

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON

In the book of Revelation visions are described which the Lord permitted His disciple John to see when he was an old man on the Isle of Patmos. The vision we are focusing on John described as a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon at her feet, and with a crown of twelve stars on her head, and she was going to have a child born to her.

There was also another wonder in the heavens: a great, red, horrible-looking dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his head. This dragon was raging, waiting to destroy the woman and the child that she was to have, and while waiting, it was lashing its tail; and its tail was sweeping the stars from the sky. But, in the Lord's mercy, the woman was able to escape from the dragon, and to find a safe place prepared for her in the wilderness; and the Lord sent the angel, Michael, to fight against the dragon, and the dragon was defeated by the power of the angel and cast out of the heavens.

Now, this strange vision has an important meaning. For the vision was not telling about things that actually took place in this world; both the woman and the dragon were in the spiritual world. They represented things—that is, they were symbols of things important for us to know and to think about.

We are taught that the woman is a symbol representing the New Church in heaven, and also on earth. By the sun which clothed the woman is meant love to the Lord, which makes the glory of the New Church, and fills life with warmth and happiness. And, by the moon at the woman's feet, is meant the faith of the New Church—the faith in the Lord and in the truths of His Word which is to shine brightly in the New Church for all to see, and which is to lead us in all that we do and think.

In John's vision, a woman was the symbol of the New Church. She was beautiful, as all things of the New Church should be beautiful. A woman represents love, and in the New Church there is to be a great love for the things that the Lord makes known in His Word. This is especially true for the spiritual sense of the Word which the Lord has made known in the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church. These are meant by the child that was to be born to the woman. And because of the love for these teachings in the church, the spiritual sense has been given by the Lord to cherish and to guard even as a mother cherishes and guards her child.

The horrible red dragon is a symbol representing evil thoughts and loves. These, if they are properly seen, are as dreadful and horrifying as the red dragon. They also lead to hatred of the Lord and all that is from Him, and they become stirred up to great anger when they feel that there is a love for the Lord and for things that are from Him, and especially for the truths that are revealed in the Heavenly Doctrines. Like the great, red dragon, evil loves and thoughts will become particularly enraged at the things of the New Church and try to destroy it and all who belong to it.

But remember that the great, red dragon could not prevail over the woman. She was kept safe by the Lord, and He sent His angel to overthrow the dragon. This is true with each one of us. If our

love to the Lord is strong, and our faith in Him clear, if we love the things of the church and try to keep them safe, He will protect us with His great power. And the Lord will help us overcome and cast away our evil thoughts and evil desires.

This is a wonderful thing to know, and always to keep alive in our thoughts, especially when we celebrate the birthday of the New Church, which was on June 19th, 1770.