
“A very special ‘apple of discord’”: Comenius’ reference to tradition as seen in his discussion of the Lord’s Supper

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“A very special ‘apple of discord’ for Christians has become, alas! the sacrosanct Supper of Christ, through the holiness of which he ordered his faithful to eat his body which has been given to death for us, instead of the Passover Lamb, and to drink his blood which has been shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Although all celebrate the ceremony of this sacrifice and confess that this mystery is based on faith; nevertheless, they quarrel almost excessively about the kind of presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist and reproach each other in a most detestable way for the differences in views and rites.”¹

No theological question has led to such confrontations of the theological “spirits” during the Bohemian Reformation and during the World Reformation as the question about how properly to understand and use the Lord’s Supper. “The question about the Lord’s Supper is the central problem of the Bohemian history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*)” assesses Erhard Peschke as a starting point of his description of the theology of the Brethren.² Accordingly, he considers the problem of the Lord’s Supper as a key, “which best opens to us Bohemian spiritual life (*Geistesleben*) in the 15th century and its preconditions and consequences.”³ While he might be exaggerating, somewhat, it does reflect a situation when anyone who, at that time, spoke against the lay chalice was considered by a much of the public as engaging in a pact with Antichrist. In the eschatological visions of Antichrist religious and social concerns coincide. “The disputes over the Lord’s Supper,” Peschke adds, “reach deep into the 16th century. The Bohemian Brethren were persecuted mainly because of their understanding of the Lord’s Supper. In the decisive years of his activity as a reformer, Luther grappled with it. Its Wyclifite foundations influenced his early understanding of the Lord’s Supper until he overcame them in an internal struggle as a temptation of reason.”⁴ The divisions between the denominations during the Reformation coincides closely with the different understanding of the Lord’s Supper. After the first generation of reformers, their successors tried, for their part, to enlarge the new insights in faith into a comprehensive system. They again clashed in their different opinions about the correct understanding of the Lord’s Supper with front lines often running across the

¹ *Atrium Latinitatis*, ODO III (Erud. Schol. pars III) 711f. (§965). The *Atrium Latinitatis* is the more detailed version of *Janua Linguarum* which presents systematically in numbered paragraphs the most important things of the world to pupils. For the Lord’s Supper cf. *Janua Linguarum* ODO III: 587 (§965).

² Erhard Peschke, *Die Theologie der Böhmisches Brüder in ihrer Frühzeit, I. Bd.: Das Abendmahl, 1. Untersuchungen*, (Stuttgart, 1935) 1.

³ *Ibid.* 3. The importance of the lay chalice, for example, becomes evident in the second of the Four Articles of Prague from 1420, which form the common basis of the Hussite resistance.

⁴ *Ibid.* 2f.

former limits of confessions. Hence, perhaps there is no more appropriate subject to display Comenius' reference to tradition than the Lord's Supper.

Hermann F. von Criegern, however, has opined that: "Concerning the means of grace, [Comenius'] teaching only offers something remarkable in the article on the holy Lord's Supper, which is, he doesn't advance any teaching!"⁵ Von Criegern might take offence at the fact, that Comenius hardly touches the disputes over the correct understanding of the Lord's Supper in his theological writings. On the other hand, Comenius as a representative of the Bohemian Brethren directly makes reference to their own and other evangelical traditions. He mainly talks about it in his historiographical writings with which he presents and defends his Unity against the outside Protestant world and in documents he co-edited as a senior of the Brethren. Why did Comenius not go more deeply into the matter in his own theological writings?; why did he not confess in a clear and distinctive way his own understanding of the Lord's Supper? I will attempt to answer these questions in the following pages.

Czech theologians consider Comenius first of all as a representative of the Bohemian Brethren.⁶ Undoubtedly, Comenius, as their bishop, was also their theological representative but, on the other hand, we know about the deep disagreements between the Brethren and Comenius mainly on his pansophical endeavour. Outside the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, Comenius is hardly known as a theologian. Those theologians abroad, who luckily "stumble" over his writings, mostly approach him from a special field of interest in Church history. Accordingly, Comenius' relation to Protestant orthodoxy and early pietism have been examined by taking one or more of his writings as a basis or, more modestly, as an example. Thus, for example, Martin Brecht shows how close Comenius was to pietism, while Emidio Campi stresses his inclination to Protestant orthodoxy.⁷ So far a "theology of Comenius" has not been written, and all his classifications within the traditions of his time rather represent a patchwork. With their specific focus on the Lord's Supper, the following comments can be no exception.

According to Comenius' description in the *Historia persecutionum Ecclesiae Bohemicae*⁸ of 1648 communion *sub una*, which is like a sacrilege, was introduced

⁵ Hermann Ferdinand von Criegern, *Johann Amos Comenius als Theolog*, (Leipzig-Heidelberg, 1881) 159.

⁶ See Daniel Neval, "Vom Verstehen der eigenen Tradition zum ökumenischen Gestalten der Gegenwart. Die Anliegen des Comenius bei A. Molnár und Josef L. Hromádka," CV 41(1999) 212 - 240; J.M. Lochman, *Comenius*, (Freiburg i. Ue./Hamburg, 1982); J.B. Lášek, "Comenius als Prediger," in Vladimír J. Dvořák (ed.), *Comenius als Theologe*, (Prague, 1998) 166 - 173 and *passim*.

⁷ Martin Brecht, "Johann Amos Comenius im Zusammenhang der protestantischen Theologie seiner Zeit," in *Jan Amos Comenius 1592 - 1992. Theologische und pädagogische Deutungen*, ed. Kl. Goßmann and Chr. Th. Scheilke, (Gütersloh 1992) 70 - 84. Emidio Campi, "Johann Amos Comenius (1592 - 1670) und die protestantische Theologie seiner Zeit," *Zwingliana* 22 (1995) 67-83.

