

ern Church to the non-juring bishops:—"Therefore we declare that this truth hath ever been the doctrine of the Eastern Church; that the Episcopal dignity is so necessary in the Church that *without a bishop there cannot exist any church nor any Christian man, no, not so much as in name.*" (The italics are those of the *Critic.*) These explanations of this monstrous and anti-Christian figment are plain enough; and it is against this that the declaration of the Wycliffe calendar and the words of Dean Alford are aimed.

III. We are thus led to the consideration of John xx. 23; not only because it is in reference to this scripture that Alford's statement is made, but also because, as Haddon expressly states, the dogma of apostolic succession rests upon this passage. We therefore give Alford's comment in full:—

"The words closely considered amount to this: that with the gift and real participation of the Holy Spirit comes the conviction, and therefore the knowledge, of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; and this knowledge becomes more perfect the more men are filled with the Holy Spirit. Since this is so, they who are pre-eminently filled with His presence, are pre-eminently gifted with the discernment of sin and repentance in others, and hence, by the Lord's appointment, authorised to pronounce pardon of sin and the contrary. The apostles had this in an especial manner and by the full indwelling of the Spirit were enabled to discern the hearts of men and to give sentence in that discernment. And this gift belongs to the Church in all ages, and especially to those who by legitimate appointment are set to minister in the Church; not by successive delegation from the apostles—of which fiction I find in the *N.T.* no trace—the italics are Alford's—but by their mission from Christ, the bestower of the spirit for their office, when orderly and legitimately conferred upon them by the various Churches. Not however to them exclusively—though for decency and order it is expedient that the outward and formal declarations should be so—but in proportion as any disciple shall have been filled with the Holy Spirit of wisdom is the inner discernment his."

But Dr. Carry complacently informs us that "Dean Alford is no authority whatever in this matter." We shall therefore summon another witness. In his comments upon the same text, Canon Westcott, the present learned Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, says:—

"The words were not addressed to all the apostles nor to the apostles alone. . . . The commission and the promise were given therefore like the Pentecostal blessings which they prefigured, to the Christian Society, and not to any special order in it. The gift is conveyed once for all. No provision is laid down for its transmission. It is made part of the life of the whole society, flowing from the relation of the body to the Risen Christ. Thus the words are the charter of the Christian Church and not simply of the Christian ministry. . . . All Christians, as such, are indeed apostles, envoys of their risen Lord. To ministers and people alike, while they are not as yet undistinguished, He directs the words of sovereign power in the announcement of His victory over sin and death:—"Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent Me even so send I you, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." The message of the Gospel is the glad tidings of sin conquered. To apply this to each man severally is the office of the Church, and so of each member of the Church. To construe it personally, is to give absolution as we in our different places bring home to the conscience of others the import of Christ's work, so far we set them free from the bondage in which they are held. There is therefore nothing arbitrary in the fulfilment of the

Divine promise. He to whom the word comes can appropriate or reject the message of deliverance which we, as Christians, are authorized to bear. As he does so, we, speaking in His name, either remove the load by which he is weighted down or make it more oppressive."

IV. The limits at our disposal will not allow us to discuss the passages from the New Testament cited by Dr. Carry. We must reserve their consideration as well as that of the statement quoted from the Ordinal, for another article. This is of less consequence, as they do not materially contribute to the discussion before us. Two points they prove, points which the great majority of evangelical Christians, in common with Calvin, accept, viz., that there was an ordained ministry, and that the usual mode of ordination was by the laying on of hands. But to leap from these to the enormous hypothesis of apostolic succession is the feat of an ecclesiastical acrobat, attempted in defiance of every law of grammar and of logic. But more of this anon.

In conclusion, we submit that the dogma of "Apostolic Succession," as defined by the Tractarians and sacerdotalists we have quoted, is contrary alike to Scripture and to history.

It is opposed to the whole scope and tenor of revealed truth, grievously errs as to the nature both of the Apostolic office, and of the Christian ministry, implies a superstitious and erroneous view of ordination, sets up a despotic absolutism for a constitutional Church government, inverts the true relationship of the individual to the Church, and substitutes a system of externalism for a living Christianity.

It is refuted by the whole course of history, which neither yields the proofs of unbroken tactual succession it demands, nor supports the claims it assumes to exclusive spiritual powers and a monopoly of the grace of Christ. It is not, and never was the doctrine of the Church of England, which, in the 16th century, was in full communion with the other Protestant churches of Europe, and whose reformers, and most eminent divines, such as Hooker, Usher, Hall, and others, acknowledged the validity of non-Episcopal orders. Moreover, the experience of Christian men and the common sense of mankind, reject a theory which is hopelessly irreconcilable with the facts and phenomena of Christendom, and the consciousness of all spirit-taught men. We hope to refer to these points in future articles, although it does seem almost superfluous to combat an error which we had hoped was long ago relegated to the limbo of effete and discarded superstitions.

