

Comenius as a Public Theologian
The Enrichment Center - May 24, 2006
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Introduction

Without doubt, John Amos Comenius was the most significant figure ever produced by the Moravian Church. He is most famous today for his brilliant work on educational theory and methods, but he was also a theologian, bishop, cartographer, hymn writer, novelist, lexicographer, and social reformer.¹ Just one indication of Comenius' continuing relevance is that one of the European Union's current educational programs is named for Comenius, and there are a number of academic Comenius societies in Europe.² During his lifetime, Comenius was an international celebrity, who spoke in peace conferences and the halls of government. The rulers of England, Sweden, Hungary, and France competed for his services.

Cotton Mather reported that Comenius was even offered the position of president of Harvard College, which he wisely turned down.³ The reason Mather mentioned this episode was to show the world that New England was so progressive that Harvard sought out the famous Moravian scholar and almost won his services. Comenius' textbooks were still in use in New England schools as late as the 19th century. I am sure that he is the only Moravian minister whose works have been published in Turkish and Mongolian. In short, Comenius was part of globalization before we had the word for it.

Public Theologian

Though most of the current interest in Comenius is in the area of the education of children, he always viewed himself as a theologian. In fact, he was the model of a public theologian, that is, a theologian who is actively engaged in the public arena. He was not content to leave theological and ethical reflection in the classroom or the sanctuary, but labored for the common good. He hoped to complete Luther's reformation of the church by reforming society

itself. As one of the foremost Comenius scholars has observed, Comenius ideas “will lead to a new system of culture, based on the defence of and respect for life, on universal life-long all round education for everyone based on truth, love and tolerance.... This utopian endeavour is especially important in the late twentieth century now it has been recognized once again how dangerous and inhumane rigid authoritarianism can be.”⁴ Tonight we will examine Comenius’ proposals for reform, and we may find resources to help us in these times of conflict and controversy.

Life and Thought

Comenius lived during one of the most violent and cruel periods in Europe’s long and violent history. In his writings, he frequently referred to the cruelty of education in his day, based in part on his experience in primary school. When he was sixteen, a patron made it possible for him to study at the premier Brethren’s school of Přerov where he would later teach. His talents were evident in school, and his teacher, gave him the name Amos, from the Latin *amore* (loving) because of his love of learning. Later Comenius associated himself with Amos the biblical prophet who was zealous for social justice. A Moravian aristocrat then provided the funds for Comenius to study at the Reformed Academy (the *Hohe Schule*) of Herborn as well as the University of Heidelberg. There he became part of a Christian reform network.

When he returned to Moravia, he was ordained a deacon, and two years later was ordained a priest in the Unity of the Brethren. He married and looked forward to a happy career until war intervened. In 1618 the Czech Protestants rebelled against the Habsburg emperor who had threatened to take away their religious liberty. War ravaged Central Europe for the next 30 years. During the early stages of the war, Comenius’ home was destroyed, his library was burned, and his wife and children died of the plague. He was forced into permanent exile in 1627

and lived the rest of his life as a pilgrim for peace and justice. War, disease, and ecclesiastical conflict forced him to keep moving, until he finally found a lasting refuge in Amsterdam in 1656. By then, he had lost his second wife, had another home destroyed by war, and lost over 50 unpublished manuscripts to fire. He also witnessed the slow destruction of his church, and he was the last bishop of the Moravian and Bohemian branch of the Unity of the Brethren. Despite personal tragedy, throughout his life he continued to work as a scholar, pastor, and social activist.

