

# JAN AMOS KOMENSKÝ

(COMENIUS)

*By*

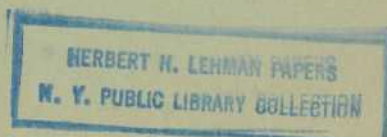
OTAKAR ODLOŽILÍK, Ph. D.

*In commemoration of the 350th anniversary  
of Comenius' birthday*

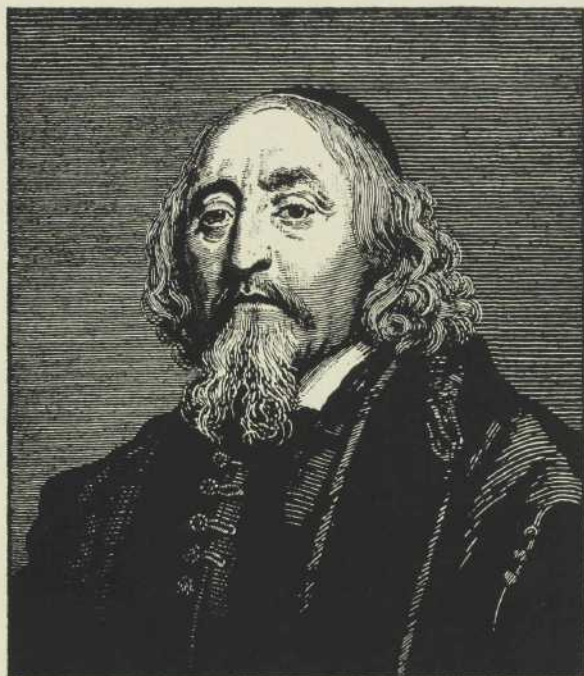
Published by the

CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Chicago, 1942



04 22-0032-001



The Great Czechoslovak  
**JAN AMOS COMENIUS**  
(KOMENSKÝ)

"THE TEACHER OF NATIONS"

*Quid ego Tibi scienti commemorem vel sancta conamina Duraci nostri, vel alta molimina paene vestri Comenii, vel fausta auspicia Verulamii.*

John Stoughton, *Felicitas ultimi saeculi*, London 1640.

*Tempus erit, quo Te, Comeni, turba bonorum factaque spesque Tuas vota quoque ipsa colet.*

G. W. Leibniz.

*Comeni c' est son nom, chassé de Moravie par les féroces Espagnols, y perdit la patrie, et y gagna . . . le monde. J'entends un sens unique d'universalité. D'un coeur et d'un esprit immense il embrassa et toute science et toute nation. Par tous pays, Pologne, Hongrie, Suède, Angleterre, Hollande, il alla enseignant: premièrement la paix, deuxièmement le moyen de la paix, l'universalité fraternelle.*

Jules Michelet, *Nos Fils*, Paris, 1869.

*The place of Comenius in the history of education, therefore, is one of commanding importance. He introduces and dominates the whole modern movement in the field of elementary and secondary education. His relation to our present teaching is similar to that held by Copernicus and Newton toward modern science, and Bacon and Descartes toward modern philosophy.*

N. Murray Butler, *The Place of Comenius in the History of Education*, Syracuse, 1892.

*In my subsequent journey round the world in 1914—1918, the Bequest of Comenius, together with the Kralice Bible of the Bohemian Brethren, was for me a daily memento, national and political.*

T. G. Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, Prague, 1925.

John Amos Comenius was born on the 28th of March, 1592, in Moravia and died on the 15th of November, 1670, in Amsterdam.

During his lifetime Europe passed through a series of grave conflicts and devastating wars. Conditions changed profoundly not only in the Kingdom of Bohemia but all over the Continent of Europe. A man who had been born in the last decade of the sixteenth century, in the atmosphere of comparative tranquillity, and upon whose manhood the long and merciless war cast its shadow, was not easily understood by the succeeding generation and passed away almost unnoticed. For some time uncertainty prevailed as regards the year of Comenius' death and

the year 1671 was accepted by some biographers instead of the correct date.

Of the almost four score years of Comenius' life, more than a half as spent in exile. Comenius shared the lot of thousands refugees whom Emperor Ferdinand II had driven from Bohemia and Moravia after his victory over the Bohemian rebellion on the White Mountain in 1620. Despite unfavorable conditions, Comenius worked assiduously in various fields and attained fame in his own day. "He did not toil in vain" — thus concludes R. H. Quick his brilliant sketch of Comenius' life — "and historians of education have agreed in ranking him among the most influential as well as the most noble-minded of the Reformers."

There is no doubt that as a champion of new methods in education Comenius became widely known among his contemporaries. In modern times historians of education have revived interest in his life and work. The rapid progress of studies and the growth of literature concerning Comenius and his ideas went hand in hand with the improvement of education in the modern age. Time has come for a close examination of other subjects of his studies and deliberations. His life was eventful and his biography is full of unforeseen turns and of dramatic episodes. The present upheavals, accompanied by endless migration of peoples whom the conqueror has deprived of their homes, have sharpened our sight and disposed us for a new scrutiny of both hopes and sorrows of the exiled scholar and thinker.



I.

## A True Patriot.

*Nor can I forget thee, thou Czech and Moravian nation,  
my native land . . .*

Comenius, *The Bequest of the Unity of Brethren*  
(1650).

Comenius was the most prominent representative of the Czech people in the seventeenth century. Both the plight and noble aspirations of his countrymen have been reflected in his life and work. Among his contemporaries he held such a position as John Hus in the fifteenth century and T. G. Masaryk in the modern era. His ideas and writings rank among the finest products of the Czech mind.

Like Hus and Masaryk, Comenius was of humble parentage and owed his rise to prominence solely to education. The original home of his family was a small village, Komna, in southeastern Moravia — hence the name Komenský which has become famous in its latinized form Comenius. He himself was most likely born in Nivnice and spent part of his childhood in Uherský Brod and in several other places. In the entourage of a Moravian nobleman, Kunovský of Kunovice, he visited Germany. In 1611 he matriculated at the University of Herborn in Nassau. After two years he left for Heidelberg and completed there the course of his education. After his return to Moravia he was active as schoolmaster in the town of Přerov and later as a minister of the church. In normal times and conditions, his career might have culminated in his ordination and in his appointment to the pastorate of a flourishing congregation at Fulnek, on the border of Moravia and Silesia.

