Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

236 To Know (*Scire*)

To Know. Although the learned are like shining stars, they do not scorn those wishing to learn. For [3] Kings 10[:1-2] it is said, “the queen of Saba came to Solomon to try him with hard questions.” The foolish do the contrary, because they are ignorant of what they do not know, Prov. 26[:16]: “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that speak sentences.” This foolish person seems more foolish than a fool, according to that which

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is passed over there, [Prov. 26:12]: “Have you seen a man wise in his own conceit? there shall be more hope of a fool than of him.”

¶ And it is to be known that some men do not know, and do not know that they do not know. Some know that they do not know. And however, they put little store in learning. Some freely learn terrestrial matters, but not heavenly. Some learn and teach celestial matters.[[1]](#endnote-1) Jerome says in his *Epistola* to Nepotianum.[[2]](#endnote-2) Therefore, neither should a rustic think himself holy, if he knows nothing. Nor should he estimate himself experienced and eloquent in the holy language. For of two imperfections, it is better to have a holy rusticity, than the eloquence of a prostitute. Again, says the *Gloss*,[[3]](#endnote-3) upon that of Isai. 29[:12]: “The book shall be given to one that knows no letters,” it is better for one unskilled in the law to confess than to boast of prudence. Again, Bernard *Super Canticum,* Homilia 36 [Rom. 12:3]:[[4]](#endnote-4) “To be wise unto sobriety.” It is most vigilant to observe what to know more or before it is necessary. For the time is brief. Certainly, it is every good knowledge that is based on the truth, however. The Apostle says [1 Cor. 8:2]: “If any man thinks that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.” Behold what kind of fruit he placed in the manner of knowing. For it is required that you know in what order, what study, what end, and what it is necessary to know. In what order as that first which is more mature for salvation. In what study as that more avidly by which more vehemently for love. In what end as not to the morning glory, or curiosity, or anything similar, but only for the edification of yourself or your neighbor.

¶ For there are those who wish to know so that they might be known, according to that of Persius,[[5]](#endnote-5) is your knowledge so worthless unless someone else knows that you know it. But this is shameful vanity.

¶ But there are those who want to know so that they may sell their knowledge, as for money, for honors, for favors, and it is a shameful quest. But there are those who wish to know so that they may edify, and it is charity. And there are those who wish to know that they may be edified and it is prudent. The last two of these lack the abuse of knowledge. For the good of the intellect is for all so doing. For all the rest hear that good of knowledge and they are not doers. It is a sin for that one and by the similitude it may be said to one taking food and not dwelling which is pernicious for that one. For food undigested engenders evil humors, corrupts the body,

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and does not nourish.

¶ This knowledge in the memory of the soul undigested by the fire of charity, not cooked by the customs and touches in the same way by straights for others, poured forth it engenders a bad example on the outside and bad customs in the same way evil humors. On the inside, however, inflations and heartburns are sustained in the conscience. For the servant knowing the good and not doing it. Wherefore Gregory in the *Pastorale*,[[6]](#endnote-6) they are to be warned who accuse wicked things, nor however do they deviate in order that they may see the evil better, that they may not deviate to a worse thing. For they perish who neglect accepted knowledge for their aid. It directs this against themselves as a witness at the last judgment. For no healthy knowledge ought to be despised. Wherefore Anselm, *De similitudinibus*,[[7]](#endnote-7) there is the likeness between the foolish poor people and the obtuse scholars. For the foolish poor man when he acquires a little something, says for what good will I keep something so small. Not because of this will I be richer. Therefore, I will spend this on nuts and apples. So, the foolish scholars put off the least things because they do not lead to greater. But the wise poor man the less he has, the more attentively he observes, therefore he tends to retain more things, to such an extent from a collection of many unimportant things he seeks to arrive at greater things. So, ought the poor scholar do. For just as grains make a mass and drops make a river, and many coins make riches. So many particles of knowledge make wisdom. There are those who have beautiful books, but they study little in them. Therefore, Herod is designated as that one who is interpreted as the glory of his skin. But such ones fear that of Job 2[:4]: One’s own “Skin for skin” like goats. For Rom. 1[:18] it is said “they detain the truth of God in injustice.”

