

615TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING, .

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH, 1920,
AT 4.30 P.M.

Professor H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., B.Sc., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed and the Hon. Secretary announced the Election of the following Members and Associates :

Members.—Miss M. Mackinlay, Miss L. M. Mackinlay, Miss K. M. Cordeux.

Associates.—Mrs. H. Ellis Dobson, Mrs. Spackman, Lt.-Col. A. S. Roberts, W. E. Leslie, Esq., Ernest A. Dubois, Esq.

Life Associate.—Miss F. E. A. Parker, F.R.M.S.

THE SILENCES OF SCRIPTURE.

By the Rev. A. H. FINN.

THE Bible narratives are so vivid and often so full of minute detail that it is easy to gain the impression—and many seem to think—that we have a complete account of the whole period embraced. It is only on more attentive consideration that we realize how very much there is that is not told us.

There are long periods of which we know practically nothing. The 2000 years between Adam and Abraham are only broken by the narratives of the Deluge and the Tower of Babel ; from the migration of Jacob's family down to the beginning of the Egyptian oppression, about 150 years, only two events—the deaths of Jacob and Joseph—are recorded ; between the Old and New Testaments there is a lapse of four centuries only partly filled in by the Apocrypha and Josephus.

Even where the history does give us some records, closer examination shows them to be very fragmentary. The period of the Judges gives us a few remarkable names and incidents, but the greater part of the life of the nation is untouched ; from the death of Solomon to the destruction of the Temple, we have little beyond the succession of kings, and even of these we have but few details in most cases ; the activities of Ezra

and Nehemiah constitute almost all that is known between the Return from the Captivity and the close of the Canon.

It is much the same when we examine the lives of the most familiar characters. Abraham is said to have lived 175 years, yet of the first 75 we know nothing but the migration to Haran and of the last 75 only some half-dozen events are noticed.

Concerning Joseph, there is nothing of his early life, very little of his period of servitude and imprisonment, and nothing again of his reign as viceroy after the famine. Moses lived 40 years as an Egyptian prince, and another 40 as a shepherd in Midian; except his slaying of the Egyptian and consequent flight, and his marriage with Zipporah all of that period is a blank. The life of David is given more fully than most, yet of more than half, the 40 years of his reign as king, it is only a comparatively few incidents that are narrated. Elijah flashes suddenly like a meteor across the dark period of Ahab's reign; and how much is really known of the long lives of Isaiah and Jeremiah?

Most remarkable of all are the gaps in the life of Christ. It is a little difficult to realize that all which the four Gospels have to tell us relates to less than one-tenth of His earthly life. In the 30 years from His Birth to His Baptism there is but the one incident of the Finding in the Temple. Of the Apostles, too, we know something about St. Peter, St. John, and St. Paul—and how little even of them?—while the others are scarcely more than names.

It comes to this, that a few great crises, a few marked lives, a few notable events are brought out in startling relief against a shadowy background. The silences of Scripture are almost more remarkable than the records.

It is very evident that all this shows a process of selection, for it is not the case that nothing more was known. The allusions to the books of the Wars of the Lord and of Jashar as well as the repeated references to the chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah clearly indicate that there was a mass of material which might have been utilized. The writers of the first three Gospels could not have been altogether ignorant of the events in Judæa narrated in the fourth, and St. John (xxi, 21) expressly asserts that there was very much more that was not written. The latter half of the book of the Acts is taken up with the doings of St. Paul; were all the other Apostles idle, and were there no events worth recording at Jerusalem, except the First Council and the arrest of St. Paul?

But then selection implies a plan and purpose on the part of the writers requiring the omission of what is not essential to the design. That is of course a characteristic of most histories, especially of those written from a special point of view. As a geological map will contain many features not in the ordinary map, and omit much which is found there, so a political history will, generally speaking, take little notice of religious matters, while an ecclesiastical history will pass by many a political event. That is excellently exemplified in the difference between the books of the Kings and those of the Chronicles, and it is simply unfair to assume, when the writers of the latter supply religious details not recorded by the former, that they were drawing on their imaginations, and "idealizing" the past.

Then, again, selection will often, perhaps chiefly, mean noticing what is unusual to the exclusion of the ordinary and regular. In the Book of Judges, for instance, it is recorded that "the land had rest" for 40 years in three instances, and for 80 years in another, yet of these prolonged periods of quiet, nothing whatever is chronicled. It is only to be expected that this will also be the case with regard to matters religious. The exceptional passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah are noticed just because they were exceptional, while elsewhere the observance of the festival is not mentioned. After the days of Joshua, the practice of circumcision is not alluded to, and there are only two or three casual allusions to the Sabbath (in 2 Kings): it would be rash in the extreme to conclude that these were unknown or neglected.

On the other hand, breaches of the laws would call for notice, and this would account for the mention of unauthorized places of sacrifice (including those at the "high places," of which so much has been made) and of irregularities such as Micah's images, Gideon's ephod, and the golden calves of Jeroboam.

From all this it follows that it is most unsafe to argue that because certain matters are not mentioned in the histories therefore they were unknown. A modern history notices the refusal to pay an unauthorized impost, such as the ship-money or the duty on tea in the American colonies, and might record a police strike; it will make no mention of the regular payment of rent, rates, and taxes, or the steady activities of the police, just because they are so constant. In precisely the same way the normal observance of sacred days, rites, and dues, or the performance of the duties of priests and Levites would be likely

to be passed over as matters of course just in proportion to their regularity. It is precisely the exceptions to the rule which are marked and noted.

The omissions from the history not only indicate that there was a plan and purpose, but, by throwing into bold relief the isolated events and characters which are recorded, enable us to trace what that plan and purpose was.

It is quite clear that it was not a comprehensive history, or even the outline of a history, of the human race which was aimed at. From Adam down to the call of Abram the interest is centred only in one particular line of descent. The Dispersion of the nations is just mentioned, and then the great majority of the peoples are left in silence and darkness; the great empires and civilizations that are now known to have existed are altogether passed over.