Soon after his ordination, however, a rebellion flared up in the Kingdom of Bohemia. Though its immediate causes were of local importance, it soon assumed the character of a prelude to an European conflagration. Like Czechoslovakia in the thirties of the present century, so Bohemia in the early seventeenth century had

been a testing ground of conflicting forces. The issues of the conflict in Comenius' time were both religious and constitutional. In 1526 the country of John Hus did not oppose effectively the accession of Ferdinand I, of the House of Habsburg, to the throne. Thus the seed or discord had been sown in the Bohemian soil. The dynasty remained faithful to the Roman church and promoted Catholic religion in all its domains in Central Europe, in Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary. The Bohemian nobility as well as the people followed in the footsteps of John Hus. They embraced the Protestant creed and maintained lively connections with their co-religionists in other parts of Europe.

The difference in religion thwarted collaboration between the ruler and the leading class of the Czech people. Moreover, the nobility viewed with jealous eye the attempts of the dynasty to strengthen its position in the country and to curtail the prerogatives of the Estates. Religious freedom was considered the foremost privilege of the free citizens of the kingdom. With the turn of the tide in the struggle between the Catholics and Protestants all over Europe, the desire grew in Bohemia about the year 1600 for a solemn confirmation of liberty in matters of religion and for a written guarantee of peace in the country. In 1609 the effort of the Protestant nobility was crowned with success. The sickly Emperor Rudolph II issued a charter, known as "the Letter of Majesty," by which religious freedom was granted to the inhabitants of Bohemia.

There was, however, much unrest in Europe in the early seventeenth century and Bohemia was not spared its echoes and disturbing influences from the outside. Peace in the country was of short duration. In less than a decade — events were moving more slowly in those times than in our century — disputes over "the Letter of Majesty" and over supplementary agreements of the Protestant and Catholic nobility had created such an embitterment that a clash became inevitable. The trial and defenestration of the leaders of the Catholic group by spokesmen of the Protestant nobility in May, 1618, inaugurated a rebellion in Bohemia. After two years of struggle the Emperor, acting as defender of the dynastic interests as well as of those of the church, secured victory over the revolting nobility and established himself firmly in

the country. For a great majority of the inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia the day of the victory of the imperial troops on the White Mountain (November 8, 1620) became the turning point of their life. Quite appropriately a contemporary Czech chronicler called the White Mountain "the origin and the door of all the miseries and calamities that had befallen the Czech nation."

The Unity of Bohemian Brethren to which Comenius belonged, incurred the wrath of the Emperor earlier than the other Protestant communions both for its close connection with the Calvinists in various European countries and for the participation of its prominent members in the uprising. Not only against persons of rank but also against its clergy several Imperial decrees were directed, portending storm and persecution. In 1621 Comenius lost his home — the fire which the Spanish mercenaries started in Fulnek destroyed not only his house but also the library and manuscripts of several works. For several years Comenius lived in constant fear and anxiety, changing frequently his places of abode.

The Bohemian rebellion put in motion an avalanche of enmities and of local conflicts. It passed into an European conflagration "unique in its length, its constant shifting of scene and motive, its dreariness and ferocity." For thirty years imperial troops remained on battlefields, opposed successively either by the armies of individual rulers or by coalitions of the foes of the House of Habsburg. With each imperial victory the pressure on Bohemia and Moravia and its population increased. After the promulgation of a series of decrees in 1627, known as the Renewed Land Ordinance, even the mountainous districts of northeastern Bohemia offered no safe refuge. Early in 1628 Comenius left Bohemia with hundreds of members of the Unity and settled in Leszno in Poland. Thus — to use the words of Jules Michelet — "he lost his country and found the world."

The town of Leszno became the center of the exiled members of the Unity from Bohemia and Moravia. They lived there under the protection of the Polish noble family of Leszczyński, never losing hope of the ultimate defeat of the House of Habsburg and the restoration of Bohemian liberties. Leszno became the new home of Comenius. He either lived there amidst his countrymen or would return there after journeys abroad or prolonged resi-



dences in various countries, in England, Sweden, or Hungary. The destruction of Leszno during the Swedish-Polish war in 1656, surpassing in its effect and dimensions the sack of Fulnek by the Spaniards, terminated abruptly the sojourn of Comenius in Poland. He accepted an invitation from Amsterdam and lived there "on the shore of the Great Sea" until his death.

As a bishop of the Unity he was connected with its dispersed members by the bond of mutual love and coordinated his work to the interests of his church and of his nation. It would be difficult to understand Comenius' schemes and activities without a knowledge of his relation to the groups of exiles from Bohemia and Moravia and of his participation in the struggle for the restoration of Bohemian independence. He never severed the ties binding him to his native land and directed his efforts to its liberation. The story of his life differs from the simple and uneventful biographies of great many of his learned contemporaries whom the storm of wrath and the prolonged hostilities had not driven from their homes. Though he was offered several times positions, promising both substantial financial aid and a haven of rest, he never yielded to the natural longing for ease and for the end of wandering. Like a prophet and herald of hopes, alternating cyclically with dejection and disappointment, he accompanied his people on the tortuous path leading through the labyrinth of war and of inflamed passions. Up to the end of his days he remained a loyal citizen of the Kingdom of Bohemia whose gate, as he often complained on the eve of his life, had been closed forever to him by the implacable tyrant.

For more than two decades prominent noblemen from Bohemia and Moravia stood in the forefront and directed the course of the struggle for the restoration of independence of their country. They participated in diplomatic activities, often helping to bring together the enemies of the House of Habsburg and to prepare combined attacks on its domains and strategic positions. They offered their services to countries which waged war with the Emperor. They mustered regiments of volunteers from the ranks of their exiled countrymen and commanded them in battles. They fought under Dutch, Danish, and Swedish banners, linking their cause with the anti-Habsburg front. On several occasions they entered, along with for-



eign troops, Bohemia and Moravia and encouraged by their proclamations and deeds their countrymen to resist more effectively the merciless conqueror of their country, whose real aim was the domination of Europe. The percentage of Czech officers and soldiers in foreign armies was high, especially in the Swedish armies, which operated for almost twenty years in Germany and in Central Europe, harassing the imperial troops and preventing the Emperor from consolidating his gains. They kept alive the spirit of opposition to the "new order" which the Habsburgs introduced into the conquered kingdom by force, executions, confiscations of property, and banishment of opponents.

