or morality and religion or piety when he looks at the individual, and of erudition, politics and religion when he looks at the whole society or humankind respectively. Man, and with him the whole Creation, strive towards God, the *summum bonum*.

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73) *Orbis sensualium pictus* (1658) DJAK 17, 55-271.

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74) *Janua linguarum reserata sive seminarium linguarum et scientiarum omnium* (1631), DJAK 15/I, 257-301.

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Paradise is an image of the deep union of God and his Creation. Comenius distinguishes different accesses to Paradise: a first one is the way into one's heart, where we can meet Christ, a second one is heaven, which we can attain after our death and of which we already have a small foretaste in our heart. Another access is through the church, which God, as a consolation for of the loss of Paradise on earth, lets flourish again and again. Finally in the last days, which have already begun, the Kingdom of God will be established and the Christ will return. After terrible fights a new heaven and a new earth will be raised.

Of great significance for Comenius is also the triad of the books of the Holy Scripture, nature and reason.⁷⁵ Comenius considers the conversion to the Lord as a necessary condition for the ability to see the glory of the Lord as the core of all things.⁷⁶ Natural theology thus is the art of seeing the traces of God's work everywhere in Creation, thanks to the grace of a personal encounter with the Lord. Comenius therefore does not represent a natural theology, which blurs the differences between the cognition of the world and the cognition of God, or which considers their transition as continual. The transition from a purely innerworldly to a theocentric or christocentric view respectively is not just a matter of intellectual assent, but requires the personal encounter with Christ and thus a gift of grace of the Lord.

After this short - as a matter of fact too short - sketch we must turn to the third part of our project: the critical inquiry from the present point of view. But this inquiry is much more difficult than it seems. What is "the present point of view"? Is there a present "objective" scientific point of view? Will we not discover in a few years that our present point of view is deeply dependent on our time, with its good aspects and its problems? It seems easier to take for comparison the worldview of one outstanding person of our day. But who? Undoubtedly some experts of today could be found concerning any of the subjects treated by Comenius, yet most of them are characterized by their specialization in a certain field, while Comenius shows us a way to see the whole. This is one main difficulty for any person who deals with Comenius: the more he writes about him, the more he begins to look at our present limited way of thinking from the much wider pansophical thinking of Comenius. Although his way of thinking becomes problematic when the exact state and location of things should be described, its strength lies in showing up relations and dynamics between different subjects and – in connection with this – shows a path for overcoming the strict division of subject and object. We should not only check the worldview of Comenius for consistency and look for contradictions and mistakes in his thinking, but we should also be open to changes of our own present "objective scientific" point of view. In the 17th century many a "switch" was turned, whose consequences are still being felt up to the present. At a lot of points we today reach the limits of the modern conception of reality in natural sciences and materialism. The fundamentals of this modern conception we find in the contemporary thinking of Comenius. Maybe the ideas of Comenius can give us suggestions, how to get out of the present entangled situation.

I deliberately abstain at this point from presenting a collection of slogans indicating how Comenius could save the world and how we could make his ideas

75) Cf. *Cons I*, col. 134 - 138; *Pansophiae seminarium*, DJAK 14, 25-42.

76) Cf. *Labyrinth*, DJAK 3, 376.

more popular. Not because I do not wish him to become more popular today - on the contrary. But I do not want to misuse him for a superficial cleaning of facades. This has been done enough during the last two centuries. My intention was simply to present some of his central ideas and to put them up for discussion. To carry on the thoughts of Comenius and the Brethren into the present is a task for a whole life.