Next, the fortunes of the patriarchal family are followed, but still only in outline, and its offshoots, the descendants of Lot, Ishmael and Esau, only appear as in later times they come in contact with the Chosen People.

Is it, then, a history of Israel that is given? Again, we have only fragmentary notices. What were their fortunes from the time of the migration into Egypt till the Exodus? How much do we know of the 40 years in the Wilderness, and how long was the stay in Kadesh? See how difficult it is to form a clear idea of the invasion and settlement of the Promised Land, or of the troublous times of the Judges. There is a long list of Kings of Israel and Judah, but it is only of a very few reigns that any details are given; even the glories of Solomon's Kingdom are barely indicated, and the long and prosperous reign of Jero-boam II is summed up in seven verses. The period of the Return from Captivity is full of gaps. It is certainly nothing like a complete political history of Israel that is set before us.

Is it, then, a history of the Hebrew religion? Certainly the Pentateuch sets forth that the Hebrew religion was Divine in origin, derived in the first place from God's revelations of Himself to the patriarchs, and afterwards more fully from the revelations to Moses; that the Law, moral and ceremonial, was given in minute detail before the entry into Canaan; that God Himself gave instructions for the erection of a Sanctuary at which alone sacrifice should be lawful, and that this should be afterwards replaced in the Promised Land by a permanent Central Sanctuary "in the place which the Lord thy God

shall choose." But the historical books are largely taken up with records of how, from the Golden Calf at Sinai to the idolatries of Manasseh and the successors of Josiah, the people were unfaithful to even the most fundamental of these laws. That might be more fitly described as a history of Hebrew irreligion.

If, however, modern critics are right, the whole of this account is utterly misleading. According to them, the history of Hebrew religion was altogether different; the Law was not given in the Wilderness, but gradually grew up out of priestly oral decisions or prophetic teaching, and many of its leading institutions were due to priestly legislation of a late date; the Tabernacle never existed, and the Temple did not become the sole Central Sanctuary till the time of Josiah. If that be true, then the Old Testament is not at all a history of Hebrew religion according to the facts, but only an account of what later writers thought that history ought to have been.

Since, then, we have here not a history of mankind in general, nor a political history of Israel, nor a history of the Hebrew religion, are we to give up the idea of any unity at all, and look upon the whole as a chance collection of fragments having no coherent plan or dominant idea?

There is one thread which runs throughout, and that is the development of God's plan as revealed in His Promises. At the outset there is the promise of the Seed of the woman who should crush the serpent's head. By the catastrophe of the Deluge, the fulfilment of this promise is narrowed down to the family of Noah. That again is narrowed down to the Seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; and that in turn is limited to the line of Isaac and Jacob. In Jacob's Blessing, there is a hint of a further limitation: not among the descendants of the first-born Reuben, or of the fruitful Joseph, or of Levi, but only in the royal lineage of Judah is to be found the One to whom the obedience of peoples should be, foreshadowing His kingly dignity. Later on there is the promise of the Prophet like unto Moses whom the Lord would know face to face. Still later on, it is the house and throne of David that is to be established. The Psalter points forward to the King whose Name shall endure for ever, the Lord of David who is also a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Isaiah foretells the coming forth of the shoot out of the stock of Jesse, the King to reign in righteousness, and portrays the suffering Righteous Servant of the LORD. Jeremiah tells of the Righteous

Branch of David whose Name is "the Lord our Righteousness." Daniel is taught of the coming of the Anointed One, the Prince. Malachi predicts the sudden coming of the Lord to His Temple, even the Angel of the Covenant.

This note of expectation of the Coming One rings through the whole of the Old Testament, but though the Promise is there, repeated again and again, and becoming ever clearer and more definite in the course of ages, yet up to the close of the Hebrew Canon it is still a Promise unfulfilled. The New Testament supplies what was missing by telling us how in the fulness of time He came in whom all the features of the various promises unite. In a special sense He was the Seed of the woman; He was the Seed of Abraham, and in Him the blessing is extended to all the nations; He was acknowledged the Son of David, heir to the throne, "born King of the Jews"; He, the Eternal Word, face to face with God (*πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*, St. John i, 1) was the Prophet, Teacher, and Lawgiver; He was the Righteous One, "wounded for our transgressions," the great High Priest "of the good things to come." Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets had written concerning Him; the Gospels are records of Him; the Acts and the Epistles proclaim Him; the Revelation shows Him as the Lamb once slain but now alive for evermore, and prepares us for His final manifestation as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." It is the Christ who binds all the Scriptures together in one. The Jews have no name for their Scriptures except a memorial word made up of the initials of the words for "the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings." Christianity brings together the Old and the New Covenants into one Holy Bible, through which runs the one great Purpose and Plan. That we are enabled to discern this Divine Purpose is largely due to the silences of Scripture.

So far we have been concerned with the silences of the history due to the passing over of matters not essential to the purpose. There are some other kinds of silence mentioned in Holy Writ. There is the silence of *patience* and *restraint*, as when the Psalmist (*xxxix*, 2) says, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace"; or when to Rabshakeh's arrogant blasphemy "the people held their peace, and answered him not a word" (*2 Kings xviii*, 36); or when the Righteous One "opened not His mouth," but alike to false witnesses and unjust judges "held His peace and answered nothing" (*St. Mark xiv*, 61; *St. John xix*, 9). There is also the silence of *attention* and *expectation*,

as when "all the multitude kept silence" to hear Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv, 12) or when "there was made a great silence" in the hostile crowd at the foot of the castle-stairs (Acts xxi, 40). This again deepens into the hush of *awe* and *reverence*, as in Hab. ii, 20, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him"; in Isai. xli, 1, "Keep silence before Me, O islands"; in Ps. lxxv, 1, "Praise is silent for Thee, O God, in Zion"; and in Rev. viii, 1, "There was silence in heaven."

