

JAPAN.

The Rev. J. G. Waller writes to us as follows:

"We have had the Bishop up for confirmation in the early half of the month. There were only fourteen candidates. Christian work seems to be very difficult since the war, and I think that the great calamities with which this land is visited in such rapid succession should justly be regarded as an outpouring of God's wrath upon a stiff-necked people. Of course, they arise from 'natural causes,' but these 'natural causes'—in whatever shape, fire, flood, famine, earthquake, disease, or volcanic eruptions—seem to be very potent instruments in God's hands, and certainly are more prevalent in Japan than in any Christian country I have ever heard of. The cable has probably told you of the latest calamity—a tidal wave which visited the northeast coast of the main island on the evening of June 15th, when the air and sea seemed perfectly calm. The destruction wrought, whether of life or property, has been very great. The first reports of three thousand drowned and killed, instead of being exaggerated, as many thought, prove to have fallen absurdly short of the mark. Official statistics up to June 22nd give the number of deaths as over thirty thousand. The descriptions of the disaster by eye-witnesses, or by those who have since visited the place, are most harrowing. The 'tidal' wave is supposed to have been caused by volcanic eruptions in the sea some distance from the land. The great earthquake at Gifu, in October, 1891, did not do half the damage that this wave has.

"I remain, yours very sincerely,

"JOHN G. WALLER."

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY'S CALL TO CHRISTENDOM.

(From the *Homiletic Review*.)

I. The call is emphasized by a fact. That fact is that we are just approaching the nineteen hundredth anniversary of the birth of Christ.

The nineteenth century of the Christian era will close and the twentieth begin somewhere between Christmas of this year (1896) and February to April of next year (1897). This has been established by the investigations and calculations of the best scholarship; so that it may be said to be universally acknowledged that Christ was not born on Christmas in the year 754 after the founding of Rome—as Dionysius mistakenly put it in making up our common chronology, and as the Roman Church endorsed it—but in the year 750 or 749, the latter year being far the more probable, and toward the springtime the more probable date. This conclusion rests especially upon the indis-

putable fact that Herod the Great, in whose reign the birth of Christ took place, died in the fourth year before the commencement of our era, or in the year 4 B.C., according to the proper reckoning. That will be nineteen hundred years ago next Easter.

The nineteen hundredth anniversary of Christ's birth is not, therefore, several years off, but just upon us—not further away than the close of the present year, or the opening months of 1897.*

It is not, however, the purpose in the present connection to present with any fulness the arguments that have led the scholars of Christendom to the so general acceptance of this change of date. We hope to have them presented soon by able and authoritative writers on this subject. Our present purpose is strictly practical, for—

II. The call is to an imperative and pressing duty.

The simple fact that we are just about to cross the threshold of the twentieth century ought to be enough to rouse all Christendom to this duty. Our desire is to let the twentieth century utter its own trumpet-call to our twenty thousand subscribers, largely heralds of Christ's Gospel, and to our much larger number of readers, and through them to the Church of Christendom, for the final rally of the nineteenth century, with a view to final victory for the Gospel in the opening years of the twentieth century. Brethren, does not Christ call us all just now, by His Word and by the signs of the times, to co-operate in inaugurating a movement all along the line for the immediate evangelization of the world? We ask you, in Christ's name, to consider, carefully and prayerfully, some reasons that urge such a movement.

1st. Nineteen centuries have passed since Christ uttered the "Go ye" of the great commission, and it is still true that the majority of mankind are unsaved. Almost a thousand millions of our lost race perish in the life of each generation without the Gospel. Does not that commission throw the responsibility for all this upon the Church of Christ, and especially upon its leaders, the ministry?

2nd. We have evidently reached a great crisis in the history of our race, when nothing but the universal spread and triumph of the Gospel can save the Church and the world from dire disaster. The Gospel has wrapped up in it the solution of all the industrial, financial, political, social, and moral problems of the age with which the philosophers and statesmen and philanthropists are hopelessly struggling. Is not the call a clear one, to those who have the Gospel and understand its regenerating and transforming power, to apply it speedily in

*See Matthew ii. 1; Josephus, "Antiquities," xvii. 9, 3; Andrews, "Life of Christ"; Robinson, "Harmony of the Gospels."