308 Root (*Radix*)

Just as a tree without a root does not stand in the wind nor grow nor bear fruit, so neither does a man in this life without the root of charity, Eph. 3[:17]: “That being rooted and founded in charity.” Therefore, Christ says in Luke 8[:13]: “These have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation, they fall away.” According to the Philosopher, in the book *De plantis*,[[1]](#endnote-1) trees which do not have deep roots are shorter of life and duration. So, they who are not rooted in the deepness of humility last a short time in the spiritual life, Wis. 4{:3]: “Bastard slips shall not take deep root.” Because such ones not of deepness do not bear fruit, because they draw little moisture.

Wherefore they who ought to bear fruit, if they draw little moisture of grace, they bear little spiritual fruit, Jer. 17[:7-8]: “Blessed be the man that trusts in the Lord,” and it follows, “that spreads out its roots towards moisture,” etc., “neither shall it cease to bring forth fruit.” Therefore, Isaiah said, 37[:31]: “That which shall be saved of the house of Juda, shall take root downward, and shall bear fruit upward.” So those who are of the house of Juda, that is, trusting in the name of God, humbling themselves, send their roots down and draw moisture from the substance, and they make fruit of good work upwards, Isai. 11[:1]: “There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse,” etc.

¶ So in anyone deeply rooted in humility, he will flower in honesty and upon him shall rest the Spirit of the Lord. Significantly he ought to be called the flower that ascends from the root, because it happens sometimes that the flower so ascends. Fruit however does not follow. Wherefore Ambrose in the *Hexameron*, c. 11,[[2]](#endnote-2) says that a vine first fixes the live root, then it brings forth. So, the people of the Church as if some root of the faith are planted. Wherefore that of the Psal. [79:9-10]: “You have brought a vineyard out of Egypt: you have cast out the Gentiles and planted it … you planted the roots thereof, and it filled the land.” Augustine, book two, *De doctrina,* c. 11,[[3]](#endnote-3) says the hyssop is a humble herb, and yet nothing is more penetrating for it penetrates a rock with its root. So, one rooted in charity penetrates obstinate hearts. Therefore, says the Psal. [50:9]: “Sprinkle me, Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed.” Wherefore Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum*,[[4]](#endnote-4) when you see the tree with leaves growing pale, you will judge a vice to be in the root. So, when the body of man is undisciplined, you will judge the vice to be in the heart.

1. Aristotle, *On Plants* 1.4 819b5-11 (Barnes 2:1257): Again there are other plants, as we have said, intermediate between trees and small herbs, such as are called bushes, containing in their roots many branches, such as sallow and bramble Garden herbs are those which have many stems arising from one root, and many branches, such as rue, cabbage and the like. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, 3.12.49 (PL 14.176): Quae ad imitationem vitae nostrae primum vivam defigit radicem, deinde quia natura flexibilis et caduca est, quasi brachiis quibusdam, [Col.0176C] ita et claviculis quidquid apprehenderit, stringit, hisque se erigit et attollit. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 2.41.62 (PL 34:64): hyssopo fuisse signatos (Exod. XII, 22). Herba haec mitis et humilis est, et nihil fortius et penetrabilius ejus radicibus: ut in charitate radicati et fundati possimus comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit latitudo, et longitudo, et altitudo, et profundum, id est, crucem Domini: cujus latitudo dicitur in transverso ligno, quo extenduntur manus; longitudo, a terra usque ad ipsam latitudinem, quo a manibus et infra totum corpus affigitur; altitudo, a latitudine sursum usque ad summum, cui adhaeret caput; profundum vero, quod terrae infixum absconditur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. (Pseudo-)Chrysostomus, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* homilia 38 ex cap. 21.12 (PG 56:839): Vidit arborem pallentibus foliis marcidam, et intellexit studiosus agricola, quia laesuram in radicibus haberet. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)