

REFLECTIONS

UPON

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Mr. *Wetmore's* LETTER

In Defence of

Dr. *Waterland's* DISCOURSE

OF

REGENERATION.

WITH A

VINDICATION

Of the received Doctrine of REGENERATION;
And plain Scripture-Evidence, that the Notion of
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION is of a dangerous
and destructive Tendency.

By *Jonathan Dickinson*, A. M.

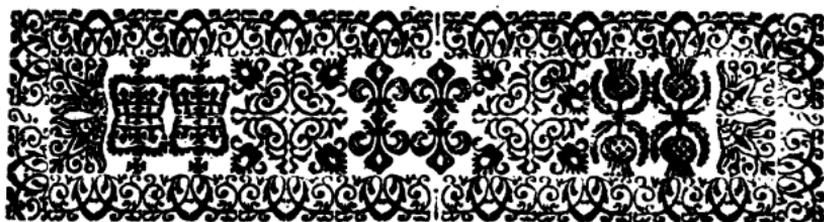
Minister of the Gospel at *Elizabeth-Town, New-Jersey*.

2 Tim. i. 13. *Hold fast the Form of sound Words, which thou hast heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in CHRIST JESUS.*

B O S T O N : N. E.

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M,DCC,XLIV.



REFLECTIONS
UPON
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In Defence of
Dr. *Waterland's* Discourse
OF
REGENERATION.



REGENERATION being by our blessed LORD himself determined to be of absolute Necessity to all that would ever enter into the Kingdom of GOD, it must be acknowledged to be of vast Consequence, to have a right Apprehension, as well as a sensible Experience of this great Change, upon which our eternal Interest does so immediately depend.

By this Consideration, I was sometime since excited to publish a Discourse upon *the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration*; and to annex some *Remarks* upon a Treatise of Dr. *Waterland's* upon that Subject, which was industriously handed about the Country, and seem'd to threaten the Seducement of many of our People from the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, in that most important Concern.

The Rev. Mr. *Wetmore* has thought fit to undertake the Defence of Dr. *Waterland's* Scheme, in a Pamphlet. entitled, *A Letter occasioned by Mr. Dickinson's Remarks upon Dr. Waterland's Discourse of Regeneration*: He does not indeed pretend, that his Discourse is an Answer to my Remarks. He might probably foresee how very poor an Appearance such a Pretence would make in the Title-Page, when all my Arguments against his Scheme are wholly overlookt in the Treatise; and not so much as an Attempt made to answer any one of them. He tells us, that *all which appeared needful, by way of Antidote to the Poyson of this confident Performance of Mr. Dickinson, is to shew, that believing the Doctrines this Author so highly faults the Clergy of the Church of England, and particular Dr Waterland for teaching, as they are in reality taught, can't possibly be any Prejudice to any Man, in respect of his Hope and Comfort here, or his Happiness in Eternity.* (P. 6)

I'm not therefore call'd to vindicate my Remarks upon Dr. *Waterland*: this Author gives me no Occasion or Opportunity for it. My Arguments against the Dr.'s Discourse are yet unanswered, and (for ought that appears in this Letter of Mr. *Wetmore's*) are altogether unanswerable. But it seems, our Author has this Satisfaction, that he supposes his Doctrines (whether true or false) *can't possibly be any Prejudice to any Man, in respect of his Hope and Comfort here, or his Happiness in Eternity*.—That is, he thinks his Doctrines true, and would be willing to prove them so; and tho' he cannot answer the Arguments against them, he has this to recommend them to our Acceptance, that the Belief of them will do us no hurt, if it does us no good.—I think, he don't pretend to prove any special Advantage, that can follow from the Entertainment of his Principles. It is (it seems) sufficient to his Purpose, to shew that they are not injurious and mischievous.—We need not then be very solicitous about coming into his Sentiments; nor filled with any-Anxiety lest our side of the Question should prove a Mistake, since there is so little danger of an Error on that Hand. If *Baptism* be *Regeneration*, we are as safe as the Gentlemen who oppose us; being regenerated as well as they. But if it should prove otherwise, and by resting upon our *Baptism*, we should fall short of that *New-Birth*, which is absolutely necessary to all who would see the Kingdom of GOD; It is obvious, what the Consequence of such a fatal Mistake must be.—It is therefore open to every Man's View, which Side of the Question it becomes a wise Man to take, where there

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is such infinite Danger on the one Hand, and none at all on the other. And this will appear in a yet stronger Light, when I have shewn (as I hope to do in the sequel) that this Gentleman can produce no good Evidence at all, either of the *Truth* or the *Safety* of his Principles.

I shall first endeavour to consider, Whether a *Mistake* in this Doctrine be so *innocent* and *indifferent*, as Mr. *Wetmore* would represent it.

I shall then take some brief Notice of the *Objections* he is pleased to make against some Expressions of mine, in my Remarks upon Dr. *Waterland*.

And next proceed to consider the *State of the Question* as represented by this Author: And then answer the *Arguments* he brings in Support of his Opinion.

First, I am to consider, Whether a *Mistake* in this Doctrine be so *innocent* and *indifferent*, as Mr. *Wetmore* would represent it.

He demands, Whether it can be any *Prejudice* to such as truly believe in CHRIST, repent of their Sins, and live in Obedience to the Gospel-Precepts, that they think verily, and so declare, that they were born again, when they were baptized? (P. 8.)

I must answer this Question in the *Affirmative*. For tho' the Danger of this Doctrine does not so much, and so immediately affect true Believers and sincere Penitents, as others; yet it may prove very injurious to them also.— Their supposing, that they were regenerated at their Baptism, may make them inattentive to, and insensible of the great and gracious Change wrought in their Souls at their Regeneration; and prevent that Peace with GOD through our Lord JESUS CHRIST, that Access by Faith into the Grace wherein they stand, that rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of GOD, and that glorying in Tribulations, which the Apostle tells us are consequent upon our Justification by Faith (Rom. v. 1, 2, 3.) and may render their Lives exceeding dark and uncomfortable, tho' their State be safe.— Besides, this may prevent their Discharge of several Duties, which they owe to GOD, such as giving him the Praise due to the Glory of his Grace, by which they are accepted in the Beloved, their Rejoicing in CHRIST JESUS, their crying Abba, Father; and their serving him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of their Lives.

