

These were days of widespread spiritual darkness and famine, when a cheap substitute for the bread of life was being offered to the people, yet the darkness was relieved by one bright ray of hope.

"See that thou hurt not the oil and the wine". Here is evidence that even in the days of darkest apostasy, the rich bounties of heaven would still flow freely to the earth, and the light of true religion would never be completely extinguished. In spite of the very worst that Satan could do, he could not obstruct or pervert the free and unceasing ministry of the Holy Spirit—bringing enlightenment, refreshment and comfort—here symbolised by "the oil and the wine". This is a clear indication also, that even in these days of deepest spiritual famine, God nourished and preserved a remnant of faithful witnesses, who resisted the Great Apostasy.

THE FOURTH SEAL — REV. 6 : 7, 8

(See Chart No. 16—*Fourth Horseman*)

The rider on the pale horse is the symbol of apostasy in full flower, when the State-church of the Middle Ages—the professed Church of Jesus Christ—became an instrument of ruthless tyranny and persecution. The word "Hell" here is from the Greek "Hades", and means the "power of the grave". Here is the complete reversal of God's original purpose for His Church, and at first sight, a complete triumph for Satan. The Church which Jesus founded as the ambassador of life and peace has now become a pitiless engine of destruction and death—a hideous and unrecognisable caricature of the Church of the New Testament!

Yet this has always been the inevitable harvest of departure from the pure worship of God. From the day that Cain killed Abel, the disobedient and perverse have always sought to justify their rebellious ways by silencing those who protested, and clung to the worship of God in its original simplicity. The fourth horseman is a graphic and accurate symbol of the tremendous mortality which occurred during the period of Papal supremacy. For a thousand years the soil of Europe was drenched with the blood of an estimated 50 million martyrs. The era of the pale horse was the era of the "Inquisition", and the world still shudders at its memory. The historian Wylie says of this dark era: "It was the noonday of the Papacy; but the noonday of the Papacy was the midnight of the world!"

This seal extends from the beginning of Papal supremacy to the opening of the Protestant Reformation.

THE FIFTH SEAL — REV. 6 : 9-11

(See Chart No. 17—*The Souls Under the Altar*)

The opening of the fifth seal reveals the victims of the fourth horseman—"Protestants" before the Reformation, martyred millions lying at the foot of a bloodstained altar—pleading with God for retribution.

"The Souls under the Altar". "Souls" is used here in the common Biblical sense of "persons" or "people" and, though slain, they are represented as crying to God by the same metaphor—personification—which is used in Gen. 4:10, where the voice of Abel's blood is represented as "crying to God from the ground".

"The altar". The "altar" in this case is a fitting symbol of the lands of Western Europe, which for centuries had been crimsoned with martyr blood.

"How long, O Lord?" As a fact of history, the cry, "How long, O Lord?", was also raised by the Protestant Reformation, when brave men lifted their voices against Papal tyranny, called for a cessation of persecution, and insisted that the martyrs be recognised as the champions of truth and soul-liberty—men and women who were nearer to God's ideal than were their cruel executioners.