

✓ E. Y. Mullins, 1901

KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD

Sermon preached at Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, May 10, 1901, by President E. Y. Mullins, D.D., LL.D., Louisville, Kentucky. Rewritten and revised since the World War.

Text:- "He made us a Kingdom, priests to God and his Father."
Revelations 1:6.

In this text Christians are called a "Kingdom" and "priests." In other New Testament passages they are described as Kings. Thus we become kings and priests unto God through the mediatorial work of Christ.

The ideas of king and priest could not be combined in the Old Testament. A king could not act as priest, nor a priest as king; but in the New Testament Jesus unites the two ideas in the same character.

Now kingship stands for power, dominion, glory. Every form of power is a kingly element of life. Priesthood stands for fellowship between man and God, and between man and man. Priesthood represents the sympathetic, the patient, the long-suffering, the helpful, in man's relation to man. Kings in the old sense of autocrats ruling by arbitrary will are anachronisms.

"God said: I am tired of kings,

I suffer them no more.

Up to my ears each morning brings

The outrage of the poor."

But the kingly element in life remains. It was never greater than it is today.

Priests in the old sense of custodians of divine grace and salvation, monopolizing the privilege of approaching God, are an anachronism in modern life. Yet the priestly element of sympathy, of patience, of fellowship and service was never so much needed as it is needed today.

Human progress, or civilization, or true culture in its complete sense has been the result of the union in due proportion of the kingly and priestly elements in life. Human failure has been the failure to see the relation between the two. The kingly has ignored the priestly, or the priestly has ignored the kingly. The race of man has slowly spelled out its sentences of light, word by word, and often at fearful cost in pain and sacrifice.

Let us apply this truth in some of the ways which the modern world requires, and see how it contains the clue to the maze in which the world seems to walk. We shall see that, distracted as mankind is today, here is a gleam which we may follow to our era of higher and better things.

First, consider this truth in the realm of personal life or, as we say, the development of personality. Here we need the two elements, the kingly and priestly. We talk much of the self, and two groups of words compounded with self represent the two elements. Self-emptying, self-denial, self-sacrifice stand for the priestly side. Self-discipline, self-direction, self-development belong to the kingly. But character never comes to self realization until both elements enter. A young man or woman has the priestly impulse to love and service, but fails to appreciate the kingly attainments that must go with it. The young preacher is ready to be "laid upon the altar", but may fail to consider whether there is anything of value in the thing so laid. Self-development is

essential if self-sacrifice is worth anything. If a man is drowning and a swimmer risks his life to rescue him, the rescued man would be very grateful if the self-sacrifice of the would-be rescuer had been preceded by a great deal of self-development. A man must win a certain degree of kingship before his sacrifice can bear fruit.

Paracelsus, you remember, set out to explore life. He compared himself to a pearl diver in whose life there are two super moments --- first when, a pauper, he stands ready to plunge into the sea, and second when, a prince, he rises with his pearl. What was his experience? The pearl he sought was power. He found it. He sought the kingly element, and it came to him as a result of his seeking. But it did not satisfy, as he confessed. It was because he omitted love, the priestly factor, "I gazed on power", he says, "Till I grew blind. I could not take my eyes from that." What, then is the use of power? It is to set love free. What, then, is the use of love? It is to give power its true direction. A man finds himself, comes to himself, realizes himself just in proportion as he becomes a king in the elements of power and a priest in the use of power. One man doubts himself, his possibilities, and remains a dwarf, it may be with priestly impulses to bless. Another becomes a king in power, but remains stunted in altruistic impulse. It is in the union of the two elements that the ideal is realized.

Again, let us apply the principle to the sphere of citizenship. A few years ago a series of articles appeared in one of our religious papers entitled "Letters to a King." They were on the subject of citizenship, and addressed to a young man just arrived at the age of twenty-one. They emphasized the truth that the American is a sovereign. He

is one of the sovereign people. The ballot is his scepter. He is a true king. The writer tried to impress on the young man his kingly function. He warned against a lazy kingship which lacked energy to think out political duty; against partisan kingship which worshipped blindly at a party shrine; against a materialistic kingship which thought of the ballot merely as a means of gain; against a blind kingship which allowed a boss to usurp the king's own place.

But he is also a priest. I always have felt that the first series should have been followed by another entitled "Letters to a Priest".

In our economic life we have developed great captains of industry. Men have learned to guide and combine the great currents of trade and finance. They have amassed fabulous fortunes. Some of them are true servants, true priests of God and man. But too often the kingly power has been divorced from the priestly ideal. Alas, we have had the war profiteer with us, in spite of the holy ends for which America fought. Capital has matched its wits against labor, and labor has pitted its wits against capital. War among the classes has become one of the acute aspects of modern civilization. The outcome has not been satisfactory. The logic of the clash of the kingly elements of life is seen in the extremes of our day. Radical social reformers wish to overthrow the present social order root and branch, because it produces giants who love to exploit their fellowmen.