Comenius was not silent during this life and death struggle. He did not wield a sword, but his pen was a mighty weapon in the defense of the common cause. In several Czech writings he voiced the grief and anxiety of his people over the catastrophic end of the rebellion, or in the periods of growing preponderance of the imperial armies over the Protestant forces. With prophetic words, taken as a rule from the books of the Old Testament, he welcomed powerful opponents of the House of Habsburg and of its lust for world domination. In the hour of decision he became the only spokesman of the free Czechs and entreated the Swedish delegates at the Peace Conference to secure from the imperial envoys tolerable terms for the exiled Czechs and for those in the occupied country who had resisted the pressure upon mind and conscience and had remained faithful to their creed. He labored in vain. Ignoring their solemn pledges, the Swedes accepted in the decisive moment a compromise and left Bohemia to the mercy of the Habsburg ruler. Thus they strengthened enormously the position of the dynasty which had provoked the long struggle by its intolerant attitude toward the Protestant people and had been mainly responsible for the horrors of the war.

In the anguish of his soul, Comenius announced to the dispersed countrymen the failure of his effort and raised his voice to the high-sounding prophecy of the return of a more propitious age. The often-quoted words from *The Bequest of the Unity of Brethren*: "I trust God that after the passing of storm of wrath which our sins brought down upon our heads, the rule of thine affairs shall again be restored to thee, O Czech people" — com-

forted the decimated ranks of the exiles. With them in mind Comenius worked on for more than twenty years. He presented the world with a complete edition of his educational works and in various books saved from extinction the ideas and the spirit which had permeated the Czech spiritual life in the period of independence.

After more than two hundred and fifty years, the prophecy of Comenius inspired T. G. Masaryk, then on the Dutch soil, to the struggle for the liberation of the Czechoslovak people. He inscribed Comenius' words on his revolutionary banner as well as at the head of his first message to the independent people, read in December, 1918. Thus the indefatigable zeal and effort of Comenius were revived and linked up with the resurrection of the Czechs and with their reunion with the Slovak people.

## II.

### Comenius in England.

*Here give me leave . . . to recommend to your favour the noble endeavours of two great and publique spirits who have laboured much for truth and peace, I meane Comenius and Duraeus; both famous for their learning, piety and integrity and not unknown, I am sure, by the fame of their works to many of this honourable, pious and learned assembly.*

John Gauden, *The Love of Truth and Peace* (preached before the House of Commons, Nov. 29, 1640).

During the years of uncertainty after the promulgation of the imperial decrees against Protestant ministers, Comenius was not able to attend publicly and regularly to his pastoral duties. He lived on the secluded estates of wealthy patrons of the persecuted clergy and devoted his time to study and literary activity. *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, accessible to modern readers in a fine translation of Professor Matthew Spinka, is the best of the books and treatises which Comenius wrote during those critical years. During the last few months of his stay in the mountains of north-eastern Bohemia, he began to work on a book on education. He completed it in Leszno. *The Great Didactic* was written in Czech because it was intended primarily for Czech educators upon whose shoulders the new organization of schools was to rest after the liberation of Bohemia and Moravia. Only in 1657 Comenius published a Latin version of the book in the magnificent folio of *The Complete Didactic Works*.

*The Great Didactic* linked Comenius' work in his native land with his activities in the exile. It indicated that in the early thirties of the seventeenth century the desire to reform education overshadowed all other interests and wholly captured Comenius' mind. Simultaneously with the theoretical treatise on education grew under his hands a school-book which met with an enormous and immediate success. It appeared in Leszno with the title of *Janua linguarum reserata*. In an autobiographical work



(*Continuatio fraternae admonitionis*), Comenius described the reception of the *Janua* in the following words: "From the learned in various lands there came to me letters giving me joy at my new discovery and in divers ways encouraging me to yet bolder an enterprise." The *Janua* was intended as an introduction to the study of Latin. It was based on the principle that the understanding and the language should advance in parallel line, and that in the study of languages mechanical memorizing of words should be replaced by teaching words through things. It inaugurated a new era in the teaching of Latin and made a triumphal procession through Europe. It was known in twelve European languages and in Asia it appeared in Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Mongolian.

On the title page of the first edition of the *Janua* Comenius wrote a sentence which he had found in the preface to Bacon's *Novum Organum* and used as a motto. Thus he acknowledged his indebtedness to the English thinker and presented his work as a continuation of the latter's effort to advance learning. If we look for parallels to the relation between Comenius and Bacon we must either go back to the Middle Ages and study Wyclif's influence on John Hus, or proceed to the modern age and consider Masaryk's predilection for English and American philosophy. In all these cases the affinity between the English and the Czech thought and the desire of the leading Czech thinkers to out-balance German influences acted as stimuli.

As the author of the *Janua* Comenius became quickly known in the British Isles. Its first edition, *The Gate of Tongues Unlocked and Opened*, was prepared for the press by a French refugee, John Anchoran, and was published under his name in 1631, "in behalfe of the most illustrious Prince Charles and of the British, French and Irish youth." The name of Comenius was only affixed to the preface so that some confusion existed as to the authorship of the work.

Soon after the publication of the *Janua* it became known to what "bolder enterprise" Comenius had been encouraged by the admirers of his new method. He contemplated a book in which not only words, as it was the case in the *Janua*, but also facts would be classified and arranged according to their affinity. Thus the reader was to be presented with a survey of all human know-

ledge which was to serve as "a kind of antidote universal to ignorance, misunderstanding, hallucinations and errors." It was the author's desire to produce a work for which there was no parallel in the past or contemporary literature. During the years of exile he became well acquainted with the causes of unrest in war-torn Europe and sought for remedies and for guarantees of stability. A reconciliation of churches and a reform of education were in his opinion the prerequisites of a durable peace. Therefore, he planned his new work not as a mere survey of data and facts but wished to incorporate there all that was "necessary for the furtherance of felicity in this and the future life, whether of knowledge or faith, action or aspiration."