All these motives for keeping silence may be said to combine in those silences of Scripture which are not due to the omission of the unnecessary, but to reserve. Some things are left untold which we might well desire to know, and might even deem to be helpful. The Lord appeared to Simon on the Resurrection day (St. Luke xxiv, 34), and to James at some later period (1 Cor. xv. 7); what intense interest would attach to some account of those interviews, yet only the bare fact is mentioned and no details are given. Must that not be because what then passed was of too intimate and personal a nature to be made public? Is not that also the reason for our Lord's own silence on the Cross during the three hours of darkness? The thoughts that then occupied Him, the conflict He then waged were matters too sacred and too high to be divulged. Where was the Master and what was He doing during the week that followed the Resurrection, and in the interval between the appearance to Thomas and that at the Sea of Tiberias?

There are, too, subjects concerning which we are expressly told that knowledge is purposely withheld from us, as for instance, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority" (Acts i, 7). So Daniel, when he would know the issue of these things, was bidden to go his way, "for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. xii, 9). St. Paul tells us of the man who was "caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii, 4). When the seven thunders had uttered their voices, St. John is commanded to "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not" (Rev. x, 4).

On some great subjects we have only been vouchsafed very partial enlightenment, such as the being and activities of angels, both of light and darkness; the life between death and resurrection; the nature of the resurrection body, and the tremendous events which are to usher in the end of the age. There

are also deep mysteries about which much controversy has been waged, such as the origin of evil, and the reconciling of predestination with freewill, though at best we can only dimly guess at them, and it is not unlikely that they may be beyond the powers of our finite understanding.

Concerning all matters like these, where the Scriptures are silent it will be our wisdom to maintain the reverent silence of patience and expectation until the time when we shall know even as we are known. The Scriptures were given to make us "wise unto salvation," and we may humbly be satisfied that all which is really necessary for that has been imparted, though there are some things we need not know, and others we are not as yet allowed to know. It is not only with regard to judging other men that we need to learn the lesson "Not beyond that which is written" (1 Cor. iv, 6). If it is expressly forbidden (Deut. iv, 2; xii, 32) to add to the Law—a prohibition so grievously disregarded by Scribes, Pharisees, and Rabbis, and not always observed in the Christian Church—there is also danger in attempting to add to what has been definitely told us.

For this reason, attempts to fill in the history with details which must largely be conjectural are to be deprecated. We may lawfully, though with cautious reverence, supplement the information given by Scripture with that derived from other sources, such as the evidence of the monuments or what is actually known of Jewish thought and manners. Even this, however, should be done with reserve, stating these details as what may probably have been, not as definitely ascertained facts. The absurdities in the Talmud about Abraham and Moses, and in the Apocryphal Gospels about the early life of our Lord, ought to warn us against the danger of letting imagination run riot, as has been done in certain romances professing to give an account of the Exodus or of the Life of Christ.

Most especially ought we to beware of endeavouring to penetrate mysteries that have been deliberately withheld from us. The study of unfulfilled prophecy is both lawful and in accordance with the injunction to "search the Scriptures." Yet it is hardly safe to assert positively that certain prophecies, clothed in figurative language, are being fulfilled in the events of to-day; and to try and fix the exact date of the end of the world is surely presumptuous in face of our Lord's explicit declarations. So also the persistent attempts to enter into communication with the spirits of the departed and to peer into the secrets of the unseen

world are in reality a trespassing on forbidden ground. For in Deut. xviii, 11, the word which in our English Versions is represented by "wizard" means one who claims to possess occult knowledge, and "necromancer" stands for "a seeker to the dead."

We still need the reminder of Deut. xxix, 29, that while "the things revealed belong unto us and to our children," there are also "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord our God."

There is much of practical importance to be learnt by noting carefully the silences of Holy Scripture.

ADDENDUM.

The silences of Scripture may be compared to the inter-stellar spaces which by their very darkness enhance the brilliance of the stars, and mark out the forms of the constellations: when however the sun rises, both darkness and stars disappear and the whole sky becomes uniformly bright. It is much the same with the writings of the Old Testament. While as yet the Dayspring from on high had not visited us, the gleams of promise and prophecy shone radiantly against the background of human woe and sin, but more or less disconnected and scattered. Then the sun, the Sun of Righteousness, arose and at once all was transfused with heavenly light. The whole history is seen, through all the many fluctuations and changes, to be governed throughout and guided to one great and worthy end: utterances of psalmist and seer are invested with a fulness of meaning far beyond what could have been understood at the time when they were uttered: rites and ceremonies can no longer be regarded as arbitrary enactments, and the different sacrifices are perceived to be significant symbols of the true Offering of devotion, reconciliation, and atonement. Light, too, is thrown in quite unexpected places. There are passages in the Old Testament which do not seem necessary to the development of the history, especially in records where there has been such evident careful selection, and some of them not very edifying. Why should those long, dry genealogies at the beginning of Chronicles have been preserved? Why was the repellent incident of Judah's relations with his daughter-in-law thrust in to break the current of the Joseph narrative? The account of the two spies in Jericho being sheltered by a woman might have been told without laying repeated emphasis on her occupation. The story of Ruth is very beautiful in its tender simplicity, but was it important

enough to require a separate book? Was it necessary that the grievous sin of David should have been told with such circumstantial detail about the partner of his guilt?

The very first chapter of the Gospel history shows the need there was for being sure that an accurate record had been kept of the families in Israel, so that there could be no doubt that the Carpenter of Nazareth was actually the heir to the throne. In the list of Joseph's ancestors there given, four women and only four, are named or alluded to, and these are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Why are these singled out for mention? Tamar was probably, and Rahab certainly, of Canaanite origin: Ruth was a Moabitess, and Bathsheba married to a Hittite, a fact brought into prominence by her being described as "the wife of Uriah" without giving her name. Further, three out of the four were sinful. Were there no good and faithful Israelite women among the ancestors of the Christ that only these four should be thought worthy of notice? Here is a remarkable instance of silence: the pure mothers of the chosen race passed over unnamed, and only those to whom discredit attached included. There must be purpose in this, and what can it be? Surely it can only be to indicate that this "Son of David," whose lineage was smirched by these terrible blots, came not for the sake of the righteous and the chosen people alone, but that His mission was to the sinner and the alien as well.

