

THE SEVEN SEALS

“[VERSE 1](#). And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2. And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” [DAR1909 431.1](#)

Having taken the book, the Lamb proceeds at once to open the seals; and the attention of the apostle is called to the scenes that transpire under each seal. The number seven has already been noticed as denoting in the Scriptures completeness and perfection. The seven seals therefore embrace the whole of a certain class of events, reaching down perhaps to the time of Constantine, and the seven trumpets another series from that time farther on, cannot be correct. The trumpets denote a series of events which transpire contemporaneously with the events of the seals, but of an entirely different character. A trumpet is a symbol of war; hence the trumpets denote great political commotions to take place among the nations during the gospel age. The seals denote events of a religious character, and contain the history of the church from the opening of the Christian era to the coming of Christ. [DAR1909 431.2](#)

Commentators have raised a question concerning the manner in which these scenes were represented before the apostle. Was it merely a written description of the events which was read to him as each successive seal was opened? or was it a pictorial illustration of the events which the book contained, and which was presented before him as the seals were broken? or was it a scenic representation which passed before him, the different actors coming forth and performing their parts? Barnes decided in favor of calling them pictorial illustrations; for he thinks a merely written description would not answer to the language of the apostle setting forth what he saw, and a mere scenic representation could have no connection with the opening of the seals. But to the view held by Dr. Barnes there are two serious objections: (1) The book was said to contain only *writing* within, not pictorial illustrations; and (2) John saw the characters which made up the various scenes, not fixed and motionless upon canvass, but living and moving and engaged actively in the parts assigned them. The view which to us seems most consistent is that the book contained a record of events which were to transpire; and when the seals were broken, and the record was brought to light, the scenes were presented before John, not by the reading of the description, but by a representation of what was described in the book being made to pass before his mind in living characters, in the place where the reality was to transpire; namely, on the earth. [DAR1909 431.3](#)

The first symbol, a white horse, and the rider who bears a bow and to whom a crown is given, and who goes forth conquering and to conquer, is a fit emblem of the triumphs of the gospel in the first century of this dispensation. The whiteness of the horse denotes the purity of faith in that age; and the crown which was given to the rider, and his going forth conquering and to make still further conquests, the zeal and success with which the truth was promulgated by its earliest ministers. To this it is objected that the ministers of Christ and the progress of the gospel could not be properly represented by such warlike symbols. But we ask, By what symbols could the work of Christianity better be represented when it went forth as an aggressive principle against the huge systems of error with which it had at first to contend? The rider upon this horse went forth - where? His commission was unlimited. The gospel was to all the world. [DAR1909 432.1](#)

“[VERSE 3](#). And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to

him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” [DAR1909 433.1](#)

Perhaps the first noticeable feature in these symbols is the contrast in the color of the horses. This is doubtless designed to be significant. If the whiteness of the first horse denoted the purity of the gospel in the period which that symbol covers, the redness of the second horse would signify that in this period that original purity began to be corrupted. The mystery of iniquity already worked in Paul’s day; and the professed church of Christ, it would seem, was now so far corrupted by it as to require this change in the color of this symbol. Errors began to arise. Worldliness came in. The ecclesiastical power sought the alliance of the secular. Troubles and commotions were the result. The spirit of this period perhaps reached its climax as we come down to the days of Constantine, the first so-called Christian emperor, whose conversion to Christianity is dated by Mosheim in A.D. 323. - *Ecclesiastical Commentaries*. [DAR1909 433.2](#)

Of this period Dr. Rice remarks: “It represents a secular period, or union of church and state. Constantine aided the clergy, and put them under obligations to him. He legislated for the church, called the Council of Nicaea, and was most prominent in that Council, Constantine, not the gospel, had the glory of tearing down the heathen temples. The state had the glory instead of the church. Constantine made decrees against some errors, and was praised, and suffered to go on and introduce many other errors, and oppose some important truths. Controversies arose; and when a new emperor took the throne, there was a rush of the clergy to get him on the side of their peculiar tenets. Mosheim says of this period, ‘There was continual war and trouble.’” [DAR1909 433.3](#)

This state of things answers well to the declaration of the prophet that power was given to him that sat on the horse “to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” The Christianity of that time had mounted the throne, and bore the emblem of the civil power. [DAR1909 433.4](#)

“[VERSE 5](#). And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” [DAR1909 434.1](#)

