

Men

MEN¹

The most critical need of the Church at this moment is men, the right kind of men, bold men. The talk is that we need revival, that we need a new baptism of the Spirit - and God knows we must have both - but God will not revive mice. He will not fill rabbits with the Holy Spirit.

We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened, because they have already died to the allurements of this world.

Such men will be *free*, free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances. Their only compulsion will come from within - or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have prophets again instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial consideration, perform no religious act out of mere custom, nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or desire for reputation.

Much that the Church - even the evangelical church - is doing these days she is doing because she is afraid not to. Ministerial associations take up projects for no higher reason than that they are being scared into it. Whatever their ear-to-the-ground, fear-inspired reconnoitering tells them to do, they will be doing come next Monday morning, with all kinds of trumped-up zeal and show of godliness. Their "call" is from the pressure of public opinion instead of the voice of Jehovah.

The true Church has never sounded out public expectations before launching her crusades. Her leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or the lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it and their people followed them - sometimes to triumph, oftener to insults and public persecution - and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Another characteristic of the true prophet has been *love*. The free man who has learned to hear God's voice and dared to obey it has felt the moral burden that broke the hearts of the Old Testament prophets, crushed the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, and wrung tears from the eyes of the apostles.

The free man has never been a religious tyrant, nor has he sought to lord it over God's heritage. It is fear and lack of self assurance that has led men to try to bring others under their feet. They have some interest to protect, some position to secure, so they have demanded subjection from their followers as a guarantee of their own safety. But the free man - never! He has nothing to protect, no ambition to pursue, and no enemy to fear. For that reason he is completely careless of his standing among men. If they follow him, well and good; if not, he loses nothing that he holds dear. Whether he is accepted or rejected, he will go on loving people with sincere devotion, and only death can silence his tender intercession for them.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive she must have men again, the right kind of men. She must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and she must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff prophets and martyrs are made of. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt. And

¹ From *Balance of Truth*, published by the Gospel Literature Service (Bombay: May 1972). As becomes apparent in the final paragraph, it was written in the days when "men" embraced "women".

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He will send deliverers. It is His way among men.

When the deliverers come - reformers, revivalists, prophets - they will be men of God and men of courage. They will have God on their side because they will be careful to stay on God's side. They will be co-workers with Christ and instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Such men will be baptized with the Spirit indeed, and through their labours He will baptize others and send the long delayed revival.

It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people - to drift with the tide - it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty and spiritual reality.

"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," wrote the battle scarred apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church of the Kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets. The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus...² And multitudes today, in the church as well as in "the world", applaud the courage of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn like faithfulness today.

WANTED TODAY - men and women, young and old, who will open up their hearts and obey their convictions, even if at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963).

² I have omitted one sentence here about "The church of the popes" which I find offensive.