6 THE APOCALYPSE [ou. i. 4  
  
5. and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the First-born of  
the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.”  
  
At this point begins a special message to a@ certain  
class of God’s servants, then recognized on earth during  
the dispensation of mercy, under which the Revelation  
was given. But we soon learn that the distinction of  
the Church as God’s sole witness is about to cease, owing  
to its unfaithfulness, when tried by God’s just demands  
upon those so privileged. Hence the Apocalypse does  
not anywhere give the distinctive glory of the Church, as  
the Epistles of Paul do. The glory of the New Jerusalem  
is one enjoyed in common by all the servants of God. Nor  
was it fitting, that the peculiar glory as a body, of that  
which fails inits collective capacity, should be presented  
in this book.  
We are apt to speak of the “ Church of England,”  
“of Greece,’ ‘cof Rome.” The Scripture, however,  
uses a different expression. It speaks of “the seven  
churches in Asia.” It does not suppose the whole country  
to constitute one Church. But it recognizes churches  
subsisting as assemblies of the saints, in the midst of the  
ungodly world around. Each church was an assembly  
independent of the other, having its own angel, and  
elders, and deacons, and looking wp to no higher cor-  
poration than itself.  
But why were the churches of Asia addressed ? Pro-  
bably those of Judea were broken up by the destruction  
which had now (a.pD. 95 or 96) fallen on Judea and  
Jerusalem.  
But why were only seven churches in Asia addressed ?  
There were other churches doubtless then in being, as  
those of Hierapolis, Colosse, and Tralles. The reason  
is in keeping with the book. In it numbers are signi-  
ticant. Sevenisthe number of dispensational fullness, or  
perfection as instituted by God. Three represents the  
  
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