

Public Bible-Reading as Part of Worship

A.W. Tozer:

To read the Bible well in public we must first love it. The voice, if it is free, unconsciously follows the emotional tone. Reverence cannot be simulated. No one who does not feel the deep solemnity of the Holy Word can properly express it. God will not allow His Book to become the plaything of the rhetorician. That is why we instinctively draw back from every simulated tone in the reading of the Scriptures. The radio announcer's artificial unction cannot hide the absence of the real thing. The man who stands to declaim the Scriptures like a schoolboy reciting a passage from Hamlet can only leave his hearers with a feeling of disappointment. They know they have been cheated, though most of them could not tell just how. Again, to read the Bible well, one must know what the words mean and allow them to mean just that, without putting any body English on the passage to make it take a turn of meaning not found in the text. Probably the hardest part of learning to read well is eliminating ourselves. We read best when we get ourselves out of the transaction and let God talk through the imperfect medium of our voice. The beginner should read aloud whole books of the Bible in the privacy of his own room. In that way he can learn to hear his own voice and will know how he sounds to others. Let him consult a pronouncing Bible to learn the correct pronunciations of the names and places of the Bible. Let him cultivate the habit of reading slowly and distinctly with the reverence and dignity proper to the subject matter. Surely Protestants deserve a better sort of Scripture reading than they are now getting in our churches. And we who do the reading are the only ones who can give it to them.