But the great and (I may justly say) the infinite Mischief, that is done by this Principle, is to Unbelievers and impenitent

nitent Sinners. Multitudes of these seem to quiet their Consciences with a vain Apprehension of their regenerate State, and to cry *Peace* to themselves, while *walking in the imagination of their own Hearts.* They may be sensible, perhaps, of the sinfulness and irregularity of their present Conduct; but they keep their Consciences asleep, with their good Purposes and Designs, with their legal Repentance and dead Faith, with their lifeless Devotions, and temporary Reformation; and thus live and die Strangers to that *vital Change*, without which, our blessed Saviour assures us, we can never see the Kingdom of GOD — It is not therefore (as Mr. Wetmore supposes) 'the only Question, Whether a bare Opinion, that Baptism is Regeneration, will exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven, that believe in JESUS CHRIST, and denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World?' (P. 8) But it is a Question of vastly greater Concernment, whether they who by a vain Dream of a *baptismal Regeneration* quiet their Consciences in an *unconverted* State, are not laying a Foundation for *mourning at the last*, and lamenting the destructive Error when it is too late?

But we are told, that 'such a Mistake (if it were indeed a Mistake) would not render any Man incapable of doing every Thing that the holy Scriptures require as the Condition of Salvation.' (P. 8.)

To which I answer, He that hath no other *Regeneration* than his *Baptism*, is incapable (while in his present State) of doing any Thing which the Scriptures require, as the Terms of Salvation. He is indeed capable of the external Duties of Religion; and thereby of being in the Way of the Blessing, and wherein only he may hope for the Influences of GOD's sovereign Grace, which he can neither deserve nor claim, by any Thing he does or can do. He is capable of an external Reformation, and of a careful Endeavour to live a Life of Morality: But by these Things he can never answer either the peral or preceptive Demands of that *Law*, which curses him for the least Imperfection of his Obedience, and for his *not continuing in all Things written therein to do them.* He is *dead in Trespasses and Sins.* (Eph. ii. 1) He is *in an Estate of Enmity to GOD; and cannot please him.* (Rom. viii. 7. 8.) He is *a Child of Wrath* (Eph. ii. 3.) In a Word, He cannot believe in Christ, without being born of GOD. (1 John v. 1.) And without Faith, it is impossible to please GOD. (Heb. xi. 6.) This is evidently the Case of every unregenerate Soul: And

And thence it is, that he who is not *born again*, cannot see the Kingdom of GOD. (John iii. 3.)—How dreadful then must the Disadvantage be, for Sinners to be ignorant of the Danger and Misery of their State, of their Necessity of a vital Change, and of their Impotence and utter Inability to make this great and infinitely important Change in their own Hearts! Of what unspeakable Importance is it, that such as these should awake out of their pleasing Dream; that they may meditate an Escape from the Wrath to come, and being sensible of their undone and miserable State, they may be brought to the Footstool of GOD's sovereign Mercy!—How dreadful will the Issue be, after they have flatter'd themselves with their vain Imaginations of a regenerate State; and of their Capacity of doing every Thing, which the Scripture requires as a Condition of their Salvation, to find that a *deceived Heart has turned them aside*, and that *they have a Lie in their right Hand!*—Tho' it be possible for Men to experience a Work of Grace in their Hearts (as I doubt not some have done) even under the Prejudice of this Mistake; yet they won't be likely to be very solicitous about that necessary Change, while they delude their Souls with an Apprehension, that they have had it already; and therefore not very likely to be in the Way of obtaining that Grace, by which they may be capable of complying with the Scripture-Terms of Salvation.

Had I esteemed this to be a mere *Logomachy*, or verbal Controversy (as it seems this Gentleman does) I should not have provoked him to have spent so much Time and Pains for nothing, but to vindicate the Acceptation of the Word *Regeneration*; nor should I now mispend my Time in so vain and fruitless a Controversy. But it's notorious, and open to every one's Observation, that the Patrons of *baptismal Regeneration* are avowed Opposers of the Doctrines of *special Grace*, and of those *Experiences* of a new living Principle of spiritual Action, which (if I have any Understanding of the Gospel of CHRIST) are absolutely necessary to our eternal Safety. These Things are treated by 'em with Reproach and Contempt, under the Characters of *Cant*, *Enthusiasm*, *Fanaticism*, and the like; as is abundantly exemplified by this Author: And it is no more than what this Principle of theirs naturally leads them to. By supposing all those Texts of Scripture, which speak of the Necessity of the *new Birth*, the *new Creature*, the *new Man*, &c. refer to *Baptism* only, they easily (with Dr. *Waterland* and Mr. *Wetmore*) suppose, that a *sincere Endeavour to do the best they can*, and to be daily gaining Ground of their Vices and

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Passions,

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Passions, is all the Change necessary to a State of Favour with GOD. — I cannot therefore but conclude, that while I am impleading this Error of theirs, I am endeavouring to defend one of the most important Articles of our Faith and Hope; and endeavouring to pluck poor unwary Souls out of a Snare, that may prove most destructive and ruinous to them.

I am in the next place, to take Notice of his *Objections*, against some Expressions in my Remarks.

