150 Fruit [*Fructus*]

In Matt. 12[:33] it is said, “By the fruit the tree is known,” so the blessed mother is known from her blessed son Christ, Luke 1[:42]: “Blessed is the fruit of your womb.” This fruit is sought after because of itself to which through the virtuous work commonly, but it is impeded sometimes through our iniquity.

Therefore, it is sought after by the faithful because it is precious in value, Prov. 8[:19]: “His fruit is better,” [Prov. 3:15]: “than all riches: and all the things that are desired, are not to be compared with her.”

Second, because it is the best in taste, Can. [2:3]: “His fruit was sweet to my palate.” Concerning this Paul tasted, [Gal. 5:22].

Third, because it is most beautiful in color, so the picture is sought after, Gen. 3[:6]: “The woman saw that the tree was … fair to the eyes,” and it follows, “she took of the fruit thereof.”

Fourth, because it is sweet in odor just as the flower of the vine which delights and attracts toads, Eccli. 24[:23]; “As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.” Gen. 27[:27]: “Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field.”

Fifth, because it is effective in virtue, thus it is sought as a healing medicine, Ezech. 47[:12]: “The fruits thereof shall be for food, and the leaves thereof for medicine.”

¶ Sixth, because it is glorious in dignity, for it is the fruit of the king and from the part of the father and from the part of the mother, Eccli. 24[:23]: “My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches.”

¶ Seventh, because it is durable for eternity, Ezech. 47[:12]: “Their leaf shall not fall off, and their fruit shall not fail.”

¶ This second fruit is acquired through men of living faith. So, the tree does not live if it does not bring forth fruit, Psal. [1:3]: “And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters,” that is, of the scriptures, “which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season.”

Secondly, through the heat of charity, for without heat fruit is not produced, Psal. [126:2-3]: “When he shall give sleep to his beloved,” that is, of death, “behold the inheritance,” etc.

Thirdly, through expectation of hope before the suitable collection one does not look for fruit, Jam. 5[:7]: “Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.” Behold the farmer awaits the precious fruit, 1 Cor. 9[:10]: “He that ploughs, should plough in hope; and he that thrashes, in hope to receive fruit.”

Fourth, through the sowing of prudence, for he who studiously learns and teaches has the fruit of wisdom, John 15[:16]: “I have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit,” etc.

Fifth, through the cleansing of temperance, for the vineyard is purged and brings forth fruit, John 15[:2]: “Every one that bears fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Wis. 3[:13]: “Happy is … the undefiled, that hath not known bed in sin: she shall have fruit in the visitation of holy souls.” Rom. 6[:18, 22]: “Being then freed from sin, we have been made servants … to God, you have your fruit.”

Sixth, through the equity of justice, the sap in the tree symmetrically distributed creates the fruit, James 3[:18]: “And the fruit of justice is sown in peace.” Philip. 1[:11]: “Filled with the fruit of justice,” etc.

¶ Seventh, through the virtue of fortitude, the power of the seed is needed in the grain for this which ascends into fruit, Sap. 3[:15]: “The fruit of good labors is glorious. Heb. 12[:11]: “All chastisement for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: afterwards … the most peaceable fruit of justice.” And Can. 7[:8]: “I will go up into the palm tree and will take hold of the fruit thereof.”

¶ In the third place, this fruit is impeded lest it would be possessed by us for many reasons, and first through too much shading of the hypocrite, Eph. 5[:11]: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”

Secondly, through too much elevation of pride, because then the wind of vain glory takes away the fruit, Eccli. 6[:2-3]: “Extol not yourself in the thoughts of your soul like a bull: lest your strength be quashed by folly … and destroy your fruit.” And Jude [1:12] see “which are carried about by winds, trees of the autumn, unfruitful, twice dead.” Therefore, the fig does not want to be moved among trees lest its sweet fruits should perish, Ose. 9[:16]: “Their root is dried up; they shall yield no fruit.” In which it is against Eccli. 24[:42]: “I will water my garden of plants.”