⁸ DJAK 9/I: 199-338. Comenius wrote the description as an supplement to John Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, which also commemorates Jan Hus and which had been re-edited in 1632. Originally written in Czech (*Historia o těžkých protivenstvích církve české*, DJAK 9/I: 51-198), the text was translated into Latin for the *Book of Martyrs*. As the most important sources for the description Comenius referred, among others, to the works by the old chroniclers and historians such as Jan Dubravius, Aeneas Silvius, Bohuslav Bílejovský, Jan Jafet, Prokop Lupacius, Martin Kuthen, Jan Rosacius, Václav Hájek z Libočan, Pavel Skály, Pavel Stránský, Flacius Illyricus, and, further, more especially to

for the first time under the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. around the year 1350 on the initiative of Archbishop Arnošt z Pardubic (ch. V).⁹ The archbishop had been supported by the foreign professors and students, who had been invited by Charles IV. to the newly founded Academy, so that the Czechs had to accept the alien customs and could not administer the sacrament in both kinds or as often as before. One of the first who diligently stood up for frequent partaking of communion in both kinds, apparently, was Jan Milíč (ch. VI), followed by Matěj z Janova. But, after the expulsion of Matěj z Janova from Prague, the partaking of the communion in both kinds was forbidden and even those who did so in secret put their lives at risk (ch. VII). Comenius does not go into Hus' position on communion *sub utraque* in his *Historia persecutionum*.¹⁰ He continues his description with the religious persecutions in Bohemia, without discussing their reasons in detail. Sadly, he states: "However also the Bohemians thought among themselves in peculiar ways, for some of them stood closer to the emperor and the pope, while others diligently stood up for the chalice (wherefore they were called 'calixtines' [*kališníci*]), and they were unleashed to general murdering in a extremely tyrannical way." (ch. IX) Comenius reports about numerous martyrs who paid with their lives for their plea for communion *sub utraque*.¹¹ On 26 December 1420, for example, a Captain called Hynek Červenohorský from Jaromír entered the church in the village of Kerczin at the very moment, when the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Some of the church members he murdered, others he took prisoner. "And what should be remembered as an execrable fact: he took the chalice filled with wine from the altar and gave it to his horse to drink and declared that now his horse was also in both kinds." (ch. XII) But in the same year Conrad, the Archbishop of Prague, according to Comenius converted to the true faith and, thus, made possible the foundation of a Consistory *sub utraque*, to which Jan Příbram, Prokop Plzenský, Jakobellus and Jan Želivský belonged.¹² Finally, the Czechs obtained with the *Compactata* of the Concil of Basel of 1431 the confirmation of the lay chalice. (ch. XVI) Already in 1448, Rokycana was put under pressure by the pope to renounce the lay chalice again. However, he did not give in and, to the contrary, preached in such a distinct manner against the

the works of Jan Lasicius and Andrzej Węgierski. Comenius borrowed large portions from the *Historia persecutionum* for his small essay *Ecclesiae slavonicae brevis historiola* (Amsterdam 1660; Czech translations Prague, 1893 and 1941). The statements on the Lord's Supper are largely identical in both writings.

⁹ According to A. Molnár and N. Rejchrtová (in their commentary on the *Historia persecutionum*, DJAK 9/I: 393) the eucharist *sub una* was just introduced in the second half of the 15th century under the rule of the Luxembourgs while, according to Jakoubek of Stříbro it had already started by the beginning of the 13th century.

¹⁰ In a letter to the preacher of the Bethlehem Chapel, Havlík, written on 21 June 1415 from his prison in Constance, Hus clearly spoke against the condemnation of the sacrament of the chalice as heresy, while, earlier, in Prague he only very cautiously expressed his opinion on the question of the chalice. (See Alexander Kolesnyk, "Husovo pojetí eucharistie, " in *Jan Hus mezi epochami, národy a konfesemi*. ed. J. B. Lášek (Prague, 1995) 118-125.) Comenius refers to Hus' understanding of the Lord's Supper in *Ohlášení*, which will be discussed later.

¹¹ Jan Krása (c. XI), Václav, preacher at the Church of St. Arnost, along with eight others (c. XIII), Václav (c. XIV) &c.

¹² The four representatives were elected on 4 July 1421, but the election was confirmed by the emperor Sigismund only in 1435/36, and the first historical reports on the activities of the Consistory only date from the year 1452. See K. Krofta, "Boj o konsistoř podobojí v letech 1562 - 1575 a jeho historický základ," ČČM 17 (1911) 40 (according to the commentary, DJAK 9/I: 396b).

pope, identifying him with Antichrist, that his listeners took him for a second Hus. (ch. XVIII) But his courage melted away when, under Brother Gregory, the Unity of the Brethren began to be established and their members asked him to be their leader. Nonetheless, he at least helped them to obtain a remote piece of land where they could live according to the Law of Christ. Shortly afterwards, however, he definitely broke with the Brethren and became one of their first persecutors.

