

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH.

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There is found in most treatises on baptism, a disquisition deemed of absolute necessity upon the testimony of the Fathers of the Church, to whom an appeal is thought indispensable, in order to know what to regard as the baptismal practice of the Apostolic times. Two sources have thus been opened for the study of baptism—the Bible and the Fathers. It is necessary that we should decide in reference to these sources, and if we admit both, we should fix their respective value, and the use which it will be lawful for us to make of the Fathers; for we desire, in the search after truth to use nothing but legitimate materials. Now, we renounce the use of the Fathers, and do not invoke their testimony in support of our doctrine on baptism.

Our reasons for setting them aside, are: The excessive importance conceded to them in works on baptism; and the fashion of placing quotations from their writings side by side with those of the Bible, which imply that Scripture of itself is insufficient. Hence arises an uncertainty, much increased by the length and obscurity of the passages quoted from the Fathers, and which lead many either to indifference on the subject of baptism, or to imaginary views based on human authority.

Of what use is it to heap up with historical toil, all the follies which may have been uttered on the subject of baptism from Origen to the present time? What can this prove? Would an historical work, relating all the follies uttered upon the Trinity from Origen to our days, be found very conclusive against the divinity of Jesus Christ? Such a work could easily be done; but when called to decide upon such an important doctrine, all Evangelical Christians would be unanimous in appealing only to Scripture. But it is not quotations from the Fathers, but the peculiar interpretation of some passages of the Bible, which is disputed. The Fathers are only brought forward in support of foregone conclusions, in order to prop up an ill-constructed system with any accessory that