¶ But such ones seem never to have produced anything. They ornament their books, when however, they have an empty mind. Wherefore it happened once that such a one lost his books of his summary in water by chance. To this one, a poor scholar, his companion wrote these verses:[[8]](#endnote-8) You should believe in the heart not in the paper, you who know the art. For, if the paper perishes the knowledge goes away and you with it. Wherefore Seneca *Ad Lucilum*,[[9]](#endnote-9) it does not matter how many books you have, but rather the good ones you have committed to memory. But in all these things knowledge of God is best.[[10]](#endnote-10) For Wis. 13[: 1]: “All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God,” etc.

1. At this juncture F 128 adds: See more concerning these materials above in the chapter [259] Eye (*Oculus*). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Jerome, *Epistola* 52 (PL 22:535): Nec rusticus tamen et simplex frater ideo se sanctum putet, si nihil noverit: nec peritus et eloquens, lingua aestimet sanctitatem. MULTOQUE MELIUS EST e duobus imperfectis, rusticitatem habere sanctam, quam eloquentiam peccatricem. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Glossa ordinaria* Interlinear gloss on Isai. 29:12: multo levius est imperitiam legis confiteri quam iactare prudentiam nec posse quod dicitur scire [Glossae Scripturae Sacrae-electronicae (Gloss-e) (cnrs.fr)](https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/editions_chapitre.php?id=liber&numLivre=33&chapitre=33_29) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica* 36.2 (PL 183:968): Vigilantissime observare quid scire magis priusve oporteat. Tempus enim breve est. Est autem, quod in se est, omnis scientia bona, quae tamen veritate subnixa sit. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Persius, *Satire* 1.25 (LCL 91:50-51): scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?

Is your knowledge so worthless unless someone else knows that you know it? [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Gregory, *Regulae Pastoralis* 3.1. (PL 77:51): Aliter qui illicita quae faciunt, etiam laudant; aliter qui accusant prava, nec tamen devitant. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Anselm cf. Eadmer of Canterbury, *Liber de Sancti Anselmi Similitudinis* 156 (PL 159:689): Siquidem pauper insipiens, cum obolum acquirit, aut aliud quid parvi munusculi, dicit: «Ad quid illud tantillum servarem? Non propter hoc dives ero. Expendam itaque hoc in pomis, aut nucibus, aut qualibet alia re mihi delectabili. Non enim istud custodiendo sollicitus volo haberi.» Sic stolidus, dum parvipendit modica, nunquam proficit ad majora. Sapiens autem pauper parva quae nanciscitur, custodit, et quo minus se habere considerat, eo magis nacta retinere desiderat, quatenus ex parvulorum congerie ad majora queat quandoque pertingere. Sic nimirum is qui se pauperem scientiae ac bonitatis sentit debet facere, si ad aliquem effectum [Col.0689C] scientiae ac bonitatis velit pervenire. Nam sicut plura grana massam, et guttae flumen, et multi nummi divitem faciunt; sic multae scientiarum sententiae sapientem, et plures bonitatis actiones, bonum quemlibet efficiunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Verses, Cf. *Florilegium Gottingense* 306 ed. Ernst Voigt in *Romanische Forschungen* 3, ed. Karl Vollmöller (Erlangen: vorlag von Andreas Deichert, 1887:281-314), (p. 309): Cordi, non carte, credas, que noueris arte, Quod, si carta cadat, tecum sapientia vadat.

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9. Seneca, *Epistula* 45.1 (LCL 75:290-291): Non refert, quam multos, sed quam bonos habeas;

But it is quality, rather than quantity, that matters; [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Here F 128 adds: just as it is said below, in chapter [380] To see (*Videre*). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)