Pansophy

Even as a young man at Heidelberg, Comenius was developing ambitious plans for the reformation of church and society. He believed that the best way to reduce conflict and war was to promote a unified approach to knowledge and social improvement. He called his plan pansophy, which means universal wisdom. Pansophy was a direct challenge to fragmentation and specialization in the modern world, especially the tendency to separate things of the body from things of the soul. Comenius argued for a universal approach to learning that joined social and personal reform, wisdom and knowledge, peace and justice.⁵

Comenius saw his program as a part of salvation history, but he defines salvation in broader terms than simply forgiveness of sins: “*Firstly*, let us recognize THE SALVATION OF MANKIND as our goal! Let us take steps to rescue our schools, churches and political systems (1) from partisanship which infinitely divides us, (2) from multiplicity which infinitely embarrasses and perplexes us, and (3) from compulsion and violence which endlessly afflict and torment us! Let the world revive its passion for universal and total salvation and for the simplest truth and perfect peacefulness everywhere.”⁶ Comenius lived in an age that was becoming aware

of the vastness of the earth and the diversity of peoples within it, and he broadened his gaze to the universal welfare of all people on earth.

The three most important elements of this pansophic reform are education, politics, and religion. Comenius expressed his project in this way: “(1) we must make *education* easily available and introduce the *universal* culture of men’s minds, so that the inter-change of books and wisdom is just as common-place as the use of the senses and the tongue among all humankind. (2) Likewise the Reform of the *Ministry of the Church* is necessary to ensure that the sons of men therein are most truly born again to become the sons of God. (3) The *political system* requires to be reconstituted so that the whole body of human society is maintained in true peace and very pleasant order.”⁷

Comenius asserted that there are three inter-related aspects to wisdom: philosophy, religion, and politics. “Man’s hunger for truth produces PHILOSOPHY or the study of wisdom. His desire for the good creates RELIGION or the cultivation and enjoyment of the highest good. His eagerness to manage affairs effectively in freedom leads in the end to a POLITICAL SYSTEM which restores the good order to men in all their various pursuits and enables them to help and not to hinder one another.”⁸ In short, intellectuals, politicians, and preachers should work together for the common good, which includes study of nature, society, and the soul.⁹ Though the restoration of the world is ultimately God’s work, it is necessary for Christians to use their minds and take appropriate steps. “It would surely be absurd if God equipped Man with an intelligent and inquiring mind and commanded him to be especially mindful of his salvation only to find that Man in his turn insulted him by refusing.”¹⁰

A Truly Ecumenical Vision

Even in our more technologically advanced world, few people appreciate the breadth of creation the way Comenius did. Though he was an exile who loved his homeland, Comenius had a global vision, and he lamented the fact that humans divide the world into nations, declaring some enemies and other friends. “Mother earth bears them and nurses them all for a time; air and winds breathe upon them all and make them grow. The same sky protects them all; the same sun and stars traverse all regions in turn so that all men may enjoy a common life and thrive with a common spirit. Therefore since we are all fellow-citizens of one world, what is to prevent us from combining into one political state with one set of laws?”¹¹ It is no wonder that many people see Comenius as paving the way for the creation of the United Nations. He called this international body the World Assembly or Ecumenical Council, and it should represent all the inhabited continents. Unlike the UN, this assembly should address religious issues as well as political ones. I think we need to do this today.

In order for this assembly to do its work, the members will have to commit to three principles that remain vital today: “1. *the need to avoid prejudice*. No one should be deceived into claiming universality for himself or his religion. We should never expect to reach true unity, universality, and true reform until we are firmly convinced that ours is at best only partial perfection. Prejudices of this kind must be destroyed and banished from our minds, and generally speaking men should be entirely free of prejudice before taking part in this saintly assembly; 2. *the need for impartiality*, so that no one considers anything as exclusively his own affair but everything is of common concern. We should adopt as our motto ‘*the safety of the people must be the supreme law*.’” “The third duty will be *to establish a new philosophy, a new theology or*

religion, and a new political system.”¹² Even without such an Ecumenical Assembly, these three principles could help us deal with religious conflict today.