From the outset, the Brethren dissociated themselves from the Roman Catholic Church because it had committed too many mistakes because they considered a reform of the Roman Catholic Church impossible. According to their view, the errors of the papal church had given proof that it was governed by the Antichrist. Thus, they also rejected the Roman Catholic understanding of eucharist as Lasitius writes in his description of the Brethren.¹³ In his excerpts of Lasitius' description, Comenius quotes the Brethren's understanding of the Lord's Supper and its worthy celebration and reception at great length.¹⁴ The Brethren were very reserved about formulating an exact explanation of the Lord's Supper. It was Luther who challenged them to reflect their understanding of it and take up a clear point of view. The ensuing controversy between Luther and the Brethren under Luke of Prague Comenius only discusses in his *Ohlášení*¹⁵, in which he rejects the reproaches against the Unity together with another Senior of his Church. The authors stress the independence of their teaching in relation to that of the Lutherans and the Calvinists. According to the Brethren, Luther was thinking about the Lord's Supper in a far too material way (*hrubě hmotně*)¹⁶, though they agreed with his response: "We simply believe, that the bread is the body of Christ and the wine his blood, without paying attention to the physicists and mathematicians, who want to know and measure, whether the holiness of Christ is in his hair or in his hand. We have nothing to do with them."¹⁷ Unlike the Lutherans, the Brethren did not kneel down before the host as, for them, Christ also continued to sit at the right of God during the Lord's Supper.¹⁸ The Brethren had dissociated themselves from the Calvinists because of their "evacuation of the power of the sacrament" and the fact that, in the context of their teaching on predestination, they assigned to God the origin of sin.¹⁹ They also broke with the Zwinglians because of their understanding of the sacrament as a bare sign (*holé znamení v svátosti*).²⁰ On the contrary, the

¹³ Third book, c. 10: 193 - 195. According to Comenius, the Brethren at the same time also rejected the Taborite understanding of the Lord's Supper.

¹⁴ Cc. 29-32.

¹⁵ *Na spis proti Jednote bratrské od M. Samuela Martinia ohlášení* (1636), VSJAK 17: 279 – 448.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 306.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 313.

¹⁸ On Luther's rejection the Brethren answered: „We can not think and talk in another way about the mysteries of God than what God taught us with his word; only there we find, that at his Ascension our Lord was taken upward and now sits to the right of God, Mark 16.19.“

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 321.

²⁰ P. 308: Comenius mentions Jan Čížek (Hans Zeising), who had wanted to spread the Zwinglian teaching among the Brethren. Cf. J. TH. Müller: *Die Böhmisches Brüderunität und Zwingli*, Zwingliana, 1920, Nr. 2 (Bd. III, 1913-1920, p. 514 - 524) about the activities of Hans Zeising and Michael Weisse in Mikulov (South Moravia), furthermore Rudolf Vindiš, *Bratra Lukáše názory o eucharistii*, VKČSN, Prague 1923, p. 145.

Brethren, according to Comenius, believed, “that in the Lord’s Supper the body and the blood of Christ are present in a holy, spiritual, powerful and true manner. In a holy manner, because the bread and the wine are not mere bread and wine, but things, given to be called and to be, what they mean: the body and blood of Christ. In a spiritual way because the body and blood of Christ are not here as a bodily or material entity, neither are the perceptible by our senses, but they are perceptible by faith which has been given through the Spirit. In a powerful manner because, through this service, the power of the life of Christ flows into the hearts of the believers, perceptible by them. Truly, because this is not a imagining but it happens truly, like Christ is truly the truth and the Amen.”²¹ Here, Comenius clearly follows the teaching of Luke of Prague and his four-fold distinction of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.²² According to Luke the bread is “naturally and spiritually the body of the Lord Christ: spiritual, sacramental, effective and true. That is to understand it in the following way: spiritual, i.e. not fleshly; sacramental, i.e. not really or substantially, but designative; effective as the Apostle writes about its effect in 1 Cor 27:11; and true, i.e. having the essential truth within itself.”²³ This ‘sacramental’ understanding of the Lord’s Supper Comenius attributes to Hus, which he tries to prove with Hus’ sermon for Corpus Christi.²⁴ This reference, however, is not really valid because this passage written in biblical language can be read in different ways and because Hus shortly afterwards clearly refers to transsubstantiation.²⁵

Only as a co-author of a text written for his Unity does Comenius discuss the the Brethren’s teaching on the Lord’s Supper. As we can see from the introductory quotation, he considered sophisticated considerations on the Lord’s Supper too much an “apple of dispute”, a reason for theological quarrels, which made the way to harmony and the unity of the Churches impossible.²⁶ Thus, Comenius asks in his

²¹ *Ibid.* 318.

²² In the first manner of presence, Christ is substantially, naturally, corporeally and locally limited and only present in heaven and, thus, will return to earth only for the Last Judgement. His second manner of presence is the powerful way of being in which he rules as a king over the whole world (according to Mt. 28:18). In the third spiritual way of being he is present in the church and in the believer through his grace and through the gifts of the Spirit. The sacrament is a sensual sign of a spiritual truth, in which Christ is present spiritually, sacramentally, powerful and truly (*duchovně, [vy]znamenaně, mocně a právě*). In this definition Brother Luke follows the teaching of the Taborites and – although apparently only through Taborite mediation – the teaching of Wyclif.

²³ J.Th. Müller, *Die Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder*, I. Band (1400-1428) 488 (quotation from a letter of Luke to Bavorynský).

²⁴ VSJAK 17: 390 f. According to Comenius, Hus said: “že chléb jest tělem Páně a víno krví Páně posvátně, a že se věrou požívá Kristovo tělo a krev od samých těch, kteříž Krista v sobe skrze víru přebývajícího mají; jiní nehodní a bezbožní posvátnost toliko tak velikého tajemství že přijímají, a protož sobě odsouzení toliko že jedí a pijí.” See. *Kázání na den památky Večeře Páně*, in: *M. Jana Husi Sebrané spisy*, sv. IV, *Spisy české*, díl I., (ed. by M. Svoboda and V. Flajšhans) 136 – 144.

²⁵ According to Josef Müller in his commentary to the edition of *Ohlášení*, (Prague, 1898) 158. See Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Česká konfesse, její vznik, podstata a dějiny*, (Prague, 1912) 316.