The combination of purely theoretical interest with the reform aims corresponded with the state of mind of the exiled scholar. His work was an integral part of the heroic effort of émigrés from Bohemia and Moravia to regain independence of their kingdom. He wished to join hands not with theoretical writers but with the architects of the new edifice to be erected on the ruins of the old world. Though fascinating, this combination proved to be an insurmountable obstacle and the main cause of his failure. For several years, however, both Comenius and his friends cherished hopes of success of the pansophy — this term had been coined for the new scheme according to the current practice of using components of Greek or Latin words. Words of encouragement were coming especially from London. Samuel Hartlib, whose name also appeared at the end of the preface to Anchoran's edition of the *Janua*, took genuine interest in the pansophy. Being of foreign extraction and naturalized, he assumed the rôle of a mediator between the English and the Continental scholars. Several members of Hartlib's circle shared with Comenius the banishment from their home countries and the hard lot of exiles. Hartlib was responsible both for the edition of a specimen of pansophy (*Conatuum Comenianorum Praeludia*) in Oxford in 1637 and for an invitation of Comenius to London in 1641.

Comenius arrived in England in September, 1641, and left for Holland at the end of June, 1642. During his stay in London, he lived in the eastern part of the City and frequented ordinarily the congregation in the Dutch



Church (Austin Friars). Soon after his arrival, he was introduced to prominent English divines and scholars. James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln and later Archbishop of York, Robert Greville, second Lord Brooke, John Pym, the prominent member of the Long Parliament, and many others were interested in his ideas. He met also Hartlib's intimate friend, the Scottish clergyman John Durie (Duraeus) who for several years had worked for the reconciliation of Protestant churches. There was perfect harmony between the three men. John Durie spoke of it in a letter to their patron, Sir Cheney Colepeper, in the following way: "Though our taskes be different yet we are all three in a knowledge of one another's labours and can hardly be without one another's helpe and assistance."

What Comenius and his patrons contemplated has been recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the book *Via Lucis* (*The Way of Light*), written in London in the winter of 1641-42. He planned an international academy with resident and corresponding members. As the headquarters he recommended a place "to which by the aid of navigation, access shall be easy from every country of the world and from which in turn communication can be made to every country." He recommended England for the following reasons: "We may say this first because we remember the heroic adventure of the Englishman Drake, who by voyaging five times round the whole world, gave us a prelude and prophecy of this sacred and universal concert of the nations. And secondly, we may make this claim in memory of Bacon, the most illustrious Chancellor of England, to whom we owe the first suggestion and opportunity for common counsels with regard to the universal reform of the Sciences."

The College of Light was never founded. "One unhappy day bringing tidings of massacre in Ireland and of outbreak of civil war there, confounded all plans for the whole winter" — thus did Comenius describe the frustration of his work. Civil War quickly diverted people's attention from the work for the establishment of a great center for scientific research on the Baconian lines. With the consent of his English friends and patrons, Comenius accepted an offer from Sweden and travelled there via Holland. A condition was added by the sponsors of his



scheme, "that should God restore the peace, Comenius was not to refuse to return and take up his work."

He never came back to England. For several years he lived under Swedish protection in the city of Elblag (Elbing) in western Prussia, maintaining correspondence both with the Unity in Leszno and with his friends in London. After the abandonment of the Czech exiles by Swedish delegates at the Peace Conference in Westphalia, he sought another patron who would both give him opportunity for work and be ready to espouse the Czech cause. In 1650, George of Rakoczy, the ruler of Transylvania, extended an invitation to Comenius and entrusted him with the reform of schools in his country. Comenius did not hesitate to accept an offer from the arch-enemy of the House of Habsburg and spent in his territory (in Sáros Patak) several years. He returned to Leszno only after the outbreak of the Swedish-Polish War. During that struggle, his house in Leszno was burned to ashes and his precious library was destroyed. It was easier to exchange letters and ideas with Hartlib and other friends from the new home in Holland.

During the forties and fifties of the seventeenth century, new books by Comenius usually soon after the publication, found way to England, no matter where they had been published. The group of English educators and scholars who were interested in his ideas and eagerly anticipated the fruits of his pansophical studies, was growing steadily during his wandering in Central Europe. Only in the late fifties and in the sixties of the seventeenth century, sceptical voices began to be heard from England. Doubts began to gain ground that the lofty scheme might never become a reality. Even Samuel Hartlib was troubled about the constant delays and less important projects. In September, 1661, he wrote to John Winthrop, Governor of Connecticut, as follows: "Mr. Comenius is continually diverted by particular controversies of Socianians and others from his main Pansophical work but some weeks agoe hee wrote that hee would no more engage himself in any particular controversy but would refer them all to his pansophical worke." This promise was not fulfilled.

In the meantime, some friends of Hartlib and certain other scholars who were interested in the progress of learning were holding sessions in London and in Oxford.

The outcome of their discussions was the foundation of the Royal Society of London in 1662. Out of the magnificent edifice of the "College of Light," a part at least was built by the more realistic English scientists. Comenius received news concerning the founding and development of the Society without jealousy or bitterness. When in 1668 he eventually published his *Via Lucis*, he dedicated it "to the torchbearers of this enlightened age, members of the Royal Society of London, now bringing real philosophy to a happy birth." In the preface he welcomed the new body, hoping that they would succeed in realizing their program. "We have no envy towards you; rather we congratulate you and applaud you and assure you of the applause of mankind. Throughout the world the news will be trumpeted that you are engaged in labours the purpose of which is to secure that human knowledge and the empire of the human mind over matter shall not for ever continue to be a feeble and uncertain thing."

In the sixties of the seventeenth century, Comenius was less interested in the theoretical part of his pansophy than in the program for the pacification of the world and for the renaissance of human society. In his effort to reform conditions of the world and to achieve the unity of Christian civilization, he was more and more inspired by visions and prophecies, thus leaving the solid ground of scientific research. He was also more concerned with the fate of his people and of the Unity and with the wish to preserve its memory among the nations of the world. In 1660, he wrote a concise account of the rules by which the Unity was governed, *Ratio ordinis et disciplinae*. It appeared in English in 1661, in two parts. The first was *An Exhortation of the Churches of Bohemia to the Church of England. Wherein is set forth the good of unity, order, discipline and obedience in churches of Brethren of Bohemia*. The second part was entitled: *A Description of the Order and Discipline Used in the Churches of Bohemia*.