But then, how came it that these four narratives (and it is to be remembered that they come from four different sources) were included, and more than that made so emphatically remarkable, in the ancient books when so much that, humanly speaking, would be considered more important was disregarded? Was it mere chance that these seemingly irrelevant details were preserved in the records, and only seized on by the Evangelist in order to impart to them a significance which was not really theirs? Against this there is, first, the prominence they are accorded in the old books; and, secondly, the use the Evangelist has made of them. He has not drawn out and made clear their true significance, as he has done some of the prophecies, but inserted them in such unassuming fashion that they escape notice without careful scrutiny. The only rational conclusion is that these incidents were purposely inserted and made so noticeable in the early writings because of the importance which would attach to them many centuries later, and that demands a foreknowledge and a preparation for the distant future far beyond human insight.

So does the glory of the Christ—the Christ who came “to seek and to save that which was lost,” and to be “a Light to lighten the Gentiles”—reflect back upon and illuminate the mistier regions of the Old Scriptures, and show us that they were all under the guidance of one Mind. In this way, and in this way alone, the many differences that distinguish the various books melt away and are lost sight of in the light of the fuller Revelation, and the many elements which go to make up the whole collection of the Scriptures shine out like the firmament of the heavens, to display the glory of God.

It is wonderful enough to find that, in the light of the New Testament, a clear plan and purpose is traceable which unifies the forty volumes of such different characteristics as go to make up the Old Testament, but the modern critical views about that collection would set before us something infinitely more startling. According to these, there was a still larger number of authors as well as a number of editors, most of them so obscure that their names are unknown and all remembrance of their existence has utterly perished. The writers were none too sagacious in the use of the materials at their command, writing down folk-lore, myth, and legend as veracious history, colouring the past with false tints derived from their own times, inserting as predictions uttered in bygone ages what were really notices of recent events, often betraying themselves by sheer anachronisms, evolving out of their own imaginations a structure that never existed, cloaking their own anonymity by the use of revered names, and attributing their own inventions to nothing less than Divine authority. Quite as inept were the various editors. They mixed up ancient documents with writings centuries later in date: they set side by side, or interwove intricately, inconsistent accounts of the same events: they put together quite unnecessary repetitions, or fit their extracts from different writers so clumsily together that they do not cohere: they arrange their materials in such an order as to give an altogether misleading view of the history. Yet the final result of all this patching and repatching, interpolation, glossing, and rearranging is a collection which for centuries has been regarded as genuine and sacred, and moreover displays the consistent working out of a sublime Divine plan!

Truly this would be an astounding miracle, which we might be ready to believe if a case of printer's type, put together at random, were found to spell out a poem of great beauty, or if the

independent daubings of a number of house-painters fitted together to form a masterpiece worthy of the greatest artists. The truth is that the critics have been far too narrow in their microscopic study of the Scriptures. Intent on petty details of variation of style, and what they regard as inconsistencies, they have been unable to see the forest for the trees. It is as though one were to concentrate his attention on the tiny fragments which make up a great mosaic, peering into the cracks and crevices which separate them, so intently as to lose sight of the majestic Figure portrayed by the whole.

What, then, is the delineation which in its grandeur transcends a scrutiny too minute? We have already seen that the silence of Scripture about so much which would have been of interest, which could hardly have been passed over by an ordinary historian, shows that the true subject of these many differing writings is the steady working out of God's providential design in spite of the frequent failures of man, but there is something more than this. The Scriptures combine to display a remarkable and indeed quite unique representation of the character of God. The study of Nature, now so immensely extended by modern facilities for reaching out to distant worlds and for investigating almost infinitesimal details, may lead, nay, has led thoughtful minds to some conception of the Wisdom which could plan and the Power which could execute so grand and so exquisitely ordered a work. But the Creator might have been both mighty and skilful without being good. It is true that there are many indications in Nature which point to beneficence, such as the lavish bounty which has provided for both the necessities and the happiness of the creature, but there is also much which can be interpreted as suggesting cruelty and ruthlessness. The fury of the tempest, the raging of volcanic fires, the shattering earthquake, the ravages of pestilence, the ravening beast of prey and the venomous serpent, the myriad woes and sufferings of mankind, all "Nature, red in tooth and claw," do not these shriek aloud of some malignant Power? Here where Natural Religion utterly fails, Revelation steps in to present a very different conception. It tells us indeed of a Being whose wrath is terrible, but that wrath is directed against evil. He can overwhelm the world in Deluge, but it is a world corrupt and filled with violence: He can bring fiery overthrow on whole cities, but they are cities whose "sin is very grievous," whose name has passed into a byword for loathsome and unnatural lust:

He can decree the extermination of entire nations, but it is because "the land is defiled . . . and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants" by reason of their abominations (Lev. xviii, 25). Even in these judgments, He shows Himself patient and forbearing. He waits, and His Spirit still strives with man, for 120 years while the ark is a-preparing: He is willing to spare the cities if only ten righteous can be found in them: He postpones the sentence on the Canaanites for 400 years because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full" (Gen. xv, 16): nor does He leave them to sin in ignorance without warning. Noah was "a preacher of righteousness," and Lot, "sorely distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked" (2 St. Pet. ii, 5, 7), vainly tried to dissuade them from the wickedness they meditated: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their goings to and fro, "called upon (*i.e.* proclaimed) the name of the Lord." In the same way God delivered His own people into the hands of their enemies to be led away captive, but only after He had "sent to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending . . . till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi, 15, 16). Everywhere He is represented as Just and Righteous even in wrath, and withal Merciful and Loving. When He proclaims His own Name and Nature, it is as "a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7). These qualities of Righteousness and Mercy are proclaimed in Psalm after Psalm, and re-echoed by prophet after prophet, till all culminates in the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, "just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints" (Rev. xv, 3). Again, He is a God of Truth, both in detesting all that is false, and in being true to Himself and to His people, "the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy . . . to a thousand generations" (Deut. vii, 9). His especial Name declares both His eternal existence, and also His unswerving faithfulness as the changeless I AM. All these characteristics—Righteousness and Justice, Mercy and Compassion, Faithfulness and Truth—unite in the conception of a Holy God, a conception unknown in the sacred books of any other religion. He is Holy, that is separate, not by reason of His exalted majesty or the might of His power, but by the essential purity and goodness of His nature. His day is Holy: His dwelling is the Holy of Holies:

His people must be Holy "for I am Holy": and, according to both Testaments, the anthems of Heaven itself are addressed to Him who is "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts."

Not less remarkable is the portrait drawn of Man. Yet not a single portrait, but rather a whole gallery of portraits. The stately dignity, generosity and self-devotion of Abraham: the fidelity to duty of Joseph as slave, prisoner, and ruler: the uprightness of Samuel: the complex character of David, shepherd, warrior, king, poet, loyal servant to Saul, and devoted friend of Jonathan: the piety of Hezekiah and Josiah: the wisdom and unswerving religious consistency of Daniel: St. Peter, the impetuous but morally timid: St. John, loving and beloved though fiery in his zeal: St. Paul, as earnest and thorough-going in his missionary labours as in his former persecuting ardour: all these, and so many more besides, how lifelike and real they are, though for the most part only delineated in the simplest of narratives without any attempt at word-painting or elaborate analysis of character. Nor are they represented as superhumanly perfect: the faults, the failings, even the grievous sins of patriarchs, prophets, saints and apostles are plainly recorded without any extenuation: they are men of like passions with ourselves. On the other hand, there are redeeming traits even in those who are represented as worthy of condemnation. Esau, worldly-minded and at one time murderously vindictive, meets his returning brother generously: Balaam, hankering after the wages of unrighteousness, cannot be tempted by silver and gold to go beyond the word of the Lord: Saul in his furious jealousy is touched by David's magnanimity: Ahab and Manasseh humble themselves in penitence: Herod heard the Baptist gladly, and was "exceeding sorry" at being entrapped into ordering his execution: Caiaphas showed something of patriotic care for the welfare of his people: Pilate made repeated, though futile, attempts to release the Innocent One. Nor are heathen and Gentiles destitute of all virtue: Abimelech is justified in pleading integrity of heart and innocency of hands: Nebuchadnezzar, despot as he was, is still "the head of gold," and in the end learns to acknowledge the King of Heaven: Darius strives to deliver Daniel, and mourns all night when he is cast to the lions: greater faith is found in the Roman centurion than in all Israel: Cornelius' devotions are accepted. Everywhere in Scripture (and bear in mind this is not the representation of one single author of

exceptional genius and sympathy, but many different writers of different ages combine to present it), humanity is depicted as frail indeed and capable of terrible evil, yet also capable of rising to heights of true nobility. Science may regard man as nothing more than the climax of Evolution, the most highly-developed of animals: pessimists may despair of the human race, and consider it doomed to ultimate extinction: Scripture consistently sets before us Man as pitiably fallen from his high estate, but none the less originally created in the image of God, an image defaced but not wholly effaced, and capable of renewal by the grace of God.

These are the two great Figures which stand out pre-eminently on the pages of Holy Writ: God in all the glory of His infinite Power and Wisdom, in the still higher majesty of His absolute Righteousness, Mercy, and Holiness; Man, entrusted with sovereignty over the animal creation to which he is allied on one side of his nature, potentially God-like in that he was fashioned in the likeness of God. The lineaments of both unite and blend in the portrait of the Christ. Truly human was He by reason of His human birth, and development from infancy to full manhood, advancing "in wisdom and stature." Like unto us was He in being touched by hunger and thirst and weariness, by joy and sorrow, anger and disappointment, by agony and death. Specially human was He in His tender sympathy for the suffering and erring, the weary and heavy-laden. Yet was His manhood an ideal manhood. Even unbelievers have been fain to confess the winning beauty of His character in its perfect balance of gentleness and fearless courage, justice and mercy, transparent truth and patient fortitude and flawless purity. In Him "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," and we can find a wealth of meaning, far beyond what could have been intended by the speaker, in Pilate's "Behold the Man."

In like manner He displays the Divine attributes. His is the power that can control the forces of nature, dispel disease and infirmity, overmaster the malice of demons, and bring back life to the dead. His is the wisdom which can discern the distant future, can know what is in man even to the unspoken thoughts of the heart, can speak as man never spoke and can confute the wiliness of Herodian, Sadducee, and Pharisee. His is the authority which is "Lord of the Sabbath" and extends even to the Divine prerogative of the forgiveness of sins. His

is the Divine righteousness which denounces woe on the self-righteous and the hypocrite, on the impenitence of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, but His also is the Divine compassion which weeps over the doomed city, prays for the forgiveness of His murderers, and gently wins back the thrice forsworn apostle. In His death He was mortal as we are, but by His victory over death He was "declared to be the Son of God with power." Above all, He displays the supreme Divine attribute of Holiness. He can fling out to all the ages without fear of contradiction the bold challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Pilate's wife may recognize in Him "that just Man"; the centurion may confess, "Truly, this Man was righteous"; but the truth far surpasses either of these declarations. Of Him, and of Him alone among the sons of men, it could be truly said that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" by that separation which is indicated by the very words for "Holy."

