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THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

V.

(1 COR. xv. 50-52.)

AT the moment when the Apostle reaches the point before us, "the image of the heavenly," spoken of at the close of ver. 49, fills his mind and transports him with joy and triumph. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, let us also bear the image of the heavenly," had been his cry. Let us see that we be found among the number of those who belong to the line of spiritual descendants of which the second Adam is the Head, so that we may experience a resurrection from the dead similar to His, and may receive the body of "incorruption," of "glory," and of "power," the "spiritual" and "heavenly" body. Suddenly he seems now to turn to the thought that the obtaining of this body had, throughout all his previous argument, been associated with, or even conditioned by, the preliminary experience of death. But all Christians were not destined to die. In the great day of the Lord's second coming there would be those living upon the earth whom he elsewhere describes as the "we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15). They would be living in their ordinary bodies, in their bodies of "corruption," of "dishonour," and of "weakness," in their "sensuous" and "earthy" bodies, in bodies adapted to this material and fleeting world, and unfitted for that glorious kingdom of God which would then be manifested. What therefore was to become of them? Were they not to share in the blessedness of those who, being one with Christ, were "children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that they suffer with Him, that they may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. viii. 16, 17)? Curiously

enough, the misapprehension is exactly the converse of that with which the Apostle had to deal in writing to the disciples at Thessalonica. There the fear was that they who had died before the second coming of the Lord would not partake of the blessedness prepared for such as would be alive when the Lord descends "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"; and assurance had to be given that the dead in Christ shall "rise first." Here the difficulty sprang up in connexion with those who would be alive when Jesus came. The bright prospects hitherto spoken of in this chapter had been connected with a passage through the grave. What shall be the fate of those for whom the providence of God prepares no such passage?

Such seem to be the thoughts occupying the mind of St. Paul when he comes to the fiftieth verse of this chapter; and, if it be so, not only the general strain of the following verses is at once explained, but light is thrown upon individual expressions, the full meaning of which we might not otherwise perceive.

"But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." *Τοῦτο δέ φημι*, "But this I say," introducing an emphatic and positive assertion, not intended to explain more fully what has been said already, but to lead the way to a new consideration connected with it (comp. chap. vii. 29). That "flesh and blood" are here used to denote only the physical nature of man, without taking into account, under the word "flesh," the lusts and passions of our lower nature,¹ there can be no doubt; but it is of more consequence to observe that, if the view of the connexion above spoken of be correct, it is concrete men, men then alive, rather than the materials of which their bodies are composed, that the Apostle has in his eye.

¹ As Cox, p. 227.

In that condition in which he is now dealing with them, they are "flesh and blood"; and, as such, they are also "corruption." The two expressions refer to the same thing, and there is no ground whatever for the supposition—a supposition rather breaking the continuity of the Apostle's statement—that "flesh and blood" denote those who shall be alive at the *parousia*, and that "corruption" denotes those who shall have died before it.¹ The word "corruption" applies to the body, not only when in the grave, but in its present state of existence upon earth (comp. ver. 42); and both clauses refer to living men, although, according to the common method of Scripture, the second is climactic to the first. The word "inherit" is here interesting, and has light shed on it when we fix our thoughts on the general purport of the verse. The covenant with Abraham hardly seems to be alluded to;² it is of the heirship of Romans viii. 16 that St. Paul is thinking, that heirship which is given us with Christ Himself, "the Heir" (comp. Matt. xxi. 38, Heb. i. 2), when we trace our spiritual descent from Him, when we are in Him, and are one with Him. The law, then, thus laid down by St. Paul is not only general and absolute, but founded in the very nature of things. In the same way as our Lord had said, "Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3), so the Apostle says, "Flesh and blood" *cannot* inherit that kingdom when it is revealed in glory. In the second clause, in which the word "cannot" is not employed, there is probably no less of a climax to the first clause than there was when the mention of "corruption" followed the mention of "flesh and blood." The present tense, "doth inherit," seems to do more than negative the thought of what might otherwise happen at any particular instant. It gives expression to the Divine, everlasting, and unchanging plan, and in this

¹ As Godet *in loc.*

² As Edwards.

respect it may be said to be of even greater force than the "cannot" of the preceding clause.