The interest in Comenius' pansophy was rapidly waning in England as well as in other parts of the world during the sixties of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, his *Exhortation* was warmly received. Several writers from the ranks of the clergy quoted from it. During the discussions concerning the church govern-



ment after the Restoration, voices were heard recommending an incorporation of some disciplinary regulations of the Unity into the new Constitution of the Church of England. They remained in minority, but the book of Comenius was not forgotten. In 1703 a book was published in Edinburgh with the title, *Primitive Church Government in the Practice of the Reformed Churches in Bohemia*. Added to it were some notes from Comenius' *Ratio*. This evidenced the permanent interest of Scottish Protestants in the country of John Hus and of his follower, Paul Kravař, whose memory lived in Scotland since his martyr death at St. Andrews in 1433.

Even minor works of Comenius became popular in England during his lifetime. Samuel Pepys left a note in his *Diary* that one day he entertained himself with a play of Comenius. He read probably one of dramatic pieces which Comenius had composed in Sáros Patak.

During all this time, the *Janua* retained its position in schools and in families. New editions of that work were coming from printing presses in England and on the Continent. Another introduction into the study of Latin, the *Orbis Pictus* (*The World in Pictures*) which in fact was a shortened, simplified, and illustrated version of the *Janua*, went after its first publication in 1658 through numberless editions and commanded the attention of both parents and teachers. An English edition appeared in 1659 under the title, *J. A. Comenius' Visible World*. On the title page it was recommended as one of his best essays and the most suitable to children's capacities of any that he had hitherto made. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the book retained its popularity all over the world. In England it went into twelve editions.

The twelfth edition of the *Orbis Pictus* appeared in London in 1777. For several following decades little was heard of Comenius in the British Isles. With the revival of interest in his educational method on the Continent, scientific study of his life and ideas was inaugurated also in England and Scotland. In 1858, Daniel Benthham published in London a modern edition of the *School of Infancy*, based on the first English version of 1641. Translations of other works, articles, and books on Comenius' life from the pen of English and Scottish scholars followed after the successful start by Benthham. Hardly any-



body has done more for the popularity of Comenius among modern educators than R. H. Quick who inserted a succinct biography into his *Essays on Educational Reformers*. Following in his footsteps, S. S. Laurie wrote from original sources the first biography of Comenius in English, called *John Amos Comenius, Bishop of the Moravians. His Life and Educational Works*. It appeared in Edinburgh in 1881 and was reprinted several times both in Great Britain and in the United States. In the ancient capital of Scotland, M. W. Keatinge was working during the early nineties of the nineteenth century on a translation of the *Great Didactic* and on a biographical sketch which were published in 1896.

Keatinge stated openly in his introduction that his work was based upon original research and on the best German authorities. Of the works of Czech scholars, only those written in German were accessible to him. A deviation from the current practise to study only the Latin works by Comenius and to rely only on the results of German studies, is noticeable from about 1900. Count Francis Luetzow, a student of Czech history and author of several books on Bohemia, translated into English and edited in 1901 one of the most remarkable books of Comenius in Czech, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*. His translation was reprinted several times and made Comenius' allegory popular with modern readers.

Count Luetzow's efforts to familiarize English and American scholars with the fruits of Czech scholarship found its continuation in the literary activities of Dr. R. Fitzgibbon Young. He devoted much of his time to the study of Czech exiled scholars of the seventeenth century, and scrutinized the sources relating to Comenius' sojourn in London. His monograph, *Comenius in London*, brought to light a wealth of details concerning the educator's visit and his plans. Based partly on monographs of Czech scholars, partly on the author's systematic research, it has thrown new light on Comenius' activities. If it had not revived the memory of the exiled bishop on both sides of the Atlantic, and if it had not called attention of both British and American scholars to his co-operation with English learned contemporaries, it would not have been so easy to unite the English learned world last fall in the commemoration of the three hundredth anniversary of

Comenius' coming to London. The celebrations culminated in commemorative services held at the University of Cambridge on October 24, on which occasion President Beneš of Czechoslovakia was the chief speaker.

From selected documents which Dr. Young has published in English translations, from critical notes and comments, it has become apparent that there was an affinity between Comenius' ideas and the English thought of that time. The exiled bishop of the Unity was an ardent admirer and worthy continuator of Francis Bacon. He took a prominent position among those who have promoted mutual understanding and collaboration between the English speaking world and the Slav peoples.

### III.

## The American Echo.

*That the brave old man Johannes Amos Comenius, the fame of whose worth hath been trumpeted as far as more than three languages (whereof everyone is indebted unto his Janua) could carry it was indeed agreed withal, by our Mr. Winthrop in his travels through the Low Countries, to come over into New England and illuminate this (i. e. Harvard) College and country in the quality of a president. But the solicitations of the Swedish Ambassador, diverting him another way, that incomparable Moravian became not an American.*

Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), IV, 128.

In the summer of 1637, John Harvard arrived in New England. Among the books which he brought from England and later bequeathed to the college in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was also Anchoran's *Porta linguarum*. Thus two years after the founding of the college, its library owned the book which had carried Comenius' fame all over Europe.

Little is known concerning the curriculum at Harvard College in the early period of its existence. We may assume that from Comenius' *Janua* many students learned Latin, those especially who "came to the university not with the intention to make scholarship their profession but only to get such learning as may serve for delight and ornament." Several copies of successive editions of the *Janua* were bequeathed to American libraries either by Harvard alumni or their heirs. There is, therefore, a great deal of evidence of the use of the *Janua* as a textbook throughout the seventeenth century. It was introduced also into the Boston Latin School. One copy of the *Janua* is particularly interesting. It was owned by an Indian student, Joel Jacoomis, who studied at Harvard with his friend, Caleb Cheeshahteumuck, in 1665 and from it acquired his knowledge of Latin. Comenius' *Janua* circulated in New England in a large number of copies and preserved its author's reputation on this side of the



Atlantic. It is also known that an introduction into physics by Comenius (*Physicae ad lumen divinum reformatae synopsis*) found its way to Harvard College. A copy of that book had been in the possession of John Barnard who had entered the Boston Latin School in 1689 and graduated from Harvard in 1700.

Not only the *Janua* but also the pansophic ideas and the educational method of Comenius attracted the attention of those interested in the progress of learning in New England. It is very likely that John Winthrop (1606-1676), son of the Governor of Massachusetts, met Comenius in London during his stay there in the winter of 1641-42, which coincided with Comenius' sojourn there. As S. E. Morison pointed out in his "*Founding of Harvard College*," "John Winthrop Jr. was asked by the first Board of Overseers, when he went abroad, to invite some outstanding figure in education to be Master of Harvard College—someone whose name alone would advertise the College and attract more students from England."

