345 Scripture (*Scriptura*)

Sacred scripture is like a drugstore of the Holy Spirit in which is found a remedy: an ointment against a wound, an antidote against a sickness, and a remission against pain. And according to Chrysostom,[[1]](#endnote-1) in Sacred Scripture the ignorant finds what he should learn, the arrogant what he may fear, the laboring rewards, and the timid comforts.

¶ Therefore we are invited to it, Prov. 22[:20]: “Behold I have described it to you three manner of ways.” Therefore, we ought to pay attention to it as if to a solid object, 2 Pet. 1[:19]: “We have the firmer prophetical word: whereunto you do well to attend.” But there are some who hold this scripture as empty, saying that of Num. 11[:6]: “Our eyes behold nothing else but manna.” Which means, What is this. And Num. 21[:5]: “Our soul now loathes this very light food.” But their sight is deceived, 2 Pet. 1[:21]: “For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time.” Prov. 12[:19]: “The lip of truth shall be steadfast forever.” But rather for the worldly the scriptures are foolish, 2 Tim. 2[:23]: “Avoid foolish and unlearned questions.” It is read in Gen. 11[:7] once the division of languages was made, there followed a dividing of the peoples.

So the philosophers while they erected machines of their ingenuity for probing the heavens on high, and presuming with their powers, the knowledge of the truth was made subject, and by their ignorance of the clouds they were given to entanglements, and in a false sense innumerable errors were spawned, “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,” Rom. 1[:22]. Therefore, these sayings of those who have little solidity, Eccle. 6[:11]: “There are many words that have much vanity in disputing.” Isai. 56[:10]: “His watchmen are all blind, seeing vain things.” Wherefore Jerome, to the people of Damascus, *Epistola* 13,[[2]](#endnote-2) concerning the husks by which he could not be restored to health, the prodigal son found in these neither security nor truth. Therefore, the Psal. [39:5]: “Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord; and who has not had regard to vanities.” Worldly knowledge makes them to go mad. Just as it was said to Paul, Act. 26[:24]: “Much learning makes you mad.”

¶ Therefore we ought not pay too much attention to these, just as Jerome says of himself, *Epistola* 82,[[3]](#endnote-3) when he hinted that for his books of Cicero, he had been led before the tribunal of Christ and there beaten.

Again, Jerome ad Damascus *Epistola* 23,[[4]](#endnote-4) the type of secular knowledge is evident in the captive woman [Deut. 21:10-14] who before she ought to be taken to the embrace, she ought to be cropped of her hair and have her nails cut. So, ought we by reading the books of the philosophers, what is there useful to recover for our use, what is superfluous or harmful to scrape away. Wherefore is not one cured by herbs which the earth has produced or which the gardener has cultivated when they bring them for our health. So, the sayings of the gentiles can be received as the cause of edification by sacred decree, so Paul to Tit. 1[:12] when he refuted some men, he used the verses of Epimenides the poet.[[5]](#endnote-5)

¶ How the poets and prophets seem to be used, see in the prologue of the fables of Aesop.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Again, again some have sought from another in a faculty whether there were many students at Paris, and the response was that in logic no. Another said, rather in music (*musica*) because many waste time (*musant*) rather than study.

¶ Again, Jerome, *Epistola* 25,[[7]](#endnote-7) for learning no hour is too late it seems to me. Because although it is better for an elder to teach than to learn, let him teach more, however it is fitting to learn than to be ignorant, Wis. 8[:2]: “Her have I loved, and have sought her out from my youth, and have desired to take her for my spouse.” This one as a spouse he ought to take, not as a concubine, as the philosophers are read to have done. Wherefore Valerius, book 8,[[8]](#endnote-8) Plato lying in the eighty-first year of his age is read to have had the books of Sophron under his head. Wherefore also for him the end of living and philosophizing were the same.

Again, Augustine,[[9]](#endnote-9) it is better that doubts be solved in prayer than by questioning, Wis. 7[:7]: “I wished, and understanding was given me.”

1. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectus in Mattheum* Homilia 41 ex cap. 22 (PG 56:863): Quidquid quaeritur ad salutem, totum jam adimpletum est in Scripturis. Qui ignarus est, inveniet ibi quod discat. Qui contumax est et peccator, inveniet ibi futuri judicii flagella, quae timeat. Qui laborat, inveniet ibi glorias et promissiones vitae perpetuae, quas manducando amplius excitetur ad opus. Qui pusillanimis est et infirmus, inveniet ibi mediocres justitiae cibos, qui etsi pinguem animam non faciunt, tamen mori non permittunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Jerome, *Epistola* 21.13 (PL 22:385): Verum ubi cum summo studio fuerint ac labore perlecta, nihil aliud, nisi inanem sonum, et sermonum strepitum suis lectoribus tribuunt: NULLA IBI SATURITAS veritatis, nulla refectio justitiae reperitur. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jerome, *Epistola* 22.29 (PL 22:416): Quid facit cum Psalterio Horatius? cum Evangeliis Maro? cum Apostolo Cicero? Nonne scandalizatur frater, si te viderit in idolio recumbentem? Et licet omnia munda mundis, et nihil rejiciendum, quod cum gratiarum actione percipitur: tamen simul bibere non debemus calicem Christi, et calicem daemoniorum. Referam tibi meae infelicitatis historiam. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Jerome, *Epistola* 21.13 (PL 22:385): Hujus sapientiae typus, et in Deuteronomio sub mulieris captivae figura describitur: de qua divina vox praecipit, ut si Israelites eam habere voluerit uxorem, calvitium ei faciat, ungues praesecet, et pilos auferat: et cum munda fuerit effecta, tunc transeat in victoris amplexus. Haec si secundum litteram intelligimus, nonne ridicula sunt? Itaque et nos facere solemus, quando Philosophos legimus, quando in manus nostras libri veniunt sapientiae saecularis, si quid in eis utile reperimus, ad nostrum dogma convertimus: si quid vero superfluum, de idolis, de amore, de cura saecularium rerum, haec radimus, his calvitium inducimus, haec in unguium morem ferro acutissimo desecamus. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. “Pagan Influence in the Writings of Paul”: Epimenides: “the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies” *Cretica*—a poem scolding the Cretans for making a tomb to Zeus because Epimenides believed Zeus to be eternal. The quote is derived from Tit. 1[:12]: “One of them a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies.”

<https://www.jesuswordsonly.com/books/300-pagan-influences-in-writings-of-paul.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cf. Phaedrus, *Fables* 1 Prologus (LCL 436: 190-191): Aesopus auctor quam materiam repperit, hanc ego polivi versibus senariis. duplex libelli dos est: quod risum movet,

et quod prudenti vitam consilio monet. calumniari si quis autem voluerit, quod arbores loquantur, non tantum ferae, fictis iocari nos meminerit fabulis.

Aesop is my source. He invented the substance of these fables, but I have put them into finished form in senarian verse. A double dowry comes with this, my little book: it moves to laughter, and by wise counsels guides the conduct of life. Should anyone choose to run it down, because trees too are vocal, not wild beasts alone, let him remember that I speak in jest of things that never happened. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Jerome, *Epistola* 131.1 (PL 22:1124): Sed ad discendum quod opus est, nulla mihi aetas sera videri potest; quia etsi senes magis decet docere quam discere, magis tamen discere, quam quid doceant ignorare. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 8 ext. 3, 5 (LCL 493:232-233): altero etiam et octogesimo anno decedens sub capite Sophronis mimos habuisse fertur. ... Carneades, laboriosus et diuturnus sapientiae miles, si quidem nonaginta expletis annis idem illi vivendi ac philosophani finis fuit....

As he lay dying in his eighty-first year, he is said to have had the mimes of Sophron under his head. ... Carneades was a hard-working and long-serving soldier of wisdom. After he had completed ninety years, the end of his living and his philosophizing was the same. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Augustine, cf. Peter Cantor, *Verbum Abbreviatum* 125 (PL 205:320): Oratione igitur melius solvuntur et aperiuntur dubia, quam inquisitione alia. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)