

Japan for Christ

ONE OF THE PREDESTINED PEOPLES. WHAT HER CONVERSION WOULD EFFECT.

(By MAOL-IOSA, in the *Irish Catholic*.)

Ireland, in the old days, had no sooner received the glad tidings of the Gospel than she sent forth her children to evangelise other pagan lands. "*Peregrinari pro Christo*" was the rallying call of the Isle of Destiny (Inis Fail), which did in fact decide the destinies of many peoples and bring them into the True Fold of Christ. And, in our own days, Ireland is rallying once more to the old call, she is finding her soul—her old missionary soul—she has her Columcilles, her Columbaans, her Fearghals. In every missionary land the sons and daughters of Ireland are to be found toiling in the harvest of the Master.

But there is one missionary land which is so very little known amongst us, and the importance of which seems to be so very little realised, that it is necessary to say something about it. The land I refer to is the "Land of the Rising Sun," the "Eye of the Far-East," the great Japanese nation. Certain peoples, like certain individuals, seem to be better disposed and prepared for the receiving of the Word of God; and, as in the case of certain individuals, too, the conversion of such peoples draws with it, by the very weight of their influence, many other peoples to the feet of Christ. Now, Japan seems, in God's designs, to be one of those

Predestined Peoples

whose influence would draw many others. Let us first give a short account of the history of Catholicism in Japan, and then we will try to point out how the conversion of Japan is the starting point for the conversion of the whole Far-East, and how Japan is now ready to receive the Gospel, craving for enlightenment.

The Gospel was brought to Japan in 1549 by St. Francis Xavier, one of the greatest apostles of modern times. He found the Japanese very well disposed, and was greatly rejoiced at the eagerness and generosity with which they embraced the Faith. By 1590 the faithful had increased to 300,000. But then a violent persecution broke out which both for the cruelty of the persecutors and the constancy of the martyrs, recalls the most fierce days of the persecutions of the early Christians by the mighty Roman Empire. In spite of all that the living flame of the Faith was not extinguished. In remote villages and solitary islands thousands of the faithful continued to practise as best they could their proscribed religion, and (what is unique, perhaps, in the history of the Church) for two and a half centuries, though deprived of all priestly ministry, owing to the fact that the ports of Japan were closed to every Catholic, they preserved almost intact the revealed truths and the essential rites of the Catholic religion. At last, in 1860, the banned missionary landed there once more, and to his great joy he

discovered thousands of Japanese, descendants of the old Christians, who had kept the Faith! At present, Japan, comprising Corea and Formosa, has a population of 79,000,000. Of these only 190,000 are Catholics. The rest are pagans, excepting some 200,000 Protestants and schismatics, who do immense harm to the Church by their extensive proselytism.

Everything points to Japan as being the leading and most influential power in the Far East, for not only does she far outstrip her neighbors as a sea and land power, but she is likewise supreme in the realm of science, of commerce, and of industrial efficiency. Her schools are in no way inferior to those in Europe, and are frequented not only by the Japanese youth, but by many students from China, Siam, the Philippines, and India, who drink in from these fountains the philosophical and religious and social doctrines which they will afterwards

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propagate in their own countries. Such being the case, one can easily realise what a wonderful good would be effected by bringing this great influence of Japan to the service of the Gospel. It is no exaggeration to say that her conversion would mean

The Conversion of the Whole Far-East and of Southern Asia. Her old Shintoism and Buddhism can no longer satisfy her. She has her own culture, she is highly developed and civilised, and she seeks enlightenment. The critical moment has come, when she is looking around for a State religion, and if Catholicity were spread by numbers of priests going to Japan, conversions would follow, and the Government might easily adopt the Catholic religion. *A little longer and it will be too late.* The harvest is ripe. Several of the highest nobility are Catholics. There are conversions every day in all classes. Lately one of the Emperor's doctors died, baptised on his death-bed, and there are very many other cases of death-bed conversions and baptisms. *But the laborers are so few!* Priests, priests! priests! Japan awaits you, Japan needs you, Japan is ready to receive you. "Lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest."

This Holy Year has witnessed the starting of

A Most Important Work

for the conversion of Japan. On the 24th January last the Japanese vessel s.s. Kaslima Maru, calling at Marseilles on her way to Japan, took on board a small group of three persons who were going to Japan to be the pioneers in this great undertaking. Notre Dame de la Garde, as she looked down on the harbor of Marseilles that day and saw

those three heroic souls who chose to leave all so as to bring the Name of Jesus and her own sweet Name to the "Land of the Rising Sun" must surely have spread her protecting mantle over them. Under her motherly care, all will go well for them. The group consisted of a doctor-priest (a native Japanese) and two English ladies; their destination was Tokyo, where they were to start a Catholic hospital (the first in that great city), with the approval and blessing (in writing) of his Holiness Pius XI. Four years ago this doctor-priest (Father V. B. Totsuka, M.D.) was sent to Europe by the Japanese Government to visit all the medical and surgical centres and to bring back to Japan all that was best in European methods. But God was calling him to greater things, and he would bring back to his native Tokyo.

Something Far More Precious.

than all that modern science and discoveries could give. He was not long in London till he decided to become a priest. So he renounced all the brilliant career that was open to him as a professor in the University of Tokyo and as a surgeon, and began his studies for the priesthood. On June 29 last year (1924) he was ordained priest at St. Sulpice in Paris. During his period of preparation, he laid the foundations (at Paris, with the approval of Cardinal Dubois) of a new Missionary Association—the Good Samaritans of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—whose primary object is to promote the work of conversions in pagan lands, by means of works of Christian charity (hospitals, schools, social work, etc.). At Easter last year he was nominated by the Holy Father Pius XI to be one of the doctors on the Committee for the Medical Section of the Missionary Exhibition in the Vatican. Father V. B. Totsuka saw the Holy Father in private audience on two occasions, and told his Holiness all about the work he hoped to do, and about the Catholic hospital he intended to start in Tokyo. The Pope was very much pleased with it, and gave (in writing) his blessing to the work and to all who co-operate in it or help to promote it. That was in December last. With the Holy Father's blessing, Father V. B. Totsuka left Rome, and sailed for Japan from Marseilles with those two English ladies—the first group of Good Samaritans for the missionary field.

On arriving in Tokyo early in March they were most warmly received and welcomed by the local Bishop and by the Apostolic Delegate (Mgr. Gardiani). They set to work without delay and, in the midst of the difficulties and sacrifices which every good work involves,

The First Catholic Hospital in Tokyo

was opened on the First Friday of May (1st May)—it is called St. John's Hospital. In those first days, there were already from 6 to 15 patients, three nurses, Dr. V. B. Totsuka and a lady doctor. Very soon they got permission to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved, so now they have their little chapel, and there is one more Tabernacle in the world where the Eucharistic King will dwell

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