"Flesh and blood" then, or "corruption," that is, the men and women who would be alive upon the earth when Christ was manifested, could not enter as they were into the kingdom. What was to be their fate? They would not be in the position of those who had passed through the seed-bed of the grave. Dead believers would be raised, ready for the kingdom. But these had not died. They were, by the supposition, in their earthly bodies; and earthly bodies are, alike by the nature of the case and the Divine plan, unfit for the kingdom. What then was to happen to them? Everything makes it plain, and the point ought to be fixed with the greatest possible distinctness in our minds, that St. Paul is thinking only of those who shall be alive at the *parousia*, and that the mystery of which he is about to tell us has reference to them alone.

This mystery is now stated, vers. 51, 52, in the following words, taken from the Revised Version, which is here in the closest correspondence with the Authorized: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Before endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of these words, it is necessary to determine the best attested reading of the Greek; and this the more, that the various readings of ver. 51 open up principles of textual criticism as interesting and important as those of any single text in the New Testament. There are three such readings; but one of them (that which gives us *ἀναστησόμεθα* instead of *κοιμηθησόμεθα*) is of little consequence, and we may confine ourselves to the two that remain.

The first (A) is substantially that of the *Textus Re-*

ceptus, πάντες μὲν οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα ; the second (B) assigns a different position to the negative particle, placing it, not before, but after κοιμηθησόμεθα, and before the second πάντες : πάντες κοιμηθησόμεθα οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλογησόμεθα. The most remarkable circumstance connected with these two readings is, that while all the most valuable diplomatic evidence, with the exception of the *Codex Vaticanus*, is in favour of the second (B), critics generally, including even Westcott and Hort, whose adherence to this department of evidence is so steadfast, and has been attended with such momentous consequences to the New Testament text, have been constrained to decide, upon internal grounds, in favour of the first (A).¹ In short, we have here a case, one of very few of the kind, in which the ablest inquirers have felt themselves compelled to allow that external evidence must yield to internal. And why? Because, supposing (A) to be the correct reading, the genesis of (B) can be at once explained; because, supposing (B) to be correct, the genesis of (A) would be inexplicable. What we shall immediately see to be the true meaning of (A) must have appeared either so unintelligible or so startling to the Church, that she must have considered it out of the question to acquiesce in it. The reading, she would reason, must be false; and the second reading (B) would suggest itself as a simple method of meeting the difficulty, and of making the words of the Apostle worthy, as they must have been, of his Divine commission. The meaning of the first reading, the only meaning of which it is naturally susceptible, is, "All of us shall not-fall-asleep," or, in other words, "None of us shall fall-asleep." In the course of a few years therefore, to say nothing of generations, it could not but be seen that that statement was disproved by fact. The meaning of the second reading is, "All of us shall fall

¹ Comp. also Tregelles, Tischendorf, etc.

asleep, but not all of us (*i.e.* some of us) shall be changed"; or, to put it in another way, St. Paul says first, "All of us shall fall asleep," and then suddenly correcting himself, he adds, "Yet not all of us : some of us shall be changed." A satisfactory sense, or at least, a sense in conformity with fact, appeared thus to be gained. The future would be as the past until the end of the present dispensation. Falling asleep would continue as before; but the great day would come, and then some of those living at the time would be changed. These considerations suggest the probable history of the manner in which the second reading (B) found its way into so wide a circle of authorities. But the greater the degree of probability with which we can account, on subjective grounds, for the introduction of a contested reading into the text, the less is that reading entitled to claim its place as the original utterance of the writer. The weight of external evidence on behalf of (B) is thus considerably diminished.

Nor is even the sense afforded by it so good as to weigh much in its favour. If it relieves us from the peculiar difficulty attaching to (A), it has difficulties of its own to contend with not less serious. One of two meanings must be attached to it. (1) The "all" in the two clauses may be understood, in its widest sense, as applicable to men without exception; in which case the meaning is, All shall die, but only believers shall be changed. Thus introducing a reference to non-believers, this meaning may be set aside without any argument against it upon other grounds. There is no more striking characteristic of the whole chapter than the degree to which it ignores the existence of unbelievers. (2) The "all" may be understood in a more limited sense as applying only to believers; and, as already indicated, the Apostle may be understood to say, "All of us shall die; yet not all of us : some of us shall be changed." But, apart from the awkwardness of the limitation "all, yet not all,"

what could lead the Apostle to give prominence to the fact that those of whom he is thinking shall fall asleep or die? He has passed away from that state of things. He has nothing to do now with either death or resurrection from the grave. He has turned to a different class of persons, in whose case there was neither death nor resurrection. He could hardly therefore have spoken in the manner supposed. On every ground the second reading must be rejected, and the first reading, that of the *Textus Receptus*, must stand. The Apostle says, πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα. What is his meaning? And, if his meaning be that naturally suggested by the words, is there any legitimate method of escape from the charge that it has been disproved by fact?

