

ed by the assaults of the enemy, so this doctrine took its shape, not from Scripture statements, but from the exigencies of controversy. It was thrown up to meet the assaults upon the true divinity of Christ; and although cumbrous and involved, it saved Christianity. For the truth of the proper divinity of Christ is the marrow of the sacred Scriptures. It is the only point at which natural and revealed religion can be reconciled.

"But if by another and better statement the divinity of Christ can be exhibited in equal eminence and with greater simplicity, and if such exhibition shall be found in more obvious accord with the language of the New Testament, and with what we now know of mental philosophy, it will be wise, in constructing a life of Christ, to leave the antiquated theory of the mediæval church, and return to the simple and more philosophical views of the sacred Scriptures."*

We shall have occasion presently to notice, that "other and better statement," which Mr. Beecher proposes to substitute for what he calls "the antiquated theory of the mediæval church." Meanwhile, a demurrer or two may claim to be put in against certain statements contained in the quotation just given. The first relates to the affirmation, that the doctrine objected to took shape not from Scripture teaching, but from the exigencies of controversy. Do the facts uphold this position? Is not this the simple history of the doctrine, that the early theologians, like those of modern times, found two classes of texts in the Bible, descriptive of Christ, the one class describing a true and proper man, the other describing the true and living God; so that the exigencies, not of controversy, but of Scripture interpretation, compelled the theory of two distinct natures in one wondrous person? Again, what a strange, indefensible statement it is, that a doctrine to be rejected as unsound and unscriptural "saved Christianity," in the days of exigent controversy. How can this be? Is error the champion and saviour of truth? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And yet once more, is it entirely fair to style this doctrine, "the antiquated theory of the mediæval church," when it formed a most conspicuous article in the Nicene creed, and has been unswervingly held by the Christian Church ever since? Mediæval things are somewhat hazy, dubious, and even suspicious; and mediæval times began long after the date of which this doctrine was formally adopted. Mr. Beecher himself says, (p 47) of this view, it "may be called the doctrine of the Church, at least since the fourth century."

The *second*, and purely humanitarian view of the person of Christ is not without its modern advocates. Renan, one of the most distinguished among them, has been already named, and his remarkable volume, briefly characterized. "*Vie de Jesus*" is no common, every-day book. It is "an attempt to conjure up, by means of great learning and greater imagination, a mighty phantom in place of the Son of God." Nor is the attempt artful and dishonest. It is made in a sincere and earnest spirit, and might be mottoed, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Renan neither excites nor gratifies sceptical levity. He draws, with all the enthusiasm of an artist, a striking picture, the effect of which is to call up one still more striking. As you gaze, the conviction becomes inwrought, "He who was all this, must have been far more." The picture has indeed great blemishes, and is disfigured by one signal blot. The blemishes are those passages which attribute to Christ partial degeneracy of character as His history advances, want of absolute sincerity, resort to innocent artifices, duplicity, fanaticism, and what Renan styles "a frightful access of enthusiasm." The great blot on the work, even in a literary point of view, is the attempt to show that the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection was a pious fraud, and as such, under the circumstances, excusable and even justifiable. This Life of Christ is avowedly constructed on the unmanageable hypothesis that everything supernatural is false. Any life of Christ must be a failure that is written on this principle. The most appreciative estimate of Christ a sceptic has ever given to the world, Renan's portraiture is wholly taken from below.