

EDITORIAL REMARKS

The year 2007 being the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment described symbolically in the Apocalypse, historian Mr. Michael Hogan, in a paper presented to the Board of Trustees of The Cole Foundation for the Renewal of the Culture, proposed the idea of holding a celebratory event. The outcome was a conference titled “The World Transformed: The Impact of the Last Judgment on Human Knowledge and Values” held October 4–5, 2007, in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. The conference, sponsored by the The Cole Foundation and supported by Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, was chaired by Mr. Hogan.

Included in the broad range of papers presented were several that had direct bearing on science and mathematics and, at Mr. Hogan’s request, these are here presented to give wider circulation to the ideas in them. It is a privilege for the Swedenborg Scientific Association to do this through its journal.

Qualifying human thought about spiritual events are two particular ideas found in Swedenborg’s work *Divine Providence*. The first is a law of the Divine Providence that men and women must act in freedom in accord with reason; we need to be able to live our lives, to engage in thought and act from our own will, freely, with no sense of coercion (*DP* 72). And the second, that we can see Divine Providence after an event but not before or during it (*DP* 187).

The Last Judgment was a spiritual event necessary for the preservation of the freedom, and hence the survival, of mankind. But that freedom would have been jeopardized had the Judgment not been accomplished, as it were, in secret.

The Papers

In “The New Jerusalem Come Down to Earth” Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell places his treatment of the subject within the broad context of the spiritual history of mankind from the idyllic Garden of Eden Golden Age to the present, this history being punctuated by necessary judgments: the banishment from the garden, the Noachian flood, that associated with the First Advent, and finally, that of the Last Judgment. The focus of his paper is on science and religion, leading to the role Swedenborg played in restoring what may be called “spiritual thought” to the consideration of the operations of nature.

Dr. Dan Synnestvedt provides us with an extensive and intensive study of naturalism in "Naturalism and the Last Judgment." Following an introduction, Dr. Synnestvedt develops his treatment under the following major headings: Defining Naturalism; Naturalism, Swedenborg, and His Contemporaries; The Heavenly Doctrines and Naturalism; Arguments Concerning Naturalism; The Future: Naturalism and Spiritualism; Conclusion.

"Removing Obstacles: Why Swedenborgian Theology Recasts Christian Concepts of the Last Judgment and the Singularity of the Earth" by Dr. Allen Bedford opens with "The material examined in this study is the intersection of New Church teaching on the plurality of worlds and the Last Judgment, teachings that are in opposition to beliefs held by many Christians." Dr. Bedford presents his thinking under six headings: I. Introduction; II. Swedenborg's Revelation and the New Christian Age; III. Reshaping Christian Expectations; IV. Swedenborgian View of the Last Judgment; V. Expectations for the Christian Word; VI. Conclusion.

That an event as cataclysmic as the Last Judgment should have wide ramifications is to be expected; but would we expect it to have significance in mathematical thought? In Dr. Forrest Dristy's paper titled "The Last Judgment and the Liberation of Mathematics" he makes a case for the proposition that it did, through an account of the history of ideas regarding the development of aspects of geometry and algebra.

In his paper titled "Ideas for Swedenborgian Mathematical Illustrations" Dr. Neil Simonetti draws our attention to Swedenborg's use of aspects of mathematics to illustrate spiritual ideas. He notes Swedenborg's occasional use of mathematics, but then asks what further use he might have made of it given advances since his time. Dr. Simonetti then goes on to illustrate several ideas found in Swedenborg's works in a variety of ways.

News, Notes, and Comments

Having received a review copy of The Swedenborg Society's new title *The Five Ages: Swedenborg's View of Spiritual History*, we close this issue with some remarks on a book which complements the papers in this issue in the sense that the Last Judgment ushered in the last and now developing age of mankind's spiritual history.