

period dates the rule of Creeds, which requires the assent of the mind to given words, and converts the slightest doubt into a crime more odious than any breach of the Commandments." The rule is still in force if we may consider the most popular evangelist of our day as authority. In one of his published sermons W. Spurgeon declares unbelief to be a greater crime than all the acts forbidden by the decalogue rolled into one. Before the Council of Nice formulated a Creed intended to put an end to the trinitarian controversy, men were responsible for their deeds, and not for their thoughts. With the Pagans impiety consisted in withholding from the gods their dues, sometimes victims, sometimes a pinch or two of incense cast into the flame on the altar. With Christians piety consisted in doing the will of God. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, and the Prophets before him, inculcated conduct and not belief in any proposition whatever. But now the churches have a code containing a series of propositions, some historical as of the past, some prophetic as of the future, and some philosophical, dealing with the nature of God and man, and these all men are required to believe under threat of eternal torment to those who refuse. Many of these propositions are by good and intelligent men pronounced untrue and pernicious. John Wesley declared that the doctrine of predestination to the belief that God will punish men for not believing what they have never had a chance to hear, or hearing can't understand. And Archdeacon Farrar declares that his conscience indignantly revolts at much that is taught as part of the gospel of salvation.

It must appear strange that doctrines which are odious to such men as I have named have found entrance into the formularies of the Christian faith, but the wonder will cease when we consider when, by whom, and under what circumstances these formularies were framed. Milman's History of Chris-

tianity will supply sufficient information on the subject.

The religion of Jesus, as I have said, was a religion of conduct. He declared that those who heard his words and did them would found their house upon a rock; and in his picture of the judgment he represents men as accepted or condemned upon the sole ground of what they had done or had not done. But the teaching of Jesus was in a dialect understood only by few, and those generally poor and humble. He wrote nothing, and his words were not committed to writing by anyone, or at least not published for perhaps a century after his death. But there was an able and eloquent writer of Greek, which was a world wide language, and who was himself an enthusiastic Christian. He promulgated what he believed to be Christian doctrines in epistles which exceed in bulk all the narratives and epistles of those disciples who had been with Jesus, while the Greek apostle whom I speak of had never seen or heard him. This was St. Paul. He had been the most formidable persecutor of the disciples. His hands were stained with the blood of the first martyr, and others had been doomed to death by his voice. In the midst of his bloody career he stopped short, and began to defend and to teach the religion he had before persecuted. His reasons for this change we know only from himself, and his story is wholly without corroboration. He said that Jesus spoke to him from heaven to change his career, and that God had inspired him with what he was to teach. He expressly disclaims having been taught by any man. He never read any of the gospels, for they were not yet written. He saw none of the Apostles till he had been preaching three years, and then only, and for a short time, Peter and James. Indeed he was never cordially received by the apostles, though they gave him the right hand of fellowship. Peter said that in his epistles were some things