He insinuates, that 'my great Aim was to possess my credulous Readers with groundless Prejudices against and Aversions to the Clergy of the Church of *England*:— And complains of my 'warning my Hearers (in Page 30 of my Sermon) in the Apostle's Language, *2 Tim. iii. 5. From such turn away.*' (P. 1.) — In the Place he refers to, I admonished my Hearers against the Ministry of such, who would quiet Men's Consciences with a *Form of Godliness*, without the *Power*, ; who would put poor sleepy Sinners into a vain Dream of having already received a *baptismal Regeneration*; who would encourage their Hopes of a safe State, merely from their Morality; and who leave the Necessity of the converting Influences of the blessed Spirit, and of a vital Union to CHRIST by Faith, out of their Creed; and flatter Sinners with an Imagination of Safety, without experiencing either the one or the other. — Now then let the Appeal be made to the World of Mankind, Whether his finding such Fault with this Address, and his applying these Characters to the 'Clergy of the Church of *England*,' don't abundantly justify what I have above observed, with Respect to the great Importance of our stedfast Adherence to the Doctrine of *Regeneration*, as it has been generally received in the Protestant Churches. I must therefore be so far from giving Satisfaction to this Gentleman, as to the Matter of this Complaint, that I must renew my Exhortation to all who have any Value for their eternal Interests, to *turn away* from such Doctrines as tend to satisfy their Minds, and give them Hopes of Salvation, without the Experience of a new and living Principle of Grace in their Hearts.

He complains, that 'I represent the great Importance (of the Doctrine I plead for) 'with as strong a Claim to 'Infallibility, as the Pope himself.' (P. 4) Because I deduced this Corollary from full (and I think, unanswerable) Proof, that *Baptism* is not that *Regeneration*, which the Scriptures make

make necessary to Salvation ; viz. " From hence it appears, " that we can't see the Kingdom of GOD, in Consequence " of these Principles espoused by some of our episcopal Clergy. " How harsh soever the Consequence may be supposed, it " is nevertheless infallibly certain. "

Upon this he exclaims — ' I find we need not go to Rome for ' Infallibility : Behold and admire ! ' But what Cause of this tragical Exclamation ? Can any Thing be more infallibly certain, than a Consequence justly deduced from Premises truly and fairly stated ? Let him therefore, if he can, first shew what Defect there is in the Premises, before he exclaims against the Conclusion. If this be what he dare not attempt, he must yet allow me to suppose that Conclusion to be *infallibly certain*.

But he flouts at the Expression, and seems to suppose it incongruous and ridiculous, to speak of seeing the Kingdom of GOD, in Consequence of Principles espoused and professed. ' This (he tells us) is a low Discovery for an infallible Doctor.' — I would enquire of this Gentleman, whether they who shall finally see the Kingdom of GOD, won't be saved in Consequence of their believing the Scriptures to be the Word of GOD ; our blessed Saviour to be the SON of GOD ; and Holiness to be necessary to eternal Happiness ; and whether all practical Godliness, both of Heart and Life, be not in Consequence of these Principles ? Or to speak directly to the present Purpose, whether a proper Concern about, and Endeavour to obtain a *new Birth*, or saving Conversion unto GOD, be not in Consequence of our believing the Necessity of that great and important Change ? Or on the contrary, whether Security, Carelessness and Negligence about obtaining the renewing Influences of the Spirit of GOD, are not too commonly seen, in Consequence of a *Disbelief* of the Necessity of converting and regenerating Grace ? — If these Things are so, Men may be saved or perish in Consequence of the Principles they espouse and profess. If not, there are no Principles, that we can profess or practise upon, which will have any Influence upon our eternal Salvation.

But he ' would fain know, if seeing the Kingdom of ' GOD can be said infallibly to be in Consequence of be- ' lieving any Doctrine whatsoever, without Obedience to the ' Will of GOD. — ' (P. 4.) I answer, No, by no means. But I can tell him, that speaking impertinently will always be the infallible Consequence of changing the Question in Debate. He might have remembered, that I had fully proved o him, that Obedience to the Will of GOD was the necessity

necessary Fruit, or (if he pleases) the infallible Consequence of our being *born of GOD*. On the contrary, Dr *Waterland*, and this Gentleman, teach us, that a Man may be born of GOD, while he remains an impenitent Hypocrite, and lives in a Course of Sin. Now then the Question fairly stated between him and me, is this: Seeing *Regeneration* is by the Suffrage of our blessed LORD himself, absolutely, *necessary* in Order to our seeing the Kingdom of GOD, and we have such different Principles with Respect to the Nature of this Change; *Which* of those Principles has the directest Tendency towards the Kingdom of GOD, THAT which supposes Obedience to the Will of GOD, both in Heart and Life, a necessary Fruit and Consequence of Regeneration; or THAT which supposes the Regenerate may finally live and die in Disobedience and Impenitence?—We both agree, that *Regeneration* is absolutely necessary to Salvation; but we vastly differ with Respect to the necessary Consequences of that *Regeneration*, upon the Hearts and Lives of Men.—He supposes, that this *Regeneration* which is so absolutely necessary to Salvation, may leave Men finally impenitent and wicked; while, I insist upon't, that it must be always accompany'd with all the Graces of the blessed Spirit, and must always bring forth the Fruits of Holiness and new Obedience: And I have shewn him, that our blessed LORD and his Apostles do abundantly insist upon the same Thing: To which he has not seen Cause to make any Reply.

Mr *Weston* again, as it seems with a very indecent Heat of Spirit, complains of my enquiring why the *moral Heathens* mayn't be in a State of Salvation, as well as such Pretenders to Christianity, that have no other Marks of the New Creature, than those given us by Dr. *Waterland*, viz. 'Sincerely to endeavour to do the best they can; and to be daily gaining Ground of their Vices and Passions; and to find themselves after strictest Examination, to be upon the improving Hand.'—Upon this he cries out, 'What sound is this to christian Ears, from the Mouth of a pretended Christian infallible Teacher? Behold the Effect of sectarian Liberty! How much does Christianity suffer by the mad Zeal of Enthusiasts?'—But would not less Heat and better Argument have done his Business full as well?—I have shewn him, that *these Characters* may be found in those, who have never been weary and heavy laden with their Sins; who have never had any true Repentance for Sin; who have never had any saving Faith in CHRIST JESUS; who