Sinbad, the sailor, was shipwrecked. You remember the giant he found on the island who ate a sailor every time he got hungry. Men point to the extreme of power in the industrial world and say it is Sinbad's giant over again. On the side of labor we have the I.W.W. and similar organizations at the other extreme. In both cases it is merely

a form of the kingly element contending with another form. Where there has been improvement, it has been due to the union of the two. Progress is through mutual trust, respect, appreciation, recognition of rights, desire to perform duty. This is the great lesson of Christianity for us today. Jesus Christ has become king in millions of lives. But he won his kingship through priestly sacrifice. His kingdom was built on a cross.

The fundamental meaning of the great war is that it was a clash between the kingly and the priestly elements in the conception of the state. Autocracy stands for the kingly, and democracy stands for the priestly element. Here are the two theories of the state; one says the citizen exists for the state; the other says the state exists for the citizen. The kingly ideal says the meaning of government is brute domination. The priestly ideal says the meaning of government is trusteeship. The kingly ideal was incarnated in the old German state. Its formula was: The Kaiser is the God-appointed ruler of Prussia; Prussia is the God-appointed ruler of Germany, and Germany is the God-appointed ruler of the world. The kingly ideal had its exponent in a Treitschke, a Nietzsche, a Bernhardi. Its fundamental assumption is that weakness is the only possible sin of the state, and that the state knows no moral law. The corollary of this was a crushed Belgium, and nameless horrors on land and sea, including the sinking of the Lusitania.

The priestly ideal says the state is for the people. Man comes first, institutions come second. What the world wants and needs is not less of power, but more of sympathy. The kingly element of life must be supplemented by the priestly. Why did the Hague conference

and agreements prove so futile? The answer is not far to seek. When the nations sat around the conference table they wore their priestly vestments. Brotherhood, humanity and sympathy were the professed ideals for all. But on the part of some the priestly robes were hypocritical robes. In the background there lurked the kingly theory of the state, in deadly contradiction to the ideals of the conference table. The result was that the Hague agreements became mere "scraps of paper".

We must have a regenerated theory of the state before the world can get far on the road to a permanent peace. Hague agreements come to little if based on contradictory doctrines of the function of government. America is a priestly nation. She points to the Spanish-American war, to Cuba, to her declared policy with the Philippines. Our entrance into the great world war had no sordid motive. The love of humanity, jealousy for human rights, sympathy with the oppressed, a sense of trusteeship for civilization---these were her animating motives, all priestly motives. She had abundant kingly power. America with all her resources laid those resources on the altar. But "he that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

It may be further noted that the kingly ideal, taken by itself and apart from the priestly, is self-destructive to the state. Germany taught the doctrine that might is right, and Germany sought to destroy the world in the interest of German supremacy. Ambition for power, however, destroys itself. If a predatory state aggrandizes itself at the expense of weaker states, the logical outcome of the principle is that the weaker states are destroyed. Their resources

are absorbed by the strong state, with the result ultimately that the strong state has no resources apart from itself. Inevitably, the inhabitants of such a state, trained in the idea that might is right, will fall upon and devour each other, because resources on the outside will have been exhausted. The outcome will be the ultimate destruction of the state which adopts as its motto, "might is right."

On the other hand, the state which adopts the priestly ideal along with the kingly studies the interests of other nations as well as its own. Patriotism then ceases to be a narrow and exclusive ideal, and is broad enough to consider the rights and interests of humanity. This has been the great defect in the patriotic ideal in past ages. "My country against the world" has been the motto of many patriots, but as a matter of fact it is a self-destructive ideal. The interest of no nation is against the interest of any other, in the last resort. Of course a man will stand for his own country when it is an issue between his own country and another. But a patriotism which denies the rights of other nations and the interests of other peoples is bound to come to grief. It follows, therefore, that a nation in order to prosper must adopt the priestly ideal along with the kingly. Government is the trustee of human rights, and the rights of one national group do not conflict with the rights of other national groups. Progress therefore in international relations must be along the lines of altruistic service for others as well as for the nation itself.

We may also apply the ideals of the text to science and education in general. Science is a noble calling. It is impossible to exaggerate the service rendered by modern science to the cause of humanity. The

discovery of new forces in nature and the enlistment of those forces in the service of man has been its outstanding feature. Many diseases have been brought under control and well nigh wiped out through the insight gained by scientific research. The laws of chemistry, and electricity and steam and other natural forces have been brought to bear in a thousand ways upon human welfare. The man of truly scientific spirit seeks first of all to discover truth and then his first impulse, if he be a normal scientist, is to communicate that truth to others for the good of men. One of the most glaring instances of the misuse of scientific knowledge was seen in Germany in the World War. Science was used in every form to support a despicable espionage system and to bring about the destruction of the enemy. Of course, the legitimate uses of science in war are not brought in question, but it is easy to make an illigitimate use of scientific knowledge.