Comenius had seen enough of war to know that there is no such thing as a holy war. He reclaimed the pacifist heritage of the Unity of the Brethren and eloquently proclaimed this heritage throughout his works.¹³ In the *Consultatio* he wrote that: “Mankind has had enough of folly and war, and it is to be hoped that the time will come when all men are exhausted with wars and return to peace, and the state of this world nearing its end becomes one of peace and tranquility as it was before the flood.”¹⁴ Before Christians can put an end to wars in the world, Comenius argued, they must end the wars within the church and learn to live together as followers of Christ. “This is not a matter for discrimination. We have no occasion to differentiate between nations or sects or parties, philosophical or religious or political. Anyone advocating unity must ignore party loyalties. All my proposals are presented to you in the name of Christ alone. You are Christians, sworn to unite and not to separate, to expand and not to contract, to enlighten and not to obscure, to cure anxiety and defend the Kingdom.”¹⁵

Eschatological Hope

Comenius understood that his vision of world reformation was beyond the strength of humans, but he was confident that God had promised that such a restoration was possible through with the help of the Holy Spirit. In his book *Panorthosia* (universal reform), Comenius offered his thoughts on the reformation of the world based on the expectation of the millennial kingdom of God that is promised in Revelation 21:9-10 and 19:7-8.¹⁶ Unlike modern fundamentalists, Comenius’ eschatological expectation was based on the conviction that God intended humans to participate in the work of restoration.

The world is currently suffering from the curse of Babel, but Christians should anticipate and work for the appearance of Zion, the city of God, by establishing a just social order.

Comenius used the Old and New Testament to buttress his belief that the new age is dawning when the world will return to the original blessings of Eden.¹⁷ He thought that the time had come to call people together for *A General Deliberation Concerning the Reform of Human Affairs*.¹⁸ In order for the millennial age to appear, “Men need a true relationship with Nature through Philosophy, with each other through true Politics, and with God through true Religion, and this would produce a true reform of human affairs in contrast to previous attempts which have been fraught with strife and violence.”¹⁹ The goal of human history, for Comenius, is the return to the original blessing of creation where God, nature, and humankind worked in harmony.²⁰

Comenius united two cardinal theological concepts in his understanding of the restoration of all things. First, God created all things good and made humankind in his own divine image. Although he believed that the world is corrupt and people are sinful, Comenius rejected the notion of utter human depravity. Nature, including human nature, reflects the goodness of God. The second concept is the reality of redemption through Jesus Christ. “Only Christ, the new Adam, is capable of restoring everything, since he is the *highest of prophets and teachers* and the light of the world (John 1:9 and 8:12), and the *highest priest*, competent to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins.”²¹ This redemption is not simply the justification of the individual before the judgment seat of God; it is the restoration of the original blessing of creation through Christ.²² For Comenius, faith in God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier leads one to positive engagement with the world that God has created, redeemed, and sanctifies. In other words, faith is an active verb for Comenius.

Once humans recognize the true nature of themselves and their world, and commit themselves to cooperating in the redemption of the world, “then the light and peace would return to the world, which would work like an elaborate clock with all its components well-connected, well balanced and functioning together for a common purpose. Every man in creation would return to the image of God within him (I Colossians 1:26-29) and similarly every family group, every state and church, and finally the entire world.”²³ One simple place to start is to recognize that all humans, not just Christians, bear God’s image: “Whenever you encounter one of your neighbours, regard him as yourself in another form (which he is), or indeed as God in another form, for he is the image of God, and God will be watching to see how reverently you treat him.”²⁴

Politics

Comenius’ millennial dawn does not begin with an apocalyptic struggle to rid the world of evil. It begins with the awareness that all humans share in the divine image and reflect, however imperfectly, the divine nature. The quest for social reform will succeed only if it respects this axiom. Each person “is a Creature with his own free will, made in the likeness of his Creator.... Hence God brings no compulsion to bear upon mankind, even when it has recovered from its fall and is restored to its true self; but deals with it only by persuasion, using promises to attract it the good and threats to deter it from evil, and teaching it how to see the ways of salvation before it but to guard against surrounding pitfalls leading to destruction, and so to take thought for its own best interests.”²⁵

Peace, for Comenius, is more than the cessation of armed conflict; it is the ability to view the world from God’s perspective and to act as God acts toward his own creation. Compulsion violates creation and demeans the image of God in humans.²⁶ True to the historic conviction of

the Unity, Comenius argued for a separation of politics and religion. Politicians should not interfere with the church and pastors should never assert secular authority.²⁷ There is no place for the sword in matters of salvation, but neither should theologians dictate the laws of a state. Each of the three orders (education, politics, and religion) must be judged according to how well it performs its own tasks.