who have never had any Humility, spiritual-mindedness, or Victory over the World; who have never had old Things pass away, and all Things become new; and in a Word, who have never had CHRIST in them, without which they must be Reprobates.—Why then should Mr. *Wetmore* be so very angry at this, without giving any Reason at all of his vehement Exclamation?—If moral *Heathen* are as capable as others, ‘sincerely to endeavour to do the best they can;’ if they may be and have been sometimes ‘daily gaining Ground of their Vices and Passions;’ and if they may ‘find themselves after the strictest Examination, to be upon the ‘improving Hand:’ Then the *moral Heathen* may have such Marks of a State of Salvation, as the *Doctor* assures us are sufficient; and the *Christian* which the *Doctor* there describes, has no better Marks of a converted State, than a moral *Heathen* may attain to.—Let Mr. *Wetmore* take what Advantage he can of this Reasoning: I can foresee but one Answer he or any Man else can give; and that is such an one as he has already given. However, he should have remembered, that it is such an one, as *Michael* the Arch-Angel would not give even to the Devil, when disputing about the Body of *Moses*.

But the professed Christians in the Question, were *baptized*.—If so, I must again make my former Remark; and observe, that if they have no more *Christianity*, than these Gentlemen make the Evidence of a converted State, their *Christianity* and their *Baptism* will but aggravate their Guilt. For, how much greater the Obligations be, they are under to be Christians indeed, so much the greater will their Guilt be, if they rest short of a saving Change.

Nothing is more certain, than that the *Scriptures* do require other Qualifications, in Order to our inheriting the Kingdom of GOD, than Dr. *Waterland* and Mr. *Wetmore* have made the Marks of a converted State. Besides ‘gaining Ground of our Vices and Passions, and being upon the ‘improving Hand,’ they do require an Illumination of our Understandings, (Eph. i. 18.) a Renovation of our Affections, (Col. iii. 2) a Subjection of our Wills to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, (Psal. cx. 3.) and a captivating our very Thoughts unto the Obedience of CHRIST, (2 Cor. x. 5) They do require Faith in JESUS CHRIST, (Mark xvi. 16) sincere Repentance, (Acts iii. 19.) Love to GOD above all Things, (Matt. xxii. 37.) spiritual-mindedness, (Rom. viii. 6.) Victory over the World, (1 Joh. v. 4) a being renewed in all the Faculties,

Faculties of our Souls, (Eph. iv. 23) the *Fruits of the Spirit* in our Hearts and Lives, and a *walking in the Spirit* (Gal. v. 22, 25.) and in a Word, that CHRIST *be in us* by his Image and influence, if we would not be Reprobates. (2 Cor. xiii. 5.)—And I think it equally certain, that a Man may have those *Marks* of a safe State given by the Dr., and Mr. *Wetmore*; and yet have *none* of these Graces, Influences, and Fruits of the Spirit. A moral *Heathen* is therefore as capable of the *Marks* given by these Gentlemen, as a nominal *Christian*, who is destitute of those Scripture-Marks I've mentioned.—There is Nothing in the Nature of Things, Nothing in the Christian Institution, that renders it impossible, or improbable, for a *Heathen* to attain to what is proposed by these Gentlemen, as the Marks of Conversion, in the same Manner, and in the same Degree, as any professed Christian in the World is capable of, who has no higher Attainment than these under Consideration.—Whence it follows, either that *Baptism* alone, without any religious Attainments but what are common with us to the moral *Heathen*, will intitle a Man to *Salvation*; or else, that the *baptized Christian* will be *more inexcusable* in the Day of Judgment, than the *moral Heathen*, on Account of his violating his baptismal Covenant.

Thus we may see how little Cause this Author had for his repeated wrathful Exclamations; and how great Cause every one has, who would secure the eternal Safety of his immortal Soul, to be fearful of embracing the dangerous Doctrines taught by these Gentlemen; and of satisfying his Mind with no higher Attainments in Religion, than what may be found among the Heathen themselves, while he rests short of all those Graces and internal spiritual Qualifications, which the Word of GOD makes necessary to our future Happiness and Glory.

Mr. *Wetmore* proceeds to complain of my *Uncharitableness*; and spends some Pages in the declamatory Style, in Praise of Charity, and in severe Censures upon those whom he calls uncharitable. (P. 10, &c.)—But whence this Heat? I have endeavour'd to prove, and I think I have fully prov'd, that what these Gentlemen call *Regeneration*, is not the *new Birth* which our blessed Saviour declares necessary to salvation, and which is particularly described in the Word of GOD; and therefore not the *new Birth*, by which we must be prepared for the Kingdom of GOD. And if this be *Uncharitableness*, I must still remain just so uncharitable, till I can obtain a very different View of this Case

Case, from what I can find in my Bible. — Is it Uncharitableness, to assert the Truth of those Doctrines, taught by our blessed LORD himself, and by his inspired Apostles? Thus Uncharitable must we necessarily be towards some People or other, in retaining any one essential Article of the Christian Faith — Would it not therefore have been much more to the Purpose, if this Gentleman had consider'd the Arguments brought, and the many Texts of Scripture alledged in Proof of my Point, than thus to confute them all in the Lump, by passionate Exclamations? — But he seems conscious to himself, that this could not be done, or at least that he would but in vain attempt it: We might else have expected something of that Kind, in this his Undertaking. — If he thinks it can be done, I do now entreat him (whilst in his charitable Frame) out of mere Compassion to such *poor deluded People*, as he is pleased to style us, (P. 12.) distinctly to consider and answer the Arguments I have brought against his Principles. We shall else still conclude, that our Adherence to the Doctrines fully and plainly taught in the divine Oracles, may be justified, tho' he is pleased to call us uncharitable.

