

THE CHRISTIAN.

Vol. III. }

SAINT JOHN, N. B., JUNE 1847.

} No. 6.

CONDUCTED BY W. W. EATON.

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.—*Petr.* On this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.—*The Lord Messiah.*

DECLINE OF CONGREGATIONS. THE CAUSE AND REMEDY.

A question of great importance bears heavily on the minds of the faithful in Zion. Why is it that many Congregations of the Lord—in the order of the Gospel—regularly holding forth the word of life, do so little for the conversion of the world? Indeed a graver question yet, perhaps, should be propounded: why are the deaths, removals, and apostasies of some congregations more numerous than conversions to the Lord? There are causes. They should be sought out, and if a remedy can be found it should speedily be applied.

An inquiry into the cause of a disease does not remove it; but it sometimes suggests the best means for its removal. If apathy, indifference, or the violation of the laws of the King exist either in Churches or in individuals, the cause unquestionably is a want of conformity to the divine record. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah lix. 1, 2. The causes therefore of the decline of individuals and congregations are transgression and disobedience. What! and these churches in the order of the Gospel? Yes: it is now possible to have the form of godliness without the power; indeed Paul has informed us that in the "last days" these times would come. It is possible for men to attend to all the positive institutions of the Gospel and all its public observances, with their hearts as cold as an iceberg, and their affections as completely engrossed in the world as were those of Judas or Ananias and Sapphira.

Various motives may have called together many who now have their names registered on our Church books. It would be surprising were not this the case. If in the days of the Apostles, when Jews and Gentiles were combined against the Lord and his Anointed, when the disciples were a hissing and a by-word among the nations—unworthy men and false teachers, yea false apostles, made the christian confession, what are we now to expect when in many places it is unpopular not to belong to some religious society; when, indeed, some religious teachers urge as a motive to become members of the Church, that it will add to their