

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Annual Letter to the Churches.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE N. S. EASTERN ASSOCIATION, TO
THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,—

The subject of our Annual Epistle is one to which we commend your prayerful attention, viz :

DEFECTION FROM CHRIST.

To any observing Christian, it must often have been a source of sorrow to see so many dropping out of the ranks of the militant host. Some who seemed destined to be specially useful, who apparently possessed not only talent, but that which sanctifies all talent, spiritual-mindedness, have soon succumbed to the adverse influences bearing upon them. Others have during a longer period, borne some fruit, when mildew has fallen upon them, and checked further productiveness. There are instances, not a few, in which members of our churches have continued in the Christian course for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and after all, have belied their profession, and stained the record of a life-time. So frequently have these instances presented themselves, that the Arminian view of "falling away," has necessarily suggested itself as being at least tinctured with probability. There is, indeed, a side of truth to it. Wherein, we are led to inquire, lies the difference between the two great systems? A proportion of those received into Arminian churches "fall away," and the system recognizes the fact as a doctrine. A proportion of our own converts in like-manner "fall away," but we strenuously urge that the doctrine is not true. It is not true that a person can be regenerated more than once, but it is a melancholy fact that each body loses a large number of its converts. The Saviour declares that "if a man do not abide in Him he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." (John xv. 1-6.) It is better for us to face the truth that Jesus utters, that the branch not bearing fruit is *dead*, no matter to what church he may have been united.

Not impugning for a single instant the doctrine of the complete salvation of those regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the question still remains, what about the multitudes who have been baptized, and walk no longer with us? What becomes of those "who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away?"

Compelled to recognize its existence, let us ask