²⁶ See: *Cesta Pokoje*, VSJAK 17: 458. As a deterrant example of the theological quarrels, Comenius mentions the eucharistic dispute between Luther and Karlstad on the Lord’s Supper wherein the parties which labeled one another respectively as “ubiquitarians, kapernaits, eutychianians” and as “sacramentarians, nestorians, arians,” *ibid.* 469f. As a positive example, Comenius notes the 1631 Leipzig agreement between the the theologians of Saxony (Lutheran), Brandenburg and Hesse, *ibid.* 472-474.

Haggaeus Redivivus: “Whether this partaking [of the Lord’s Supper] now happens with the mouth or with faith itself – is it not useless to quarrel about it? Why do we try to speak of that on which the Bible is silent?”²⁷

In the years before Comenius became senior of the Brethren, he was occupied with very different concerns than that of the exact understanding of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper. After the defeat of the Bohemian Estates at the Battle of the White Mountain, he had to hide underground and watch helplessly as the Roman Catholics destroyed most achievements of the Bohemian Reformation. “We believe that not without deeper reasons the realm of the Antichrist has been shown to St. John in the form of a swindler: and with our own eyes do we see it ourselves, when we look at the atrocities of this swindler against the living and the dead, and the rage, with which he tears to pieces everything that stands in his way.”²⁸ The chalice, as a symbol of what the old faithful Czech had fought for with their swords, is removed and destroyed. “In Prague, the huge gilded chalice at the Church before Týn was removed on 23 January 1623 and a portray of Mary was placed in its stead and, where king Jiří of Poděbrady stood defending the chalice with his bare sword, an image of Ferdinand armed with the sword against heretics was installed. In Hradec Králové the chalice above the entrance gate of the Church of St. Anthony was erased and overpainted with a monstrance and a overturned chalice above it out of which flowed thick yeast next to which they wrote: ‘They also drank yeast.’ And above the doors they put in golden letters these lovely lines: ‘My house is a house of prayer, unlike yours, you dirty Calvin.’”²⁹ In his early writing *Rescue from the Antichrist*³⁰ of 1617, Comenius treats in detail the anti-Christian teaching of the Pope. Drawing on Scripture, Augustine and, surprisingly, Bernard of Clairvaux, he refutes the view of the Papists “that in the Sacrament (namely in the eucharist) not only the natural body of Christ is enclosed with its bones and hairs, but also with spirit and holiness, so that ex opere operato grace is given to anybody, who partakes it.”³¹ “The Pope testifies of himself, that he has the power, to change the sacraments and the manner of using them, and he actually does it. ... From the Lord’s Supper he tore half of it away and left just the first part. Is that not an arrogance against him who instituted this sacrament, that is over God himself?”³² For Comenius, the papal prohibition of the lay chalice was one proof among others that the pope is identical with Antichrist as he is described in the book of the prophet Daniel and in the Apocalypse.³³

The resolutions concerning the Lord’s Supper which Comenius drew up along with the other Seniors of the *Unitas Fratrum* can not be discussed fully at this place. Just a few examples may be mentioned. In 1632, Comenius published in

²⁷ *Haggaeus Redivivus*, XX (DJAK 2, p. 336).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 173.

²⁹ Cap. 105. For Prague see: Stanislav Klíma, *Země Husova. Historický průvodce po Praze a po Čechách*, (Prague, 1915) 27f.; for Hradec Králové see: J.J. Vrabec, *Příspěvek k dějinám kultu Husova na Králové-hradecku před Bílou horou*, RS 1 (1921) 43.

³⁰ *Retuňk proti Antikristu*, DJAK 2: 9 - 224. (Also published by B. Souček in 1924 under the title *O papežství*.)

³¹ *Ibid.* 66f.

³² *Ibid.* 155.

³³ Comenius also criticizes “the idolatrous adoration of the monstrance” *ibid.*, 140.

Lissa the *ordo* (rationale) of the Unity to which he added his own remarks and comments.³⁴ The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism are introduced together with Word of God and the Keys (church discipline) as "*ministerialia*", i.e. those things, which minister to the "*essentialia*", the essential things of Christianity, i.e. faith, love and hope. The comments on the Lord's Supper are entirely dedicated to the ceremony itself. "When the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated, we take greatest care that all mysteries in this holy procedure are worthily (1 Cor 11:19ff.) preserved."³⁵ In the centre stands the "common and personal preparation of the heart" and the forgiveness of sins. Comenius remarks: "How great is the joy of the believing soul, which is absolved from the sense (*sensus*) of sin and the wrath of God, David has experienced, when all his bones sprang up (Psalm 51.10)"³⁶. In 1633 the Seniors and Conseniors in Lissa sent instructions for the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper, the "*Coena Agni*", to their brothers in Lithuania.³⁷ They stressed right preparation and examination of conscience. With the Lord's Supper all our sins are forgiven. The aim of the mystery of the Lord's Supper (*scopus mysterii*) is to join and unite the believers and to fill them with joy.³⁸ In a letter from 1645 to the Protestants in Great Poland, which also bears the signatures of Comenius the Brethren, their understanding of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is spelled out.³⁹ They stand against the "papal" physical understanding as well as a mere figurative and spiritual understanding. Their own understanding they delineate as "communicative", "or as the Church commonly says, a sacramental" understanding: "We confess, that the true body of Christ truly seizes us." In the sacrament, the body of Christ is present in a natural, spiritual and sacramental manner, as pledge and confirmation of our unity with the holy body of Christ and the glorious resurrection of our bodies.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Comenius took part at the (irenic) colloquium in Thorn in 1645, although just for a very short time. In preparation for the colloquium Comenius wrote a short document in which he discusses different manners of arguing but does not express his opinion on any theological question.⁴⁰ Accordingly, no remarks on the Lord's Supper can be found. Although the colloquium of Thorn ended without an agreement between the denominations (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed), the Reformed side, to which also the Brethren belonged, agreed among themselves on the famous *Declaratio*

³⁴ *Ratio disciplinae ordinis ecclesiastici in Unitate fratrum Bohemorum*, VSJAK 17: 1-155.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 100.

