

LIFE AFTER DEATH. 1934

(Arranged from “Didactia magna” by J. A. Comenius)

In this year, the year of Hindenburg’s passing and the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the war with its great outpouring of death, this Year’s Memorial-day stirs in us especially serious thoughts. But thoughts of dying visit us all, independently of current events. In this context it is interesting to leaf through “The Little Book about Life after Death” by scientist and philosopher G. Th. Fechner (who precisely 100 years ago became Professor of Physics in Leipzig). (The little book is easily read and captivating and not too long), and many, who read it do not know that these thoughts of Fechner had found nearly identical expression by J. A. Comenius two hundred years ago. Comenius, Bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, a branch of the Herrnhuter Bruedergemeinde, was one of the great pedagogues of the new times. From his pedagogic masterpiece “Didactica magna” the following thoughts about life after death have been assembled.

“Everyone’s life and its dwelling place are threefold: the womb, the earth, the heavens: in the first we are only given life, endowed with movement and the beginnings of consciousness, in the second life, movement, consciousness with the beginnings of knowledge, in the third limitless completion of all.

The first life is a preparation for the second, the second for the third, the third goes off in itself without end. ... The first and second dwelling may be comparable to workshops, where the body gets ready for usefulness in the following life; the third dwelling place will bring the completion and enjoyment of both." – "Our first life rests in the lap of our mothers. But what for? For its own advantage? Far from it. It is only concerned, that the little body be made a suitable dwelling place and instrument of the soul, for the comfortable use in the life-after to be enjoyed under the sun. As soon as this is accomplished, we break into the light, because nothing further can happen in this darkness. Similarly, life under the sun is nothing but a preparation for the eternal life, in so far that the soul in the service of the body has earned what is needed for the future life." – "Just as we can be sure that the stay in the mother's womb is preparation for life in the body, it is just as sure, that the stay of the body is a preparation for the life, which will follow this and will last forever. Happy is he, who leaves the mother's womb well formed! A thousand times happier he, who carries a well adorned soul from here along with him."

"This world is nothing more than a garden, our storehouse, our school. There is a beyond, to which we graduate after dismissal from this school, the eternal academy." – "The descriptions attributed to this life let us understand, that it is only a preparation for the other life. This life is called way, walk, gate, expectancy, we are called strangers, pilgrims, tenants, in hopes of a different state, one that will be permanent. (Cf.1 Gen. 47, 9. Psalm 39, 13, Job 7,12. Luke 12, 36.)"

However: "The passage from the first life to the second, and from the second to the third, is tight and painful, but in both cases only the clothing and wraps are left behind

(which are only secondary there, but here the prison of the body), just as from a broken eggshell the young one appears.”