Well! Whether I am in the due Exercise of *Charity* or not, we may reasonably expect our Author will *exemplify* this excellent Grace to us, at least while he is writing so fine a Panegyrick upon it. Let us then look and see what a mighty *charitable* Disposition he has manifested, towards those who differ from him in the Subject of the present Debate. — ' Whatever they may pretend as to Holiness, (says he) *The Way of Peace they have not known.* (P. 11) — They are Disturbers of Church and State, and promote Strife, and Variance, and Confusions in all Societies; which is a shrewd Sign their Opinions, which they think themselves so wise in being tenacious of, are not the true Wisdom from above: but such as St. James tells us, are *earthly, sensual, devilish,* (P. 12.) — ' factious Men, who pervert the Scriptures, and wrest them (as St Peter expresses it) to their own Destruction. (P. 18.) — Which no Man can do (*that is, no Man can find the Marks of Grace truly in himself*) ' that lives in a State of Schism and uncharitable Separation from the Communion of that *national* Church, of which he ought to be a peaceable Member,' (P. 39) — Had I imitated this, Reverend Author, in the numerous rhetorical Flourishes of the like Kind, which his Discourse abounds with, I could not have harangued with a very good Grace upon the Necessity of *Charity*; but must have expesed my self to that just Admonition of our blessed Saviour, *Matth. vii. 3.* Another

Another very heavy Complaint much insisted on against me, is, that I have said, the ancient *Fathers* held many such *ridiculous Opinions*, as would now expose a Man to the *Contempt* and *Scorn* of the World, if he should make a Profession of them.

This is a Fact so notoriously open to every one's Observation, who has any Acquaintance with Antiquity, that there is but very little Room for this Author's fine Harangue, to prove the *Fathers* the only Interpreters of Scripture : And as little Room for Mr. *Wetmore* to press them all into his Service, in support of the Opinion he is now pleading for.

But that I may take off the Odium, which he is endeavouring to bring upon me, by his passionate Appeal to the Populace upon this Subject, I will give a few Instances, which have a special Reference to the present Debate ; out of the many which might have been produced, to shew how criminal soever Mr. *Wetmore* represents that Saying of mine, it is nevertheless strictly and ungainably true.

Our Author tells us, that ' this Change (*Regeneration*) is wrought by the Operation and Influence of GOD's Holy Spirit, in and with the Application of Water, according to CHRIST's Institution. ' (P, 27.) — But what say the ancient *Fathers* upon this Point ? Hear Two of them, which were truly ancient. — *Tertullian*, directly contrary to Mr. *Wetmore's* Hypothesis, declares, ' Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the baptismal Waters ; but being cleansed in Water by the Angel, we are prepared for the Holy Spirit. — Then comes the laying on of Hands, to invite the Holy Spirit by that Benediction. — And thus the Angel who presides at Baptism, makes Way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, by that cleansing from our Sins which our Faith obtains, being plighted to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. — Then being gone out of the Water, we are anointed to the blessed Unction, according to the Custom under the Priesthood, with an Horn of Oyl *.' — To the same Purpose that of *Cyprian*, ' If a Man could be baptized out of the Church, according to the Faith of Hereticks, and yet obtain Remission of Sins, he could according to the same Faith obtain also the Holy Spirit ; and there would be no Need that Hands should be laid on him, that he might receive the Holy Spirit †. — Here is fully represented, not only the Practice, but the Opinion of Antiquity upon the

* *De Baptism* C. 5, 6, 8. † *Epist.* 73. *ad Jub.*

Subject in Debate. Mr. *Wetmore* supposes that we obtain the Holy Spirit in *Baptism*. The Ancients supposed that we did not obtain the Holy Spirit in *Baptism*; but by the Imposition of Hands, and the Anointing which with them immediately succeeded *Baptism*. So that if they supposed them born of *Water* by *Baptism*, they supposed them born of the *Spirit* afterward. — Now it is offered to this Gentleman's Choice, to give up which he pleases, either his favourite Opinion, which he so stiffly contends for; or his lofty and extravagant Panegyrick upon the ancient Fathers.—Evident it is, that if *his* Opinion be true, *their* Sentiments and Practice were not only inconsistent, but ridiculous too.

I shall proceed to consider some other of their Customs, in the Administration of *Baptism*, and the LORD's Supper; as represented by *Tertullian*. 'As we are going into the Water (says he) we protest there, as we did also before that in the Church, in the Presence of the Bishop, that we renounce the Devil and his Pomp and Angels. Then we are dipt three Times, answering somewhat more than what our LORD has determined in his Gospel. Being thence received of GOD as his Children, we taste a Mixture of Milk and Honey; and from that Time for a Week together, we forbear the ordinary Use of the Bath. The Sacrament of the Eucharist, which was appointed by our LORD at a Meal-Time, and given in Charge to all, we receive in our Assemblies before Day; and only from the Hands of the Bishop. We make Oblations for the Dead; and for their Martyrdom on a stated Day Yearly. We reckon it unlawful to Fast, or to Worship kneeling, on the LORD's Day; and all the while between Easter and Whitsunday. We take great Care, that none of our Wine or our Bread should fall to the Ground. In the beginning of any Business, going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting Candles, going to Bed, sitting down; or whatever we do, we sign our Foreheads with the Sign of the Cross.' *

Now what will Mr. *Wetmore* say to these Things? What is the Cause, that he don't believe and practise according to this ancient Pattern? Have I not now a fair Occasion to turn his own Artillery upon him; and to observe to him, that 'when he boldly intrudes his novel Interpretations of Scripture, I think I offer him good Reason when

* *De Coron. C. 3.*

‘ I tell him, that the Fathers of the Christian Church, Men of Piety and Sense, and such as would sacrifice their very Lives for the Honour of CHRIST, had a different Opinion, and a different Practice *from his!* (P. 18.) — Let him then keep to this Rule: Let him make the ancient *Fathers* his Pattern in the Case before us: Let him dip Children three Times, when he baptizes them: After Baptism, let him give them to taste of a Mixture of Milk and Honey; then lay Hands on them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; and proceed to anoint ’em with Oyl: Let him administer the LORD’S Supper before Day; make Oblations for the Dead once a Year; declare it unlawful to fast, or to worship kneeling on the LORD’S Day, all the Time from Easter to Whitfunday; and be conscientiously scrupulous, not to suffer a Piece of Bread, or a Drop of Wine to fall to the Ground, during that Time: Let him cross himself in the beginning of any Business, as going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting Candles, going to Bed, &c. And let the World about him be admonished, not to call these Things *ridiculous*. For they were the Opinions and Practices of the *ancient Fathers*; and such Points in the purest Ages of Christianity, we may reasonably imagine were well sifted; and what the Mind of the Apostles themselves was in such Points, would be sought and preserved with Care. ’ (P. 17.)

