

upon the earth in the 'fulness of its power and splendor. So little did they understand his meaning, that they were startled by his appearance after his 'resurrection (15). This revived their hope. Nor did it die out after his Ascension ; but it clothed itself again in the old national costume. They expected him to return to the world in order to establish the Kingdom ; and they shaped their hopes in terms of the Old Testament pictorial descriptions of the Messianic Advent. Their expectation so influenced the early Church that she kept gazing into the skies for the Coming of the Lord.

The Traditional Reports.

It is thought by many that the Jewish prepossessions of the first disciples so colored their report of Christ's sayings concerning his Second Coming, that we must carefully distinguish between Christ's own view and his disciples' apprehension of that view. We shall see later on how much value may be attached to this contention, and in the meantime we shall accept as substantially correct the traditional reports of Jesus' words. In describing his Coming, he made use of current Jewish symbolism. He borrowed specially from the imagery of the apocalyptic literature of the Hebrews. This it is which makes the interpretation of his eschatological discourses extremely difficult to the Western mind. We forget to reckon with the historical element in the language. Oriental symbolism was highly exaggerated, and literalism must be abandoned in its interpretation. Daniel prophesied the coming of the Messiah on the clouds of heaven (16). How tame, in comparison, was his appearance in the manger at Bethlehem ! It is no explanation to say that Daniel had in view the Second Coming, or that Jesus quoted his words with reference to that (17) in order to teach the literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. It is not likely that the Second Advent had any place in the thought of the prophet. Jesus' teaching on this subject was not traditional ; it was quite original. The question is

(15). Mark 16 : 11.

(16). Daniel 7 : 13.

(17). Matthew 26 : 64.