

CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The Ministers and Messengers of the Eastern Baptist Association
to the Churches which they represent :*

BELoved BRETHREN:

UNDER new and peculiar circumstances, do we now address you. Until now, we were accustomed to meet annually in one Association, in one band. Happy the past! We think of it with mingled pleasure and pain. Sweet was the fellowship of spirit which was enjoyed. Good and pleasant was it to dwell together in unity; and often did we experience the blessings of that union, which was as the dew of heaven descending upon the mountains of Zion. There we met with our fathers in the Gospel, whose ardent love, whose wise counsel, whose deep sympathy, whose care of the churches, and joy in their prosperity—whose strong faith, and deep piety, were so manifest, and with whom we felt so much pleasure in meeting. But scenes are now changed; we meet in different localities, and with comparatively few of the many who were accustomed to assemble with one accord, and in one place. It cannot fail to be a cause for much thankfulness, however, that, though thus separated from so many of our brethren, it is a separation of affection, and though occupying different *spheres* of labor, it is not in hostile array—objects and interests are the same. And although each Association is independent, and will carry out its own measures, each church is independent of each sister church, and also of each Association, one great, absorbing object of each, we trust, will be the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world. Hostile feelings have not divided us; animosities and jealousies have not separated us, but the hope that we may be more extensively useful, in promoting the cause of God. This, also, we believe is the reason for our occupying different localities, and forming separate organizations.

Our position therefore, dear brethren, is a new and important one. Solemn and weighty are our responsibilities. We are united in a new organization,—shall it prove a failure? shall the responsibilities resulting from the change in our associational affairs be discharged—the duties assigned by the Providence of God be performed. Shall we lose sight of the great object which should absorb our minds, and engage our most energetic efforts—the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom? How shall this be most successfully accomplished, is a question which, as christians, and christians of churches, we should most seriously ask. Let each christian ask himself