



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye wil
enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

WHO ARE THE OFF-SHOOTS? NAME CALLING NOT A NEW ART!

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There is a sentiment among the rank and file of the laity of the Church; that is, among those who have not embraced the heretical teachings of Dr. Desmond Ford, nor accepted the plagiarism charges of Elder Walter Rea, that anyone who differs with the hierarchy is an "off-shoot." Further, anything which does not carry the official imprimatur of the publishing committees of the Church is an "off-shoot" publication. This is not new, nor peculiar to the present time. The charge of "off-shoot" has been a favorite smear tactic used by religious leaders in their attempt to blind the eyes of sincere seekers of truth, and to keep those who might wish to investigate from doing so.

An "off-shoot" by definition is "a side root or branch from the main stem of the plant." The first "off-shoot" was Lucifer. Jesus told it very simply as to why he became an off-shoot - "He... abode not in the truth." (John 8:44) And in the same breath, Jesus charged the religious leaders of His day as being of their "father the devil." They were the true off-shoots of Christ's day; that is, if the criterion upon which judgment is to be based, is truth! And why? Jesus emphatically stated - "He that is of God [the main stem] heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (John 8:47) In other words - "off-shoots!"

This charge by Christ stung these so-called guardians of orthodoxy. They said to Him - "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." (verse 48) Calling Christ a "Samaritan" was the very worse epithet they could use to cause the rank and file of Israel to have nothing to do with Jesus, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. (John 4:9) To this they added "and hast a devil." In so doing they sought to toss back the charge upon Jesus that He abode not in the truth. Jesus ignored the charge of being a Samaritan, but emphatically denied the allegation that He was possessed with a devil, and stated why - "I have not a devil; but I honor my Father." (John 8:49)

Herein was the basic difference between Himself and the religious leaders of His day. These leaders and spiritual guardians of the people would not believe Jesus nor the message He brought from God. Why? Jesus revealed the answer by asking on another occasion, a question - "How can ye believe, which receive honor one from another, and seek not that honor which cometh from God only?" (John 5:44) When we seek the honor and prestige that men can give, rather than seeking to uphold the truth and honor of God alone, we will compromise the truth so as to gain the favor of men. At this point, we become "off-shoots!"

The Jewish leadership played the "off-shoot" name calling to the hilt. After the encounter with the Jews as to who was of the devil, or who had a devil, Jesus performed a miracle by giving sight to one who had been born blind. It being on the Sabbath day, "eyebrows were raised." The former blind man

was brought before the Pharisees. One segment after hearing the testimony stated - "This man is not of God." He is an "off-shoot." Some were not quite so sure because here was a miracle that could not be gainsaid. (John 9:1-16) However, as the issue became more intense, they closed ranks behind the one argument which seemed to keep everybody in line. To the former blind man, they responded haughtily - "We be Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not whence He is." (vers. 28-29) In simple words, they sought to picture Jesus as having so far departed from the norm which they defined as "Moses" that they were unable to perceive of Him as ever associated in concepts which they professed. And He never was. That was why He was where He was, and they were where they were. If He had sought honor of men, and had been willing to look to them for the guidance of His mission, they would have readily accepted Him. Had not Nicodemus stated their original evaluation of Him, when he said - "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God." (John 3:2)

These ancient guardians of orthodoxy find their counterparts today in those who profess to acknowledge historic Adventist beliefs while they adhere to the compromises as presented in the books - Questions on Doctrine and Movement of Destiny. They further confess their allegiance to the Statement of Beliefs which reflects the heresy of these books and continues the compromise so as to be accepted by both the Evangelicals and the World Council of Churches. Those who expose this departure from the truth are labeled as "off-shoots." This as effectively closes the minds of the "devout" as did the charge that Christ was a "Samaritan" close the minds of the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that they could join in the cry, "Crucify Him," with their religious leaders.

There is an interesting parable that Jesus told which should cause us very carefully to consider who really is an "off-shoot." In connection with telling of the signs which would mark the end-times, Jesus also gave some illustrations to help clarify the issues which would be involved in those end-times. One such illustration is the parable of the Ten Virgins. [I am well aware of the fact that the early pioneers in the Advent Movement applied aspects of this parable to the experience associated with the summer of

of 1844 and immediately after the Disappointment. However, in 1896, Ellen G. White wrote - "My mind was carried into the future, when the signal will be given, 'Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.'" (R&H, Feb. 11, 1896)]

Jesus pictured the Ten Virgins as all together in one group - albeit, all asleep. Suddenly at midnight, a voice is heard from outside [off-shoot?] the sleeping virgins calling, "Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out to a meeting of Him." (Matt. 25:6 Gr.) Suddenly, there is an arousal. All trim their lamps for they all perceive the nearness of the end! But five discover they are short on oil - spiritual perception - and their lamps start to flicker in the final waiting period. These go to those who merchandise in the things of God - the hierarchy, the so-called guardians of the spiritual interests of the people. The other five - the wise virgins - go out to a meeting with their Lord. There is a separation! Who are the "off-shoots"? The wise or the foolish?

While the foolish turn to the venders of "spiritual" merchandise, the Bridegroom comes and they that are ready go in with Him to the marriage. The door is shut! (Matt. 25:10) Again, who are the "off-shoots"?

I am sure that the venders - the hierarchy - would console the foolish with the idea that the wise separated themselves from them because they continued to listen to them, the venerable supporters of orthodoxy. These venders in heavenly wares urge the foolish - "Stay with the ship." Those others - the wise - are very foolish; they have become "off-shoots"! But while the foolish consider themselves wise by placing their trust in men, the door is shut against them, and when they knock, the Lord confesses woefully, "I know you not." Who then are the real "off-shoots" --- if YOU are really serious about Heaven?

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