

ry to be acquainted with some *note* by which they may be discovered. The Lord says, "you shall know them from their FRUITS."

The "*works*" of the Teacher, then, are given as a criterion of his Doctrine. This is the sense in which "FRUITS" is taken in the 12 ch. of St. Mathew; and, even in what follows in the 19th verse of this chapter, "Every tree which produceth not good *Fruit* shall be cast down and cast into the fire"—*Fruit* must evidently receive a like interpretation.

The efficiency of this mark in discovering the false doctrine of a *Teacher* who *comes* is very general—it may not be universal. Such persons, being "self-condemned," and rather personifying an ideal character, than acting a real one, will generally betray themselves, by the strong impulses of unassisted nature,—the mouth speaking "from the abundance of the heart" (Matt. 12, 34) and since man is prone to evil from his youth—when the sign of grace hath been slackened.

In the same sense our Lord continues that "a good tree cannot bring forth bad *Fruit*—nor a bad tree bring forth good *Fruit*." That is, by *natural* efficacy alone this cannot be supposed possible: and, as the Teachers alluded to, are denuded of grace, nature—perverse nature—will at some period manifest its deformity.

"Expellis naturam furca tamen usque recurrit."

The same language is applied in the same sense to the Scribes and Pharisees in the 23 ch. 23 v. of St. Matt. "How can you speak good things when you are evil?" The Saviour did not mean, that to speak "good things" was metaphysically impossible to them; for he tells us that they "sat in the chair of Moses," and that we are to "*do as they say*." Hence, he can only mean, as in the verse above explained, that *of themselves* they are incapable of speaking the "good things" alluded to.

The Manicheans derived the existence of their "Evil Principle," from this text; the Pelagians erased Original Sin; the Donatists concluded that the Sacraments followed the moral nature of their dispensers; and the Calvinists eliminated free will from the catalogue of human attributes. All seemed to forget the language of the Saviour in the 12 ch. 34 v. "Either make the tree good, and its *Fruit* good, or evil, and its *Fruit* evil;" where the power of producing the good Fruit or bad

Fruit is supposed to be possessed by the subject whom he is exhorting.

"Therefore," concludes the Redeemer, in the sense of our exposition, "from their fruits, you shall *know them*."

This text, by a childish exposition, is made to prove that *works* do not make man *good*—but only manifest his goodness; because "the *Fruit*" does not make "the *Tree*" good—but only manifests its goodness. Such commentators do not seem to have applied their interpretation to the second part of the text; otherwise, they should not have erred as they have, by applying it to the first. If "good Fruits" make not the tree "good,"—"bad Fruits" surely make not the tree "bad;" rather an inconvenient conclusion, as by it, a man may be "bad," before he has done anything to make him so. On such a principle Adam having been created "good" committed no "evil" by his fall: or, having committed "evil," he was not rendered morally "bad" by his transgression. All these conclusions lead to absurdities, which might have been avoided by remembering that the "Tree" is here the representative of a *moral*, not a physical cause. Hence the similitude should be urged only in a *moral* sense; that is, that of its own nature, "a bad tree cannot bring forth good Fruit, &c."

In another and not less important view, we are all met by False Prophets, on the journey of life. They come in the familiar garb of those, who are interested in our happiness, and with words of seductive kindness they gain an ascendancy over our souls. They are the passions and feelings of mere human nature, under the guidance of which hope has been so often awakened, and so often destroyed. Pretending to a perfect acquaintance with the path to happiness, they obtrude themselves upon the Pilgrim's way. They are radiant with the light of passion and brightened with the hues of earthly feeling. Cautious in their first advances, steady in maintaining every position they acquire, they too frequently obtain an absolute mastery. The moral intelligence becomes clouded; the moral instinct corrupt: life becomes the theatre of a universal moral deception—a realm peopled with fantasies, that mock while they allure. And it is only when the talisman of a coming futurity dissipates the vision, that we find, we have been