

without asking their *permission*. When Paul "greatly desired" Apollos to come unto Corinth with the brethren, he writes of him, (1 Cor. xvi. 12,) "but his will was not at all to come at this time, but he will come when he shall have convenient time." And when Paul and Barnabas differed about the expediency of taking John Mark with them, on their missionary journey, each followed his own convictions, Barnabas taking him, and Paul choosing Silas instead, and going in another direction, (Acts xv. 39, 40.) Thus every minister, and every church, were not only at liberty to follow their own convictions of duty, according to the light given them in each particular case, but they were held responsible to Christ for their doing so. He himself had said, "One is your Master"—only one—"even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

3. Primitive churches were independent, also, in regard to *their right of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures*. Soon in Apostolic days there arose differences of opinion and practice upon various points; e.g., in relation to the observance of particular days, and the eating of meats offered for sale in the markets, after having been sacrificed to idols. These were matters of indifference in themselves,—neither absolutely right, nor absolutely wrong, but only proper or improper, according to circumstances. When, therefore, such questions were submitted to the Apostle for his decision, he pronounced neither for nor against their practice, but urged "every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind," (Rom. iv. 5,) and to avoid censoriously judging others who might differ from them. Thus they were "called unto liberty."

We can hardly call them *Protestant*, for there was no frowning, fulminating hierarchy, claiming infallibility for its Popes and œcumenical Councils, against which they needed to *protest*. But they were carefully instructed in that cardinal principle of Protestantism—the right of determining for one's self the will of God, by direct appeal to his own word! No *creeds* had as yet been drawn up; no *calendar* had been prepared. They were neither required to subscribe to a confession of faith, nor to fast according to synodical or episcopal injunction, nor to pray and sing from particular books. Every church and every believer was bound by the word of God only, whether in doctrine or practice. If any brother fell into error, after a first and second admonition, he was to be "rejected;" but the church was *the judge* of the error, and the word of God *the standard* by which he was to be tried.

Behold, then,

"How unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's simple, artless, unencumbered plan!"

Our sketch of New Testament Independency is, we are aware, very imperfect. Our aim has been to present a very brief outline of the Divine model upon which our Churches are framed, rather than a description in detail, which would, of course, occupy much more time than could be allotted to it in such a service as the present. But "ye see your calling, brethren;" "ye have been called unto liberty,"—liberty such as no church can enjoy which does not conform itself to this rule. You have recently exercised your undoubted right in the calling of our beloved brother to the oversight of you in the Lord. There is no church Court to say to *you*, "we cannot consent," or to say to *him*, "you must not accept." You have invited him—he has accepted your invitation;—each, as we trust, having prayerfully submitted the matter to the Divine Master alone. Nei-