Though Comenius' scheme for social reform appears complicated, the basics are rather simple. He repeatedly called for people to look at first principles and ask, what is the real purpose of the church, the state, the school, or even the family? Then one can judge how well such institutions function and where reforms are needed. Comenius' definition of the purpose of the state continues to be relevant, I think. "Since the aim of human society is general peace and security, and the safety of the people ought to be the supreme law of every state and kingdom, our immediate task is to put a stop to everything that can distress, trouble, or upset human society in any way or break the bonds of peace and security whether of the state or the individual."²⁸ For Comenius, this means that war always represents a failure of the state since war endangers citizens rather than protects them. Though he allowed for the self-defense, he believed that good government, diplomacy, and decency would reduce the threat of aggression.

The worst of all states, though, is one where the government is at war with its own citizens and endangering their lives and souls through oppression. The state is not absolute but must respect international law, natural law, and human rights.²⁹ Comenius believed that the actions of a national government must face a "global test" of justice. Governments are not to be judged by their ideology or their national pride or the strength of their military, but by how effective they are in achieving the *purpose* of government. That purpose is fulfilled best by engagement with other states. "The end or aim of this Political System will be to gather the

nations of the world together again into the harmony of peace among mankind by abolishing wars and cutting away the causes of war.”³⁰

Obstacles to Reform of Society

Comenius had a high regard for human nature and the divine gift of reason, but he recognized the obstacles to the reform of society. He did not expect that laws and institutions alone would restore the proper function of politics. Ignorance, prejudice, and stubbornness combine to prevent the changes necessary for improvement. Because each person thinks his or her own ideas are correct, we repeat past mistakes and fail to learn a better way. As long as humans are divided into rival camps, there will be no peace. As long as each camp harbors grudges and seeks revenge for wrongs real or imagined, there will be no peace. Comenius anticipated by three hundred years the brilliant insights of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela in establishing a truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa. Without truth, there is no reconciliation, and without forgiveness there is no hope for peace.

There must be a fundamental change in attitude so that we intentionally raise doubts about our judgments and seek the better way.³¹ In some cases, judgment on controversial matters may have to be suspended until the end time since the final answer must be supplied by God. Comenius even argued that within a pluralistic society, it is necessary for the state to be tolerant of error rather than use force to support the truth. Unlike most theologians, Comenius considered toleration a fundamental Christian virtue and a sign of strength on the part of believers.³² The proper role of religion in the civil order is to promote honesty, tolerance, and reconciliation.

Church Reform

Comenius’ proposals for the reform of the Church flow from the same principles as his proposals for political and educational reform. The key is to focus on results rather than argue

about theories. “*Knowledge* which does not produce deeds must perish. The same applies to *Faith* which does not operate through acts of charity, and to a *Political System* which fails to maintain human affairs in peace.”³³ This is simply a different way of expressing the Moravian principle that faith must be completed in love or it is not really faith.

Comenius shared the conviction of his Moravian ancestors that God speaks through both faith and reason; therefore it is possible to learn and understand what is essential for happiness in this life and the next. Since all people are made in God’s image, they will tend toward God so long as they are not forced to do so. “Anyone choosing to use compulsion only embitters, poisons, and alienates men, and either makes them hypocrites or prepares the way for a fresh and perhaps greater breakaway. Fear is a poor guarantee of friendship.”³⁴ This was certainly the experience in Comenius’ homeland during the Counter-Reformation as the people were forced to return to the Catholic Church.