Education, regarded in its larger aspects is imperfect except where it inculcates the ideal of service along with the ideal of power. The great apostles and reformers in education have usually approached the subject on the priestly side. Herbart, and Froebel, and Pestalozzi were men who appreciated the individual, who sought to develop personality. They were men, first of all, of sympathy. How to set the mind free that the individual might discover and realize the self was the task. Our more recent emphasis has sometimes been on the kingly side. Science has introduced us to new and vast oceans of power. The reservoirs of nature are being tapped in a thousand ways. But are we learning as priests of nature and humanity to guide power to its true ends of making it easier to live with our fellows. Are the kingly

men of today also priestly men? Do those who tower highest among us in intellectual or financial power always remember that they are priests--- that their true end is the service of humanity?

A man who is merely sharpened in his wits and in his intellectual resources, but left without an ideal of human service, is not a well educated man. In fact, education which merely increases intellectual power may be productive of criminals of the worst type. This has taken place in many instances in the history of the world. Education must have the priestly element as well as the kingly if it is to succeed.

I wish next to apply the principle of the text to the larger aspects of Christianity and its program in the world. Christianity is intensely missionary in all its aims and ideals. It has no meaning except as a missionary religion. The great commission was a command of Christ to the Disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Christianity as an expansive force dies unless it reaches out to the regions beyond. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, but the power of God as manifested in the Christian religion wanes and ceases to function except when it is directed toward the salvation of men.

There is a very practical conclusion to be drawn from this principle. The kingly ideal in Christianity is the reign of Christ. The priestly ideal is the missionary impulse. It is the union of these two which makes Christianity a success. The impulse to bless the world is noble and glorious, but the impulse to bless the world which has characterized Christianity from the beginning has been dependent upon intellectual equipment. Christian leaders must have power of intellect as well as altruistic desires. A missionary may be ever so consecrated and

devoted to his task, but unless he has a trained mind and trained will and the equipment necessary to expound and propagate the faith, his mission will fail.

One of the outstanding lessons which has been taught by the history of Christian missions is the close relation between missions and education. From the beginning, whenever missionary enterprises have been inaugurated, the missionaries have been dependent upon education to make their work effective. In the wake of the missionary enterprise, therefore, school and colleges have been founded. One of the first needs which was realized by Judson and Rice when they went to India as missionaries something over a hundred years ago was the imperative need of educated leaders. As a result Luther Rice returned to America and canvassed the country to raise a fund to establish a college for the training of men and women for service in the Kingdom. As the outcome of his movement Columbian College in Washington, D. C. was founded. And so it has been in all the States among our Baptist people. The expansion of Christianity in any form of mission work has always reacted in the direction of creating a need for education. Education, therefore, has become the handmaid of missions, and today those elements are indissolubly bound together.

A pathetic story is told of the poet Heine, who was broken in health and in low spirits. He was poetic in temperament, but without faith in God and without hope in the world. He was one day walking through the Louvre in Paris and came to that masterpiece of Greek sculpture known as the Venus de Milo. The statue was recovered after being buried in the earth for centuries. Its arms are missing. Otherwise the statue

*E. J. Mullins
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is complete, and is regarded by artists as a masterpiece. In a whimsical and pessimistic mood, the poet Heine stopped in front of the Venus de Milo and said: "My lady of Milo, you cannot speak to me; but I know what you would say if you could speak to me. You would say to me, 'Heine, I know you are in trouble, and I sympathize with you greatly, and I would like to help you. But, look, you can see for yourself. I have no arms.'" This, of course, was simply a poetic reverie of a discouraged poet as he stood in the presence of the Venus de Milo. But it is a figure of a situation when Luther Rice returned from India to America and plead with our people to give money to found a college for the training of missionaries. He was saying to American Baptists what Heine said to the Venus de Milo. He was saying, "you have a glorious and noble missionary impulse. You desire to bless the world with the gospel. Your heart goes out to the heathen. But, alas, you have no arms. You are without an educated ministry. Give the money necessary to equip the college to train the men."

This has always been true and will always be true. The highest and noblest desires which Christian possess cannot be fully realized unless they clearly grasp the necessity for equipment and training. Schools for the training of ministers of the gospel---theological seminaries---are fundamentally important for all Kingdom work. The truth is the mighty power of God. But truth must be interpreted, expounded, defended and propagated. Trained intellects as well as trained hearts are needed.

It will be a great day for all our people when the missionary vision is properly coupled with the educational vision and when intelligence and love join hands for the redemption of the world.