

THE CANTICLE OF ANNE OF ELCANA

(concluded)

According to a custom both ancient and familiar the Hebrews marked by lasting monuments, either built or written, the great benefits granted by God to the whole nation, to a family or to some individual. Kings David and Ezechias, the prophets Jonas and Habacuc, and especially the three children who, from the midst of the fiery furnace kindled by a cruel king invite Angels, men, beasts, rivers and seas, heaven and earth, to praise the Lord in a Canticle handed down to us by Daniel, are so many examples of this holy custom. Conformably to the usage of her country, our prophetess wished to place among the Archives of the Tabernacle this imperishable memento of her Faith and of her gratitude towards God her benefactor. Those who came, in later ages, on a pilgrimage to Silo, were thus able to read that holy page relating the miracles wrought on behalf of the illustrious pilgrim.

Since, without going as far as Silo, we have the advantage of being able to study this monument of the Mosaic ages, let us yield at least to the charm of pious curiosity under which a precious lesson lies in store for us.

What impresses at first, is the almost priestly and altogether prophetic tone which predominates in the holy Canticle. For, in singing the praises of God, Anne shares with the priest one of his chief functions, which is to praise God, as it is said in another canticle "Priests of the Lord, praise ye the Lord." Arising with this first cloud of sweet-smelling incense to the throne of the God of Abraham her father, the spirit of Anne soars to that heavenly region where it can look into futurity. She describes her vision and draws a grand picture of the glorious reign of the promised Messiah; she thereby takes rank with the prophets. Whilst her spirit is drunk with the wine that gladden