³⁶ "Let me hear joy and gladness, let the bones you have crushed rejoice."

³⁷ *Seniores et Conseniores Unitatis Fratibus profecturis in Lithuaniam*, Lesnae, 2 Juli 1633, in: *Analecta Comeniana*, ed. by J. Kvačala, (Iurievi [Tartu], 1909) 5 – 10. The expression 'Coena Agni' is found on 6.

³⁸ "[F]ideles copulare in unum et implere gaudio" *ibid.*, 7.

³⁹ *Synoda Jednoty evangelikům Augsburského vyznání, Z Lešna - 26. dubna*; in: Kvačala, *Korrespondence II*, 83 - 87 (č. XLI) "[U]t Verum Christi Corpus vere nos sumere confiteamur." *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁰ *Comenius - socio cuidam Thorunium profecturo*. Elbingae 21 Jan. 1645 in: *Analecta Comeniana*, ed. J. Kvačala, (Iurievi, 1909) 19-51.

*Thoruniensis*⁴¹. Here, as usual in reformed orthodoxy, the elevation of the heart through the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ, raised above all the heavens, is stressed. The inner man is nourished by the substance of the flesh of Christ in the form of a pneumatic real presence. It is only through the corporeal execution of the feeding the Lord's Supper that salvation is ascertained.⁴²

For a closer look at Comenius' ties to protestant orthodoxy the influence of his teacher in Herborn, Johann Heinrich Alsted, has to be considered in first place. Comenius, however, never explicitly mentions the name of Alsted in connection with the Lord's Supper, and, thus, the unidentified allusions to Alsted are still waiting to be identified. Furthermore, Comenius only applies all his knowledge about the orthodox arts of dispute, which he had learnt during his studies, when it came to arguments with the Socinians over the understanding of Trinity.⁴³ But in his voluminous and, often, quite long-winded antisocinian writings, the Lord's Supper does not play any important role. An exception is found his critique of the Socinian understanding of the Lord's Supper in his commentary on the catechism of Rakow, although, here, Comenius does not argue as a representative of orthodoxy in a strict sense. He opposes the catechism's placement of baptism after the Lord's Supper: "Is baptism not the symbol of our regeneration (*symbolum regenerationis nostrae*), Eucharist the symbol of our spiritual nourishment?" Christ is not only our brother and our father, our Lord and King, but also our bridegroom and our husband. He also says that he is a tree and we his branches, that he is a vine and we his vine-branches. "As he now wished to express his union with us more deeply than before, he said that he will become our meat and drink; beyond that nothing more united and proximate can be said or thought. For when a healthy man takes in food and digests it properly it becomes our blood, our body, our bones, that is our substance itself which cannot be taken from ourselves anymore without taking our lives."⁴⁴ With this intimate union of the faithful with Christ, Comenius stresses the aspect of the teaching on the Lord's Supper which, in protestant orthodoxy, was less controversial and, thus, linked the different parties: the teaching of the fruit or purpose of the Lord's Supper. While tempers continued to run high over the precise presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, a certain concord reigned on this question. All parties commonly agreed that the Lord's Supper not only caused individual forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith, but also a growing unity with Christ as the head and with the living community of the members with one another. Just as baptism is the unique sacrament of rebirth and incorporation into the covenant of mercy, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing sacrament of spiritual renewal and nourishment for eternal life.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ed. Niemeyer: *Collectio Confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicatarum*, (Lepizig, 1840) 681 - 683.

⁴² Albrecht Peters, "Abendmahl," TRE III/4: 132.

⁴³ See E. Campi, "Johann Amos Comenius (1592 - 1670) ...," *Zwingliana* 22 (1995) 67-83.

⁴⁴ *Socinismi Speculum*, 53f (also in E. Schadel ed., 1085f.). Here he distinguishes between baptism as a "symbol of our regeneration" and eucharist as a "symbol of our spiritual nourishment".

⁴⁵ The orthodox teaching on the fruits of the Lord's Supper had been prepared already by the Augustinian tradition of prayer: the concept that we, by word and prayer, are continuously nourished spiritually with the body and blood of Christ. This concept was broadly developed in late medieaval and early Reformed devotional literature and again, later on, again in Pietism.

In Comenius' understanding of the Lord's Supper we find both aspects, which brings him closer to Lutheran orthodoxy, as well as other aspects which rather reflect a reformed orthodox view. In Lutheran orthodoxy the mystical union (*unio mystica*) and the spiritual erection of the eschatological body of obedience is stressed. Reformed orthodoxy, on the other hand, laid emphasis on the memorial of the covenant of the expiatory death of Christ and the hope of bodily resurrection. Comenius refers to the mystical union with Christ in several of his writings such, for example, in the *Labyrinth*⁴⁶ and in *Centrum Securitatis*, whereas he lays emphasis on the covenant e.g. in *Mundus Spiritualis*: "This is my body. It is not suitable to speak in another way, for the sacraments are seals of the covenant."⁴⁷ Finally, in *Praxis Pietatis*, Comenius states that the Lord's Supper is a sign, a slogan (*heslo*), even the foundation (*základ*) for the closest and tightest union with the Lord of which we can think.⁴⁸ It is given to us as hope for eternal life, as a sign and as pledge for our spiritual resurrection as well as for the resurrection at the last day. We therefore find in Comenius' writings Lutheran as well as rather reformed statements on the fruits of the Lord's Supper. This can also be understood as part of his endeavour to find a point of view beyond denominational borders. Most accurate might be to depict his attitude as one of "reform orthodoxy" if, by this term, the later movement in protestant orthodoxy is meant, which tried to overcome the arguments between the denominations and the falling apart of theory and practice of Christian faith without giving up the desire for a systematic unfolding and delineation of Christian faith.