Not only John Winthrop Jr., but also some English clergymen who were interested in missionary work among the Indians in New England, took into consideration Comenius' unusual qualities and encouraged him to the journey across the Ocean. It would not have been difficult to combine educational work at Harvard with missionary activities among the Indians and to promote intellectual life in New England in both ways. In the preface to *Via lucis*, Comenius stated that he had come to London in September, 1641, "on the advice of certain pious theologians and bishops (the occasion being the propagation of the Gospel unto the nations of the world and in particular the sowing thereof made then in New England)." When the interest in the "College of Light" faded away there was more ground for the hope that Comenius would consider seriously both Mr. Winthrop's sounding and the advice of his friends from the ranks of the English clergy. There was some reason to expect that the "incomparable Moravian would become an American."

After some deliberation, Comenius declined the offer. According to Cotton Mather, whose story contains some truth despite confusion in regard to the date and circumstances, "the solicitations of the Swedish Ambassador diverted Comenius another way." The invitation from the

Swedish government was, no doubt, more attractive than the prospect of a long journey to the other shore of the Atlantic. Swedish troops still stood in the field and Swedish statesmen were bound by solemn pledges to work for the restoration of Bohemian liberties. It was advisable to offer service to the country which sponsored the Czech cause and to strengthen the bond between Sweden and the groups of exiles from Bohemia and Moravia.

Comenius had not set foot on the American soil but influenced by his writings the intellectual life in New England. As Albert Matthews has written in his illuminating article, "Comenius and Harvard College," the scholars of New England were not content with merely buying the works of Comenius or with using them at school or college; they also studied them and quoted them in their own books. The effort of Comenius to save from oblivion the Unity and its main principles was crowned with remarkable success. The account of the sufferings of the faithful Christians in Bohemia and Moravia which had appeared originally in Czech and in 1648 in Latin, was translated into English and published in London in 1650. Copies of *The History of the Bohemian Persecution*, describing the savagery of the imperial officials and soldiers in Bohemia and Moravia after the White Mountain, circulated also in New England. The book reminded people of the plight and sacrifices of the Czech people during the Thirty Years' War and kept alive the memory of their heroic struggle for religious freedom.

Of special interest for theologians and ministers of churches in New England was Comenius' description of the rules and discipline of the Unity. A prominent Congregational minister, Increase Mather, who was active successively as pastor in Boston and as president of Harvard College, was responsible for its introduction into New England as well for its popularity. In 1661 he sent from Europe a copy of Comenius' *Ratio ordinis et disciplinae* to his father, Richard. The latter corroborated in his *Defense of the Answer* (1664) his views by references to Comenius' work and gave him publicity in learned circles in New England.

In the Mather family, which had given New England prominent ministers and prolific writers, Comenius' *Ratio* was held in high esteem. Several of the Mathers



quoted from it in their treatises and kept the memory of the Unity alive on this side of the Atlantic just as some English clergymen did in their own country. Increase Mather enthusiastically mentioned, in 1700, the order of the Unity in his *Order of the Gospel Professed and Practiced by the Churches of Christ in New England* and referred to Comenius' *Ratio* in the text. Increase's eldest son, Cotton Mather, in his *Faithful Account of the Discipline Professed and Practiced in the Churches of New England* (1726) "imitated a little what was done in the *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Bohemorum*, written by that incomparable Comenius." Similarly, Samuel Mather, in his *Apology for the Liberties of the Churches in New England* (1738) supported his argument by quotations from a large number of books dealing with the history and the government of Protestant churches in Europe — it goes without saying that Comenius' *Ratio* supplied him with examples and was mentioned several times. More than a century after the publication of Cotton Mather's *Faithful Account*, in 1829, an interesting book appeared in Portland (Me.). Under the title of *Ratio Disciplinae; or the Constitution of the Congregational Churches*, T. C. Upham reprinted extracts with alterations from the *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Bohemorum* by Comenius and from Cotton Mather's account.

In Congregational churches of New England, the memory of the Unity and of the effort of the Bohemian Brethren to create an ideal Christian communion lived before the coming of the first group of the spiritual heirs of that church, the Moravians. In their desire to preserve the heritage of John Hus and of his followers, the Moravians were inspired by the example and ideas of Comenius and saved his name from oblivion into which it had been falling during the eighteenth century both in Europe and in America.

Early in the nineteenth century, the interest in Comenius' *Orbis Pictus* revived. As the ties between the centers of learning on the American side of the Ocean and England had been severed during the struggle for independence, it was considered necessary to arrange for a new edition of the book to satisfy the demand. It was printed in New York by T. & J. Swords, No. 160 Pearl Street, in 1810. On the title page it has been expressly stated that this was the first American edition. It is



very likely that the book of which Harvard College Library has a copy, was not only the first American edition of the *Orbis Pictus*, but the first book by Comenius that came from an American printing press. Prior to that, copies of his works had been imported from Europe.

The American editor of the *Orbis Pictus*, W. Jones, wrote in the preface that after a careful examination of the *Orbis* he had found it "by far the best book extant for the purpose of introducing boys to the knowledge of things as well as of Latin terms." The knowledge of Latin and its use were, however, steadily declining. Therefore, the first American edition of the *Orbis* was not for a long time followed by another printing. Only in 1887 a new edition of the *Orbis* was prepared and published by C. W. Bardeen in Syracuse, N. Y. It followed the same English edition (1727) on which the first American edition had been modeled, without mentioning the pioneer work of W. Jones.

C. W. Bardeen's edition was an evidence of a renewed interest of American educators in Comenius' ideas and method. Efforts to establish his place in the history of education went along with scientific study of Comenius' books. A mention of Comenius became an integral part of American histories of education. H. J. Smith, of the Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pa., set an example for all subsequent writers by including an account of Comenius' life and activities in his *Education*, published in New York, in 1842.

