

Editorial

ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT

Most people have heard of “Judgment Day” but few know that it actually took place in the spiritual world during the year 1757, two hundred and fifty years ago. The expectation is that this judgment will bring about a cataclysmic end of the world as we know it and herald the promised second coming of the Lord.

But it did not happen as expected. What took place instead was a spiritual judgment with tremendous spiritual consequences, but with little noticeable effect in this world.

Fifty years ago, on the 200th anniversary of this event, Bishop George de Charms noted in this journal: “No man living, except Emanuel Swedenborg, was aware at the time of the tremendous changes taking place in the spiritual world.... In the *Spiritual Diary* and in *The Last Judgment and Babylon Destroyed* [published in 1758] Swedenborg gives an eyewitness account of this momentous event. He tells of storms and eruptions and earthquakes that left great cities in ruins. He describes how the good among the inhabitants were protected...and organized into a new heaven; while the evil, fleeing in terror, cast themselves into hell. All this took place within the short period of a single year.” He continues: “[These spiritual events] produced no sudden upheaval of human society on earth. Life here went on as before.... Even now, after the lapse of two hundred years, the fact that such a spiritual judgment has taken place is known only to those few who belong to the New Church...” (*New Church Life* 1957, p.1).

The Heavenly Doctrine confirms that little changed outwardly in the natural world as a result of the spiritual upheavals brought about by the Last Judgment. Civil affairs and even various religious sects continue as before. But henceforth, we are told, “the man of the church will be in a more free state of thinking on

NEW CHURCH LIFE, March 2007

matters of faith...because spiritual freedom has been restored to him” (*Last Judgment* 73).

In commemoration of the bicentennial of the Last Judgment, several articles related to the subject were included in the issues of *New Church Life* during the year 1957. This 250th year since the Judgment provides yet another occasion to remember the continuing importance of what took place in the year 1757. To this end, we include in this issue an article titled “The Last Judgment.” (See p.93)