How rapidly the work of corruption progresses! What a contrast in color between this symbol and the first one: A black horse - the very opposite of white! A period of great darkness and moral corruption in the church must be denoted by this symbol. By the events of the second seal the way was fully opened for that state of things to be brought about which is here presented. The time that intervened between the reign of Constantine and the establishment of the papacy in A.D. 538 may be justly noted as the time when the darkest errors and grossest superstitions sprang up in the church. Of a period immediately succeeding the days of Constantine, Mosheim says:- [DAR1909 434.2](#)

“Those vain fictions, which an attachment to the Platonic philosophy and to popular opinions had engaged the greatest part of the Christian doctors to adopt before the time of Constantine, were now confirmed, enlarged, and embellished in various ways. Hence arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints, and those absurd notions of a certain fire destined to purify separate souls, that now prevailed, and of which the public marks were everywhere to be seen. Hence also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relics, which in process of time almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion,

or at least eclipsed its luster, and corrupted its very essence in the most deplorable manner. An enormous train of superstitions was gradually substituted for true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution proceeded from a variety of causes. A ridiculous precipitation in receiving new opinions, a preposterous desire of imitating the pagan rites, and of blending them with the Christian worship, and that idle propensity which the generality of mankind have toward a gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of Christianity. Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken to Palestine and to the PICTURE tombs of the martyrs, as if there alone the sacred principles of virtue and the certain hope of salvation were to be acquired. The reins being once let loose to superstition, which knows no bounds, absurd notions and idle ceremonies multiplied almost every day. Quantities of dust and earth brought from Palestine, and other places remarkable for their supposed sanctity, were handed about as the most wonderful remedies against the violence of wicked spirits, and were sold and bought everywhere at enormous prices. The public processions and supplications by which the pagans endeavored to appease their gods, were now adopted into the Christian worship, and celebrated in many places with great pomp and magnificence. The virtues which had formerly been ascribed to the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Christian churches, to water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the same privileges that the former enjoyed under the darkness of paganism, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the gospel, or, rather, under that cloud of superstition which was obscuring its glory. It is true that, as yet, images were not very common, nor were there any statues at all. But it is at the same time as undoubtedly certain as it is extravagant and monstrous, that the worship of the martyrs was modeled, by degrees, according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ. [DAR1909 434.3](#)

“From these facts, which are but small specimens of the state of Christianity at this time, the discerning reader will easily perceive what detriment the church received from the peace and prosperity procured by Constantine, and from the imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the gospel. The brevity we have proposed to observe in this history prevents our entering into an ample detail of the dismal effects that arose from the progress and the baneful influence of superstition, which had now become universal.” [DAR1909 436.1](#)

Again he says: “A whole volume would be requisite to contain an enumeration of the various frauds which artful knaves practiced with success to delude the ignorant, when true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid superstition.” - Ecclesiastical History, 4th cent., part 2, chapt. 3. [DAR1909 436.2](#)

This extract from Mosheim contains a description of the period covered by the black horse of the third seal that answers accurately to the prophecy. It is seen by this how paganism was incorporated into Christianity, and how, during this period, the false system which resulted in the establishment of the papacy, rapidly rounded out its full outlines, and ripened into all its deplorable perfection of strength and stature. [DAR1909 437.1](#)

The Balances. - “The balances denoted that religion and civil power would be united in the person who would administer the executive power in the government, and that he would claim the judicial authority both in church and state. This was true among the Roman emperors from the days of Constantine until the reign of Justinian, when he gave the same judicial power to the bishop of Rome.” - *Miller's Lectures*, p. 181. [DAR1909 437.2](#)

The Wheat and Barley. - “The measures of wheat and barley for a penny denote that the members of the church would be eagerly engaged after worldly goods, and the love of money would be the prevailing spirit of the times; for they would dispose of anything for money.” - *Id.* [DAR1909 437.3](#)

The Oil and the Wine. - These “denote the graces of the Spirit, faith and love, and there was great danger of hurting these, under the influence of so much of a worldly spirit. And it is well attested by all historians that the prosperity of the church in this age produced the corruptions which finally terminated in the falling away, and the setting up of the anti-christian abominations.” - *Id.* [DAR1909 437.4](#)

It will be observed that the voice limiting the amount of wheat for a penny, and saying, “Hurt not the oil and the wine,” is not spoken by any one on earth, but comes from the midst of the four living creatures; signifying that, though the under shepherds, the professed ministers of Christ on earth, had no care for the flock, yet the Lord was not unmindful of them in this period of darkness. A voice comes from heaven. He takes care that the spirit of worldliness does not prevail to such a degree that Christianity should be entirely lost, or that the oil and the wine, the graces of genuine piety, should entirely perish from the earth. [DAR1909 437.5](#)

“[VERSE 7](#). And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto him over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” [DAR1909 438.1](#)