There are those who, while confessing the ideal beauty of the life and character of the Christ, and acknowledging Him as our great Example and Teacher, will not allow that He could be actually Divine; and others who would explain away His miraculous birth and the reality of His resurrection, and attribute the accounts of His miracles and His own claims to be one with the Father to the mistaken zeal of His followers. Yet even these cannot deny that the outlines we have been tracing are those drawn by the Evangelists and in the Apostolic writings as we have them. In that portrait, the Scriptural features of the Divine and the human are clearly combined. It is the portrait of the true Superman, not superior to his fellowmen by the craftiness of his cunning or the ambitious "will to power," but superior in being "full of grace and truth," at once "Perfect Man and Perfect God."

Have we been wandering from our subject of the silences? Have we not here been considering rather what *is* said than what is *not* said? True, yet how is it that we can so unerringly discern the grandeur of what is set before us? There are paintings and mosaics that were found amid the ruins of Pompeii where sometimes whole scenes and sometimes single figures are set against an intensely black background. That framework of darkness throws up in high relief the grace of the drawing and enhances the brilliance of the colouring. So the silences of Scripture serve to define accurately and give added vividness

to what is portrayed therein. And this similitude may help to explain the greatest silence of all. For nearly nineteen centuries now the voices of Revelation have been hushed: no new manifestation has occurred: no new truth has been proclaimed. That is, as it were, the lower margin of darkness which shows that the picture is complete. In the portrait of the Divine Christ the work of the Divine Artist is ended, and we need no addition until the living reality of the living God-Man in all His glory is revealed to our adoring gaze.

DISCUSSION.

Lt.-Colonel G. MACKINLAY said:—Mr. Finn does well in calling attention on pp. 75 and 76 of his valuable paper to the fact that the selection of events and discourses for record, implies a plan on the part of the inspired writers, requiring the omission of which is not essential to the design.

Acting on this hint we have clues to the following questions which have long puzzled many.

Why do the first three Gospels omit all mention of the raising of Lazarus, since that miracle was the proximate cause of the crucifixion, arousing the intense opposition of the Jews?

And why does the fourth Gospel omit all mention of the Transfiguration and of the last fateful journey to Jerusalem, while all the first three tell of these events fully?

The answer to both questions appears to be that the three Synoptists and John have different plans in leading to the same climax, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; and they have therefore selected for record only those events which suit them. Their omission are therefore accounted for.

In the Synoptic Gospels, St. Peter's grand confession of the Christ comes shortly before the culmination of glory at the Transfiguration, which is followed by the healing of the demoniac boy after the failure of the disciples. Little is said about the opposition of the Jews. Almost the next event selected for record by the first three evangelists is our Lord's start for His last journey, of His own accord, to death at Jerusalem (Luke ix, 51). The contrast from glory and success in Galilee to the voluntary death of shame at Jerusalem.

In the Gospel of John, on the other hand, it is recorded that our Lord was hotly opposed by the Jews at the feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, and that He constantly moved about in order to avoid the persecution of the Judæan Jews. Then we have the record of the intensification of opposition recorded as the result of the raising of Lazarus at Bethany, evoking the bitter persecution which culminated in the crucifixion.

Thus the Synoptists adopted one plan of conducting to the climax: they told of the voluntary journey to the death of earthly shame just after glory and success, with hardly any mention of persecution; while St. John adopted a different method, he dwelt on the great and increasing opposition of the Jews, which our Lord evaded until His hour had come. If either had narrated the special facts told by the other, the unity of each plan of leading to the climax would have been lost. Both plans are perfectly in accord with the events which actually happened.

It is sometimes said that the Synoptists did not tell of the raising of Lazarus from fear of injuring him, as he was probably alive when they wrote, and the Jews had "consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death" (John xii, 10); but John, writing long afterwards, was not prevented from recording the miracle by any such considerations. This may be so, but the other reasons just given for the omission are probably the chief ones, as they explain the omission in the fourth Gospel, as well as those in the first three.

Another instance of the process of selection to which Mr. Finn calls our attention is furnished by the ending of the Acts. Some think it has been lost, because no account is given of the death of St. Paul, though so much is told us of his life. But if we conclude, as no doubt we must, that the purport of this book is to record the work of the Holy Spirit, through faithful men, in gathering out the members of the infant Church from among the nations of the world, the ending, as we have it, is most appropriate, because the book closes with the attainment of a definite climax—the preaching of the Gospel unhindered in the world's capital by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, with good prospects of further success (xxviii, 28).

An account of the death of St. Paul would have spoilt this plan. The Acts is not a biography of a man, but it is an account of the work of the Holy Spirit.

I have great pleasure in expressing my thanks for the suggestive and stimulating paper which has just been read.

Mr. T. B. BISHOP said :—I think that Mr. Finn's paper is one of the most helpful we have ever had before us, and I hope that it may be possible to add it to the series of "Tracts for New Times" just published by the Victoria Institute, and to include some part of the postscript we have just heard.

There is only one point on which I should like to remark. On page 74 Mr. Finn mentions the period of 2000 years between Adam and Abraham. This is of course according to Archbishop Usher's chronology, but there are cogent reasons for concluding that the period was far longer.

Archbishop Usher's chronology was, of course, founded on the lists of patriarchs given in Gen. v and Gen. xi.

These genealogies have come down to us in different forms :—First, in the Hebrew Bible, then in the Septuagint version, then in the Alexandrian version of the Septuagint, and then in the Samaritan Pentateuch. The number of the years of life of the patriarchs differ widely in these various versions, and not only so, but there is very clear evidence that the alterations have been made intentionally.

It is clearly impossible to form a chronology from the time of Adam to that of Abraham on such data. Other facts show that we cannot take the figures as any guide to the period of time that elapsed between the Flood and the call of Abraham to Palestine. If we accept them according to the Hebrew Bible, Shem must have lived on far into the life of Abraham, which, of course, is utterly inconsistent with the history.

Then, if we turn to the genealogy of our Lord in Luke iii, we find that a second patriarch by the name of Cainan is introduced, between Arphaxad and Sala, whom we do not find in Genesis. This raises the question whether many other names may have been omitted.