I had before instanced in an Opinion and Practice, which generally obtained among the Ancients, *viz.* their administering the LORD’S Supper to young *Infants*. This they supposed absolutely necessary to Salvation, from their odd Construction of that Text, *John vi. 53.* This Principle and Practice obtain’d at least as early as *Cyprian’s* Time; † and continued long in Use in the Church. — What Mr. *Wetmore’s* Sentiments are about it, is hard to determine: He makes a long Apology for it. — But should he come into this Practice, he would not only be esteemed erroneous, but *ridiculous* too, even by his own Party, as well as ours.

I might alledge many more Particulars, which would abundantly justify that saying of mine, which he so loudly complains of. But what I have already said, is not only sufficient for that Purpose; but also to shew, that Mr. *Wetmore* himself will be determin’d by the Judgment of the *Fathers*, no further than they agree, or he imagines they do agree, *with*

† *Vid. Serm. de Lapsis, Sect. 20.*

him in Sentiment. I shall therefore dismiss this Subject, but with one Remark more.

I have before shewn him, that tho' the Ancients may frequently speak of our being *regenerated* by *Baptism*; yet they seem to mean no more by it, than that *Baptism* is an outward Sign, Seal, Pledge or Token of *Regeneration*; and not properly in any Respect the *new Birth* it self. They put the Sign for the Thing thereby signified; it being a Seal and Representation thereof. This appears to be their Meaning, by their denying the absolute Necessity of *Baptism* to Salvation; and their so frequently calling *Baptism* the Sign and Seal of Faith. And I may now add to what I then observ'd upon this Head, that if we allow *Augustine* to interpret his own Meaning, and the Meaning of others who used the same Language, they could intend no more by *baptismal Regeneration*, than is here supposed. He speaking of the Jewish Sacraments, observes; 'When the Sacraments were common to all, the Grace which is the Vertue of the Sacraments, was not common. Even so now, the *Laver of Regeneration* is common to all; but the Grace by which the Members of CHRIST are regenerated with their Head, is not common to all.' * It was a noted Distinction with him, between a Sacrament and the Matter of a Sacrament; and he tells us, 'We must always distinguish the Matter from the Sign, lest we transfer that to one, which belongs to the other. † — Now if we understand the ancient Fathers in this Sense, in which by the common Suffrage of learned Men they ought to be understood, and in which *St. Augustine* certainly is to be understood, if we will allow him to explain his own Meaning, all Mr. *Wetmore's* high Pretences from the *Fathers* will come to nothing. We may even venture to understand the Scriptures for ourselves, without any Danger from that Quarter.

I shall take Notice of but one Complaint more against me, which is, that I am 'one of that Sort, who are famous for Infant-damning Opinions; and, if my sort of Regeneration be necessary for every one that gets to Heaven; and my six Marks the Characters of every Child of GOD; and without those Marks no seeing the Kingdom of GOD, as I assert, (P. 22.) What will become of Infants, dying

* In Psal. 78. † *De Baptism. Parvul. Vid. Calvini Institutiones, Lib. 4. Cap. 14. Sect. 15.* where much of this Nature is cited from this Father.

‘ in the Womb, at the Birth ; or any Time before they
 ‘ are capable of experiencing my Marks ? ’ — But how have
 I made my self famous for *Infant-damning* Opinions ? Has
 any Thing that I have ever written, preached, or spoke,
 given the least Handle for such an Accusation ! I challenge
 this Gentleman to produce so much as the Shadow of an
 Instance of this Kind, to justify his Charge — But ‘ without
 ‘ those six Marks there is no seeing the Kingdom of GOD ;
 ‘ and, *Infants* are not capable of experiencing those Marks.’ —
 The six Marks he speaks of, are (1) A new Principle, (2)
 That this Principle be spiritual and supernatural, (3.) That
 this be wrought by the immediate Influence of the Spirit
 of GOD, (4) That this Principle extends to all the Powers
 and Faculties of the Soul, (5) That it is a Principle which
 enclines and enables the Soul to the Exercise of Faith in
 CHRIST ; and, (6) That it is a Principle of new Obedience
 to GOD. I would now enquire of this Gentleman, what
 is it that renders *Infants* incapable of such a new Principle
 in their Souls ; and of being thus renewed in the Spirit of their
 Minds, by the Influences of the Holy Ghost ? — If they
 are not capable of actually believing and holy living, yet
 are they not capable of that *Principle*, from whence these
 shall proceed when they come to the Exercise of Reason ?
 And does not even Dr. *Waterland* himself seem to allow
 this Capacity to *Infants* ? ‘ They are (says he) capable of
 ‘ being savingly born of Water and the Spirit ; and of be-
 ‘ ing adopted into Sonship, with what depends thereon :
 ‘ For though they bring no Virtues with them, no positive
 ‘ Righteousness ; yet they bring no Obstacle or Impedi-
 ‘ ment. (P. 23.)

Certain it is that *Infants* are capable of the renewing In-
 fluences of the *Spirit* of GOD ; and of having a new *Prin-
 ciple* in their Souls ; or they are incapable of the *Kingdom
 of GOD*. For I think no one can pretend, that they shall
 be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, under the Guilt,
 Pollution and Dominion even of *original Sin*. And now who
 is justly most famous for *Infant-damning* Opinions ; He that
 supposes them incapable to be renewed and qualified for
 the Kingdom of GOD ; or, I that suppose them capable
 Subjects both of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter ?

