

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*Dr. Esolen makes some important points in his article, “When the Priest Turns Athiest”*

- 1. He brings out the role of the priest (OT & NT) to direct the people to God as God has anointed the priest to do.*
- 2. He illustrates the privileges granted to the priest (clericalism) so that the priest be freed from servile work in order to fulfill priestly duties*
- 3. He illustrates the power of the priests over the people which can be used for God or misused for selfish reasons (Eli’s sons demanding sex from the women, later priests/bishops from boys and men.)*
- 4. Esolen shows how temples to false gods are built by Solomon the king whose job it was to protect the religion and the priest.*
- 5. He shows the depravity of the priests, prophets, and kings, those anointed by God for service, and how it spills over to the people who then become unfaithful or if already so, fail to be drawn back to God.*

*He did NOT say as the bible does that the kings built altars to false gods **IN THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD***

*He did NOT say as the bible does that the priests offered sacrifices to the false gods **IN THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD***

*He did not say as the bible does that the prophets prophesied by the **FALSE gODS**.*

*The corruption comes slowly. It obviously begins in the desires of the heart of the leaders for things that God is not offering them beyond the generous clerical benefits so they can exercise their office. It shows the misuse of power, and demand for respect and prestige, and material benefits beyond what is offered by God so that the leaders be free to minister as God anoints them to do in the OT as priests prophets kings, and for all the baptized who share in Jesus as priest prophet and king (anointing with the sacred chrism).*

*Temples to false gods are all around us: the 52” TV I have with the temptation to avoid the spiritual in order to watch sports or mindless but fun shows; the internet where one can waste hours and pervert his soul; Planned Parenthood clinics to kill children in view of all; “gentlemen’s clubs” with neon signs; clergy gatherings for drinking, gossip, and*

*sometimes sex for certain priests as we saw in Rome at the CDF building; pick up bars, etc, etc.*

*One more would be the vapid worship by spiritually empty bishops and priests in their weak celebrations for God's people, giving communion to the divorced and remarried and practicing homosexuals. In protestant churches the devil is invited in when adulterous 2nd marriages are celebrated and "gay" unions are blessed.*

*The most important altar for a priest, and indeed every man and woman, is the altar of his soul, his conscience where man is alone with God. Every person and especially Roman Catholic priests need to be with Jesus at the altar of the soul intensely for a period each day, and several other times a day. This is reflected in our Liturgy of the Hours building on the daily sacrifices and hours of prayer specified in the old Testament.*

*Just as Satan is in the world in the external false temples illustrated above, he can still enter the soul to draw the priest away from Jesus as was done for Eli's sons, for King Solomon, other priests prophets and kings, and as has been done for McCarrick and so many other priests and bishops today.*

*I stopped going to convocations, Chrism Masses, deanery meetings, days of reflection because for me, they were empty of real spiritual life, and ordered to socialism which does not interest me. I was ordained to preach Christ and Him crucified, and to allow Him to express His mercies through me.*

*Retirement affords me an escape from those men and events that would make me another Hophni or Phinehas, another Solomon, another Jeroboam, another Manasseh, or worse, another McCarrick or even a McElroy, Cupich, Francis, Martin, Rosica, Stokes, Tobin, Farrell, Palmeirio, Parolin, etc and those who are promoting worldly things.*

*I have my holy hour each day, and still demons try to invade my thoughts and desires. So I have to run back to Jesus even after the holy hour throughout the day. I am not always successful at fighting off every attack in thought, speech, desire, but I know where to go: to the depth of my soul with Jesus the eternal Son of God who told me clearly and audibly in the first years after my ordination to keep me free from ambition and*

*faithful to my duty, “You never will be a bishop, just be faithful in preaching my word to my people.”*

*Death will be welcome one day when I see Jesus face to face, and the demons will no longer be able to tempt me anymore. In the meantime, Jesus is the answer. Many men, because of voids or neglect in their upbringing, look to sex, power, possessions, prestige, the good life in first class travel, top shelf liquor, power sessions for making decisions, use of the bodies of others for pleasure and control, fall as did Hophni and Phinehas the sons of Eli.*

*Samuel then was sent to the Jewish people to rescue them, a precursor of Jesus who was sent to redeem us all. I am not that Samuel, and don't want to be. I just want a pure altar in my soul to worship my Lord and His strength to fight the demons who crouch around me enticing me to their side against my God. I want a clean heart, and Jesus gives me that in prayer and in forgiveness.*

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## When the Priest Turns Atheist

[Anthony Esolen](#)  
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When John Milton names and describes the worst of the fallen angels, he tells us where in the Mediterranean world and the Levant they set themselves up as false gods to be adored. The closer to Sion, the worse you are. So in that sense Moloch, whom he names first, is, after Satan and Beelzebub, the worst of all.