And if we examine other genealogies of the Old Testament, we find without doubt that there are frequent omissions. The genealogy of our Lord in Matt. i, omits the names of four kings of Judah. In the genealogy of Ezra, given in Ezra vii, 1-5, several names are omitted, as will be seen from 1 Chron. vi, 3-14. An article on "Primitive Chronology," by Professor W. H. Green,

of Princeton, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, of April, 1890 (which is introduced in Dr. G. F. Wright's *The Origin and Antiquity of Man*), goes fully into this subject, and shows that this abbreviation of genealogies is characteristic of the Old Testament. We may, therefore, conclude that the list of the post-diluvian patriarchs, at all events, is probably only a list of the most prominent men who were in the line of succession between Noah and Abraham. And certainly the peopling of the world by the descendants of Noah, and the rise of the kingdoms of Babylon and Egypt, with their advanced civilization, seems to require a much longer time than Usher's Chronology would allow.

The Rev. A. CRAIG ROBINSON sends the following:—I am very glad to have been, through the courtesy of the author, afforded an opportunity of perusing his most interesting and able paper, with every word of which, I may say, I am in perfect accord. The author has, I think, given a most lucid and graphic unravelling of what seems to have been the thread of purpose—high—holy—and Divine—which runs through the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. But he very naturally says, "If, however, modern critics are right, the whole of this account is utterly misleading." To my mind it seems to be capable of absolute demonstration that the true order of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is "The Law and the Prophets"—and not, as the German critics would have it, "The Prophets and the Law." On occasions too numerous to mention, I have called attention to three remarkable features of the Pentateuch, viz.:—(1) The absence from the Pentateuch of the name "Jerusalem"; (2) the absence from the ritual of the Pentateuch of any mention of Sacred Song; and (3) the absence from the Pentateuch of the Divine title "Lord of Hosts," so much in vogue in those later times in which the critics assert that the Pentateuch was pieced together.

These features in the Pentateuch are facts absolutely undeniable. No one can say that the name "Jerusalem" *does* occur in the Pentateuch: no one can say that any mention of Sacred Song *does* occur in the ritual of the Pentateuch: and no one can say that the Divine title "Lord of Hosts" *does* occur in the Pentateuch. What is the explanation of this complete absence from the Pentateuch of the name "Jerusalem"? Is it not this? That at the time the Pentateuch was written Jerusalem with all her sacred glories had

not entered yet into the life of Israel? What is the meaning of this absence of any mention of cymbals, timbrel, harp and Sacred Song from the ritual of the Pentateuch? Is it not this? That the Mosaic code, enjoining no music but the simple sounding of the trumpet-blast, stands far behind these niceties of music and of song—seeming to know nothing of them all? What is the explanation of the absence from the Pentateuch of the Divine title “Lord of Hosts” (which occurs for the first time in the Bible in 1 Sam. i, 3)? Is it not this? That the Pentateuch was complete—before this title for Jehovah was ever used in Israel? And in view of these and other undeniable facts, modern criticism—the “Graf-Wellhausen Theory” of the composition of the Pentateuch—like so many other of the cunning sophistries hatched in Germany, is—no matter what number of scholars should endorse it—logically, and absolutely, impossible to be true.

And therefore the order of the history and ritual of the people of Israel, as we have it set forth in the Old Testament, is undoubtedly the true order: and the paper written by Mr. Finn gives, I am convinced, a true and an eloquent exposition of the Bible’s majestic silences.

The Rev. CHANCELLOR J. J. LIAS writes:—I congratulate the Institute on getting another paper from Mr. Finn. I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Mr. Finn’s grandfather, the Rev. Alexander McCaul, D.D., late Professor of Hebrew at King’s College, London, and Rector of St. Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge, from whom I learned Hebrew. Our Church owes much to Mr. Finn’s family. The cause of Missions was energetically supported by his father, Consul Finn of Jerusalem, and I can well remember his vigorous advocacy of C.M.S. work some fifty years ago, during his visits to England.

The first part of his paper has a strong evidential force, of which he says nothing. The remarkable “silences” in Scripture of which he tells us makes it clear that the sacred historian had a *purpose* in writing to call attention to God’s ancient promise, and its marvellous—and let me add, miraculous—fulfilment.

There is only one more remark I wish to add. It is the warning he gives as against paying too much attention to theories on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy. I remember more than one occasion when grievous injury to religion has been done by ignoring our Lord’s bidding not rashly to intrude into things unseen.

DAVID ANDERSON-BERRY, Esq., M.D.:—In the discussion following the reading of this excellent and interesting paper on the Silences of Scripture, may I bring to your notice an illustration connected with chronology. In 1 Kings vi, we find the time between the leaving of Egypt by Israel and the building of the Temple by Solomon ending in the fourth year of his reign measured as 480 years.

Now the same period as measured by the times given by the Apostle Paul in Acts xiii, is 574 years, or nearly one hundred years longer. Much has been made by some of this "mistake" in the Bible, and commentators are hard put to it to explain the discrepancy, none of their explanations being satisfying. However, when we study the Book of Judges and note the exact periods given there when Israel was under subjection to the nations that knew not God we find that their total amounts exactly to the difference between the two grand totals. Hence there is no *mistake* but a chronological illustration of 2 John 8, "Look to yourselves that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." In connection with the Temple, the service and worship of God, the years are not counted that are not spent in the service of God.

Israel is God's earthly people, and as the sun-dial marks not the hours during which the sun does not shine, so the Bible is silent when God's people are not in fellowship with Him. When a child it puzzled me much to discover the continuation of the Book of Acts. The history clearly did not finish. It was like a magazine story with "to be continued." "What had become of Paul, and what of Peter?"

I saw not that as Israel's rejection of their Messiah began with the martyrdom of Stephen at Jerusalem, so it ended with Israel's rejection of Him at Rome. Until the Divine hieroglyphics in which the Book of Revelation is written record the return of Israel to the land and the rebuilding of the Temple, the pen of the Divine Historian is silent.

