

BY THEIR FRUIT

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

—MATTHEW 7:15

The art of falsehood is to appear genuine. To print counterfeit currency, for example, we would not print a three dollar bill for the simple reason it does not exist. For something to be counterfeited, it must have the marks of the genuine article if it is going to stand a chance of deceiving anyone.

From the infancy of the church of Jesus Christ into our present day, false prophets have covered themselves well, and Scripture warns us they will continue to do so until the end of this age. False preachers convincingly play the role, learn the Christian language and give the appearance of performing good works. In Matthew 7:22, Jesus said, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’”

In today’s world, many people have become accomplished performers and exercise what appear to be spiritual gifts. They will plead with God on the Day of Judgment, and argue their case with the delusion that their deception may have extended even to Jesus. But the One who is never deceived replies, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (7:23)

Cults and aberrations of true Christianity rarely identify themselves as such in their initial stages. They generally appear as having rediscovered a neglected emphasis, and are careful to use legitimate language. Many of the more disastrous cults of recent decades have their roots in evangelical Christianity, from which they drew new recruits, training them to deceive people with familiar terminology usually for monetary gain. But they are describing something that proves alien. They are wolves in sheep's clothing!

“By their fruit you will recognise them,” Jesus said. (7:20). Fruit takes a while to mature. It is wise to test any new idea or movement which is ambiguous for its genuineness, not on the initial sweet smelling blossom, but on its maturing fruit. The fruit of any Christian movement is not to be measured by whether it does people good, for any movement would die a swift death if it did not have its beneficiaries. The measurement by which the genuine article may be assessed is not evident in luxury cars, tailor-made suits and seaside mansions, but in the salvation of souls and the making of disciples. The ultimate test of the fruit is its conformity to the person of Jesus Christ, for He is Himself Christianity.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, grant me discernment in recognizing falsehood in what many pass off as Christian teaching, preaching and healing. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Would I recognize false Christian teaching?