It would be vain to attempt to enter into all the speculations of grammarians and commentators as to the correct mode of rendering negative sentences cast in the mould of that before us, or to discuss at length the different interpretations which have been given to the Apostle's words: "All of us shall not sleep," *i.e.* none of us shall sleep; "All of us shall not sleep," *i.e.* some of us shall sleep; "All of us shall not sleep," *i.e.* some of us shall be awake or alive. It is enough to say that the general contention is, that in biblical Greek the position of the negatives is not so rigorously observed as in the classic style; and that, although therefore the οὐ is, strictly speaking, to be connected with the verb, its sense may be trajected to the subject "all." We thus obtain the meaning which may be given in the words of Godet (*in loc.*): "We shall not all die—there will be living Christians when the Lord comes again; but we shall all require to be changed—living believers by transformation, the dead by resurrection." This view cannot be accepted. It is no doubt urged that we may overcome the grammatical difficulty of trajecting the οὐ from the verb to its subject πάντες by a comparison

of such a passage as that always quoted in defence of this procedure, Numbers xxiii. 13, in which Balak says to Balaam μέρος τι ὄψει, πάντας δὲ οὐ μὴ ἴδῃς, and where, to keep the negative in close connexion with the verb, would make Balak contradict himself: "a part shalt thou see, but all shalt thou not-see," *i.e.* "none shalt thou see." Or we are referred to such words as those of Romans iii. 20, οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ, where the tendency of the Hebrew mind to connect with the verb the negative belonging to the subject is thought to be illustrated. This solution of the difficulty however is extremely doubtful. Its possibility is indeed denied in the strongest terms by, amongst others, Winer and Meyer.¹ But even though it were grammatically possible, it is rendered wholly inadmissible on account of the double meaning which it puts into ἀλλαγῆσόμεθα—that of a change in some by transformation, in others by resurrection. Nothing can well be more certain than that, throughout the passage (comp. especially ver. 53, where the two acts are clearly distinguished), that verb is used in one sense alone, the sense of change by *transformation*. In these circumstances there seems to be no alternative but to abide by the simple and natural meaning of the words, and to understand the Apostle as saying, "We all (*i.e.* all included in the πάντες) shall not

¹ A moment's consideration indeed may show us that Num. xxiii. 13 is no proper parallel to the present passage. There can be there no mistake as to the meaning, the first part of the sentence stating distinctly that Balaam shall see only a part of the host. With this the second part of the sentence must agree. Nor does it make any difference in the thought of that second part whether we connect the negative with the πάντας or the ἴδῃς: "not all shalt thou see," or "all (the emphasis lying on this word) shalt thou not see." That the second passage, Rom. iii. 20, is equally useless for the purpose for which it is referred to appears from this, that if we traject the negative, connecting it with the subject of the verb, instead of the verb itself, we obtain a sense utterly at variance with the statement which the Apostle is concerned to prove: "Wherefore by the works of the law shall be justified not all flesh," or "not all flesh shall be justified," *i.e.* "some flesh shall be justified." It would seem, therefore, as if both these passages were improperly appealed to for the object they are supposed to serve.

fall asleep, but we all (*i.e.* all again included in the πάντες) shall be changed."

The propriety of so rendering is confirmed by one or two different considerations that may be noticed before speaking of the difficulty to which the rendering gives rise. (a) It preserves the connexion between the negative and the verb, as in 1 John ii. 19, "They went out, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us," where it is not so much the object of the Apostle to say that there are false members of the Christian community, as to say that none of those who, by going out, prove themselves to be so, ever really belonged to it. Although the order of the words in St. John is slightly different (yet only as regards emphasis) from that of the words before us, the negative is thus to be closely connected with its verb. So also 1 John ii. 21, "Every lie is-not (οὐκ ἔστι) of the truth"; *i.e.* it is the essence of every lie that it does not spring from the truth. (b) The rendering now defended strictly preserves the same meaning for πάντες in both clauses. The persons of whom it is asserted that they shall not die are the very same persons of whom it is said that they shall be changed. We all, whoever we are, shall not die, but we shall all be changed. (c) It preserves what would appear to be almost the technical meaning of ἀλλαγησόμεθα in vers. 51 and 52; for, as has been already stated, that word is so used as to make it impossible to include under it the "change" which is to take effect upon those who have been asleep or dead. Besides which, the idea of "change" will not suit the condition of the dead. Change supposes something to be changed, a person on whom the change is to operate. But the dead are buried out of sight. They have returned to corruption. They are not there to be changed. What they need is to be raised up in another form; and that resurrection they shall experience. This "change," whatever may be said to the contrary, cannot include resurrection.

