

CHAPTER XXV

IF WE WISH TO REFORM SCHOOLS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY, WE MUST REMOVE FROM THEM BOOKS WRITTEN BY PAGANS, OR, AT ANY RATE, MUST USE THEM WITH MORE CAUTION THAN HITHERTO.⁸⁴

1. RESISTLESS necessity compels us to treat at length a subject which we have touched on in the previous chapter. If we wish our schools to be truly Christian schools, the crowd of Pagan writers must be removed from them. First, therefore, we will set forth the reasons which underlie our views, and then the method of treating these ancient writers so that, in spite of our caution, their beautiful thoughts, sayings, and deeds may not be lost to us.

2. Our zeal in this matter is caused by our love of God and of man; for we see that the chief schools profess Christ in name only, but hold in highest esteem writers like Terence, Plautus, Cicero, Ovid, Catullus, and Tibullus. The result of this is that we know the world better than we know Christ, and that, though in a Christian country, Christians are hard to find. For with the most learned men, even with theologians, the upholders of divine wisdom, the external mask only is supplied by Christ, while the spirit that pervades them is drawn from Aristotle and the host of heathen writers. Now this is a terrible abuse of Christian liberty, a shameless profanation, and a course replete with danger.

3. Firstly, our children are born for heaven and are

reborn through the Holy Ghost. They must therefore be educated as citizens of heaven, and their chief instruction should be of heavenly things, of God, of Christ, of the angels, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This instruction should take place before any other, and all other knowledge should be shielded from the pupil; firstly, because of the uncertainty of life, that no one may be snatched away unprepared, and secondly, because first impressions are the strongest, and (if they are religious impressions) lay a safe foundation for all that follows in life.

4. Secondly, God, though He made provision of every kind for His chosen people, gave them no school other than His own Temple, where He Himself was the Master, we were the pupils, and His oracles were the subject taught. For thus He speaks by Moses: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. vi. 4). And by Isaiah: "I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go" (xlviii. 17); and again, "Should not a people seek unto their God?" Christ also says: "Search ye the Scriptures" (John v. 39).

5. God has shown by the following words that His voice is the brightest light for our understanding, the most perfect law for our actions, and the surest support for our weakness. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments! Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, which shall hear all these statutes and say: Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. iv. 5, 6). To Joshua, also, He speaks thus: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy

mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and thou shalt have good success" (Jos. i. 8). By David also He says: "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm xix. 8). Finally, the Apostle bears witness "that every scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, etc., that the man of God may be complete" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). The wisest of men (by this I mean truly enlightened Christians) have made the same assertion. Chrysostom has said: "What it is needful to know, and what it is not needful to know, *that* we can learn from the Scriptures." And Cassiodorus⁸⁵ says: "The Scriptures are a heavenly school, a guide through life, the only true source of information. To search for the true meaning of them should occupy the student's whole time, and leave him no leisure to be led astray by philology."

6. God expressly forbade His chosen people to have anything to do with the learning or the customs of the heathen: "Learn not the way of the nations" (Jer. x. 2); and again, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron?" (2 Kings i. 3); "Should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isaiah viii. 19, 20). And why? Surely because "all wisdom cometh from the Lord, and is with him for ever. To whom else hath the root of wisdom been revealed?" (Ecclesiasticus i. 1, 6); "Although they have seen light and dwelt on the earth, the way of knowledge have they not known. Nor understood the paths thereof, etc. It hath not been heard of in Chanaan, neither hath it been seen in Theman. The Agarenes that seek wisdom upon earth, the authors of fables and searchers out of understanding, have not known the way of wisdom. But he that knoweth all things knoweth it and hath found out all the way of knowledge and hath