3—9, THE ACTS. 687   
   
 ® whom they set before the apostles: and \* when they had ken.i.2s.   
   
 prayed, 'they laid their hands on them. 7 And ™ the word !@:y74   
 of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multi- , iT:   
 plied in Jerusalem greatly ; and a great f company » of the m=   
 priests were obedient to the faith. xix.   
 n John xii.   
 8 And Stephen, full of 8 faith and power, did great   
 wonders and miracles among the people. 9h Then there   
   
 arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the   
 synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alex-   
   
 f render, multitude. 8 read, grace. b render, But.   
   
 not be overlooked: but at the same time the culminating point of popularity of the   
 we must be careful not to imagine that we chureh at Jerusalem. As yet, all seemed   
 have here the institution of the ecclesi- going on prosperonsly for the conversion   
 astical order so named. The distinctness of Israel. ‘The multitude honoured the   
 of the two is stated by Chrysostom plainly, Apostles; the advice of Gamaliel had   
 whose opinion is that these are not to be moderated the opposition of the Sanhe-   
 confounded with any ecclesiastical order, drim: the priests were gradually being   
 but were merely appointed for the purpose won over. But God’s designs were far   
 thenin hand. So also cumenins. But different. At this period another great   
 that the subsequent office of deacon was element in the testimony of the church is   
 founded upon this appointment, is very brought out, in the person of Stephen,—   
 probable. The only one of these seven its protest against Pharisaism. This   
 who appears in the subsequent history (ch. arrays against it that powerful and zealous   
 xxi. 8) is called “ Philip the Evangelist,” sect, and henecforward it finds neither   
 probably from the success granted him as favour nor tolerance with either of the   
 recorded in ch. viii. 12. In these early parties among the Jews, but increasing   
 days titles sprung out of realities, and and ‘bitter enmity from them both,   
 were not yet mere hierarchical classifica- 8—Cn. VII. 60.) Tur accusation,   
 tions. 6.] they had, viz. the Apostles. DEFENCE, AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.   
 Their office of themselves to prayer 8.] This is the first of any,   
 is here specially exercised.—The laying on not an Apostle, working signs wonders.   
 of hands, the earliest mention of which is The power was perhaps conferred by the   
 connected with Blessing only (Gen. xviii. laying on of the Apostles’ hands; thongh,   
 14), was prescribed to Moses as the form that having been for a special purpose   
 of conferring office on Joshua, Num. xxvii. merely, and the working miracles being   
 18, and from that time was used on such a fulfihnent of the promise, Mark xvi. 17,   
 oceasions by the Jews. From its adoption 18, to believers, 1 should rather refer the   
 by the Apostles, it has ever been the power to the eminence of Stephen’s faith,   
 practice of the Christian church in ordaiu- full of grace, i. divine grace (not   
 ing, or setting apart her ministers. It was ‘favour with the people’): the effects of   
 also used by the Apostles on those who, which, the miracles were called gifts 9   
 having been baptized, were to be fully en- Grace (charismata, from charis, grace).   
 dowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit: 9.] The word Libertines is rightly   
 sce ch. viii. 17; xix. 6, and Heb. vi. 2. explained by Chrysostom to mean, the   
 7.) And, i. e. on this being Sreedmen of the Romans. Philo speaks of   
 completed ; as would be the case, seeing a large district Rome beyond the Tiber   
 that these seven were not only servants of as inhabited by Jews, who were mostly   
 tables, but men full of the Holy Ghost and freedmen that had originally been brought   
 of lom + and we soon hear of the part. in captivity to Italy. Tacitus relates   
 which Stephen bore in the work. a A.D. 19, that a deerce of the senate passed,   
 great multitude of the priests | number to banish to Sardinia four thousand liber-   
 of priests who returned from Babylon, Ezra tines or freedmen, who were inf   
 ii. 85—39, was 4289; and the number would. Jewish and Egyptian superstitions, aud   
 probably have much inereased since then. the rest were ordered either to abjure their   
 No evasion of the historian’s assertion is religion or to leave Italy. In this Jos-   
 be attempted, as has been done by some phus agrees, relating a story as one of is   
 Commentators.—At this time was probably causes, in which Ida, a freedwoman, wis