

the ancients, was adherence to a common religion, just as the family tie was, not common blood, but communion in the family religion (for the adopted son was as real a member as the son by nature). Accordingly, when Augustus essayed the great task of consolidating the loosely aggregated parts of the vast Empire, he had to find a religion to consecrate the unity by a common idea and sentiment. The existing religions were all national, while the Empire (as we saw) was striving to extirpate the national divisions and create a supra-national unity. A new religion was needed. Partly with conscious intention, partly borne unconsciously on the tide of events, the young Empire created the Imperial religion, the worship of an idea—the cult of the Majesty of Rome, as represented by the incarnate deity present on earth in the person of the reigning Emperor, and by the dead gods, his deified predecessors on the throne. Except for the slavish adulation of the living Emperor, the idea was not devoid of nobility; but it was incapable of life, for it degraded human nature, and was founded on a lie. But Paul gave the Empire a more serviceable idea. He made possible that unity at which the imperial policy was aiming. The true path of the Empire lay in allowing free play to the idea which Paul offered, and strengthening itself through this unifying religion. That principle of perfect religious freedom (which we regard as Seneca's) directed for a time the imperial policy, and caused the acquittal of Paul on his first trial in Rome. But freedom was soon exchanged for the policy of fire and sword. The imperial gods would not give place to a more real religion, and fought for two and a half centuries to maintain their sham worship against it. When at last the idea of Paul was, even reluctantly and imperfectly, accepted by the Emperors, no longer claiming to be gods, it gave new life to the rapidly perishing organisation of the Empire and conquered the triumphant barbarian enemy. Had it not been for Paul—if one may guess at what might have been—no man would now remember the Roman and Greek civilisation. Barbarism proved too powerful for the Græco-Roman civilisation unaided by the new religious bond; and every channel through which that civilisation was preserved, or interest in it maintained, either is now or has been in some essential part of its course Christian after the Pauline form.—(RAMSAY, "Pauline and Other Studies," p. 99.)

The task which St. Paul performed for the Roman Empire we have now to perform for the world, and in a more complicated form, but a form for which Christianity is entirely ade-