

Catholic Church as a demonstration that, if nations are to be grounded upon the truth and built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, the Bible must be given them. The history of Congo is instructive; that of Japan hardly less so.

In Congo, Portugal upheld the Romish Church from 1550 for two centuries. The Catholic faith flourished there. One hundred churches were built; at one time all the adults had been baptized; one missionary baptized 13,000; another 50,000 in five years; another 100,000 in twenty years; masses, penances, rosaries, crucifixes, medals, confessionals abounded; but there were no schools, no translations of Scripture, no pains taken to make the people acquainted with the Bible; and when the Portuguese power was withdrawn from the land, the priests also withdrew, and as the result of their departure, it is said, every vestige and fragment of their religion died out.

Xavier went to Japan in 1549. He seems to have made some attempt to reach the people through the Scriptures, and although he did not understand the language, he read in public assemblies with great effect a version of the Gospel of Matthew, made by his interpreter, and prepared in Roman letters. His own success, however, was small. It does not appear that his successors translated other parts of the Scriptures, but in their way they propagated Christianity, counting, thirty years afterwards, 200 churches and 15,000 converts. At a later date the Christians numbered 600,000, and the new faith, accepted by princes, admirals, generals, and noblemen, became dominant, with every prospect of permanence. The intense persecution which followed, with fire and sword and every cruel device, and the futile attempts to turn the converts back to paganism, proved the heroism of their character and the strength of their faith. But this is the striking fact, that Christianity was practically extirpated, without leaving any perceptible trace upon the morals and character of the people among whom it flourished for three-quarters of a century. At least one element of permanence was lacking. The priests had never given them the Bible.

Contrast this with the annals of the martyr church of Madagascar. In 1820 we see a pagan nation, untaught, with no literature, no books, no manuscript, no alphabet.

In 1830, hundreds of pupils had been under Christian instruction, a printing press had been erected four years, a translation of the New Testament had been made, and 5,000 copies had been printed. But thus far there was not a single avowed believer. On the 29th of May, 1831, twenty converts were baptized; the first-fruits of eleven years of toil and prayer.

In 1835 and 1836, the missionaries, forbidden longer to preach and teach, withdrew from the country, leaving behind them the printed Bible, complete, in the hands of 1,000 adherents, 200 of whom were communicants. Persecution ensued—bitter, relentless, chronic. "Death was threatened to any native who should read the Bible, pray to God, receive baptism, or join the communion of the Christians." For a quarter of a century persecution raged, and 10,000 persons were sentenced to penalties of different kinds, including torture and death. Worship was held in secret; the Scriptures were buried for safety, and read only by stealth; and when the supply of printed Bibles failed, many busied themselves by copying out portions with the pen. Says Ellis (page 161): "I brought home no memorials of the persecution in Madagascar more deeply affecting than some of those fragments of Scripture, worn, rent, fragile, and soiled by the dust of earth or the smoke in the thatch at times when they have been concealed, yet most carefully mended by drawing the rent pages together, with fibres of bark, or having the margins of the leaves covered over with stronger paper."

Unlike Congo and Japan and Corea, the Church of Christ in Madagascar, when bereft of foreign teachers and guides, had the Bible complete in their own tongue, a perfect rule of belief and duty in all things needful to salvation; and fed on such spiritual food during those twenty-six years of perse-