## The Sunday School.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

1ST SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 2, 1884.

#### BIBLE LESSON.

St. Paul at Athens. Acts xvii. 22-34.

When we left St. Paul last Sunday, he was *alone*—where? He had been obliged to flee in haste from Berea—why? What message was sent to Silas and Timothy? (Read v. 15.) He must wait at least a week before they could reach him. Meanwhile he is very lonely, depressed, anxious (1 Thess. iii. 1-5), and is not likely to find employment at once at his trade. He has much to see in Athens, so he wanders about the city.

#### I. WHAT KIND OF CITY WAS ATHENS?

Not a busy, trading city, like Thessalonica—not in

such a good position for traffic—besides, the day of its glory was past. Once it had been a very important place—but Rome is mistress now; Athens had been conquered—great part of its walls in ruins. But the city was spared because of its beauty. Everything is beautiful here—its position, the air, hills, vineyards, oliveyards, songs of birds—these *God's* works. But beauty too in *man's*. Everywhere temples, altars, statues, of marble, stone, bronze, ivory, gold. On the high hill overlooking the city stood a magnificent temple to the goddess Athene, and a statue of the goddess made of brazen shields taken in battle, which could be seen glittering in the sun from the harbour five miles off—even by the sailors far out at sea. Only the ruins in Athens now, but even these are very beautiful.

#### II. WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE LIVED IN ATHENS?

Suppose we go into the market-place. It is a large square full of statues among the trees of gods and great men. Here we see merchants selling various goods in their tempting shops—others, thoughtful-looking men, called philosophers (lovers of learning)—their occupation to study and teach—and groups of students about who learn from them. But a great many idle people—many strangers—nothing particular to do—just enjoying the air, and gossiping about the news of the day.

#### III. HOW DID PAUL FEEL IN THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY?

Admire it! Yes, no doubt he did. But read v. 16. His spirit stirred—how? (Compare 2 Pet. ii. 8; Ps. cxix. 136; Jer. xx. 9.) He knew these temples were built in honour of idols—those beautiful figures were worshipped those wise men knew not God. The city was "full of idols" (as in the margin). A Roman writer, who lived then, said it was more easy to find a god in Athens than a man, and idolatry is abomination in God's sight (Jer. xlv. 4). Paul was God's messenger—he must try to do something. How could he—alone—a stranger—a Jew? Would they listen?

Read vs. 17-21.

In the synagogue he meets Jews and devout persons—but how was he to get at the heathen? He goes to market-place—speaks to anyone who will listen, day by day—and he is so earnest that some can't help listening.

At last some of the philosophers come to hear what the stranger says. (Note 1.) See what they are called; *Epicureans*, followers of Epicurus. What did they teach? "The gods, if there are any, will not trouble themselves about us—far too great for that—life very short—wise thing to enjoy ourselves as much as we can." (See 1 Cor. xv. 32.) Their religion was *pleasure*.

But the *Stoics* were different; said the wise man should train himself to conquer his feelings—so as to be above feeling pleasure or pain—take everything as it comes. Their religion—*pride*.

Were they likely to accept the religion of Jesus? See what He teaches (Matt. xi. 29; Mark viii. 34). No. *Pleasure and pride their hindrance, just as prejudice that of the Jews.*

And yet does not Christ's religion bring pleasure? Oh yes? (See Prov. iii. 17; Matt. xi. 30.)

But not the same *kind* of pleasure—not "pleasures of sin"—deeper heart-joy now, "pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 11) by-and-by. But those learned men knew nothing about all this.

What did they think of Paul's words? Some despised them, called him a "babbling," talking nonsense—others said he was bringing in a new god, and this was not allowed in Athens unless first approved by their elders. (Note 2.) At all events it was *something new*, and they would like to hear about it, so they leave the crowded market—take him up steps to top of hill near—Areopagus. Here a most solemn assembly used to meet to decide important questions—judges used to sit round on seats cut in rocks. (The steps and seats are still there in the rocks.) Now the crowd fill the seats and stand around. Paul stands in the middle. Then they ask him very politely what the "new thing" is that he is teaching.

How different Paul's feelings to theirs! Theirs just idle curiosity—wanting a little amusement to pass the time. He is very earnest—heart full—burning to tell the "good news." What an opportunity his Master has given him! And He gave him wisdom to use it well.

IV. WHAT NEWS HAD PAUL TO GIVE THEM? (Read vs. 22-31.) First gets their attention by referring to their own religion—not rudely (v. 22). "Ye are too superstitious," rather means, "ye are very religious." He does not *praise* their religion, but speaks of something which he had noticed as he passed along—what? (v. 23.) Perhaps they built this altar lest they should have missed one god out, or because they could not tell from whom some benefit had come. "This is the God," Paul says, "that I am come to make known to you." And then he tells them God is