Those entrusted with the task of guiding people in religious matters must concentrate on what is most important rather than becoming ensnared in trivialities. “There is every reason to expect that we shall be as brothers if in accordance with God’s word we concentrate on seeking Faith in God, combined with Charity and crowned with Hope.”³⁵ Once again, we see the centrality of the Moravian idea that the essentials of Christianity and human happiness are faith, love, and hope rather than belief in a particular doctrine. In his proposals for reform of religion, Comenius offered to the world the teaching of the Unity as a basis for restoring the church to its proper role in society. He asserted that it should be possible to remove “anything which for any reason destroys or diminishes faith, hope, and charity, or confuses or obscures or debases or undermines them.” The best organized churches will have a few doctrines that are easily understood, a simple ritual that is easy to observe and which is connected to the requirements of

daily living, and a form of discipline that maintains order and harmony without being oppressive and arbitrary.³⁶ The Reformation that Hus and Luther began will be complete only when Christians are reunited and focused on essential matters rather than debating obscure doctrines.³⁷

Moderation in Religion

Having personally suffered from the effects of fanaticism in religion, Comenius urged Christians to recognize that moderation is itself a part of Christian faith. Satan works by inflaming unholy passions. He pushes people either to extremes of rationalism empty of faith or fanatical devotion devoid of reason. “We must therefore oppose Satan by keeping to a middle course 1. between neglect and abuse of the Scriptures, 2. between a life of profanity and one of superstition, 3. between neglect of discipline and harmful rigidity.”³⁸ Moreover, if the course is uncertain, it is safer to keep to the middle so that you can move to the right or left as needed without becoming lost.

For two centuries the Brethren had consistently struggled for religious toleration and freedom of worship. Comenius pursued that struggle on an even larger scale. Love, not dogmatic certainty, is one of the three essentials in Moravian doctrine. Comenius, like Chelčický, rejected the notion that you can show love for someone while attacking them as an infidel or heretic. Christian love and respect should extend beyond fellow Christians to all people of whatever faith.

Firstly we should have no hatred toward *Christians*, because they are servants of Christ, or at least profess to be so. We should not adopt a hostile attitude towards *Mohammedans* (Muslims), because they acknowledge our Christ as a great prophet, and do not allow any blasphemy towards him. We ought to tolerate the *Jews*... because they are our librarians, as our fathers of old used to call them, and they are most faithful in holding the word of the Prophets in trust for us. ...Lastly, we should be tolerant towards all *Gentiles*, because they are blind, and deserve compassion rather than hatred. As Christ said of the Samaritans and Paul of the Athenians, that they worshipped an unknown God, the same may be said of all the nations of the earth, that they worship the unknown.³⁹

This certainly does not rule out evangelism, but it does rule out any form of persecution or coercion in matters of faith. Evangelism should be based on love and respect. If a church's methods of evangelism are not expressions of faith, love, and hope, then they are not Christian. If the methods do not reflect the character and witness of Jesus, then they are not Christian, no matter what the content of the doctrine is.

Overcoming Religious Conflict

It was the hatred and division among Christians that concerned Comenius the most, and here again one can see the dominant influence of the Unity of the Brethren on his thought. Comenius knew that the body of Christ is bigger than his church and that there is a spiritual bond among the followers of Christ that is deeper than our creeds. Reunification of the church is part of the work of Christ.⁴⁰ This was not just a pious desire for Comenius; he offered practical ways in which Christians can cooperate with the Lord in healing their divisions and preventing further discord.

First of all, Christians need to be aware of their own sinful tendencies and take reasonable steps to reduce conflict. They should be careful not to oppose "anything which can be confirmed by the evidence of the senses, of reason, and of God's Testimony." In particular people should be careful neither to assert nor deny things in absolute terms unless the truth of the matter is undeniable. In other words, if reasonable people disagree over something with evidence supporting both sides, then no one should claim either side as absolutely right. Sometimes it is even necessary to suspend judgment until the truth becomes evident. Some things may have to wait the judgment day when God will reveal all things. One of Comenius' most intriguing ideas is that "if anything cannot be reconciled in theory, one should begin to try it out in practice, for

better practice would follow from the earnest attention given to both aspects.” If there is still no clear solution to the conflict, then people should either compromise or agree to disagree.⁴¹