The color of this horse is remarkable. The colors of the white, red, and black horses, mentioned in the preceding verses, are natural; but a pale color is unnatural. The original word denotes the “pale of yellowish color” that is seen in blighted or sickly plants. A strange state of things in the professed church must be denoted by this symbol. The rider on this horse is named Death; and Hell (, the grave) follows with him. The mortality is so great during this period that it would seem as if “the pale nations of the dead” had come upon the earth, and were following in the wake of this desolating power. The period during which this seal applies can hardly be mistaken. It must refer to the time in which the papacy bore its unrebuked, unrestrained, and persecuting rule, commencing about A.D. 538, and extending to the time when the Reformers commenced their work of exposing the corruptions of the papal systems. [DAR1909 438.2](#)

“And power was given unto them” - *him*, says the margin; that is, the power personified by Death on the pale horse; namely, the papacy. By the fourth part of the earth is doubtless meant the territory over which this power had jurisdiction; while the words *sword, hunger, death* (that is, some infliction which causes death, as exposure, torture, etc.), and beasts of the earth, are figures denoting the means by which it has put to death its martyrs, fifty millions of whom, according to the lowest estimate, call for vengeance from beneath its bloody altar. [DAR1909 438.3](#)

“[VERSE 9](#). And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held: 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little

season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." [DAR1909 438.4](#)

The events set forth as transpiring under the fifth seal are the crying of the martyrs for vengeance, and the giving to them of white robes. The questions that at once suggest themselves for solution are, Does this seal cover a period of time? and if so, what period? Where is the altar under which these souls were seen? What are these souls, and what is their condition? What is meant by their cry for vengeance? What is meant by white robes being given to them? When do they rest for a little season? and what is signified by their brethren being killed as they were? To all these questions we believe a satisfactory answer can be returned. [DAR1909 439.1](#)

1. The Fifth Seal Covers a Period of Time. - It seems consistent that this seal, like all the others, should cover a period of time; and the date of its application cannot be mistaken, if the preceding seals have been rightly located. Following the period of the papal persecution, the time covered by this seal would commence when the Reformation began to undermine the antichristian papal fabric, and restrain the persecuting power of the Romish Church. [DAR1909 439.2](#)

2. The Altar. - This cannot denote any altar in heaven, as it is evidently the place where these victims had been slain, - the altar of sacrifice. On this point, Dr. A. Clarke says: "A symbolical vision was exhibited, in which he saw an altar. And under it the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God - martyred for their attachment to Christianity - are represented as being newly slain as victims to idolatry and superstition. *The altar is upon earth, not in heaven.*" A confirmation of this view is found in the fact that John is beholding scenes upon the earth. The souls are represented under the altar, just as victims slain upon it would pour out their blood beneath it, and fall by its side. [DAR1909 439.3](#)

3. The Souls under the Altar. - This representation is popularly regarded as a strong proof of the doctrine of the disembodied and conscious state of the dead. Here, it is claimed, are souls seen by John in a disembodied state; and they were conscious, and had knowledge of passing events; for they cried for vengeance on their persecutors. This view of the passages is inadmissible, for several reasons: (1) The popular view places these souls in heaven; but the altar of sacrifice on which they were slain, and beneath which they were seen, cannot be there. The only altar we read of in heaven is the altar of incense; but it would not be correct to represent victims just slain as under the altar of incense, as that altar was never devoted to such a use. (2) It would be repugnant to all our ideas of the heavenly state, to represent souls in heaven *shut up* under an altar. (3) Can we suppose that the idea of *vengeance* would reign so supreme in the minds of souls in heaven as to render them, despite the joy and glory of that ineffable state, dissatisfied and uneasy till vengeance was inflicted upon their enemies? Would they not rather rejoice that persecution raised its hand against them, and thus hastened them into the presence of their Redeemer, at whose right hand there is fulness of joy, and pleasures forevermore? But, further, the popular view which puts these souls in heaven, puts the wicked at the same time in the lake of fire, writhing in unutterable torment, and in *full view* of the heavenly host. This, it is claimed, is proved by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as recorded in [Luke 16](#). Now the souls brought to view under the fifth seal were those who had been slain under the preceding seal, scores of years, and most of them centuries, before. Beyond any question, their persecutors had all passed off the stage of action, and, according to the view under consideration, were suffering all the torments of hell right before their eyes. [DAR1909 439.4](#)

