

SECTION II.

An inquiry what the commission was, which Christ gave to the Apostles.

THE design of religion is to fit and prepare mankind to enjoy the regions of eternal bliss.—For this end Christ came into the world, that he might redeem us, and teach us the way to be happy in the next life, for this end he instituted a church, and appointed officers in it to officiate in his name, by the authority he gave in these words, *As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* John xx. 21, 22, 23.

The power that was given to Christ by his Father, was communicated to his human nature: for no addition of power could be given to the divine nature.

Therefore, the power he received from his Father, was such, as might be communicated to the human nature of those he sent. Christ declares he gave the same power to the apostles, which his Father had given to him. So their administrations must be considered as done by the authority they received in their commission.

They were called apostles before this commission was given; but they were not invested with authority as chief ministers in the kingdom of Christ, till he gave them this commission. After they received it, they were invested with all the authority that was necessary for the government of the church, and to constitute all the officers in it, even such as they themselves were. Thus you see, what the authority of the apostles was. And it is a matter of very great importance to every Christian, to know by whose authority it is, that their ministers teach; and with what a sanction they administer the holy sacraments of the gospel.

In the commission which Christ gave to the apostles, they received power to ordain such officers in the