It refers only to transmutation. (*d*) Thus preserving the special meaning of the word "changed," we preserve also the distinction clearly drawn in ver. 52 between the νεκροί and the ἡμεῖς. (*e*) We have a meaning of precisely that kind which would be likely to startle the Church, and to lead it insensibly to modify the Greek. (*f*) On the other supposition the whole difficulty, to be immediately referred to, is not removed. From the ἡμεῖς of ver. 52 St. Paul cannot exclude himself. The meaning of the words can hardly be any other than this, that none of the "we all" shall die, that all of the "we all" shall be changed.

It is not to be denied that we are thus face to face with a very serious difficulty. We seem to be forced by the principles of fair exegesis to make St. Paul say in a distinct and positive manner what has been contradicted by fact; and we make him say this too at a time when to any observer his statement must have appeared to be at variance with what was actually passing around him. Can the Apostle really intend to convey to us the assurance that the last Christian of that generation who was to pass through the gate of the grave had already died? Was no other to follow into the valley of the shadow of death? And can he say this at a moment when, in all probability, many Christians at Corinth were "weak and sickly, and not a few were falling asleep" (κοιμῶνται, 1 Cor. xi. 30)? Is it so that, according to the statement of the Apostle, there was to be no more death, and that all believers had only to wait for a more or less immediate "change"? To say the least of it, this is exceedingly unlike St. Paul; and not only so, it is out of keeping with that mind of Christ which we know to have been his authority, and which he so often shows us he had made his own. Let the following observations be considered:

1. It does not seem difficult to account for the peculiar form of the expression, for the negative instead of the posi-

tive form, "we shall not-sleep." Throughout his whole previous argument the Apostle had dealt with *sleeping* or *dying* as the main point of the great transition he had in view. The perplexity in the minds of his readers did not present itself in the form, "What if we shall not be alive?" so much as in the form, "What if we shall not have died?" Hence he is led to designate those of whom he is thinking, not as persons who shall be alive, but as persons who shall not-have-died.

2. But what of the *πάντες*? What of a statement so universal, and apparently applied without any limitation to himself and the men around him? The explanation is to be found in St. Paul's habit of thought and in the mode in which, under the influence of that habit, he is led to express himself. When a thought takes possession of his mind, it wholly fills it. He can look at it only in one light, and apart from the qualifications and limitations with which, in cooler and less eager minds, it would naturally be associated. What he dwells upon starts up before him like a picture, the canvas of which is entirely occupied with one conception. The picture is his own. He is in the midst of it. He is one with the figures filling it. For the time he is incapable of admitting any thought by which the leading idea of the picture would require to be balanced, if we are to have all the truth. Illustrations of this habit in its more general form are so numerous and so commonly admitted, that it is unnecessary to speak of them. It is more to our present purpose to refer to one in this very chapter, in which the same word *πάντες* is treated exactly as it is here. At ver. 22 we read, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." No statement could be more general, and both the use made of it and the conclusions deduced from it in that form are well known. Yet nothing can be more certain than that "all" here is not "all" in its universal aspect. Those intended are only

“all” to the Apostle. Whence comes this? His mind was filled in the verses coming immediately before with the thought of those who wake from their sleep to be presented along with Christ, the firstfruits, to the Father, with the thought of those who share with the risen Saviour the resurrection of the dead. He had been gazing on them as they passed before him, a glorious army, clothed in all the splendour which he afterwards endeavours to describe by speaking of “this corruptible putting on incorruption, and this mortal putting on immortality” (ver. 53). The canvas is full; not another figure can find a place in it; these sons of the resurrection morning are all upon whom he can fix his thoughts, and he cries out, though having reference to them alone, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

It is precisely the same thing here. At ver. 50, as we have already seen, St. Paul had been speaking of concrete living Christians as contrasted with Christians who had died. The latter were a complete class; so then also are the former. They come before the Apostle in all their perplexity, as for the moment they think, not only that they may not, but that they will not die. Is there no hope for them? St. Paul identifies himself with them. He is in the midst of a new company, and the company of such as had died is forgotten. He is one with the new company, and he makes the new company one with him. We are to live, he exclaims; by the supposition we are not to die. “We all” belong to those who are not to fall asleep. What then? We belong to those who in that case will be changed; and our hope is as sure and precious as that of others. This power of identifying himself with others is a true trait of the great Apostle. “Who,” he exclaims, writing on one occasion to the Corinthian Church, “is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I burn not?” (2 Cor. xi. 29;) and in this very epistle, “To the

Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 20-22). It is by no means necessary, therefore, to think that the Apostle lays it down as a fact, that none of the men of that generation would die. It might have been so. It might be so with the men of this generation. None of us knows the hour when the Lord cometh, and no one knows that better of his own day than St. Paul knew it of his day. Enough that he is dealing with one half only of a great truth. The first half had been disposed of. Christians who die shall rise to a more glorious life. The second half comes next. Christians who do not die shall be fitted for the Divine glory by being changed.

Let us paraphrase the Apostle's words: "I have been dealing with the thought of death as of that crisis in the believer's history through which he passes from the corruption, the dishonour, and the weakness of earth to the incorruption, the glory, and the power of the future and heavenly life; and I have spoken as I have done because the difficulties proposed to me had reference to the condition of the departed. 'How are the dead raised up? and with what manner of body do they come?' Do not imagine, however, that I am insensible to the fact that the second coming of the Lord of which I have so often spoken in my teaching will find many of His people alive upon the earth. They, it is true, shall not die. They shall not pass through that grave which is the ultimate form of the seed-bed out of which, like grains of wheat springing up into the plant, Christians who have died shall spring up into their future glorious estate. Those who

have died shall not on that account anticipate them. They shall be changed." And then he passes on, with a full mind unburdening itself, to some of the particulars of the change.

It will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." There is no need to dwell upon the figure employed in the second of these clauses, which is obviously intended to bring out, like the "moment" spoken of, the suddenness of the change. There is no gradual development, no process of refining or spiritualizing of the body that may have been going on for years or centuries. Whatever may have happened in that way in no degree interferes with the instantaneousness of the final issue. This instantaneousness may indeed startle us, but there is also much that may help us to appreciate, if not fully to comprehend it. The first step taken in any new and great series of events must be always sudden. It may have been long prepared for, as the gathering forces of electricity in the atmosphere prepare for the moment when the equilibrium shall be restored; but, when that is restored, it is with the suddenness of the lightning's flash. Creation, in whatever form we think of it, whether as innumerable atoms in ill-assorted whirl, or as a well-ordered and harmonious system, must have been sudden. The transition from not-being to being could be nothing else. Astronomers too are familiar with great cataclysms in the history of the universe around them. They behold stars suddenly broken up, lights with which they have been long familiar disappear, and new lights come into existence. With what tremendous changes all this must have been accompanied they cannot tell; but this they know that, whatever their extent, they must have been sudden. So also now. It may help us the better to comprehend the teaching of this passage if we bear in mind that the change referred to does not take place while the ordinary processes of nature are going on with their

usual regularity and calmness. Nature prepares us for convulsions. Scripture tells us that it is in the midst of one of these that what is here spoken of will take place. It is the day of the Lord, and "the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet iii. 10). Who shall estimate aright the changes on every side, and on every object with which earth is filled, that may and must accompany this great change? To imagine man passing through it unchanged would be the difficulty, and whatever change takes place will certainly be "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

Another mark of the great era in human history spoken of is added by the Apostle—"at the last trump." The trumpet is the same as that of which we read in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, when it is there said that "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (chap. iv. 16). Still more particularly, it is that of which our Lord Himself spoke to His disciples in His discourse upon the last things: "And He shall send forth His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 31). This gathering together of Christ's elect is now before the Apostle's eye; and the sounding of the trumpet long and loud,—so long that the sound travels to every region of the earth, so loud that it penetrates the deepest chambers of the tomb—is to him the symbol of the gathering.

The greatness of the occasion, too, is increased by the circumstance that this trumpet shall then sound for the "last" time. It had sounded at the giving of the law, so that, even amidst the thunders that re-echoed amongst

the mountains of Horeb, it was heard "exceeding loud" (Exod. xix. 17). From the thought of it, as the suitable accompaniment of all great occasions when the Almighty manifested Himself to Israel, came no doubt its employment in connexion with the fall of Jericho, with the peculiar solemnities of the seventh month, the greatest month in Israel's sacred year, and with those solemn assemblies of the people of which it was said, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, call a solemn assembly" (Joel ii. 15). All along the history of Israel it had been associated with the most momentous events which befell that people. But this sounding shall be the "last." The trumpet will be no more needed to accompany the giving of a law, for the law has been written upon the Christian heart; no more needed to summon the Israel of God to the overthrow of hostile powers, for all Israel's enemies have been overcome; no more needed to introduce great festivals which are to last for a few days, for the Feast of Tabernacles has begun which is to endure for ever; and no more needed to call solemn assemblies soon to be broken up, for the solemn assembly now convened is never to be dissolved. Therefore this trumpet is the "last."