Mr. W. HOSTE calls attention to a significant fact passed over in silence in the Matthean genealogy, that, of the 700 wives of Solomon, the one chosen to hand on the royal seed in the Messianic line was an Ammonitess (2 Chron. xii, 13). This marks still farther the inclusive character of Divine grace, to which Mr. Finn refers, as witnessed in that genealogy.

I think we can easily trace in the strange and contradictory character of Rehoboam the influence of the Ammonite and Davidic strains.

There is a class of "silences" upon which I do not think Mr. Finn has touched. For instance, the use of the blessing appointed for Aaron in Num. vi and of the form of words apparently assigned to Moses in chapter x, 35-36, is not once mentioned in the subsequent history. Are we to conclude that Aaron never blessed the people or that Moses never invoked the presence of Jehovah? Certainly not, but rather that they always did so at the right moment, otherwise we should have heard of the omission. The same conclusion is correct as regards the baptismal formula of Matt. xxviii. Much has been built on the fact that this is never once mentioned in the Acts. An attempt has even been made to foist another use. The attempt is based, I submit, on a false inference. How is it possible to suppose the formula of Matt. xxviii was not used at Pentecost? What could have happened in a few days' interval to displace it? I believe it was used then and at every other baptism in the Acts, otherwise comment would be made. It is very important not to fill in the silences of Scripture with human tradition, but rather with that which is logically and historically consistent with the framework of the truth.

Mr. E. J. G. TITTERINGTON writes:—During the discussion that took place on Monday evening, reference was made to certain omissions in the genealogy of our Lord as recorded by St. Matthew. May I call attention to an explanation of these omissions suggested by Mrs. A. S. Lewis in a paper read before the Institute a few years ago, in which she showed that the names omitted were those of persons whose family lay under a curse, extending to the third or fourth generation?

That the curse was considered to be thus limited is illustrated also by a comparison of Jer. xxii, 24, with Hag. ii, 23. Zerubbabel was apparently the great-grandson of Jeconiah; though it may be noted in this case that only one name was omitted in the genealogy.

An interesting example of the purposeful omission of names is contained in the first verse of Hosea. Though this prophet was contemporary with four kings of Judah and seven kings of Israel, only one of the latter was named, whilst all the kings of Judah are mentioned. As Hosea was distinctly a prophet of the Northern

Kingdom this circumstance calls for remark. The view of the so-called "critics" that the verse has undergone mutilation is untenable, for so obvious a discrepancy cannot have been overlooked. The explanation, which is simple enough, is given by Hosea himself (*see* Hos. viii, 4). The kings whose names are not recorded existed, it is true; but God took no cognisance of them. His dealings with Ephraim at this period consisted in leaving them to their own devices: "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." The omission is therefore perfectly natural and perfectly appropriate.

The Rev. HORACE A. JENNINS, L.Th., writes from Liverpool:— I have been deeply impressed with the paper and have long noticed the great gaps or "the silences." Natural curiosity and morbid human sentiment would like a picture of the Flood itself, and other facts. We are informed of its *results*. That result is the fulfilment of the Divine threat—or, as in other cases, of Divine promises, etc.

Thus we learn that God is looking on—observing all things—and that there is no such thing as "time" with Him nor forgetfulness (*cp.*, Ex. ii, 24, "God remembered"). Our Lord's "silence" after hearing of Lazarus' illness did not mean "indifference."

Compare also Jesus Christ's statement of approaching humiliation and death, Matt. xvi, 21. Peter had just declared his belief in Christ's divinity, Matt. xvi, 16. Did Christ's declaration *test* Peter's belief?

Communication from Mr. W. E. LESLIE:—In addition to the silences of omission in the Scripture narratives dealt with by the lecturer, there are two further varieties of silence to which his general explanation hardly appears applicable.

In some passages the wording is ambiguous. Two schools of interpretation might almost be said to depend upon whether the "he" in Dan. ix, 27, should be connected with the Messiah or the Prince that shall come. Again, no two expositors appear to agree as to the mutual relations of the clauses in Eph. i.

A second class of passages require for their interpretation a knowledge, once possessed by the contemporaries of the sacred writers, but which, in the providence of God, has been lost. The nature of the Urim and Thummim is an example.

The interpretation of some of the parables and the more obscure Pauline arguments might almost be said to form another variety.

Mr. THEODORE ROBERTS suggested as a reason for the omissions in Scripture that Scripture was intended to have a moral bearing and not merely to satisfy our curiosity. He said that too much could not be implied from silences, instancing the statement in Nehemiah that there had been no feast of Tabernacles kept since Joshua. He spoke of the unity of authorship underlying the whole of Scripture.

He considered that by the constitution of our minds we learned much by contrast, and referred to the way in which the Old Testament recorded the breakdown of the first man as "Head of the Race" (in Genesis), as "Priest" (Exodus to 1 Samuel), as "King" (1 Samuel to 2 Kings), and as "Prophet" (ending in the silence after Malachi); and the re-establishment of these things in Christ, the Second Man, recorded in Mark (as Prophet), Matthew (as King), Luke (as Priest), and John (as Head of the new race, the last Adam).

REPLY BY THE LECTURER.

The comments on the paper are, for the most part, so much in agreement with the general argument that there is little need for a reply.

The Samaritan and Septuagint differences as to the patriarchal ages alluded to by Mr. Bishop were of course known to me, and indeed they are fully discussed in my little work *The Starting Place of Truth*. If the longer period advocated by Mr. Bishop be accepted, that would only increase the significance of the silence concerning it.

The silences instanced by Mr. Hoste (p. 96) and Mr. Leslie (p. 97) really fall under the head of "the exclusion of the ordinary and regular" (p. 76). I am afraid I cannot agree that ambiguities can fairly be classed as silences.

Neh. viii, 17, does not assert that "there had been no feast of Tabernacles kept since Joshua": it only asserts that since that time the people had not dwelt in booths.