

THE SECOND SEAL — REV. 6:3, 4*(See Chart No. 15—Second Horseman)*

The rider on the red horse pictures the tragic corruption of original purity which took place in the Church after the first Apostles were laid to rest. Red is the universal symbol of danger, war and bloodshed. In Bible times it stood for sin and corruption (Isa. 1:18).

In many parts of the Christian world, recent converts from heathenism grasped the helm of leadership and instead of resisting corrupting influences, turned the polluted streams of paganism into the pure fountain of Christian truth. Like drops of red ink in a vessel of clean water, these pagan elements soon stained the whole fabric of the Church's life and worship. **Belief in purgatory, the veneration of saints, prayers for the dead, the use of images in worship, infant baptism, the use of charms, rosary beads and holy water,** were just a few of the dark, red pagan drops.

"**There was given unto him a great sword.**" Church leaders openly courted the favour of the civil power. After the so-called "conversion" of Constantine in A.D. 313, it became legal to be a Christian. Unholy alliances were formed between Church and State. The Church had now grasped the "great sword" of civil power, and was prepared to use political means to achieve spiritual ends. From this point onwards persecution of dissenters or "heretics" became a matter of settled Church policy.

"**Power to take peace from the earth.**" Inevitably, this was a period of conflict, as well as compromise and corruption. The Church was torn by rivalries, jealousies, and bitter controversies which lasted, in some cases, for generations.

The period of this seal extends from the close of the first century to the period of Constantine.

THE THIRD SEAL — REV. 6:5, 6*(See Chart No. 16—Third Horseman)*

The rider on the black horse symbolises the increasing corruption of the Church, which progressed rapidly from the time of Constantine to the beginning of Papal supremacy, in A.D. 538. During this period the true Gospel was almost completely eclipsed by worldliness and superstition. So radically changed did the Church become, so opposite in character to the Church of the New Testament, that God was now obliged to represent it by a black horse—the very opposite to white!

"**A pair of balances in his hand.**" The balances—symbol of worldly business and commercialism—indicate that by this time the fallen Church had abandoned its God-appointed task of world evangelisation. Like the man with the muck-rake in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", who "could look no way but downward", the Church had become preoccupied with the things of this world. Bishops had begun to compete with worldlings in buying and selling and, by its vast accumulation of houses and lands, the Church became the wealthiest institution in Europe!

So completely did the apostate Church lose sight of the original Gospel that it even attempted to sell the bread of life! By such perversions as purgatory, the mass, the indulgence and the confessional, God's gift of salvation was offered in exchange for money. Balances are also the symbol of judgment, and may here picture the Church's attempt to climb into the judgment seat, to rule the consciences, and to decide the destinies of men.

"**A measure of wheat for a penny.**" Here is food being doled out at famine prices. This "measure" (choenix) held less than a quart—a meagre daily ration for a soldier. A "penny" (denarius) represented a full day's wages for a labourer.

"**Three measures of barley for a penny.**" In normal times, a penny would buy twenty-four measures of barley, but here only three—the daily ration allotted to a slave!