Fourth, there is the gnawing of the worm, of the evil speaking of envy, Psal. [77:46]: “He gave up their fruits to the blast,” but like the good gardener he did not put in his garden any tree unless he hoped for fruit from it, neither does Christ in heaven. Therefore, when he came to the fig tree, he did not find fruit on the fig tree, he said, “Cut it down therefore: why does it encumber the ground?” Luke 13[:7]. Thus, says Christ to any one of us, but it is to be known here that there are some trees which do not give fruit, some give fruit, but they bring forth evil and bitter, sometimes however good and sweet. Thus, it is concerning men. For some flourish either in youth and not afterwards, for exteriorly in words and no good deed appears. These are like the rose which flowers beautifully, but does not bring forth fruit, and therefore with the flower falling to nothing it seems only good for burning up. Because of this the bride says to God in Can. [7:11-12]: “Come, my beloved … let us see if the vineyard flourish, if the flowers be ready to bring forth fruits.” Flowers quickly waste away and therefore the church looks for fruit. The tree flowers out of the soft wind, but when it lacks the heat of the sun, it does not bring forth fruit by the moisture of the earth. Thus, a person sometime out of the wind of nature or fortune flowers in the world, but unless he has enlightenment where there is the sun of Christ and the moisture of grace, he will not produce fruit.

¶ Again, there are some who do works of a kind of good, but because they are produced not from charity but because of the world, therefore they are worth nothing, just as a fruit which grows in the shade, Wis. 4[:5]: “their fruits shall be unprofitable, and sour to eat, and fit for nothing.” The goodness of the fruit comes from the heat and moisture, so good works from the moisture of grace and heat of charity. In the figure of these was the blessing of Joseph, Deut. 33[:14]: “Of the fruits brought forth by the sun and by the moon,” the sun as far as the heat, the moon as far as the moisture.

¶ In the third place some make good fruit with flowers in the good of riches, Eccli. 24[:23]: “My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches.”

¶ From what has been said now, it is evident that for good fruit three elements are required, namely, heat, moisture, and work.

Concerning the first, note that however much more one approaches the south, so much more are the fruits. So however much more one approaches to God, so much the better one works.

¶ Concerning the second, note according to the Philosopher, in the book *De vegetalibus*,[[1]](#endnote-1)that trees abounding with a rich moisture around the roots are not lacking in fruit. Thus, because they are abundant in the moisture of grace, such a one is described in the Psal. [1:3]: “He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season.” Jer. 17[:7-8]: “Blessed be the man that trusts in the Lord … and he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters,” etc., up to “neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit.” This is “the tree of life” standing “on both sides of the river, bearing twelve fruits … every month, Apoc. 22[:2].

¶ Concerning the third, it is necessary that the gardener prune the roots and the tree, thus man ought to prune away his sins to the extent that he may bear fruit, Isai. 27[:9]: “This is all the fruit, that the sin thereof should be taken away,” and the labor will not be for nothing, “For the fruit of good labors is glorious,” Wis. 3[:15]. Concerning this the Apostle says, Rom. 6[:22]: “Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification.”

¶ This pruning is necessary because we have lived here for a long time, because although sometimes the tree is good, however from the evil of the earth they suck up harmful elements. So it is concerning our flesh because “the fruit of the Spirit is, charity, joy, peace,” etc., Gal. 5[:22, 19], but “the fruits of the flesh are fornication, uncleanness,” etc., which are contrary to the fruits of the Spirit, just as it is said there in Luke 6[:43-44]: “There is no good tree that brings forth evil fruit,” and it follows, “every tree is known by its fruit.”

¶ This is to be understood morally, that good fruit arises from three ways: from holy contemplation, as if from the roots, Eccli. 37[:25]: “the fruit of his understanding is commendable.” The good root confers much to the fruitfulness of the tree, so the contemplation of the heart to the value of the works. Wherefore Isais says 4 Kings 19[:30]: “Whatsoever shall be left of the house of Juda, shall take root downward, and bear fruit upward.”

Second, in holy speaking, Prov. 12[:]: “By the fruit of his own mouth shall a man be filled with good things.” And Isai. 57[:19]: “I created the fruit of the lips, peace.”

Third, in holy action, Matt. 3[:8]: “Bring forth fruit worthy of penance.” Et Prov. 10[:16]: “The work of the just is unto life: but the fruit of the wicked, unto sin.” Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 65,[[2]](#endnote-2) the fruit of the word is double: in good works and in the confession of the faith. But the fruit of good works is more acceptable with God in peace than in persecution. No one strikes you for how you live, but for how you believe.

1. Aristotle, *On Plants* 2.7 827a10-18 (Barnes 2:1267): A plant which producdes its fruit before its leaves contains a considerable amount of oily juice, and when the heat which is natural to the plant has concocted the juice, its maturity will quickly follow, and the juice will acquire force and boil up0 within the branches of the lant and will prevent the moisture from rising: the result is that the fruit appears before the leaves. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Hom. 31.7 (PG 56:794-795): Fructus autem verbi Dei est duplex, in operibus bonis, et in confessione fidei. Sed fructus bone operis gratiosior est apud Deum in pace, quam in persequutione: quia ihn persecutione nemo te discutit, quomodo vivis, sed quomodo credis. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)