It's bad enough that he was worshipped by the nearby Ammonites:

*Nor content*

*With such audacious neighborhood, he caused  
The wisest heart of Solomon to build  
His temple right against the temple of God  
On that opprobrious hill; and made his grove  
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence  
And black Gehenna called, the type of Hell.*

Can you do worse than entice the builder of God's temple, King Solomon, to build you a temple too, cheek by jowl with the true one? How can you get any closer than that?

You can get closer. Milton is leading up to it. The last of the devils he names, meant to be the apparent opposite of the bloodthirsty and warlike Moloch, is Belial the lewd, the effeminate, the lover of vice for its own sake.

Where was Belial worshiped? The answer is unsettling:

*To him no temple stood  
Or altar smoked, yet who more oft than he  
In temples and at altars, when the priest  
Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled  
With lust and violence the house of God?*

Belial does not need to erect any temples or altars for himself. He is already there, when the priest turns atheist. That does not let the laity off free either, because Belial has ensconced himself also in places of government and in the lewd customs of the people:

*In courts and palaces he also reigns  
And in luxurious cities, where the noise  
Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,  
And injury and outrage; and when night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.*

The specific vice that the sons of Belial indulge is unnatural:

*Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night  
In Gibeah, when the hospitable door  
Exposed a matron to avoid worse rape.*

So we have the child-devouring Moloch on one end, brutal and bloody, shouldering his temple against God's own, and on the other end Belial of the unnatural sexual evil, *entering* both temple and court and taking over the streets at night, driving the way people live, or causing them to hide in their homes, if they can.



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Moloch and Belial; child-murder and sodomy; bloodshed for nothing, and seed sown for nothing; war for its own sake, and lewdness for its own sake; a fertility god who eats up your increase, and a god of sterility whose vice does not give you any increase in the first place.

Nothing is new under the sun, said the Preacher. People have wondered whether priests who enticed young people into sexual acts, consensual or not, can have believed in God. I have tried to remind everyone of man's limitless capacity for play-acting and self-deception, not to mention contradiction. But perhaps we might look at the matter from the other end. Milton did not say that the sons of

Eli, Phinehas, and Hophni, were atheists when they took up Eli's role at Shiloh. He said that they *turned* atheist.

Some people lose their faith in God because of the troubles they suffer. They despair, overcome by their feeling of abandonment. Others lose their faith in God because of the successes they enjoy.

They presume, inveigled by their feeling of invincibility. What is the case of the priest?

I am not laying down a universal rule. Each priest is a man like any one of us, and he may suffer what any of us may suffer. But if we ask what are the *special* dangers to the faith of the priest, we have to conclude that in our world they have taken up residence on the side of power, comfort, and prestige, and not on the side of weakness, physical privation, and humiliation.

I am not making an accusation here. I am not saying that priests ought to be on a diet of bread and water, and that people ought to kick them off the sidewalk. I am noticing a fact. Our priests do not lose their faith by persecution. They lose it by complacency.

What happens if they have lost the faith? Again we should be careful to remember the tangles and contradictions of the human heart. We flee from the hard truth. The disgraced Cardinal McCarrick may have believed that he believed. But what would you do if you were turning atheist, and your whole life had been directed toward one thing alone, the ministry of God?

You can't go back to your old trade, because you have none. You can't sell your services, because you have none to sell. You can't afford to go to school, even if you could bear the embarrassment. You are not inured to hard physical labor, so you can't get work with a landscaping crew. You remain where you are.

If you are sincere, you pray, and pray, and mortify yourself, and get a sound spiritual director, and you weather the storm. **If you are weak and insincere, you let the faith grow more and more tenuous, while, to shore up your image, you tell yourself that you are the harbinger of a new faith, a new way of believing. You know what *really* belongs to the faith and what does not. You tear things down. You envy people who have devotions that do not move you. You secretly delight in failure.**

**You go where the world leads. You must take your direction from someone. Every human being follows a flag; atheists as much as anybody. Yet the boy Samuel will arrive, and he will bring you no comfort. Let it be soon, O Lord.**

**\*Image:** *A Procession of Flagellants* by Francisco Goya, c. 1815  
[Museo de la Real Academia de San Fernando, Madrid]

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