Comenius was convinced that most of the burning theological and liturgical controversies of his day, some of which had led to armed conflict and even regicide, could be solved through reason and Christian love. He claimed that even the most difficult matters can be resolved if people are willing, but he understood that some people have more scruples about these things than others. Comenius advised that in such cases one must remind both parties that they are under the yoke of Lord of the Church. “Pray, let our faith contain some element of mystery which is not accessible to reason. And if anything is to be reserved for the future life, it must be that which is beyond our present grasp.”⁴²

Practical Christianity

Doctrinal disagreements should not divide the church. More important, they should not distract people from the essential nature and purpose of the church. Christ called the church into being to bring people into faith, love, and hope, not to defend controversial doctrines. Comenius asked rhetorically:

- I. What is the good of inquiring how Christ is present to us when we know that he is so? We should rather inquire what we must do to receive him graciously when he is here.
- II. Where is heaven to which Christ has ascended? We should rather ask how we ourselves may avoid straying away from it.
- III. What need is there for our anxiety to know whence the Holy Spirit cometh? We should rather ask how it comes to us to remain with us for ever and ever.
- IV. Are you inclined to quarrel about the method of Justification? You must rather do everything possible towards your own justification. As Paul praises faith, you must put your trust in our beloved Saviour with all your heart. As James recommends works, you must do everything with a pure heart. And when you have done all those things, do as Christ teaches and put yourself like an unprofitable servant at the feet of God’s mercy (Luke XVII 10).⁴³

An Unfulfilled Vision

Comenius' pansophic reform may have been too ambitious for the 17th century or perhaps for the 21st century. Perhaps he, like his predecessors, placed too much confidence in human reason and the ability of Christians to live according to their faith rather than responding to their primal fears. Certainly there were few that answered his call for a general consultation on universal reformation, but it remains an inspiring vision. As Daniel Murphy has said, "The vision disclosed in his writings is one that is intrinsically Christian, by virtue of its consistent and authentic affirmation of the values of love, truth, and freedom. It is a vision that was embodied in the spiritual and cultural traditions of Bohemia from Hus to Havel, but is one which, self-evidently, has a profound and compelling relevance for the whole of humankind."⁴⁴ This is public theology on a grand scale.

Comenius' writings are the most eloquent expression of the theological heritage of the Moravian Church. In them we see the common-sense pragmatism of the Moravians who understood that theological hair-splitting neither saves souls nor builds the kingdom of God on earth. Though it appears utopian, Comenius' pansophy demonstrates the benefits of focusing our attention on the essentials of faith, love, and hope rather than points of division and controversy. Perhaps it is just a dream, but dreams can sometimes change the world.

Comenius acknowledged that some may dismiss his pansophic vision: "Someone may say here and now that I am indulging in a drunken dream. But I only wish that those who chase after worldly prosperity would sleep off their intoxication, and begin to drink abundantly of this infinitely better sweetness. ...let all men indulge in this kind of intoxication and dream the same kind of dream about naught but Christ, heaven, universal salvation, mutual charity and edification and the Sabbath of rest from sorry enslavement to sin! Indeed let us do as men

usually do when wine has made them merry and open our mouths in cries of jubilation, and let us sing aloud the hymn of victory to Christ as conqueror and the wedding hymn of the lamb as the bridegroom of the church!”⁴⁵ Imagine.

