

suaded that it chiefly arises from people's ignorance of the stores of truth and wisdom which the Psalms contain and, as it were, enshrine. There used to be a current saying in the political world some twenty years ago that there was on the part of the working classes "an ignorant impatience of taxation." And the rejoinder was that if you would remove this impatience you must first remove the ignorance. Applying this undoubtedly sound principle to our present subject, I would say that this impatience of the Psalms can only be removed by removing the too prevalent ignorance about them, or, if ignorance has too harsh a sound, shall I say want of information about them. Now it is this want of information that I shall endeavor in some degree to remove.

I think it will surprise many persons to learn with what fervor and affection the great minds of old, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church used to speak of the Psalms, to hear how enthusiastic they were in their admiration of them, and what treasures of wisdom and truth they seemed to find in their every word. If you will sit for a while at the feet of these wise and holy guides you will, perhaps, imbibe their spirit and catch the infection of their enthusiasm. You will be like a man going through a noble picture gallery under the guidance of an experienced critic, or rather of an inspired artist. Pictures which formerly you had passed heedlessly by, at once become, when you are under his influence, invested with grace and beauty. A landscape that once appeared tame and meaningless now seems suddenly full of tenderness and truth. Well then, let these men of genius lead us by the hand through the holy gallery of the Psalter. And instead of presenting the views of some one writer, I will lay before you very briefly the thoughts of several, taking them in the order in which they lived:—

1. What a solemn and mysterious thought is that of Tertullian, who lived about 200 A.D. He gives it as his opinion that in many, perhaps most, of the Psalms, we may hear the Eternal Son communing with the Eternal Father.

2. Athanasius, the great Athanasius, God's champion of the truth against Arianism (340 A.D.), used to say that the Psalter had Psalms suitable to everyone's need, and for the regulation of the passions of each individual soul. And then he goes on to say, "If thou wouldst sing God's praises on Saturday, thou hast Psalm 92; if on Sunday, the 24th; if on Monday, the 48th; if on Friday, the 93rd; if on Wednesday, the 94th, for on that day He was betrayed and began to triumph by His Passion."

3. The almost equally great (some would say greater) Augustine, after saying in his Confessions (400 A.D.), that he had often heard it said that Athanasius in his church at Alexandria always ordered the Psalms to be recited in the

service in such a tone as to resemble reading rather than singing, goes on to say, "Attune thou thy heart to the Psalms as they succeed each other. If the Psalm prays, pray thou; if it mourns, mourn thou; if it hopes, hope thou; if it fears, fear thou. Everything that is in the Psalter is the looking-glass of thy soul."

4. Next listen to the rapturous outburst of Basil (410 A.D.), and see what a treasury of devotion the Psalter was to him. He says, "The Book of Psalms recalls past history, prophesies the future, legislates for life, suggests duty. It is the safeguard of children, a comforter to the aged, the best ornament of women. It assuages passions, cements friendships, reconciles enmities. It puts devils to flight, and attracts the succour of angels."

5. Let us now turn to the experience and evidence of learned English Divines. The famous Richard Hooker, who lived in the seventeenth century, says, "What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? The Psalms are an easy introduction to beginners, a mighty augmentation to the advanced. The Psalter is the voice of the Church, cheering Festivals, ministering godly sorrow to penitents. It is the employment of angels, the conversation of Heaven."

6. Bishop Horne in the next century, who wrote a learned and devout Commentary on the Book of Psalms, says, "In the Psalms history is made the vehicle of prophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of Redemption." And he concludes the introduction to his Commentary with these graceful and pathetic words. Speaking of himself as the commentator in the third person, he says, "He arose fresh as the morning to the task, and the silence of the night invited him to pursue it. Every Psalm improved infinitely on his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him any uneasiness but the last, for then he grieved to think that his work was done."

7. The last witness that I will call is Dean Church, the late great Dean of St. Paul's. He says, "The Psalms come to us from men who lived in rough and cruel times. But in those wild times we see that there must have lived men sheltered from the tumult around them, humble and faithful souls, whom the Holy Ghost taught, and whose mouths He opened to teach their brethren. And they repeat for all time the whispers of the Spirit of God."

Here you have the testimony of seven good men, differing in character and temperament, living in different countries and in different centuries of time, but, all agreeing in their reverential admiration of the Psalter. Will not this united testimony of these great and good men do something towards quickening our interest in that blessed book? This fervor and