The interest of American educators in Comenius was stimulated by the development of studies of his work in Europe, especially in Bohemia, Germany, and England. In his native land, Comenius was unknown almost for one hundred and fifty years. He was symbol of that chapter in Bohemian history which the Habsburgs and their henchmen tried to depict not as a period of glory but as of aberration and of decline. Only small groups of Protestants, hiding in mountainous districts of Bohemia and Moravia, preserved copies of his books in Czech, partly in original editions, partly in eighteenth century reprints which had been published in various German cities or in Slovakia, and had found their way across the frontier. From those sources, the leading Czech historian, František Palacký, received information upon which he based his biographical sketch of Comenius (1829), which

appeared as a harbinger of a new era. During the Metternich period, various restrictions hampered free course of research. The era of Comenius, coinciding with the rebellion of the Czechs against the Habsburgs, was considered a dangerous subject of study for a loyal citizen of the Habsburg monarchy. Important discoveries of Comenius' manuscripts were made at the end of the absolutist era by the scientist, J. E. Purkyně. They gave a fillip to new research, which had been freely developing since the fall of Metternich. Only then did Comenius come back to his own country from which he had been banned in 1627 by the conqueror and tyrant.

Studies of Comenius in Germany and in Great Britain were better known to American educators of the nineteenth century than the writings and the editions of Comenius' books by Czech scholars. The exchange of ideas between Germany and Great Britain was regular, whereas there was but little contact with the Czech lands, incorporated in the Habsburg monarchy and attracting only few visitors from beyond the seas. It is significant that the first article on Comenius in a modern American periodical was an adaptation of K. G. von Raumer's biographical sketch for American readers. It appeared in the fifth volume of *Barnard's American Journal of Education* in 1858 which was also the year of the publication of the English version of Comenius' *School of Infancy* in London by Daniel Benham.

Step by step, American educators built up their own literature on Comenius, adding in short intervals valuable articles and books to the writings of European scholars. If we also take into consideration the American editions of some English works, we get quite a respectable list of contributions to the knowledge of Comenius. They form a modern parallel to the writings of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries and to references to Comenius in books published in those two centuries on both sides of the Atlantic. As Nicholas Murray Butler has said in his lecture, "The Place of Comenius in the History of Education," American educators "found in Comenius the source and the forecasting of much that inspires and directs the new education."

The three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Comenius did not pass unnoticed in America. The March number of the *Educational Review*, edited by Nicholas Murray



Butler, was devoted to Comenius. An editorial was followed by three papers: "The Place of Comenius in the History of Education," by S. S. Laurie; "The Text-books of Comenius," by C. W. Bardeen; "The Permanent Influence of Comenius," by P. H. Hanus. At the meeting of Department of Superintendence of the National Education in Brooklyn in February, 1892, a special session was held in commemoration of Comenius, with J. M. Hark of Lancaster, Pa., W. H. Maxwell, and N. M. Butler, as speakers. At the end of the year, the monthly *Education* brought an article on "Comenius, the Evangelist of Modern Education," by W. S. Monroe. This was a specimen of the author's studies of Comenius. It was followed, in 1896, by the first American edition of *The School of Infancy*, and matured in 1900 in a biography, *Comenius and the Beginnings of the Educational Reform*, which Nicholas Murray Butler, the chief promoter of Comenius studies in the United States, included in the series, *The Great Educators*.

In the commemoration of Comenius in 1892, both American educators and Czech colonies in various parts of the country, participated. Meetings were held in Chicago, in Racine, Wis., in Omaha, Neb., in St. Paul, Minn. and elsewhere. The Czech dailies published in America carried in March 1892, articles on the great son of Moravia and on his place in the history of the Czech people. They manifested the desire of the Czech-speaking citizens of the United States to preserve in their new homes the ideas of Comenius and to bring his humanitarian principles into harmony with the American traditions.

Celebrations of Comenius in 1892 were followed by occasional publications during the following years, especially during the War period of 1914-18. In recent time, the interest culminated in a comprehensive biography, *Jean Amos Comenius*, published in French in 1928 by Dr. Anna Heyberger of Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Another evidence of permanent interest in the work of Comenius among the Americans of Czechoslovak descent were articles by Dr. Matthew Spinka, supplemented in 1940 by a masterly translation of the *Bequest of the Unity of Brethren*.

Thanks to Dr. Spinka, the memorable message of Comenius to the exiled Czechs, from which Masaryk had drawn inspiration during his struggle for the liberation



of his people, appeared for the first time in English to announce to the world the everlasting longing of the Czechoslovak people for independence. Like a clarion call, summoning faithful patriots to action, sounds the prophecy of Comenius: "I trust God that after the passing of the storm of wrath which our sins brought down upon our heads, the rule of thine affairs shall again be restored to thee, O Czech people."

#### IV.

### The Noble Priest of Humanity.

*It is the salvation of the whole world that we seek . . .*  
Comenius, *Via Lucis (The Way of Light)*.

In the last decade of his life, Comenius was absorbed by polemics with opponents from the ranks of the Dutch clergy. The invectives of Samuel Desmarets (Maresius) surpassed in incisiveness and bias anything that had been published during the previous years or struggles. The life of Comenius was really "going down in sorrows and his years in lamentations." But bitter controversies were not the only source of his unhappiness and anxiety. The pacification of Europe was slowed up by new conflicts. The war between England and Holland shattered the exile's hope in an effective collaboration of Protestant nations which might have brought a readjustment of the harsh terms of the Peace of Westphalia concerning their correlative religionists in the Habsburg lands. From his study in Amsterdam, Comenius sent a message to the representatives of the belligerent countries, assembled in Breda. The book was entitled *Angelus Pacis (The Angel of Peace)*, and urged the delegates to terminate hostilities and to restore peaceful relations. New problems were appearing on the horizon in the last phase of Comenius' life. The venerable educator was overshadowed by his younger contemporaries who were rising to prominence with the decline of his prestige and influence.

From an outstanding member of the young generation of thinkers, G. W. Leibniz, a prophecy came which has been fulfilled in modern times. After a temporary eclipse of the fame of Comenius, interest in his work was rapidly increasing during the nineteenth century. A large number of people of good will from all parts of the world really united in the praise of the deeds, hopes, as well as aspirations of the exiled bishop of the Unity. His books were studied and his ideas influenced modern educators. We may say with Nicholas Murray Butler that the great

educational revival of the nineteenth century shed the light of scholarly investigation upon all the dark places so that Comenius is being honored "wherever teachers gather together and wherever education is the theme." Summarizing the indebtedness of modern education to Comenius, the author has written as follows: "The infant school of kindergarten, female education, the incorporation of history and geography in the curriculum, the value of drawing and manual training, the fundamental importance of selftraining, the physical and the ethical elements in education, and finally that education is for all, and not for a favored few only, were all articles in the creed of Comenius."