¹ The literature on Comenius is vast. The following works cover important aspects of his life and work and provide helpful bibliographies: Jaroslava Pešková, Josef Cach, and Michal Svatoš, ed. *Hommage to J. A. Comenius* (Prague: Karolinum, 1991); P. van Vliet and A. J. Vanderjagt, *Johannes Amos Comenius (1592-1670): Exponent of European culture?* (Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland Press, 1994); Josef Brambora, J. Polišensky and others, “Research on the Life and Work of J.A. Comenius (1957-1970),” *Acta Comeniana: Revue Internationale des Etudes Comeniologiques* 3 (1973): 443-494; Joseph Needham, ed. *The Teacher of Nations* (Cambridge: University Press, 1942); Klaus Schaller, ed. *Comenius: Erkennen, Glauben, Handeln. Schriften zur Comeniusforschung*, Band 16 (Sankt Augustin: Richarz, 1985). Facsimiles of Comenius’ major works are found in *Johann Amos Comenius: Ausgewählte Werke*, 4 vols., ed. by Dmitrij Tschizewskij and Klaus Schaller (Hildesheim and New York: George Olm, 1973-83), and his complete works were published in *Johannes Amos Comenini Opera Omnia*, 18 vols. (Prague: Academia scientiarum Bohemoslovakia, 1969).

² http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/moreabout_en.html. The overall program is called SOCRATES. COMENIUS is for the lower schools and ERASMUS is for higher education. It is very appropriate that these three names remain linked.

³ “That brave old man, Johannes Amos Comenius, the Fame of whose Worth hath been Trumpeted as far as more than Three Languages (whereof every one is Endebted unto his Janua) could carry it, was agreed withal by our Mr. Winthrop, in his Travels through the Low Countries, to come over into New England and Illuminate this Colledge and Country in the Quality of President: But the Solicitations of the Swedish ambassador, diverting him another way, that Incomparable Moravian became not an American.” Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana, or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England* (London, 1702), book IV, p. 128, quoted by Spinka, *Comenius*, 84-86. No one has been able to verify Mather’s account.

⁴ Dagmar Čapková, “The Cultural Inheritance of Comenius,” in Vliet and Vanderjagt, *Johannes Amos Comenius*, 17.

⁵ “The basic characteristic of the crisis of our times is the end of modern spirituality marked by a technico-scientific approach to All: on the one hand a ‘scientific’, i.e. cold, unconcerned aloofness of scientists examining objects, on the other hand technological endeavor to control and exploit. All human endeavor has been taking on, gradually ever more, the character of anthropocentrism-oriented domination because even scientific objectivity, however much it strove for concreteness, with great success, posited a separate observation point of the scientist-explorer, situated in some ‘God-like position.’ This ‘humanistic’ (or perhaps better ‘hoministic’) orientation was naturally manifested evermore both in the system of values and in the entire living style. Man has lost what Comenius and many with him called ‘nexus hypostaticus’, fundamental link, man’s bond with God as a being among the other creatures, as a partner among-fellow beings in the created world, the important among them as ‘imago Dei’, entrusted with the role of a careful manager co-responsible for the destiny of the world.” R. Palouš, “The World of Comenius,” in *Hommage*, 11-16, here 11-12.

⁶ Comenius, *Panegersia or Universal Awakening*, tr. by A.M.O. Dobbie (Warwickshire, England: Peter I. Drinkwater, 1990), 70.

⁷ Comenius, *Panorthosia*, 172.

⁸ Comenius, *Panegersia*, 11.

⁹ *Panorthosia*, 140.

¹⁰ *Panegersia*, 46. “It is well-known that from the beginning of creation God took no immediate action by himself in dealing with his creatures, but always used them as his agents. It is most important that every creature should be able to rule by itself. That is why God endowed everyone with an element of self-love, a desire for self-preservation, and the ability to seek ways of survival.” *Panegersia*, 46.

¹¹ *Panegersia*, 70.

¹² *Panorthosia*, 135, 140.

¹³ His classic statements on the peace witness is the *The Angel of Peace*, tr. by W. A. Morison (New York: Pantheon Books, 1945), which he wrote in 1667 in the hope of stopping war between England and the Netherlands. Josef

Polišensky, "Comenius, the Angel of Peace and the Netherlands in 1667," *Acta Comeniana*1 (1970): 59-66 and Polišensky, "The Social and Political Premises of the Work of J.A. Comenius," *Acta Comeniana*4 (1979): 5-26 analyzes Comenius' peace efforts in the context of 17th century politics, and he notes that Comenius' efforts were not well-received at the time.

