

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

YES, THERE ARE DRAGONS

by the Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz

Dragons, ferocious dragons with burning eyes and cruel teeth creep hungrily through the pages of many exciting stories, but of course dragons don't really exist, do they?

Yes, they do. There really are dragons. Not here on earth, however, but in heaven, in the spiritual world. People have actually seen them there and written about them.

The two people on earth who have seen dragons in the spiritual world and written about them are the Lord's prophets, John and Swedenborg. John wrote in the Book of Revelation, for example: "A sign was seen in heaven. I saw a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail drew down a third Part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to earth; and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that after she had given birth he might eat up her child" (Rev. 12:3, 4).

You will be glad to know that the Lord rescued the newborn baby from this vicious dragon by snatching it up to safety by His throne. Then, John writes, the cruel dragon flew up to heaven, trying still to get the baby. But Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and after a great struggle, threw him down to the land.

Swedenborg, too, saw dragons in the spiritual world. He says they were gigantic, slippery, serpent—like monsters. Their long tails had spiny barbs at the end, which they would lash skyward in an effort to drag down the stars from heaven (AR 537:5).

As Swedenborg would get nearer to these dragons, an amazing thing would happen. He would see that what had looked like a dragon from a distance was actually *a group of bad people*. They were bad because they were interested only in earthly things and didn't care the least bit about heaven and goodness. Because they were interested only in things of earth, made them look like a great serpent, slithering across the ground. Their selfishness showed as an ugly red color. But because this kind of bad people can pretend, that is, sometimes talk and act as if they are interested in the higher things of heaven, these dragon-people seemed to have wings and to be able to fly up into the sky. And because they hate all the Lord's Commandments, which, like stars, guide men in living rightly, these dragon-people looked as if they had vicious tails that lashed skyward, trying to hit and smash the stars down.

So there really are dragons, but since they are in the spiritual world there is much more to them than just what you see from the distance. Really, this is true of all the animals you will one day see in heaven yourself. The animals there are living pictures of the good—and wicked—things within the angels—and devils.

A lamb in heaven, for example, is a living picture of a nearby angel's gentle love for the Lord and his willingness to follow Him as His shepherd. A lion, on the other hand, pictures the power of an angel's love to frighten away all evil.

If you keep this fact in mind about the real nature of the animals of heaven, you will be able to understand the Lord's Word much better, for the Word is a book about heaven. As you read about an animal you can understand more because you will know that every animal described in the Word is a spiritual picture of something good, or bad, in people.

This explains why, for example, when John saw the Lord on His throne in heaven, there were four marvelous animals gathered around it. These animals were seen around the Lord's throne because each one pictured a good quality in the people who love and worship the Lord. One of the animals, for example, was like a grand eagle. Eagles have very sharp eyesight. From high in the sky they can see even a tiny mouse scurrying along the ground. So the eagle before the Lord's throne pictures the ability of good people to see clearly just what the Lord teaches in His Word about how to live rightly.

The dragon John saw pictures the bad qualities of people who want to *seem to know* the Lord's teachings, but who do not like the idea that it is important to also *do* what the Lord teaches.

This attitude of 'thinking, not doing' as the Lord teaches is indeed a terrible 'dragon'—a monster of which we should be frightened. But John later saw a single angel come down from heaven and chain that great dragon, that old serpent, who is the devil and Satan. Then he threw him into a bottomless pit. A single angel could do this because the Lord and His Divine power were with him. You can 'chain' a spiritual dragon, too—if you ask the Lord to be with you.

Text: Revelation 12: 3,4