

PREFACE.

Great diversity of opinion has prevailed as to the value of Patristic Theology. Extremes, as happens in many questions, have been run into alike by the admirers and depreciators of early ecclesiastical literature. At any rate, some acquaintance with those ancient writings becomes every student of theology, were it but to enable him to test the references so often made to the authority of the fathers, both in historic questions and questions of doctrine and interpretation. The fact that, in exposing error and in vindicating and illustrating truth, theologians of all ages—we may say also historians and philosophers—have sought to enrich their pages with citations from those ancient works, establishes a presumption that a certain degree of attention given to the study of them will repay the labour.

In a text book designed for occasional use in a Divinity class, it is not attempted to include specimens of all the fathers. The former collection prepared by the editor included only selections from the Latin writers and apologists—Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, and Augustine. Having, after mature consideration, resolved to extend his plan, by inserting specimens of the Greek fathers in one common text-book with the Latin, the work of selection, with needful compression, has been no doubt one of difficulty. But if he has succeeded in placing within easy reach of the student the means of gaining some acquaintance with the sentiments and styles of those leading writers,