¹⁴ *Panorthosia*, II:57.

¹⁵ *Panegersia*, vii.

¹⁶ H. Schroer, "Reich Gottes bei Comenius," in Schaller, *Comenius: Erkennen - Glauben - Handeln*.

¹⁷ *Panorthosia*, II:60-65.

¹⁸ *Panorthosia*, II:46.

¹⁹ *Panorthosia*, II:47. Comenius accepted the new historical understanding of Johannes Coccejus who proposed that there were seven ages of the world corresponding to the seven days of creation. The last age is the great Sabbath age, the millennial kingdom. For more on this idea, see Douglas H. Shantz, "Discovering the Key to Reformed Pietist Chiliasm: The Influence of Johannes Coccejus upon Horch, Reitz and Bröske," *Covenant Quarterly* 61 (2004): 17-37. Comenius emphasized the active role of humans in the modern world as part of this scheme of salvation. "On the *sixth* day, the rational creature, Man, was formed after the image of God, and this corresponds to the rational age of the world which has brought a revival of the arts, a love for sacred literature and a reasonable investigation of countless subjects." *Panorthosia*, 64. He most likely learned Coccejus' schema from his teacher Alsted at Herborn, whose 1627 *Diatribes de mille annis apocalypticis* was instrumental in developing and popularizing millennialist thought in Calvinist circles. Hotson, *Paradise Postponed*, 176.

²⁰ Jan Lochman identified Comenius as a forerunner of the 20th century theologian Jürgen Moltman, who coined the phrase "theology of hope." Lochman, "Chiliasmus," 275-282.

²¹ *Panorthosia*, II:72.

²² *Panorthosia*, I:23.

²³ *Panorthosia*, II:50.

²⁴ *Panorthosia*, I:22. The basis of ethics for Comenius is the awareness of the image of God in all people. "1. Men should behave in the same way towards the image of God (which means himself and his fellow men) as he should behave toward God. 2. Since mankind is God's image, we should show the same behaviour towards it as God does, for God is setting us an example." *Panorthosia*, I:190.

²⁵ *Panorthosia*, II:94.

²⁶ In his introduction to a selection of Comenius' writings on religion, Amedeo Molnár pointed to the influence of the theology of the Brethren on Comenius' motto. *J. A. Comenius - A Perfect Reformation*, ed. and tr. by J. L. Hromadka and Amedeo Molnár (Prague: Comenius Faculty of Theology, 1957).

²⁷ "For churchmen are just as guilty of sin, if they are not content with the power of the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven which has been granted to them but also lay claim to secular power which does not belong to them, as politicians who take over church government which does not belong to them, and wish to keep it under their control." *Panorthosia*, 161.

²⁸ *Panorthosia*, I:104.

²⁹ Valentin Urfus, "Jurisprudence in Comenius' Times," *Hommage*, 97-104, discusses the influence of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf on Comenius' political theories. Comenius knew Grotius personally and quoted from him.

³⁰ *Panorthosia*, I:187.

³¹ *Panorthosia*, II:101.

³² *Panorthosia*, II:119-125. Some people cannot "bear discord whatsoever. But it is only a weakling who cannot bear anything. A man of character tolerates everything, and if possible, he improves things." *Panegersia*, 72.

³³ *Panorthosia*, II:179.

³⁴ *Panorthosia*, II:120.

³⁵ *Panorthosia*, II:125.

³⁶ *Panorthosia*, II:197-198.

³⁷ *Panorthosia*, II:202.

³⁸ *Panorthosia*, II:204.

³⁹ *Panorthosia*, II:119.

⁴⁰ *Panorthosia*, II:125-126.

⁴¹ *Panorthosia*, II:125-126.

⁴² *Panorthosia*, II:137.

⁴³ *Panorthosia*, II:142.

⁴⁴ Murphy, *Comenius*, 274.

⁴⁵ *Panorthosia*, 165.