While, apart from the stress on the fruits of the Lord's Supper, it is rather difficult to define Comenius' exact relation to protestant orthodoxy in terms of contents, after examining his *Consultatio*⁴⁹ his formal proximity to orthodoxy can be seen. With orthodoxy, Comenius shares the desire to unfold a system although he enlarges its object to the whole of science.⁵⁰ A passage in the *Panorthosia* on the Lord's Supper plainly shows how he delights in formalism: "The essential things are faith, love and hope in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father, who adjudicates Salvation, the Son, who merits it, the Holy Spirit, who offers and seals it. The ministerial things are the Word of God, which instills all essential things, the keys, which hold it all together in due order, and the sealing sacraments. For with his words Christ puts us to pasture like a doctor (a pastor), with the power of the keys he reigns like a king, and with the sacraments he cleanses us like a priest. Through these three, the church becomes the school, the reign, and the sanctuary of Christ. Out of these arise faith, love and hope."⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Labyrint světa a ráj srdce*, c. 39, 3; DJAK 3: 369. Here, Comenius speaks of the "union with the only Christ, the eternal bridegroom".

⁴⁷ *Consultatio* I col. 1123.

⁴⁸ *Praxis Pietatis*, c. 30: 201 – 211.

⁴⁹ *De Rerum humanorum Emendatione Consultatio catholica*, 2 vv. (Prague, 1966.)

⁵⁰ While protestant orthodoxy tried to erect its systematic framework on Holy Scripture exclusively, Comenius introduced further "books of God" which, together with Holy Scripture, formed the foundation of his "pansophy": the "book of nature" and the "book of conscience".

⁵¹ *Panorthosia* XIII, *Consultatio* II, col. 517. See: *Řád církevní jednoty Bratří českých*, VSJAK 17: 28 – 30. Here, in the *Consultatio*, we find the distinction of the Brethren between *essentialia* and *ministerialia* within a formal framework, which contains all human matters. (See: *Ratio*, VSJAK 17: 31:

In 1630 Comenius published in Lissa his own free translation of Lewis Bayly's *Praxis Pietatis*, an Anglican of the Puritan party.⁵² Three chapters are dedicated to the Lord's Supper and focus on worthy preparation and participation of the faithful as can easily be seen from their titles.⁵³ Christ instituted the Lord's Supper for four reasons: "First, he said: 'do this in my memory or as a remembrance of me'." "Secondly, he instituted this sacrament, so that it may be a bond of unity for the church." Thirdly, he instituted it, "to strengthen us in our faith in the forgiveness of sins through his death." "Finally, he indicated that his meal which we celebrate here is given us as a guarantee and pledge of the future heavenly meal." In other words, Christ instituted his Supper for a threefold purpose, that is, as a seal of our faith, our love and our hope. "Of faith, that our trust in Christ the Saviour and our certain hope for the forgiveness of our sins be sealed in our hearts; of love, so that we ourselves would seal in front of God and the Church, and that, because God loves us and gave himself for us, we would consecrate ourselves, our bodies and souls, to him and to his children. Finally, by doing so he also seals our hearts and our hope, that our expectation of the heavenly meal of joy is undoubtedly true and will always be so. Amen."⁵⁴ The body and blood of the Lord are present in a twofold manner: "in the first place, spiritually in the hearts of believers; in the second place, in a holy manner, in the inner signs and seals, as in secret."⁵⁵ The first manner of presence is caused by the Holy Spirit; the second through faith, when one understands the sacramental words. The forgiveness of sins has in this case to be considered rather on the basis of our union with Christ than as a precondition.⁵⁶ In a threefold manner we are united with Christ in the Lord's Supper: "In the first place, in a natural manner through our humanity which he took upon himself. In the second place, in a spiritual manner and hidden in the mystery, through which our persons are brought over to his person in the spiritual body. In the third place, in a heavenly manner, through which our bodies are assimilated to his glorious body with which we will remain forever."⁵⁷ The comparison of these reflections on the Lord's Supper with later Pietist reflections on the continent shows a remarkable difference: while in the latter

"Verba enim Dei essentialia illa nobis revelat (Ps 19:12), claves assignant (Jn 20:22), sacramenta obsignant (Rom 4,11)."

⁵² Later editions: Amsterdam, 1661; Prague, 1922; free translation into modern Czech by Ladislav Kopecký, Prague, 1992. Excerpts of the chapters on the Lord's Supper in H.F. von Criegern, *J.A. Comenius als Theolog*, 74 - 92. Comenius defends the views on the Lord's Supper and on the Trinity which he had presented in the *Praxis Pietatis* in the *Ohlášení* (VSJAK 17: 391) against Samuel Martinius, who had criticized, that the work was "mnohými postranními, scestnými smysly a důmysly naplněné, o čemž brzo gruntovní zpráva vůbec se učiní, pilně se varuje a vystříhá" (Martinius: *Třicet pět důvodův*, ed. Jos. Müller, (Prague, 1898) 34.)