But it is high Time, that I should now proceed to the next
 Thing proposed, which was to consider the *State of the Question*,
 as represented by this Author. And that I may give the
 Reader

Reader a proper View of the Case, I will place his Sentiments in one Column, and the Doctrine of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles in another, that the Opposition may be most open to every one's Observation.

Mr. WETMORE's Principles. Opposite TEXTS of Scripture.

• Sonship is GOD's Grant ;
 • and the Person adopted no
 • more but a recipient & meer-
 • ly passive. But this is not
 • by any new Creation of any
 • Principle or Faculty in the
 • Soul of the Regenerate, as
 • Mr. D——n imagines ; but
 • something indeed specifically
 • different from what he seems
 • to fancy, (P. 23.)

your Hearts, crying *Abba, Father.* — And if a Son, then an Heir of God, through Christ, Gal. iv. 6, 7. See also 2 Cor. v. 17.

• It [*Adoption or Regenera-
 • tion*] is only the Grant
 • or Bestowment of a Favour
 • or Grace, — which is done
 • by the Sacrament of Baptism ;
 • in which Men may be active,
 • and exert their Will and
 • Choice, in what relates to the
 • Qualifications on Man's Part ;
 • and complying with the Con-
 • ditions, on which GOD has
 • promised to grant such a
 • Favour. (P. 23.)

• They are regenerated in
 • this Sense of the Word, as
 • it is used metaphorically, to
 • signify a great Change made
 • in the State and Circumstan-
 • ces of the Person, upon whom
 • GOD bestows the Dignity
 • and Priviledge of Sonship in
 • CHRIST JESUS. I don't mean
 • any inward Change wrought,
 • P. 24.)

*But as many as received him,
 to them gave he Power to become
 the Sons of God, even to them
 that believe on his Name ; which
 were born, not of Blood ; nor of
 the will of the Flesh ; nor of the
 will of Man : but of God. Joh.
 i. 12, 13. For as many as are
 led by the Spirit of God, are the
 Sons of God. Rom. viii. 14. And
 because ye are Sons, God hath sent
 forth the Spirit of his Son into*

*That which is born of the Spi-
 rit, is Spirit. Joh. iii. 6. Being
 born again, not of corruptible
 Seed ; but of incorruptible, by
 the Word of God, which liveth
 and abideth forever. 1 Pet. i. 23.
 Of his own Will begat he us. Jam.
 i. 18. The Wind bloweth where
 it listeth ; and we hear the sound
 thereof ; but cannot tell whence
 it cometh, or whither it goeth, so
 is every one that is born of the
 Spirit John iii. 8*

*Whatsoever is born of God doth
 not commit Sin ; for his Seed re-
 maineth in him ; and he cannot
 sin, because he is born of God. 1
 Joh iii. 9. And have put on the
 new Man, which is renewed in
 Knowledge, after the Image of
 him that created him. Col. iii. 10,*

upon the Faculties of the Soul.
 • What

Mr. WETMORE'S Principles.

Opposite TEXTS of Scripture.

What we may affirm is, that whosoever is born again, he is said to be so on Account of some Influence of the Holy Spirit, by whom all Sanctification and Blessing is derived to the Creature. (P. 28.) — And if the Water used is so sanctified, as to serve any holy and religious Purpose whatsoever; that Sanctification must be by the Holy Spirit's Influence — If it be only to render the Water sacramental, that is, to consecrate it. (P. 29.)

He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. We may understand here no more, than to be received into CHRIST, his Body or Church, with a Right to such Privileges as belong to that Society — And therefore every one that is made a Member of this Society, is taken out of that wretched, miserable, guilty State they were in before; estranged from GOD, and liable to his Curse; thus a Child of Wrath, as St. Paul says, all are by Nature, Eph. ii 3. but by Baptism brought into a State of Favour in CHRIST; and thus quickned and saved, (P. 29.)

This is agreeable to Reason, that when Persons in a natural State, guilty and polluted, are admitted into a Covenant of Favour and Friendship with GOD, their former Guilt must

According to his Mercy be saved us. by the washing of Regeneration; and RENEWING of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. iii 5, 6. That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit, John iii. 6 We know, that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 1 John v. 18.

Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead, by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his Death, we shall be also in the likeness of his Resurrection. Knowing this, that our old Man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin; for he that is dead, is freed from Sin. Rom. vi. 4, — 7.

He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not on the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God

Mr. WETMORE's Principles.

Opposite TEXTS of Scripture.

• must be removed by a gracious
 • free Pardon. (P. 29. 30) —
 • This Benefit seems to be ap-
 • plied to all, that by Baptism
 • are made Members of CHRIST'S
 • Body (P. 30.) — Nor does
 • there appear to me any Ab-
 • surdity in supposing Baptism
 • to seal Remission of former
 • Guilt, even where the Person
 • is unworthy, and makes his
 • Profession hypocritically. —
 • (P. 31.)

• Only as Pardon is a free Act
 • of Grace and Mercy, I don't
 • see why GOD may not bestow
 • that, as well as many other
 • Blessings in this World, upon
 • those that don't deserve them.
 • — Those that have received
 • Forgiveness of GOD, and yet
 • continue Wicked, may expect
 • his Severity will be encreased
 • against them at the Day of
 • Judgment. (P. 31.)

God abideth on him. Joh. iii. 18,
 36. *For in Jesus Christ, neither
 Circumcision availeth any Thing,
 nor Uncircumcision : but Faith
 which worketh by Love.* Gal. v. 6.
*For in Christ Jesus, neither Cir-
 cumcision availeth any Thing ;
 nor Uncircumcision ; but a new
 Creature,* Gal. vi. 15.

*That will by no Means clear the
 Guilty.* Exod. xxxiv. 7. *For the
 Gifts and calling of God are with-
 out Repentance* Rom. ix. 29.
*Whom he justified, them he also
 glorified.* Rom. viii. 30. *Who-
 soever is born of God—keepeth him-
 self, and that wicked one toucheth
 him not.* 1 Joh. v. 18. *Who-
 soever abideth in him, sinneth not : who-
 soever sinneth, hath not seen him ;
 neither known him.* 1 Joh. iii. 6.