The crisis through which the world has been passing since the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 had opened our eyes to those other aspects of Comenius' life and work which were corollary to his educational theory. We realize that he really sought not only a partial reform but the salvation of the whole world. Accounts of his life which do not pay sufficient attention to his desire to improve the lot of mankind and to heal the scars of the long war, overlook the most important and dynamic factor in his life. During his forty years in exile, he analyzed the causes of unrest in the world and in several writings drew up a program for a renaissance of human society. He linked up the Czech cause with the broad scheme of a general pacification of Europe.

There are parallels in Czech history to the desire of Comenius to lead mankind from calamities to the green pastures of peace and prosperity. Three centuries before the publication of the *Angelus Pacis*, a thorough reform of the medieval Church had been vehemently advocated by Comenius' countryman, Jan Milič of Kroměříž, as the only way to save European peoples from disaster. Alarmed by the growth of anarchy in the world as well as by the decline of both political and ecclesiastical authorities, Milič urged, in 1368, Pope Urban V to convoke a general council. In the assembly of delegates from all parts of Europe, the causes of unrest were to be investigated and a remedy sought for the existing decline of morals. Though primarily concerned with conditions in Bohemia and Moravia, Milič soon widened the sphere of his interest and formulated his proposals in general terms so that



they might have been applied to the whole of Christendom, had they fallen on fertile ground.

A century later, George of Poděbrady, the Hussite King of Bohemia, promulgated the idea of a league of Christian princes. He was well aware that the stability of Europe and peace among its inhabitants were jeopardized by disturbing forces. The southeastern part of the Continent had fallen under Turkish rule before George's accession to the Bohemian throne. During one century, the enemy of Christendom had consolidated his position in the Balkans as well as on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean and was steadily advancing. No single country was strong enough to defeat the Turkish armies inspired, as they were, by the teaching of the Prophet and elated by their victories over the disunited opponents.

Though the lands of the Bohemian Crown were not directly menaced by the Turks, George realized the gravity of the situation. He saw that no compromise was possible between the Christian peoples and the Infidels aiming at the subjugation of Europe. Neither the Emperor nor the Pope had sufficient authority to build up a united front against the invaders, since they were in eclipse. Taking fully into account both the decline of the medieval institutions and the growth of national states, George urged the rulers of leading European countries to form a league, so as to make an end to local conflicts and to concentrate all efforts on the defeat of the common foe. The native land of the Hussite King would have profited from the establishment and working of the league, as it had always been strengthened by the suppression of hostilities on the Continent. Its position at the crossroads of Europe has made it extremely susceptible to any swing in international relations.

George's lofty vision of a brotherhood of Christian nations welded in the face of the formidable enemy, and defending resolutely the common heritage against his assaults, had not captured the minds of the contemporary rulers and statesmen. There was less understanding of the need of subordination of particular interests to the common cause in George's time than in the years following the first World War. The League of Nations proposed by President Woodrow Wilson corresponded to the eternal longing of human heart for justice and peace

just as accurately as George's scheme. The failure of George's endeavor to achieve a union of European countries cannot be taken as evidence of his lack of political wisdom. The responsibility fell on his contemporaries who were unable to conceive of a radical change in international relations and turned a deaf ear to George's pleading.

Comenius' desire to suppress the disturbing forces and to restore harmonious collaboration of the peoples of Europe emanated from the depths of the Czech soul deeply concerned not only with the fate of his own country but also with the lamentable decline of morals and decency. Lack of foresight and selfishness made possible the victory of the Habsburgs who in the seventeenth century threatened the existence of small and freedom-loving peoples in the same manner as the dictators do in our time. From his early years Comenius opposed the idea of universal monarchy. On various occasions he called to arms people of good will against the tyrannical designs of the Caesar of that time.

Thus he set an example for his spiritual heir, T. G. Masaryk, who considered *The Bequest* of Comenius his daily memento. Masaryk's work for the liberation of the Czechs and Slovaks from the Habsburg rule cannot be dissociated from the noble efforts of many of his contemporaries to build new Europe on the basis of autocratic monarchies. With Comenius he believed that not Caesar's, but Jesus', example should inspire peoples and direct their mutual relations. The present struggle of the Czechs and Slovaks against the conqueror and temporary master of their own countries, have likewise been inspired by the work of Comenius.

Comenius was not a statesman. Nor was diplomacy or strategy his concern or occupation. He was depressed by the current political ideas and their application. He wrote in the *Via lucis* that "the main political theories on which the present rulers of the world support themselves are treacherous quagmires and the real causes of the generally tottering and indeed collapsing condition of the world." His proposals differed from the rigid clauses of the peacemakers. They were not dictated by reason but emanated from the heart of a leader of homeless exiles. Toward the end of his life, his thought was de-

flected from normal channels by prophecies and belief in miracles.

The lofty vision of the golden age comforted him in the years of depression and gloom. He had not given up hope that one day he might be able to announce how in his judgment "learning, religion and government may be brought to certain immutable principles or bases, to their best foundation, so that ignorance, uncertainty, discussions, the noise and tumult of disputes, quarrels and wars shall cease throughout the world, and light, peace, health return, and the golden age which has ever been longed for, the age of light and peace and religion may be brought to sight."

In various ways and on various occasions Comenius proclaimed his belief that peoples of Europe would find the way out of the labyrinth of passions and of conflicting interests and that they would join hands in the reconstruction of the Continent. He did not expect salvation from mere successes of the armies or from diplomatic negotiations on the current pattern. The real causes of trouble were to be discovered and eliminated by combined efforts of statesmen and scholars as a preliminary to the peace conference. Once he quoted a saying that a contentious philosophy was the parent of a contentious theology and consequently of the series of conflicts and devastating wars. His desire for the restoration of order and of normal relations between European countries was genuine and deeply rooted in his heart. He worked for peace among free peoples, knowing well that harmony cannot be restored by force or compulsion. His program was a just and durable peace based on Christian principles and supported wholeheartedly by all members of the family of nations.

He did not labor in vain. His writings and ideas have been a permanent source of inspiration not only for his countrymen but for the whole civilized world. As a true patriot he worked for the liberation of his people and has grown amidst war and high-running passions into a noble priest of humanity.