⁵³ In 1865 a small booklet was issued in Prague under the title *Nábožné přemýšlování o večeři Páně*, containing chapters 29-31 of the *Praxis pietatis*, the articles on the Lord's Supper from the Bohemian Confession and the Confession of the Brethren as well as a short biography of Comenius by F. Palacký, and the *Bequest of the dying Mother, Unity of the Brethren*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 77.

⁵⁵ *Praxis Pietatis*, c. 30,6: 206.

⁵⁶ See the sequence of the conversion in the *Labyrinth*. In the catechisms of the Brethren, however, the forgiving of sins stands in first place, e.g. in the catechism edited by Comenius in 1662: "chléb večeře Páne jest telo Pána Jezu Krista za nás vydané a víno v kalichu krev jeho za nás vylitá na odpuštění hříchů." (Article XIII, in: *Čtyři vyznání*, (Prague, 1951) 158.)

⁵⁷ *Praxis Pietatis*, c. 30,4 ed. J.B. Elsner (Prague, 1877) 203f.

the stress lies on proper preparation for the Lord's Supper and mainly on proper contrition, the *Praxis Pietatis* joyfully considers the whole context of the Lord's Supper within the pious conduct of life.⁵⁸

His special method of biblical exegesis helped Comenius considerably in avoiding sophisticated theological arguments. In his arguments, as well as in his style, he closely followed the text and language of the Bible, while he hardly ever quotes the confessions of faith or other theologians. In his theological thought he applies concentric circles which put all objects considered into a Biblical context and, thus, links them through the word of Scripture. He might trace a certain concept through the whole Bible or he might consider a certain verse in its whole context. By this means Comenius realizes, according to his conviction, one of the most important principles of biblical exegesis of the Reformers: "Scripture explains itself". A good example of this proceedings is given in the sixth Good Friday sermon in which he treats the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹ Here Comenius follows three questions: "How the Lord prepared his disciples for this mystery [the Lord's Supper]? How did he announce it? How did they live with him?" As a confirmation of his answers to the first question Comenius shows those passages in the Old Testament which already indicated them before the coming of Christ (*Předpovědní*). The sacramental word Comenius explains by a careful comparison with the Passover meal and by showing how Christ fulfills its meaning in a new way (*Tajemství*). In the centre stands Christ as the Lamb of God and his blood, shed for the forgiving of our sins. In the last part of his sermon (*Naučení*) Comenius shows what we can learn from the preceding considerations of Christ, of his disciples and of Judas and, accordingly, how we can prepare ourselves for the Lord's Supper. The way to the future communion with Christ Comenius describes as follows: According to Scripture those will come to heaven, whose garments are washed and whitened in the blood of the lamb (Rev 8:14) "Our garment in the spiritual sense is what we will have to show before God, that is, our conscience. We wash our garment in the blood of the lamb (of the Passover), when we believe that the blood of Christ has been shed to purify us and wash away our sins (1 Jn 1:7). We whiten our garments in the same blood of the lamb by not corrupting ourselves anymore, but by keeping our purity and holiness instead, so that how he who is in the light we will walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7)." ⁶⁰ The Sixth Good Friday sermon clearly shows how close Comenius stood to the Pietism's origins, which heavily stressed worthy reception of the Lord's Supper. Comenius also speaks about contrition of the heart when he, at the end, follows Psalm 51:19 saying: "The sacrifice which pleases God, is a contrite spirit, a humble heart, O God, you will not despise."

"The mystery is great; for I speak about Christ and the Church." This verse of Ephesians (5:32) stands as a motto above a small work of Comenius on the Lord's Supper which carries the circumstantial title: *Consideration (Navrzení) on the true union and communion / community of all believers with Christ, which happens through fact, faith and in a holy manner. For pious reflection for those, which are*

⁵⁸ Cf. in Anglicanism e.g. Henry Hammond, who carefully distinguished the ethical impulses and obligations which have their origin in the eucharist.

⁵⁹ In: *Sebraná díla kazatelská*, ed. L.B. Kašpar, (Prague, 1893) pt. 2: 112-127.

⁶⁰ *Sebraná díla kazatelská II*, 126.

*preparing for the worthy reception of the Lord's Supper.*⁶¹ Comenius most probably published this writing in 1656 in Lissa. Only one copy has been preserved which is kept today in Bratislava.⁶² The *Navrzeni* is the most detailed text in which Comenius deals with the Lord's Supper. He concentrates entirely on one particular aspect of the Lord's Supper, which he thinks over carefully in its whole range: the joining, union and communion of the believers with Christ. For his accurate considerations Comenius seems to refer to the *Praxis Pietatis*, which Comenius himself had translated earlier into Czech.

Bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are the communion of the body and the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16). This communion for us is of the same kind as the communion "of Christ's uniting with us and our uniting with Christ." Three ways of true union can be distinguished: corporeal, spiritual and figurative. In order that our uniting with Christ is not only true and real but also complete and perfect it must take place in all three ways, from his side as well as from our side. "Our joining with Christ is spiritual, because he has loved us from eternity and will love us to eternity." "Corporeally it is also, because he corporeally united with us accepting the participation (*učastnost*) of body and blood and thus joining his deity and eternal life with our humanity. And although he now has gone away with his body, he nevertheless promised to come back and to take us to his place, so that we will also be where he is." Finally our joining with Christ is "figurative" because, through different parables and examples, he has presented us his joining with us." He is our pastor, king, brother and bridegroom; we his sheep, his subjects, his brothers and sisters, his bride.⁶³ As a memorial sign of his deepest joining with us he has said to us, "that he will be our meat and drink" and we shall eat and drink him. Christ is so closely bound up with us, that he cannot be taken from us like well digested food, which has been converted into blood and life, cannot be taken from us anymore. "Standing on one of the deepest and truly already perfect levels we should remember our joining with him, whenever we use food and drink, as he ordered us." We partake, we eat and drink to eternal life (Jn 6.54).

