

News, Notes, and Comments

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Cole Foundation and Bryn Athyn College of the New Church announce a scholarly conference in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the *Last Judgment*. The conference is entitled *The World Transformed: Effects of the Last Judgment on Human Knowledge and Values*. It will be held over two days, November 2nd and 3rd (Friday and Saturday) 2007, at Bryn Athyn College in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

With the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment rapidly approaching in 2007, it is appropriate to examine the nature of that judgment, what was accomplished by it, and what its implications may have been in the natural world. The assessment of the Last Judgment's natural effects presents New Church scholars with an exciting array of research challenges. These challenges are enhanced by the fact that the effects of the Judgment were not readily observable at that time.

To the contemporary observer, the world which followed after 1757 was the same as that which came before 1757. The Last Judgment occurred in the spiritual world. There was no concomitant climate change, no worldwide geological dislocation, and no changes of any sort in the physical and chemical laws governing natural existence. In fact, we are told in the Writings that human society was not immediately affected either. Politics, family structure, churches, languages, treaties, ceremonies, and economic systems remained intact. This being the case, it is realistic to ask what then are these "exciting research challenges" presented to New Church scholarship? It is obvious that there have been profound long-term changes in the world since 1757, but how could these be seen as effects of the Last Judgment?

The answer lies in the manner of the Last Judgment itself and thus in the indirect process by which it affected the natural world. The Judgment was a spiritual event whose essential effect on earth was within and through the human mind itself. The Last Judgment produced a profound

change in consciousness. The Writings tell us that “henceforth the man of the church will be in a more free state of thinking on matters of faith, thus on the spiritual things which relate to Heaven, because spiritual freedom has been restored to him. For all things in the heavens and in the hells are now reduced to order” (*Last Judgment* 73).

This restoration of spiritual freedom is the essential effect on the human race of the Last Judgment. Through it the power of the human mind to understand spiritual things is vastly increased. In addition, the mind’s capacity to comprehend even natural things is increased as man absorbs spiritual influx and orders his intellectual life to take that spiritual reality into account. Here we find the essential clue to understanding the transformation of the world since 1757.

Anyone who seeks to understand these changes must begin with the Last Judgment. This is the initial event of modern history. Its subtle and profound impact is with us now and will continue to shape human history from now on. To discover these effects and to harness them for the good of use are the exciting research challenges which are now presented to New Church scholarship.

Those interested in learning more about this topic are invited to view or download the paper by Michael H. Hogan, “*The Last Judgment and New Church Scholarship: Some implications for the Future*” at www.colefoundation.org. This paper was commissioned by the Cole Foundation in 2005 to provide an initial approach to the issues to be addressed at the conference. It is sixty-four pages in length.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: AN INVITATION

You are invited to submit a proposal for a paper for this conference. The paper will address the impact of the recovery of spiritual freedom on human knowledge and values in the eighteenth century. The paper should address issues within your particular area of scholarship and expertise. Fairly broad latitude will be permitted for topics since this area of scholarship is almost completely new. However, the paper must deal with its subject matter from a New Church perspective. Papers must grapple with the relationship of the Last Judgment as described in the Writings to some

definable human enterprises since 1757. The papers could concern changes in society itself (e.g., social movements, political activity, anti-slavery activity, definition of marriage and the family, etc.) or development in scientific understanding of the natural world (e.g., cosmology, biology, technology, scientific method, etc.) The field of possible topics is meant to be quite broad.

Those interested in presenting a paper at the conference should do the following:

- 1) Prepare a one page proposal for your paper by January 15, 2007. Submit it to Michael H. Hogan, Conference Chairman, editor@colefoundation.org
- 2) If your proposal is accepted you must submit your paper (approx. 20–25 pages) by September 30, 2007. The paper will be reviewed by your panel chair during October in preparation for the discussion at the conference.
- 3) Prepare a 20/30 minute summary of your paper to be delivered at the conference. The audience will consist of the students of Bryn Athyn College, its faculty, various clergy and interested others. The panel chair will respond to each of the papers (there will be three per session). The discussion will then be opened to questions from the audience.

Conference proceedings will be published by The Cole Foundation.

If you have any questions or comments about the conference and its aims, please contact me, Michael H. Hogan, at editor@colefoundation.org. I look forward to working with you in the service of New Church scholarship.

Yours sincerely,
Michael H. Hogan
Conference Chairman