

Ourselves and Japan

(By the Rev. G. N. Strong, repatriated from Japan in 1942.)

We dare not rest from our present struggle until Japan has been undisputably defeated. That is a conviction we all share. How shall we relate that conviction to our missionary creed? It is a hard question. But it is just as he faces these hard questions that the Christian disciple is the salt of the earth. To evade them at this hour means to despair of Christ and to surrender hope to the demon of hate. As the struggle lengthens the might of evil around us does not grow less. So the Christian's witness becomes ever more urgent, the discipline of discipleship more exacting—and the Christian's faith more splendid.

The Christian View

Let us then face honestly this question of Japan's defeat. There is no hesitation in our conviction: we desire her defeat. So do many others—but perhaps with a difference. In what sense do we desire it?

We take our stand on our missionary creed. Japan's aggression is the fruit of a national idolatry. Beguiled by the evil genius of the Military Party, which, step by step, during the past 15 years has made itself master of Japan's national life, a whole people has become obsessed by false ideas and enslaved to a false ideal. The idolatry of race, rooted in the myth of the country's unique origin, and assiduously nourished by the State-imposed ritual of absolute devotion to the divinely-descended Emperor, has ended by begetting a tyranny which shuts off a peace-loving Emperor from effective leadership of his people, and denies to every decent-minded Japanese the liberty of access to the truth. On the stepping-stones of this tyranny the Military Party has now climbed to absolute power, and in its triumph has committed the nation to its self-destructive pursuit of military domination.

Only complete military defeat, together with the utter discrediting of the Military Party and its idea, can rescue Japan from that tyranny and set her people free to seek again those paths of peace and harmony with others in which they once walked, and in which alone their own peculiar and splendid gifts can be cultivated for the enrichment of all.

Japan's Gifts.

What a contribution that astonishing sense of corporate solidarity and loyalty, so vividly revealed in all

Japan's national emergencies, but so tragically misapplied to-day, might make to the life of the Catholic Church! What an enrichment they might make possible to all of us in our understanding of the corporate nature and discipline of the Christian life! That capacity for absolute and unqualified devotion and heroic self-sacrifice so fantastically revealed on the battlefield, what might it not become when won for Christ the King? That unique sensitiveness to beauty in all its forms which, in the opinion of Lawrence Binyon, has made the Japanese the most artistic race on earth—what a saving grace it might become for all of us as we go forward into an age threatened by the increasing domination of the machine and the menace of mass production and standardisation! Truly the world needs the gifts which are peculiarly Japan's, but which to-day are being so fatally misapplied.

God's Purpose.

What Japan can yet be—what Japan with her special and splendid gifts may yet contribute for the enrichment of all—there we must centre our thoughts and fix our hopes. In a word—on God's own unfulfilling Purpose: for Japan as for every people. And that Purpose of God is interpreted for us in what Christ the King has Himself shown us of the desire that He holds in His heart for them as for every people. "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations"; it is His desire—He would claim the treasures of every race for His Father's glory. And Holy Church is His plan—His only plan. And Holy Church is there—even in Japan. The Western missionary has been driven out; but, thank God, not before he had been allowed to lay the foundations of a self-governing, self-supporting native Church.

How tremendous is the task now being laid upon that native Church—to maintain, amid so much evil, the crown-rights of Christ the King! How urgent, then, is their claim upon the charity of our prayers—those children of Christ Jesus of another race who, at the font, He has made our brothers and sisters in Him. We might even say that need is so urgent as to take precedence of all other claims to our prayers at this hour: that they may be sustained, upheld and kept true—for His sake.

Our Brothers in Christ.

Japan as a land where are those whom Jesus loves—those whom, He has called out of darkness and who,

like us here, are now His Hands, His Feet, His Voice for the fulfilling of His Father's purpose; that must be the central thought in the heart of each of us as we pray "Thy Kingdom come, O God—in Japan as it is in Heaven." And as we pray we shall be reaching out to those, our brothers and sisters in Christ, of another race, gathered—it may be to-day in secret, like the early Christians in the catacombs—up and down Japan as, kneeling before the altar they, with us, bow their heads and sing:

"O Lamb of God
that takest away the sins of the
world, grant us Thy Peace."

—S.P.G. Missions Magazine,
London.

Calendar for June

- 4th.—Trinity Sunday.
8th.—Thursday: Corpus Christi.
11th.—St. Barnabas Day, A.M.
11th.—First Sunday after Trinity.
18th.—Second Sunday after Trinity.
25th.—Third Sunday after Trinity.
29th.—St. Peter's Day, A.M.

A Notable Congregation.

At the enthronement of the Rt. Rev. W. S. Baker as Bishop of Zanzibar, in the Zanzibar Cathedral, a great congregation included Prince Abdullah, representing the present Sultan, and also the Rev. John Swedi, the sole survivor of the five young slaves presented to Livingstone by the Sultan 80 years ago.

Young Anglican Movement.

A meeting of the Diocesan Youth Council was held in Napier on May 4th. It was hoped that at this meeting the Youth Council would make arrangements for the immediate launching of the Young Anglican Movement in this Diocese. However, as literature, membership forms and badges are not yet available, it was decided to postpone action until these can be issued. No doubt this will be a great disappointment to many, but we cannot fight unless we have some ammunition for our guns. Once we start we want to be able to go straight ahead, and that is not possible until we have the necessary literature to put in the hands of the clergy and prospective members. As soon as this is available all the clergy will be notified and a start made as soon as possible.