Yet, as if not satisfied with this, they cry to God as though he were delaying vengeance on their murderers. What greater vengeance could they want? Or, if their persecutors were still on the earth, they must know that they would, in a few years at most, join the vast multitude daily pouring through the gate of death into the world of woe. Their amiability is put in no better light even by this supposition. One thing, at least, is evident: The popular theory concerning the condition of the dead, righteous and wicked, cannot be correct; or the interpretation usually given to this passage is not correct; for they devour each other. [DAR1909 440.1](#)

But it is urged that these souls must be conscious; for they cry to God. This argument would be of weight, were there no such figure of speech as personification. But while there is, it will be proper, on certain conditions, to attribute life, action, and intelligence to inanimate objects. Thus the blood of Abel is said to have cried to God from the ground. [Genesis 4:9, 10](#). The stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answered it. [Habakkuk 2:11](#). The hire of the laborers kept back by fraud cried, and the cry entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. [James 5:4](#). So the souls mentioned in our text could cry, and not thereby be proved to be conscious. [DAR1909 441.1](#)

The incongruity of the popular view on this verse is so apparent that Albert Barnes makes the following concession: "We are not to suppose that this *literally* occurred, and that John actually saw the souls of the martyrs beneath the altar, for the whole representation is symbolical: nor are we to suppose that the injured and the wronged in heaven actually pray for vengeance on those who wronged them, or that the redeemed in heaven will continue to pray with reference to things on earth; but it may be fairly inferred from this that there will be a *as real* a remembrance of the wrongs of the persecuted, the injured, and the oppressed, *as if* such a prayer were offered there; and that the oppressor has as much to dread from the divine vengeance *as if* those whom he has injured should cry in heaven to the God who hears prayer, and who takes vengeance." - *Notes on Revelation 6*. [DAR1909 441.2](#)

On such passages as this, the reader is misled by the popular definition of the word *soul*. From that definition, he is led to suppose that this text speaks of an immaterial, invisible, immortal essence in man, which soars into its coveted freedom on the death of its hindrance and clog, the mortal body. No instance of the occurrence of the word in the original Hebrew or Greek will sustain such a definition. It oftenest means *life*, and is not infrequently rendered *person*. It applies to the dead as well as to the living, as may be seen by reference to [Genesis 2:7](#), where the word living need not have been expressed were life an inseparable attribute of the soul; and to [Numbers 19:13](#), where the Hebrew Concordance reads "dead soul." Moreover, these souls pray that their *blood* may be avenged, - an article which the immaterial soul, as popularly understood, is not supposed to possess. The word *souls* may be regarded as here meaning simply the martyrs, those who had been slain, the words *souls of them* being a periphrastic for the whole person. They were represented to John as having been slain upon the altar of papal sacrifice, on this earth, and lying dead beneath it. They certainly were not alive when John saw them under the fifth seal; for he again brings to view the same company, in almost the same language, and assures us that the first time they live after their martyrdom, is at the resurrection of the just. [Revelation 20:4-6](#). Lying there, victims of papal bloodthirstiness and oppression, they cried to God for vengeance in the same manner that Abel's blood cried to him from the ground. [Genesis 4:10](#). [DAR1909 441.3](#)

4. The White Robes. - These were given as a partial answer to their cry, "How long, O Lord, ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?" How was it? - They had gone down to

the grave in the most ignominious manner. Their lives had been misrepresented, their reputations tarnished, their names defamed, their motives maligned, and their graves covered with shame and reproach, as containing the dishonored dust of the most vile and despicable of characters. Thus the Church of Rome, which then molded the sentiment of the principal nations of the earth, spared no pains to make her victims an abhorring unto all flesh. [DAR1909 442.1](#)

But the Reformation began its work. It began to be seen that the church was the corrupt and disreputable party, and those against whom it vented its rage were the good, the pure, and the true. The work went on among the most enlightened nations, the reputation of the church going down, and that of the martyrs coming up, until the corruptions of the papal abominations were fully exposed, and that huge system of iniquity stood forth before the world in all its naked deformity, while the martyrs were vindicated from all the aspersions under which that antichristian church had sought to bury them. Then it was seen that they had suffered, not for being vile and criminal, but “for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” Then their praises were sung, their virtues admired, their fortitude applauded, their names honored, and their memories cherished. White robes were thus given unto every one of them. [DAR1909 442.2](#)

5. The Little Season. - The cruel work of Romanism did not altogether cease, even after the work of the Reformation had become wide-spread and well established. Not a few terrible outbursts of Romish hate and persecution were yet to be felt by the church. Multitudes more were to be punished as heretics, and to join the great army of martyrs. The full vindication of their cause was to be delayed a little season. And during this time, Rome added hundreds of thousands to the vast throng of whose blood she had already become guilty. (See Buck’s Theological Dictionary, art. Persecution.) But the spirit of persecution was finally restrained; the cause of the martyrs was vindicated; and the “little season” of the fifth seal came to a close. [DAR1909 443.1](#)

