

INTRODUCTION.

THE most important question that can employ the mind of man, is this, Whether there is, *eternal happiness to be obtained*, and *eternal misery to be avoided*? This naturally leads the man to inquire, whether there is any direction given from heaven concerning religion? When mankind are in doubt concerning this point, they have no ruling principle of action. But when they take a view of what our blessed Saviour hath done, they see that he hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. In this, our adorable Redeemer, hath opened to man the great future scene of things, which will be various in proportion to his behaviour in this life: by which, Christ hath given force to his laws, which were never felt before.

In this view of the subject, mankind must see the advantages religion proposes;—The pardon offered—their duty explained—the important doctrine taught—the sections of virtue enlarged, and ascertained—a perfect example exhibited—and the terms of acceptance before God, adapted to the present circumstances of human nature.

These things lead mankind to look back to the creation, and forward to the consummation of redemption. In this view, he sees, that God hath had a church in the world ever since the covenant of grace was made with Adam, though at different times, under different administrations. In this kingdom of God, there always has been an order of men appointed by heaven, to be governors and rulers, who had the sole right of administering in sacred things.

We need not inquire now, who these were in the patriarchal state, or under the levitical dispensation; but it nearly concerns us to know, who are the lawful ministers in Christ's kingdom. This I hope, fairly to