

ing apostles go down. It was really the beginning of missions to the Gentiles. Peter and John saw that it was a work of God, and that nothing was lacking except the gift of the Holy Spirit, which, descending on the believers at baptism with some miraculous sign, such as the speaking with tongues, was the seal of God's acceptance of them. This was bestowed, and thus the work of

Philip acknowledged as genuine.

Simon covets this wonderful gift; is willing to pay for it, offers money, indeed (hence our word "simony" meaning trafficking in things sacred). Peter discloses the blindness and wickedness of his heart to Simon. Let it be hoped that he was not beyond repentance and hope. He at least earnestly besought deliverance from the woe, v. 24.

APPLICATION

As for Saul, v. 3. The force that impelled Saul was his conscientiousness. He said afterwards (Acts 26 : 9), "I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He was wrong, but he was not knowingly wrong. When he saw his error, he showed the same zeal in furthering, which he was now showing in opposing, the cause of Christ. If every follower of Christ would sally forth to translate his belief into action, the world would soon be won for Him. Indifference is an abomination to the Lord. It is to the lukewarm church of Laodicea that He makes the threat: "I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3 : 16).

Made havoc of the church, v. 3. Again and again its enemies have made havoc of the church. In its infancy the whole power of imperial Rome was hurled against it. The story of many a bitter persecution in modern times has been written in letters of blood. In the sixteenth century it is estimated that in France alone more than eight hundred thousand persons were martyred for their faith. During the same period, the cruel Duke of Alva boasted that in the Netherlands, besides the multitudes slain in battle, he had committed eighteen thousand to the executioner, and this because they would rather die than become traitors to the truth. In Scotland in the days of the bloody Claverhouse, eighteen thousand suffered death for their religion. What further proof should we ask that the living God is in the church, than the fact that she has triumphed over all these attempts to destroy her life? And how highly we should appreciate our religious liberties, when we remember the price that has been paid for them!

Went everywhere preaching the word, v. 4.

These converts were "sowers who went forth to sow" (Matt. 13). Their seed was the word. Their field was wherever they might go. They went to Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11 : 19), and, possibly, some as far as Rome, for Andronicus and Junia were disciples before Paul's conversion (Rom. 16 : 7). Printing presses and railways and steamships have made it much easier for us to scatter the seed than it was for these early Christians. The Lord does not send a persecution to drive us out into the great field of the world with His blessed gospel, but He has commanded us to "go," and unless in some way we are going, we are not loyal to Him.

And Philip, v. 5. Philip and Stephen were of like spirit. Stephen (Acts 7 : 47-50) laid down the principle that the church is universal, embracing Gentiles as well as Jews. Philip puts that principle into practice by going with the gospel to Samaria. The Lord intended His followers to think of the church as broad enough to include men of every nation and condition. They were to learn that, if the Jews had received a special revelation, it was that they might share it with others, as we confine the light in a lamp to illumine the room, or a fire in the stove to heat the house.

There was much joy in that city, v. 8. Christianity is a religion of joy. Its chief apostle wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice." This joy is not the mere lightheartedness that youth and health and good fortune bring. Sorrow is not forbidden to the Christian. He is not condemned for being broken-hearted at the loss of his loved ones. But to the Christian hopeless sorrow is impossible. He has always something left when he seems to be