“[VERSE 12](#). And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” [DAR1909 443.2](#)

Such are the solemn and sublime scenes that transpire under the sixth seal. And a thought well calculated to awaken in every heart an intense interest in divine things, is the consideration that we are now living amid the momentous events of this seal, as will presently be proved. [DAR1909 443.3](#)

Between the fifth and sixth seals there seems to be a sudden and entire change in the language, from the highly figurative to the strictly literal. Whatever may be the cause of this change, the change itself cannot well be denied. By no principle of interpretation can the language of the preceding seals be made to be literal, nor can the language of this any more easily be made to be figurative. We must therefore accept the change, even though we should be unable to explain it. There is a great fact, however, to which we would here

call attention. It was in the period covered by this seal, that the prophetic portions of God's word were to be unsealed, and many run to and fro, or "give their sedulous attention to the understanding of these things," and thereby knowledge on this part of god's word was to be greatly increased. And we suggest that it may be for this reason that the change in the language here occurs, and that the events of this seal, transpiring at a time when these things were to be fully understood, are couched in no figures, but are laid before us in plain and unmistakable language. [DAR1909 443.4](#)

The Great Earthquake. - The first event under this seal, perhaps the one which marks its opening, is a great earthquake. As the most probable fulfilment of this prediction, we refer to the great earthquake of Nov. 1, 1755, known as the earthquake of Lisbon. Of this earthquake, Sears, in his Wonders of the World, pp. 50, 58, 381, says:- [DAR1909 444.1](#)

"The great earthquake of Nov. 1, 1755, extended over a tract of at least 4,000,000 square miles. Its effects were even extended to the waters in many places, where the shocks were not perceptible. It pervaded the greater portion of Europe, Africa, and America; but its extreme violence was exercised on the southwestern part of the former. In Africa, this earthquake was felt almost as severely as it had been in Europe. A great part of Algiers was destroyed. Many houses were thrown down at Fez and Mequinez, and multitudes were buried beneath the ruins. Similar effects were realized at Morocco. Its effects were likewise left at Tangier, at Tetuan, at Funchal in the Island of Madeira. It is probable that all Africa was shaken. At the north, it extended to Norway and Sweden. Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain, and Ireland were all more or less agitated by the same great commotion of the elements. Lisbon (Portugal), previous to the earthquake in 1755, contained 150,000 inhabitants. Mr. Barretti says that 90,000 persons 'were lost on that fatal day.'" [DAR1909 444.2](#)

On page 200 of the same work, we again read: "The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying, '*Misericordia; the world's at an end!*' Mothers forgot their children, and ran about loaded with crucifixes. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin." [DAR1909 445.1](#)

The Encyclopedia Americana states that this earthquake extended also to Greenland, and of its effects upon the city of Lisbon further says: "The city then contained about 150,000 inhabitants. The shock was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holy day, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped." [DAR1909 445.2](#)

Sir Charles Lyell gives the following graphic description of this remarkable phenomenon:- [DAR1909 445.3](#)

"In no part of the volcanic region of southern Europe has so tremendous an earthquake occurred in modern times as that which began on the 1st of November, 1755, at Lisbon. A sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterward a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes, sixty thousand persons perished. The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet

above its ordinary level. The mountains of Arrabida, Estrella, Julio, Marvan, and Cintra, being some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were from their very foundations; and some of them PICTURE opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the adjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains, which are supposed to have been electric; they are also said to have smoked; but vast clouds of dust may have given rise to this appearance. [DAR1909 445.4](#)

“The most extraordinary circumstance which occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe, was the subsidence of the new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, as a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sunk down with all the people on it and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface. A great number of boats and small vessels anchored near it, all full of people, were swallowed up as in a whirlpool. No fragments of these wrecks ever rose again to the surface, and the water in the place where the quay had stood is stated, in many accounts, to be unfathomable; but Whitehurst says he ascertained it to be one hundred fathoms. [DAR1909 447.1](#)

“In this case we must either suppose that a certain tract sunk down into a subterranean hollow, which would cause a ‘fault’ in the strata to the depth of six hundred feet, or we may infer, as some have done, from the entire disappearance of the substances engulfed, that a chasm opened and closed again. Yet in adopting this latter hypothesis, we must suppose that the upper part of the chasm, to the depth of one hundred fathoms, remained open after the shock. According to the observations made at Lisbon in 1837 by Mr. Sharpe, the destroying effects of this earthquake were confined to the tertiary strata, and were most violent on the blue clay, on which the lower part of the city is constructed. Not a building, he says, on the secondary limestone or the basalt was injured. [DAR1909 447.2](#)

