

other living writer, is deeply versed in all that relates to the literature of the Church, gives us the following as the result of his acquaintance with the writings of "The Fathers."

Independent of any direct heresies, erroneous methods of considering Christianity became prevalent from the indiscriminate study and admiration of Gentile philosophy. Each of the Christian fathers, who affected a reputation for literature, naturally adopted the favourite opinions of some philosophic school, and thus every speculative sect came to mingle their own peculiar errors in that incoherent and discordant mass of opinions which formed the Christian literature of antiquity. Few attempts have had less foundation to proceed upon than the endeavour to make the Christian fathers pass for the supreme judges of controversy and the oracles of religion. Nothing can be more vague than their conclusions, nor more weak than their arguments, nor more variable than the tendency of their writings. They might, notwithstanding the weakness of their judgment, have been valuable, as furnishing facts; but in these they are lamentably deficient, and hence the meagreness of church history. When appealed to as authorities, they lend themselves by turns to every side. When resorted to for information, they furnish little but conjectures. It is well, however, that Christianity should have small obligation to its early advocates, and that religion should rest upon the power of God, and not upon the authority of men. It is well also that a great gulf should be placed between the inspired and the uninspired Christian writers. Many of the fathers, as they are called, were but recent converts from paganism, who were better acquainted with the superstition they had left than the revelation they had embraced. Many were more attentive to the study of philosophy than to the search of scriptural truth. The caution of St. Paul was lost upon them to beware of 'philosophy falsely so called.' The emanative system, with all its errors, spread far and wide, under the authority of Origen, and with the aid of his allegorical interpretations. In the hands of the master of Origen, Ammonius, and his fellow-disciple Plotinus, the absurdities of paganism, by the supposition of an inner sense contained in them, had been made to coincide with the dreams of philosophy. The truths of Christianity were now to be explained away by the same subtle process. Evil was considered less a transgression of the holy law of God, than as distance from the supreme fountain of existence. A Christian purgatory was introduced similar to the Platonic purgation by fire, and all souls, after certain cycles of aberration and remedial punishment, were supposed to be destined to return to the one great Being from whom they had departed. From another quarter, false notions of Gnostic purity flowed in to augment the superstitions of the declining church, and the division was revived in the distinction between the monks and the laity among the orthodox, (which had previously prevailed amongst the early heretics and the Manicheans,) of the perfect, who abstained from flesh, and lacerated their body, and of the imperfect, who merely performed the duties of life. The doctrines of Plato, from the degree of resemblance which they occasionally bear to revelation, insinuated themselves with ease among the truths of Christianity. The old Pantheistic error of God including all being within himself, had likewise numerous advocates, and so confused were the notions

of its adherents, that it might be doubted of many, as in the case of Bishop Synesius and the false Dionysius, whether they were more properly heathen Pantheists or Christian Mystics. To sum up all, Aristotle, after stoutly defending paganism, at last lent the Christians his vexatious logic to exasperate the multitude of their disputes, and to split and subdivide every error to infinity.—*Douglas, of Cavers.*

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE.—We commend the following remarks from the pen of a well-known writer to the devout consideration of the pious and devout of every name. With how much of moral dignity is pecuniary sacrifice invested, when deposited on the altar of christian charity, and devoted to the salvation of immortal souls!

Consider, I entreat you, the different results of the property you spend upon yourselves, and that which you spend upon Christ: the former perishes in the using, the latter acquires an imperishable existence. What you lay out in the comforts and elegances of life, yea, and what you lay up unnecessarily, dies with you when you die, and obtains no resurrection, for it has no principle of immortality. You will see it in no form in another world, for it contains no seed that will bear fruit in eternity. It will pass away for ever, and nothing of it remain but the remembrance and the regret, if, indeed, regret can enter Heaven, that it had not been spent for God. But the wealth which, under the influence of pure motives, is devoted to Christ, will never die: this is immortal and incorruptible, not indeed in the form of property, for of what use would this be to us in Heaven? but in what is infinitely more glorious and gratifying, in the form of those redeemed and blessed spirits of just men made perfect, whom it has been employed to convert to God. Yes, the men who give their property for the conversion of souls, may be said, in one sense, to transmute it into those living substances of holiness and bliss which fill the upper world. This, in the best and fullest sense of the term, is "to lay up treasures in Heaven;" it is to enrich the celestial city; to increase the glory of the New Jerusalem, and to place fresh gems in the mediatorial Crown of the Redeemer. What a motive to liberality! What an incentive to munificence! How does it soften the labour of getting wealth, sweeten and sanctify the enjoyment of it, and compensate for any little sacrifice we may make in parting from it, to recollect that by giving it to Christ, we impart to it a principle of immortality, and add it to the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Dull must be the heart which such a motive cannot quicken; grovelling the spirit which such a prospect does not elevate. O Christians, how is it that we can cheat ourselves of such heavenly felicity and eternal honour, merely to have a little more comfort, luxury, or elegance here? Why do we impoverish ourselves in another world, to enrich ourselves in this? How is it that the prospect of seeing our property for ever before our eyes in the forms of glorified spirits, of laying it up around the throne of the Eternal; of adding, by it, to the splendours of the holy of holies; and multiplying the objects on which the eye of Christ shall rest with satisfaction as the travail of his soul, does not induce us to part with more of it for such purposes,