The heart of St. Paul appears to swell with peculiar emotion when he thinks of this feature of the great day of which he speaks, for he comes back upon it, without repeating anything that he had said of the other characteristics of the day. "For," he adds, "the trumpet shall sound."

Then follows the effect, "And the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The two classes of which he had been speaking are still before him,—the dead, and they who are alive at the Lord's coming. Of the one he says that they shall be raised, and that no longer in the state of corruption; *i.e.* of weakness and decay and liability to death in which they had lived on earth, but

incorruptible. Of the other he says simply, without as yet specifying the characteristics of the change, "and we shall be changed." Many attempts, more or less plausible, have been made to show that under the "we" thus spoken of the Apostle does not necessarily include himself, and that he thus leaves no imputation to be made upon the accuracy of that view of the future which it is thought his inspiration must have secured to him. These attempts can hardly be said to have been successful; and all that it seems possible to contend for is, that there is no dogmatic assertion of the fact that he and the men of that generation would certainly be alive when the Lord came. As, at ver. 51, he can hardly be understood to maintain that no one of his own generation, including himself, will die before that time, so he can hardly be understood to maintain here that he and they will certainly be then alive. He may have thought it highly probable that such would be the case; and the tone of his earlier writings, as in the two epistles to the Thessalonians (for the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians teaches upon this point no other lesson than the first), confirms the impression that he did entertain some expectation of the kind. If so, we can the more easily comprehend that he should throw himself into that position in the manner we have already endeavoured to explain. But it is not easy to see why an expectation of the kind, though proved by the event to be false, should weaken our confidence in the general inspiration under which he wrote. That inspiration did not extend to the times and the seasons when the events connected with the second coming would occur. Our Lord Himself said of His coming: "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). Even after His resurrection, and when commissioning His Apostles to their work, He said: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the

Father hath set within His own authority" (Acts i. 7). To suppose that inspiration ought to have included such knowledge is to suppose that Christ Himself was not inspired. On the other hand, if St. Paul and the Christians of those days did not know when the second coming would take place, what could they expect but that it would be immediate? Let us place ourselves in their position. Let us be persecuted, afflicted, tormented, with no prospect before us in this world but a daily dying. Let us then remember the "blessed hope" of the return of Him on whom the most ardent affections of our souls are fixed; and who, when He does return, will bring us freedom from all our troubles, rest from all our enemies, and eternal joy in His own immediate presence. Let us dwell on these things till our hearts, like those of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, burn within us, till already the darkness of the present vanishes and the glory of the future is around us, and what other idea can we entertain but that in all probability Christ will come before we die? We shall not think of ourselves as doomed to die. The grave will not be the termination of the vista down which we look into the future. We shall see the Lord's chariot of glory already appearing and rapidly approaching: and the natural language of our lips will be, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." The dead are dead, and shall soon awake. We shall be changed. Let us admit that St. Paul expected not to die, and we may still urge that his inspiration, in any just sense of the word, is not weakened because the expectation was not fulfilled.

All this then the apostle declares to be "a mystery" (ver. 51). It would seem that the word is not to be applied to the raising of the dead. It is applied only to the changing of the living, and perhaps to their being presented, along with Christians raised from the dead, in one blessed company to their Lord. This supposition is involved in

the meaning of the term upon which, as used in the New Testament, there is general agreement. It is used to signify a truth unknown before, but now made known by positive revelation. In this sense it could scarcely be applied to the raising of dead Christians. Christ was risen: these must rise with Him. Their resurrection was a logical inference from accomplished and acknowledged fact, rather than a revelation. But the other half of the statement, that the living shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, and that then both sections of the great Christian army shall be "caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17),—that was a revelation, a statement of the future, of things which "eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, but unto us God revealed them through the Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). We complain of the darkness of the future, and in many respects it is dark. On one point we have light. Why do we so often forget it? "He that cometh will come, and will not tarry." He will come "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"; and every true member of His body shall be with Him. However long they may have slept in their graves, in whatever uttermost parts of the earth or of the sea they dwell when the trumpet sounds, not one of them shall be lost. Provision has been made for all, and we may "comfort one another with these words."

W. MILLIGAN.