“The great area over which this Lisbon earthquake extended is very remarkable. The movement was most violent in Spain, Portugal, and the north of Africa; but nearly the whole of Europe, and even the West Indies, felt the shock on the same day. A seaport called St. Ubes, about twenty miles south of Lisbon, was engulfed. At Algiers and Fez in Africa, the agitation of the earth was equally violent, and at the distance of eight leagues from Morocco, a village, with the inhabitants to the number of about eight or ten thousand persons, together with all their cattle, was swallowed up. Soon after, the earth closed again over them. [DAR1909 447.3](#)

“The shock was felt at sea, on the deck of a ship to the west of Lisbon, and produced very much the same sensation as on dry land. Off St. Lucas, the captain of the ship ‘Nancy’ felt his vessel shaken so violently that he thought she had struck the ground, but, on heaving the lead, found a great depth of water. Captain Clark, from Denia, in latitude 36° 24’ N., between nine and ten in the morning, had his ship shaken and strained as if she had struck upon a rock. Another ship, forty leagues west of St. Vincent, experienced so violent a concussion that the men were thrown a foot and a half perpendicularly up from the deck. In Antigua and Barbados, as also in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Corsica, Switzerland, and Italy, tremors and slight oscillations of the ground were felt. [DAR1909 448.1](#)

“The agitation of lakes, rivers, and springs in Great Britain was remarkable. At Loch Lomond, in Scotland, for example, the water, without the least apparent cause, rose against its banks, and then subsided below its usual level. The greatest perpendicular height of this swell was two feet four inches. It is said that the movement of this

earthquake was undulatory, and that it traveled at the rate of twenty miles a minute. A great wave swept over the coast of Spain, and is said to have been sixty feet high at Cadiz. At Tangier, in Africa, it rose and fell eighteen times on the coast; at Funchal, in Madeira, it rose full fifteen feet perpendicular above high-water mark, although the tide, which ebbs and flows there seven feet, was then at half ebb. Besides entering the city and committing great havoc, it overflowed other seaports in the island. At Kinsale, in Ireland, a body of water rushed into the harbor, whirled round several vessels, and poured into the market-place. [DAR1909 448.2](#)

“It was before stated that the sea first retired at Lisbon; and this retreat of the ocean from the shore at the commencement of an earthquake, and its subsequent return in a violent wave, is a common occurrence. In order to account for the phenomenon, Mitchell imagines a subsidence at the bottom of the sea from the giving way of the roof of some cavity, in consequence of a vacuum produced by the condensation of steam. Such condensation, he observes, might be the first effect of the introduction of a large body of water into fissures and cavities already filled with steam, before there had been sufficient time for the heat of the incandescent lava to turn so large a supply of water into steam, which, being soon accomplished, causes a greater explosion.” - *Library of Choice Literature, Vol. VII, pp. 162,163.* [DAR1909 448.3](#)

If the reader will look on his atlas at the countries above mentioned, he will see how large a portion of the earth's surface was agitated by this awful convulsion. Other earthquakes may have been as severe in particular localities, but no other one of which we have any record, combining so great an extent with such a degree of severity, has ever been felt on this earth. It certainly supplies all the conditions necessary to constitute it a fitting event to mark the opening of the seal. [DAR1909 449.1](#)

The Darkening of the Sun. - Following the earthquake, it is announced that “the sun became black as sackcloth of hair.” This portion of the prediction has also been fulfilled. Into a detailed account of the wonderful darkening of the sun, May 19, 1780, we need not here enter. Most persons of general reading, it is presumed, have seen some account of it. The following detached declarations from different authorities will give an idea of its nature:- [DAR1909 449.2](#)

“The dark day of Northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read of with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain.” - *Herschel.* [DAR1909 449.3](#)

“In the month of May, 1780, there was a terrific dark day in New England, when ‘all faces seemed to gather blackness,’ and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived, ‘men's hearts failing them for fear’ that the Judgment-day was at hand; and the neighbors all flocked around the holy man,” who “spent the gloomy hours in earnest prayer for the distressed multitude.” - *Tract No. 379, American Tract Society; Life of Edward Lee.* [DAR1909 449.4](#)

“Candles were lighted in many houses. Birds were silent and disappeared. Fowls retired to roost. It was the general opinion that the day of Judgment was at hand.” - *President Dwight, in Connecticut Historical Collections.* [DAR1909 450.1](#)

