SIXTH SEAL.

12. “And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and a great  
shaking 1 followed; and the sun became black as sack-cloth of  
hair, and the whole (full) 2 moon became as blood; and the stars  
of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when shaken by a great wind. And the heaven  
departed as a scroll that is being rolled up; and every mountain  
and island were moved out of their places.”  
  
 Are the signs in the heaven to be taken literally or  
figuratively?  
 Most regard them as figurative.  
 But we assume as the true principle that each statement  
is to be taken literally, if it be possible. Is there  
any absurdity in so explaining the phenomena foretold?  
There is not, it is granted, in relation to the effects on  
the sun and moon: but how can the stars fall to  
earth?  
 I cannot tell. Yet sure I am that God designed  
these signs to be taken literally. For difficulties do not  
lie on the literal side only. Greater besiege the figurative interpretation.  
 The Saviour is crucified: with what results?  
 Was the *sun literally stricken with darkness?* Yes.  
Did the *earth literally quake?* It did, and that as the result  
of the sin of man in putting the Son of God to  
death. How clear, then, that the darkening of the sun  
and the tremulousness of the earth in this seal are  
literal also!  
 The earthquake at the crucifixion was not nearly so  
great. It only rent rocks: it did not hurl islands from  
their seats. Nor answerably were the effects on men  
so great. They did not *flee from* their homes, and hide

1 This is more than an earthquake: it is the shaking of heaven  
as well as earth. The word is applied to a tempest at sea: Matt.  
viii. 24.  
2 ὅλη. So Tregelles.