In a similar way, as Christ is joined with us, we are joined with Christ. Though corporeally we are not yet with him, because we still are guests in our body, we, who are baptized in Christ, nevertheless are joined with Christ." "Spiritually we join with Christ through love; when we fervently love him as the only one more than anything on earth, when we try to please him in all things." We also join Christ through the mysteries in all those things, in which he presented himself to us by seeing, accepting and embracing him." Especially we can taste and perceive his kindness in

⁶¹ *Navrzení O Pravdivém všech veřících s Kristem Sjednocení a Společnosti, kterak se děje Skutkem, a Věrou, a Posvátně. Ku Pobožnému Přemýšlování těm, kteříž se k hodnému Večeře Páně Užívání strojí, podané od K.J.A.K. Léta 1656.* (henceforth: *Navrzení*) Edited by R. Říčan under the title *Komenského návrzení o pravdivém všech veřících s Kristem sjednocení a společnosti*, in: *Křesťanská Revue* 20 (1953) příl., 74 - 78. "Navrzení" literally means "sketch, proposition", but in this particular case rather stands for "essay, consideration".

⁶² In the Evangelical Library bound together texts as Nr. 3881 (according to R. Říčan).

⁶³ "He is a garment of justice and we are his body, whose nakedness he covers, warms and adorns; he is our sun, we are his earth, which he lightens and delights with the rays of his grace; he is the dew and the rain, we are his herb, which he sprinkles, waters and animates; he is the vine and we are his vine-branches, whose grafted members he carries, animates and fertilizes." (*Socinismi Speculum*, c. 16: 51 (in: *Antisozinianische Schriften*, ed. Erwin Schadel, 2: 1083).

the Lord's Supper. With the lips of our body we should drink the sacrament of the body and the blood of Christ, but with the lips of faith we should drink the present body and blood of the Saviour himself. By doing so, faith will grow and love, the flame of life of our soul, will kindle and the hope for the eternal meal with Christ will take its unchanging force. In this way we should grow together with Christ in one spirit and one body.

As we are joined with Christ in a threefold manner we likewise have a threefold community with him. In common with him we have God, the Father, and with him also we also share his inheritance, the right for eternal life.⁶⁴ "In common with Christ we also have his Spirit, which flows from him as from the head to us as the members, which gives us life, enlightens, sanctifies, consoles and holds us with his power and preserves us for Salvation."⁶⁵ And finally we also share the same fate with Christ, "now the suffering, thereafter the glory".⁶⁶ As Christ is joined and united with believers, so the believers are joined and united to each other. "The communion / community of believers is the common use of all spiritual things. In common we all have God the Father, Christ the Brother, the Holy Spirit his pledge. In common we also have faith, love and hope; and the community of suffering and the glory with Christ and among ourselves."

Comenius stands among three traditions: the Brethren, protestant orthodoxy and early pietism. Altogether Comenius in his own writings puts the communion with Christ into the centre of his teaching on the Lord's Supper thus representing an important feature of reformed orthodoxy and early pietism respectively. Only in a vindication of the writings of the Brethren does he refer to the teaching of the Reformers and the Brethren on the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, otherwise considering it as an evil source of quarrels which go far beyond what is written in Scripture. His view on the Lord's Supper, with its heavy stress on the communion with Christ, diverges from the Lutheran teaching, where the forgiveness of sin stands in first place. On the other hand, however, he also rejects the Calvinists' mere symbolic understanding of the Lord's Supper. As Comenius considers the Brethrens' distinction between "essentialia" and "ministerialia" to be the basis for a theology reuniting the Church, he adopts accordingly their understanding of the Lord's Supper as "ministerialium", as sacrament, which seals our faith, love and hope together with baptism. Especially his efforts for concord among the different denominations separates him from the representatives of orthodoxy in the proper sense, while he stands close to all their representatives which stress the fruit of the Lord's Supper. At this point however, orthodoxy, pietism and the tradition of the Brethren touch. But unlike later pietism where self-examination and contrition of the heart before the Lord's Supper is often given greatest emphasis, in Comenius' writings the joy about Christ's presence prevails. After our union with Christ, Comenius most often stressed the partaking of the Lord's Supper as a condition for eternal life. In no text does Comenius express both aspects as excellently as he does in *Haggaeus Redivivus*: "About the Lord's Supper we all believe, that the body of Christ, which has been given for us unto death, its a truly food, and that the blood shed for us is true drink. That if somebody does not eat of this meal and drink of this

⁶⁴ See Jn 20:17 and Rom 8:17.

⁶⁵ See Rom 8:9; 2 Pt 1:4 and 1 Pt 1:5.

⁶⁶ See Rom 8:17; 1 Pt 5:1; 2 Tim 2:11.

drink, he can not have eternal life; but that, who eats and drinks it, will be made one body with him [Christ] and he will abide in Christ and Christ in him, as Christ is living through the Father and he through Christ in all eternity; and that this so venerable and celestial meal is consumed in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, because the holy bread is the communion of the body of Christ and the chalice the communion of the blood of Christ, for after the testimony of Christ the blood is his body and the wine his blood; and therefore this table of the Lord is such a great mystery, and therefore it should not be approached in any other way than in great reverence and with the preparation of one's conscience."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ The text can be found almost identically in *Závírka Komeniusova (Obraz Jednoty Českobratrské* (see above) (Prague, 1869) 279f.). The most important differences are the added biblical passages (1 Cor 6:15,19f.; 10:16; 11:28f.; Mt 26:26,28; Jn 6:63).