not be overlooked: but at the same time  
we must be careful not to imagine that we  
have here the institution of the   
*ecclesiastical order* so named. The distinctness  
of the two is stated by Chrysostom plainly,  
whose opinion is that these are not to be  
confounded with any ecclesiastical order,  
but were merely appointed for the purpose  
then in hand. So also Œcumenius. But  
that the subsequent office of deacon was  
founded upon this appointment, is very  
probable. The only one of these seven  
who appears in the subsequent history (ch.  
xxi. 8) is called “*Philip the Evangelist*,”  
probably from the success granted him as  
recorded in ch. viii. 12. In these early  
days titles sprung out of realities, and  
were not yet mere hierarchical   
classifications.   
  
**6.] they had**, viz. the Apostles.  
Their office of giving themselves to *prayer*  
is here specially exercised.—The *laying on  
of hands*, the earliest mention of which is  
connected with *blessing only* (Gen. xlviii.  
14), was prescribed to Moses as the form  
of conferring office on Joshua, Num. xxvii.  
18, and from that time was used on such  
occasions by the Jews. From its adoption  
by the Apostles, it has ever been the  
practice of the Christian church in   
*ordaining*, or *setting apart* her ministers. It was  
also used by the Apostles on those who,  
having been baptized, were to be fully   
endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit:  
see ch. viii. 17; xix. 6, and Heb. vi. 2.

**7.] And**, i.e. on this measure being  
completed; as would be the case, seeing  
that these seven were not only servants of  
tables, but men full of the Holy Ghost and  
of wisdom: and we soon hear of the part.  
which Stephen bore in the work.

**a great multitude of the priests**] The number  
of priests who returned from Babylon, Ezra  
ii. 36–39, was 4289; and the number would.  
probably have much increased since then.  
No evasion of the historian’s assertion is to  
be attempted, as has been done by some  
Commentators.—At this time was probably  
the *culminating point of popularity of the  
church at Jerusalem*. As yet, all seemed  
going on prosperously for the conversion  
of Israel. ‘The multitude honoured the  
Apostles; the advice of Gamaliel had  
moderated the opposition of the   
Sanhedrim: the priests were gradually being  
won over. But God’s designs were far  
different. At this period another great  
element in the testimony of the church is  
brought out, in the person of Stephen,—  
its *protest against Pharisaism*. This  
arrays against it that powerful and zealous  
sect, and henceforward it finds neither  
favour nor tolerance with either of the  
parties among the Jews, but increasing  
and bitter enmity from them both,

**8–CH. VII. 60.]** THE ACCUSATION,  
DEFENCE, AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

**8.]** This is the first instance of any,  
*not an Apostle*, working signs and wonders.  
The power was perhaps conferred by the  
laying on of the Apostles’ hands; though,  
that having been for a special purpose  
merely, and the working miracles being  
a fulfilment of the promise, Mark xvi. 17,  
18, to *believers*, I should rather refer the  
power to the *eminence of Stephen’s faith*.  
  
**full of grace**, i. e, **divine grace** (not  
‘favour with the people’): the effects of  
which, the miracles were called *gifts* *of  
Grace* (*charismata*, from *charis*, grace).

**9.]** The word **Libertines** is rightly  
explained by Chrysostom to mean, the  
*freedmen* of the Romans. Philo speaks of  
a large district of Rome beyond the Tiber  
as inhabited by Jews, who were mostly  
freedmen that had originally been brought  
in captivity to Italy. Tacitus relates under  
A.D. 19, that a decree of the senate passed,  
to banish to Sardinia four thousand   
libertines or freedmen, who were inf  
Jewish and Egyptian superstitions, aud  
the rest were ordered either to abjure their  
religion or to leave Italy. In this   
Josphus agrees, relating a story as one of is  
causes, in which Ida, a freedwoman, was