

16th June 2021

Bold

**“And as she looked about, she did behold,
How over that same door was likewise writ
Be bold, Be bold, and everywhere Be bold ...
At last she spied at that room’s upper end
Another iron door, on which was writ, Be not too bold.”**

Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queens (1596)

Georges Jacques Danton was a leading figure in the early stages of the French Revolution and was the first president of the “Committee of Public Safety”. Some historians describe him as the chief force in the overthrow of the French monarchy and the establishment of the First French Republic. He was guillotined in 1794 by the “advocates of revolutionary terror” after accusations of leniency toward the enemies of the Revolution.

In a rousing speech to the Legislative Committee of General Defence in September 1792, he said this:

Boldness, and again, boldness, and always boldness.

It is the nature of the revolutionary purpose and spirit to be bold. How will things change, injustices be challenged, a better society be created unless people are bold? “Boldness ... always boldness” was what was required of Georges Jacques Danton and his revolutionary cohorts.

I am not the boldest of people. I can raise a voice of complaint or challenge when it is needed. But I am not bold. I have friends who’ve put themselves in the front line of boldness in campaigns for gay rights, anti-nuclear protests, pro-Palestinian issues, and much more besides. I envy their boldness, and I wonder, sometimes, if I’m simply too timid. And then I read again Edmund Spenser’s advice, quoted above, from 500 years ago.

Yes, there are doors which call us to “Be Bold”, to lie in front of tanks, chain ourselves to railings, be involved in this revolution or that. But there *is* a door – and thank God for it – which is labelled “Be Not Too Bold”. This is *not* being timid, or ducking issues, or being less than revolutionary. It is finding a door through which I *am* able to go, to find on the other side others with whom I can still join in a just and righteous cause.

A prayer for today

Lord, make me bold for the cause of right. Give me strength to keep going. Amen

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