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 in its collective capacity, should be presented  
in this book.

We are apt to speak of the “Church of England,”  
“of Greece,” “of 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 up to no higher corporation than itself*.

But why were the churches *of Asia* addressed? Probably those of Judæa were broken up by the destruction which had now (A.D. 95 or 96) fallen on Judæa and Jerusalem.

But why were only *seven* churches in Asia addressed? There were other churches doubtless then in being, as those of Hierapolis, Colossæe, and Tralles. The reason is in keeping with the book. In it numbers are significant. *Seven* is the number of *dispensational fullness*, or *perfection as instituted by God*. *Three* represents the