

Chapter 6

By occasion of a murmur in the Church (whose number now is so grown that it can not be numbred) Seuen of them being ordered by the Apostles in the holy order of Deacons; 8. one of them, Steuen, worketh great miracles: and is by such as he confounded in disputation, falsely accused in the Council of blasphemie against the Temple and rites thereof.

And in those daies the number of Disciples increasing, there arose a ^amurmuring of the Greekes against the Hebrewes, for that their widowes were despised in the daily ministration. ² And the Twelve calling together the multitude of the Disciples, said: It is not reason, that we leaue the word of God, and serue tables. ³ Consider therefore Brethren, ^aseuen men of you of good testimonie, full of the holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint ouer this busines. ⁴ But we will be instant in prayer and the ministration of the word. ⁵ And the saying was liked before all the multitude. And they chose Steuen a man full of faith and of the holy Ghost, and Philippe, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a stranger of Antioch. ⁶ These they did set in the presence of the Apostles: and praying ^a)they imposed handes vpon them. ⁷ And the word of God increased, and the number of the Disciples was multiplied in Hierusalem exceedingly: a great multitude also of the ^b)Priests obeyed the faith.

⁸ And Steuen full of grace and fortitude did great wonders & signes among the people. ⁹ And there arose certaine of that which is called the Synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them that were of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Steuen: ¹⁰ and they could not resist the wisdom and the Spirit that spake. ¹¹ Then they suborned men,

The election of the 7. first Deacons.

προσήλυτον

^a Order of Deacōs giuen by imposition of handes. See *Annot. Act. 13, 3.*

^b Now also the Priests and they of greater knowledge and estimation began to beleue.

to say they had heard him speake wordes of blasphemie against Moyfes and God. ¹² They therefore stirred vp the people, and the Ancients, and the Scribes: and running together they tooke him, and brought him into the Councel, ¹³ and they fet false witneses that said: This man ceaseth not to speake wordes against the holy place & the Law. ¹⁴ For we haue heard him say, that this same IESVS of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions, which Moyfes deliuered vnto vs. ¹⁵ And al that fate in the Councel beholding him, saw his face as it were ^athe face of an Angel.

ANNOTATIONS

1 Murmuring.) It commeth of humane infirmitie, that in euery Society of men (be it neuer so holy) there is some cause giuen or taken by the weake, of murmur & difference, which must euer be provided for & staied in the beginning, lest it grow to further schisme or sedition. And to al such defects, the more the Church increaseth in number and diuersitie of men and Prouinces, the more it is subiect. In al which things the spirital Magistrates, by the Apostles example and Authoritie, must take order, as time and occasion shall require.

Murmuring & emulation.

3 Seuen men.) We may not thinke that these seuen (here made Deacons) were only chosen to serue profane tables, or dispose of the Churches mere temporals, though by that occasion only they may seeme to some now elected, no expresse mention being made of any other function. For, diuers circumstances of this same place giue euidence, and so doth al antiquitie, that their Office stood not principally about profane things, but about the holy Altar. The persons to be elected, must be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, they must after publike praier be ordered and consecrated by the Apostles imposition of hands, as Bishops and Priests were afterward ordered. *ep. ad Tim.* where S. Paul also requireth in a manner the same conditions in them as in Bishops. Al which would not haue bene prescribed for any secular stewardship. Yea straight vpon their Ordering here (no doubt by commission of the Apostles, which they had not before their election) they preached, baptized, disputed, and as it may appeare by the wordes spoken of S. Steuen, that he was full of grace and fortitude, they received great increase of grace by their Deaconship.

The 7. Deacons.

1. Tim. 3. & 4.

Act. 6, 8.

^a Such is the face of al constant & chereful Martyrs, to their persecutors & iudges.

Li. Eccl. Hier.
c. 3. part. 2.

But S. Ignatius *ep. ad Tral.* can best witness of their office and the Apostles manner and meaning in such things, who writeth thus: *It behoueth also to please by all means the Deacons, which are for the ministerie of IESVS CHRIST. For they are not seruitours of meate and drinke, but Ministers of the Church of God. For what are Deacons but imitators or followers of Christ, ministering to the Bishops, as Christ to his Father, & working unto him a cleane and immaculate worke, euen as S. Steuen to S. Iames &c.* S. Polycarpe hath the like in his *epistle as Philippienses*. And S. Denys writeth that their office was about the Altar, and putting the holy bread and chalice vpon the same. S. Clement also (*Apost. Const. li. 2. c. 61.*) that their Office among other things, is to assist the Bishops, and read the Gospell in the Service &c. S. Cyprian in diuers places *ep. 65. & ep. 49. ad Cornel.* calleth Deacons, the Churches and the Apostles Ministers, and their office *administrationem sacram,* an holy administration. S. Hierom affirmeth, in *caput. 7. Michae.* and in *episto. 85. ad Euangrium tom. 2.* where he checketh some of them for preferring themselves before Priests, and putteth them in remembrance of their first calling, that they be as the Levites were in respect of the Priests of the old Law. Finally by S. Ambrose *li. 1. Offic. c. 41.* and Prudentius in *Hymno de S. Laurent.* speaking of S. Laurence the Deacon, we may see their Office was most holy. See S. Augustine also of the dignitie of Deacons. *ep. 148. ad Valerium Conc. Carthag. 4. can. 37, 28. 39. 41.*