

Discriminating Reading

A.W. Tozer:

I hope my readers conclude right here that I have contradicted myself in the above paragraphs. It will indicate that they have been reading with their critical faculties awake. But actually there is no self-contradiction present. I have warned against harmful books and declare that there is no harm in reading in fields far removed from the standard evangelical meadows considered safe by the timid souls who think they must defend Christianity and protect the faithful from the effects of alien ideas. I'll explain.

By harmful books I do not mean those on a high intellectual level, such as the classics, poetry, history, political science and whatever falls within the category of the liberal arts. I mean cheap fiction (religious or secular), shallow religious chop suey such as is found in so many religious magazines, the world of religious trash designed to entertain the saints; I mean the self-glorifying religious adventure stories written by the brethren of the restless feet who refuse to take any responsibility or to stay in one place long enough to plant a single tree or lay a single foundation, but who always manage to spin an exciting yarn when they get back home. I mean the "digest" type of religious literature, precooked and predigested, to be ingested with a minimum of effort and in the shortest possible time. Such matter not only affords no nourishment for the soul, but its continuous use creates a parasitic mind in the reader, gives him a morbid appetite for wind and makes the reading of serious religious books not only distasteful but impossible.

I deliberately omit from my list of dangerous books the vulgar and the unclean. I take it for granted that no Christian would stain his soul with such literary putrefaction. At least I am quite sure that no one who reads this page will need to be warned about such books.