“The darkness was such as to occasion farmers to leave their work in the field, and retire to their dwellings. Lights became necessary to the transaction of business within

doors. The darkness continued through the day.” - *Gage’s History of Rowley, Mass.* [DAR1909 450.2](#)

“The cocks crew as at daybreak, and everything bore the appearance of gloom of night. The alarm produced by this unusual aspect of the heavens was very great.” - *Portsmouth Journal, May 20, 1843.* [DAR1909 450.3](#)

“It was midnight darkness at noonday.... Thousands of people who could not account for it from natural causes, were greatly terrified; and indeed, it cast a universal gloom on the earth. The frogs and night-hawks began their notes.” - *Dr. Adams.* [DAR1909 450.4](#)

“Similar days have occasionally been known, though inferior in the degree or extent of their darkness. The causes of these phenomena are unknown. They certainly were not the result of eclipses.” - *Sear’s Guide to Knowledge.* [DAR1909 450.5](#)

“Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind in nature’s diversified range of events, during the last century, stands the *dark day* of May 19th, 1780, - a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New England, - which brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds, as well as dismay to the brute creation, the fowls fleeing, bewildered, to their roosts, and the birds to their nests, and the cattle returning to their stalls. Indeed, thousands of the good people of that day became fully convinced that the end of all things terrestrial had come.... The extent of this darkness was also very remarkable. It was observed at the most easterly regions of New England; westward to the farthest parts of Connecticut, and at Albany; to the southward, it was observed all along the seacoast; and to the north, as far as the American settlements extended. It probably far exceeded these boundaries, but the exact limits were never positively known.” - *Our First Century, by R. M. Devens, pp. 89, 90.* [DAR1909 450.6](#)

The Moon Became as Blood. - The darkness of the following night, May 19, 1780, was as unnatural as that of the day had been. [DAR1909 451.2](#)

“The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as has ever been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light. I could not help conceiving at the time that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable darkness, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes, was equally invisible with the blackest velvet.” - *Mr. Tenney, of Exeter, N.H.* [DAR1909 451.3](#)

Dr. Adams, already quoted, wrote concerning the night following the dark day:- [DAR1909 451.4](#)

“Almost every one who happened to be out in the evening got lost in going home. The darkness was as uncommon in PICTURE the night as it was in the day, as the moon had full the day before.” [DAR1909 451.5](#)

This statement respecting the phase of the moon proves the impossibility of an eclipse of the sun at that time. [DAR1909 453.1](#)

And whenever on this memorable night the moon did appear, as at certain times it did, it had, according to this prophecy, the appearance of blood. [DAR1909 453.2](#)

And the Stars of Heaven Fell. - The voice of history still is, *Fulfilled!* Being a much later event than the darkening of the sun, there are multitudes in whose memories it is as fresh as if it were but yesterday. We refer to the great meteoric shower of Nov. 13, 1833. On this point a few extracts will suffice. [DAR1909 453.3](#)

“At the cry, ‘Look out of the window,’ I sprang from a deep sleep, and with wonder saw the east lighted up with the dawn and meteors.... I called to my wife to behold; and while robing, she exclaimed, ‘See how the stars fall!’ I replied, ‘That is the wonder;’ and we felt in our hearts that it was a sign of the last days. For truly ‘the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.’ [Revelation 6:13](#). This language of the prophet has always been received as metaphorical. Yesterday it was literally fulfilled. The ancients understood by *aster* in Greek, and *stella* in Latin, the smaller lights of heaven. The refinement of modern astronomy has made distinctions between stars of heaven and meteors of heaven. Therefore the idea of the prophet, as it is expressed in the original Greek, was literally fulfilled in the phenomenon of yesterday, so as no man before yesterday had conceived to be possible that it should be fulfilled. The immense size and distance of the planets and fixed stars forbid the idea of their falling *unto the earth*. Larger bodies cannot fall in myriads unto a smaller body; and most of the planets and all the fixed stars are many times larger than our earth; but these fell toward the earth. And how did they fall? Neither myself nor one of the family heard any report; and were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt, to illustrate the appearance of the heavens, as that which St. John uses in the prophecy before quoted: ‘The stars of heaven fell unto the earth.’ They were not sheets, or flakes, or drops of fire; but they were what the world understands by falling stars; and one speaking to his fellow, in the midst of the scene, would say, ‘See how the stars fall!’ And he who heard would not stop to correct the astronomy of the speaker, any more than he would reply, ‘The sun does not move,’ to one who should tell him, ‘The sun is rising.’ The stars fell ‘even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.’ Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from *one*. Those which appeared in the east fell toward the east; those which appeared in the north fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west fell toward the west; and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park), fell toward the south. And they fell not as *ripe* fruit falls; far from it; but they flew, they were *cast*, like the unripe, which at first refuses to leave the branch, and when, under a violent pressure, it does break its hold, it flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force, but each one falls on its own side of the tree.” - *New York Journal of Commerce*, Nov. 14, 1833. [DAR1909 453.4](#)

