

given it unto Jacob his servant and Israel his beloved" (Baruch iii. 20, 21, 22, 23, 32, 36, 37); "He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (Psalm cxlvii. 20).

7. Whenever His people went aside from His laws to the snares of man's imagination, God used to blame not only their folly in forsaking the fountain of wisdom (Baruch iii. 12), but the twofold evil that they had committed, in forsaking Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewing them out broken cisterns that could hold no water (Jer. ii. 13). Through the agency of Hosea He complained also that His people held too much intercourse with other nations, saying: "Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts, they are counted as a strange thing" (Hos. viii. 12). But, I ask, is not this what those Christians are doing who hold heathen books in their hands night and day, while of the sacred Word of God they take no account, as if it did not concern them? And yet, as God bears witness, it is no vain thing, but our very life (Deut. xxxii. 47).

8. Therefore the true Church and the true worshippers of God have sought for no teaching other than the Word of God, from which they have drawn the true and heavenly wisdom that is superior to all earthly knowledge. Thus David says of himself: "Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies," and, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm cxix. 98, 99). Similarly Solomon, the wisest of mortals, confesses: "The Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. ii. 6). The son of Sirach also testifies (in the prologue to his book) that his wisdom is drawn from the law and the prophets. Hence the exultation of the righteous when they see light in the light of God (Psalm xxxvi. 9); "O Israel, happy are we: for things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us" (Baruch vi. 4). "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 68).

9. The examples of all ages show us that it has been an occasion for stumbling whenever the Church has turned aside from the fountain of Israel. Of the Jewish Church, sufficient is known from the lamentations of the Prophets. As regards the Christian Church, we learn from history that a pure faith lasted as long as the Gospel, and nothing else, was preached by the Apostles and their successors. But as soon as the heathen entered the Church in numbers, and the ardour that existed at first grew cold, pagan books were read, at first in private and then in public, and the result was a great confusion of doctrine. The key of knowledge was lost by the very men who boasted that they alone possessed it, and from that time opinions without number were substituted for the articles of faith. Then did strife arise, whose end is not yet visible; charity grew cold, and piety disappeared. And thus, under the name of Christendom, paganism came into existence again, and still reigns supreme. For the threat of the Lord Jehovah had to be fulfilled: "If they speak not according to the Word of God, surely there is no morning for them" (Isaiah viii. 20). "Therefore the Lord hath poured out upon them the spirit of sleep, and hath closed their eyes, that all vision might become unto them as the words of a book that is sealed," because they worshipped God in accordance with the teaching of man (Isaiah xxix. 10, 11, 13, 14). O, how truly in their case is fulfilled what the Holy Spirit says of the heathen philosophers: "They became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (Rom. i. 21). In short, if the Church is to be purified from uncleanness, there is only one way, and that is to put aside all the seductive teaching of man and return to the pure springs of Israel, and thus to give over ourselves and our children to the teaching and guidance of God and of His word. Thus at last will the prophecy come to pass, "And all thy children shall be taught of God" (Isaiah liv. 13).

10. Indeed our dignity as Christians (who have been made sons of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven

through Christ) does not permit us to degrade ourselves and our children by allowing them to have an intimate acquaintance with pagan writers, and to read them with such approval. We do not choose parasites, fools, or buffoons, but serious, wise, and pious men as tutors for the sons of our kings and princes. Should we not blush, therefore, when we confide the education of the sons of the King of kings, of the brothers of Christ and heirs of eternity, to the jesting Plautus, the lascivious Catullus, the impure Ovid, that impious mocker at God, Lucian, the obscene Martial, and the rest of the writers who are ignorant of the true God? Those who, like them, live without the hope of a better life, and wallow in the mire of earthly existence, are certain to drag down to their own level whoever consorts with them. Christians, we have carried our folly far enough! Let us pause here. God calls us to better things, and it is good to obey His call. Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God, has opened a school for the sons of God in His own house; in which the supreme control is exercised by the Holy Spirit, and the professors and masters are the Prophets and the Apostles, all endowed with true wisdom, and all holy men, who, by their teaching and example, point out the way of truth and of salvation; where the pupils are the elect of God, the first-fruits of men, ransomed by God and by the Lamb; where the inspectors and guardians are the angels and archangels, the principalities and powers in heaven (Eph. iii. 10); and where true wisdom, which is of use to us in this world and the next, is taught on all subjects that the mind of man can grasp. For the mouth of God is the fountain from which all the streams of wisdom flow; the countenance of God is the torch from which the rays of true light are scattered; the Word of God is the root from which spring the shoots of true wisdom. Happy are they, therefore, who look on the face of God, listen to His words, and receive His sayings in their hearts. For this is the only true and infallible way to attain the true and eternal wisdom.

11. Nor can we omit all mention of the earnestness with which God forbade His people to have anything to do with the works of the heathen, and of the consequences that followed their disregard of His injunction: "The Lord will consume those nations from thy sight. But the graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire. Thou shalt not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God; and thou shalt not bring an abomination into thine house, and become a devoted thing like unto it" (Deut. vii. 22, 25, 26). And again: "When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, take heed to thyself that thou be not ensnared to follow them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How do these nations serve their gods? But what thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it" (Deut. xii. 29). After their victory Joshua reminded them of this, and advised them to remove the idols (Jos. xxiv. 23); but they did not obey him, and these heathen productions became a snare for them, so that they continually fell into idolatry until both kingdoms were overthrown. Should not we, therefore, take warning by their example, and avoid their error?

12. "But books are not idols," some one will say. I reply: They are the works of the heathen, whom God has destroyed from before the face of His Christian people, as He did of old. Nay, they are more dangerous than idols. For these only led away those who were fools at heart (Jer. x. 14), while books deceive even the wisest (Col. ii. 8). The former were works of men's hands (as God used to say when chiding the folly of the idolaters), the latter are the works of the human understanding. The former dazzled the eyes by the brilliancy of their gold and silver, the latter blind the intelligence by the plausibility of their carnal wisdom. Do you still deny that pagan books are idols? What was it that led the Emperor Julian away