

THE PRIEST OF GOD . . . who ministered in a heathen temple
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(Judges 17:7-12)

"Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod . . .
(Judges 17 :5, 6). Yes, the idolater was very proud of his
temple, and his fanatical eyes shone with delight when he
surveyed his collection of gods. "And there was a young
man out of Beth-lehem-judah, one of the family of
Judah, who was a Levite . . . and he came to mount
Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed . . . And
Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me
a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of
silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals.
So the Levite went in" (,vv. 7-10).

An Unemployed Priest-Why?

He belonged to the Levites-the people responsible for
the upkeep and the services of the sanctuary at Shiloh.
Had he followed the example of his fellow Levites, he
would have been busy in the service of God; but some-
thing had interfered with his normal course of duty.
What was it? (i) Had he sinned? And as a result had
he been banished from the ministry of God's house? (ii)
Had he been frustrated in his ambitions? Had he served
in a minor position, and longed for a more important and
a more remunerative task? (iii) Had he been restless?
Had the work in God's house bored him, and had he
seized the first opportunity to leave the district? Thus
he forsook his task and departed-an unemployed priest
who had lost both the desire and the opportunity of
serving in holy things.

An Unfaithful Priest-Why?

"And the Levite was content to dwell with the man;
and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And
Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became
his priest, and was in the house of Micah" (vv. 11, 12). The
proud owner of the temple escorted him around the build-
ing, and his eyes shone with satisfaction as he entrusted
the care of the shrine to the young priest from Bethlehem.
The newcomer turned away, and was content. This was
vastly different from the other sanctuary in which he had
served. It would appear that he had been demoted; but
had he? "Ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit
of apparel, and thy food" (v. 10). Demotion or promo-
tion? It all depended upon one's viewpoint. Why did
this priest accept the position? (i) if he had sinned, was
this the continuation of his rebellion? Did he rejoice at
the possibility of carrying his enmity a little further? (ii)
! he had been ambitious, did the new offer appear to be
the chance of a lifetime? He could become a high priest
in his own right, and his financial embarrassment would
disappear for ever. (iii) If he had been restless, had his
journey produced loneliness? Did he enter the employ
of Micah in order to find fellowship? Arrayed in new
vestments he ministered in Micah's temple, but behold,
an angel in rags!

An Unholy Priest-Why?

When the Danites came to steal the cherished idols
(18:11-26) they said to the priest, "Hold thy peace, lay
thy hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us
a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest

THE PRIEST OF GOD . . . who ministered in a heathen temple unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people." It was not difficult to break the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," for he had already broken the greatest commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." And in new surroundings, the house of idols became the greatest treasure of the Danites-And all the time the house of God was in Shiloh (18 : 31). All the ambitions of the Levite had been realized. He was a great man, and had probably become wealthy. He could laugh at the silent impotence of the place in Shiloh, for he had prospered amazingly since the time when he threw off the restraint of that irksome sanctuary. He had demonstrated the fact that a man could get along quite nicely without God and His house. Yes, his heart was filled with satisfaction-and then, alas, it was time to die. Suddenly his idols seemed to be unresponsive, and his desperate prayers remained unanswered. And then he was summoned to stand before God. He was pale and speechless; he was bankrupt. He had gained a world but had lost his soul.

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