“Extensive and magnificent showers of shooting stars have been known to occur at various places in modern times; but the most universal and wonderful which has ever been recorded, is that of the 13th of November, 1833, *the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion*. No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another.... During the three hours of its continuance, the day of judgment was believed to be only waiting for sunrise.” - *Our First Century*, p. 329. [DAR1909 454.1](#)

“Arago computes that not less than *two hundred and forty thousand meteors were at the same time visible above the horizon of Boston*.” And of the display at Niagara it is said that “no spectacle so terribly grand and sublime was ever before beheld by man as that

of the firmament descending in fiery torrents over the dark and roaring cataract.” - *Id.*, *ib.* [DAR1909 454.2](#)

And the Heaven Departed as Scroll. - In this event our minds are turned to the future. From looking at the past, and beholding the word of God fulfilled, we are now called to look at events in the future, which are no less sure to come. Here is our position, unmistakably defined. We stand between the 13th and 14th verses of this chapter. We wait for the heavens to depart as a scroll when it is rolled together. And these are times of unparalleled solemnity and importance; for we know not how near we may be to the fulfilment of these things. [DAR1909 455.1](#)

This departing of the heavens is included in what the evangelists call, in the same series of events, the shaking of the powers of the heavens. Other scriptures give us further particulars concerning this prediction. From [Hebrews 12:25-27](#); [Joel 3:16](#); [Jeremiah 25:30-33](#); [Revelation 16:17](#), we learn that it is the voice of God, as he speaks in terrible majesty from his throne in heaven, that causes this fearful commotion in earth and sky. Once the Lord spoke, when with an audible voice he declared to his creatures the precepts of his eternal law, and the earth shook. He is to speak again, and not only the earth will shake, but the heavens also. Then will the earth “reel to and fro like a drunkard;” it will be “dissolved” and “utterly broken down” ([Isaiah 24](#)); mountains will move from their firm bases; islands will suddenly change their location in the midst of the sea; from the level plain will arise the precipitous mountain; rocks will thrust up their ragged forms from earth’s broken surface; and while the voice of God is reverberating through the earth, the direst confusion will reign over the face of nature. [DAR1909 455.2](#)

To show that this is no mere conception of the imagination, the reader is requested to mark the exact phraseology which some of the prophets have used in reference to this time. Isaiah ([24:19, 20](#)) says: “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. [DAR1909 455.3](#)

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.” Jeremiah ([4:23-27](#)) in thrilling language describes the scene as follows: “I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills move lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.... For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate.” (See also the scriptures referred to above.) [DAR1909 456.1](#)

Then will the world’s dream of carnal security be effectually broken. Kings, who, intoxicated with their own earthly authority, have never dreamed of a higher power than themselves, now realize that there is One who reigns King of kings; and the great men behold the vanity of all earthly pomp, for there is a greatness above that of earth; and the rich men throw their silver and gold to the moles and bats, for it cannot save them in that day; and the chief captains forget their little brief authority, and the mighty men their might; and every bondman who is in the still worse bondage of sin, and every freeman, - all classes of the wicked, from the highest to the lowest, - join in the general wail of consternation and despair. They who never prayed to Him whose arm could bring salvation, now raise an agonizing prayer to rocks and mountains to bury them forever from the sight of Him whose presence brings to them destruction. Fain would they now avoid reaping what they have sown by a life of lust and sin. Fain would they now shun the fearful treasure of wrath which they have been heaping up for themselves against this day. Fain would they bury themselves and their catalogue of crimes in everlasting darkness. And so

they fly to the rocks, caves, caverns, and fissures, which the broken surface of the earth now presents before them. But it is too late. They cannot conceal their guilt, nor escape the long-delayed vengeance. [DAR1909 456.2](#)

“It will be in vain to call, Rocks and mountains on us fall; For His hand will find out all, in that day.” [DAR1909 457.1](#)

The day which they thought never would come, has at last taken them as in a snare; and the involuntary language of their anguished hearts is, “The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” Before it is called out by the fearful scenes of the time, we pray you, reader, give your most serious and candid attention to this subject. [DAR1909 457.2](#)