I may even Challenge this Gentleman to form any Pro-
 positions more directly contradictory one to another, than
 these Doctrines of his are to the Scriptures I have placed
 in Opposition to them. This therefore must be a sufficient
 Admonition to every one, who hath a reverential Regard to
 the sacred Standard of our Faith and Practice, and any Va-
 lue for the Salvation of his Soul, to take Heed of such
 Principles, so directly regnant to the Oracles of Truth.

Can it possibly be true, that *Adoption* is not by any new
 Creation of any Principle in the Soul of the *regenerate* ; but
 something specifically distinct ; and yet all that have Power to
 become the Sons of GOD, have received the Lord JESUS
 CHRIST, are born not of the Will of Man but of GOD, are
 led by the Spirit of GOD, have the Spirit of his Son in
 their Hearts, are Heirs of GOD thro' CHRIST ; and are *new
 Creatures*, having old Things passed away ; and all Thing
 becom

become new in them?— Can it possibly be true, that *Regeneration* is only a Favour or Grace done by the Sacrament of *Baptism*; and yet that all the *regenerate* are spiritual Persons, and born of an incorruptible Seed?— Can it be true, that Men may be active and exert their Wills and Choice in *Regeneration*; and yet, they be born not of the Will of Man; but of the Will of GOD, of his own Will and nothing else; even as the Wind bloweth where it listeth; and we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth?— Can *Regeneration* be without any inward Change; and yet all the *Regenerate* be so changed, that they cannot commit Sin; but have the Seed of GOD remaining in them; and are renewed after the Image of Him that created them?— May we be said to be born of the Spirit, while Partakers of no farther divine Influence, than what consecrates the Water; and renders it sacramental; and yet the renewing of the Holy Ghost, being made *Spirit* or spiritual, and being made free from Sin, and keeping our selves that the wicked One toucheth us not, should be the necessary Characters of all who are born of GOD?— Are we to understand no more by the Salvation consequent upon *Faith* and *Baptism*, than to be received into the Church; and to have a Right to such Priviledges, as belong to that Society? Is this to be taken out of that wretched guilty State, that we were in before, while Children of Wrath; and yet all who are truly Partakers of this Salvation consequent upon *Faith* and *Baptism*, must be not only buried with CHRIST by *Baptism* into Death; but walk in Newness of Life, have their old Man crucified, the Body of Sin destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve Sin; and they so dead, as to be freed from Sin?— Can the *impenitent Hypocrite* have all his former Guilt done away by *Baptism*; and yet be condemned already, under the Wrath of GOD; and his *Baptism* avail nothing, without Faith, that works by Love; and the new Creature?— May Men receive Forgiveness of GOD at their *Regeneration*; and yet continue wicked, to their greater Condemnation at last; when GOD will by no Means clear the Guilty; but determines to glorify all, whom he pardons and justifies; and when they are born of GOD, do keep themselves from the wicked one, they abide in him, they do not sin, if they have ever seen him or known him?— When the greatest Contradictions can be reconciled, when Light and Darkness, Truth and Error can be proved to be the same Thing, then, but not till then, can this Gentleman's Doctrines be prov'd conformable to the Word of GOD. I

I shall next proceed to consider the Arguments brought by Mr. *Wetmore* to confirm these his Notions of *Regeneration*.

He observes, that 'this figurative Way of Description alluding to a Birth, is apply'd to more Cases than one in holy Scripture, which Mr. *Dickinson* don't seem to have a just Apprehension of; but applies all Texts of this Nature to one only Thing, which he will have call'd *Regeneration*, and allows that Term to be used for Nothing else; nor any other Expressions that have any Affinity to it.' (P. 19.)

This is but an artful Changing the Question. Had he spoke to the Purpose, he should have shewn us, that *Regeneration, being born again, begotten of GOD, or born of GOD, being created anew, or made new Creatures, being born from above, or born of Water and the Spirit,* are Expressions apply'd to more Cases than one in holy Scripture. For he knows, or should know, that this is the Point before us; and not whether some *Allusions* may be found in Scripture to a natural Birth, in a different View from what I am pleading for. — If no such Instances can be found, and these Expressions do retain one invariable Meaning thro' the whole Word of GOD, all his Reasonings upon this Head are altogether impertinent; and therefore all the Instances he assigns to confirm that Argumentation, are wholly foreign to the Business before him. — Suppose it true, that 'a Change from Sorrow to Joy is illustrated by a Birth in Scripture; Suppose the Term Children of GOD is used with Respect to the Resurrection; Suppose great Streights and Difficulties are described by a like Metaphor; and that the Children of Israel were truly GOD's People, in this metaphorical Sense,' as this Gentleman takes Pains to prove (P. 19, &c.) What Conclusion will these Premises afford him? How will it follow from thence, that to be *regenerate*, to be *begotten*, or *born of GOD*, to be *new created*, or a *new Creature*, to be *born from above*, or to be *born of the Spirit*, may signify no more than to be *baptized*, when it can't be prov'd, that these Expressions are ever once used in that Sense; or that they any where in the Bible, have any other Meaning than what I have assigned them?

But 'the Word *Regeneration* is always used in a metaphorical Sense, except when used to signify the Resurrection; and all those Expressions of being *begotten of GOD*; and *born of GOD*; and *born from above*; and whatever else seems to infer a new Birth, are figurative; and can mean

‘ no more than the Production of some great Change or Alteration, which may bear some Analogy, in a figurative Way of speaking, to that Change that passes upon the State of an Infant, when it first comes into the World ; or is produced by Generation.’

Well, what then ? Will it thence follow that all the most distant Allusions to a Birth or Creation, must be understood in the same Sense, with these strong and emphatical Expressions under Consideration ; because both the one and the other are metaphorical ? — He tells us that ‘ great Streights and Difficulties are described by a like Metaphor.’ (P. 20.) Will it therefore follow that *Affliction* is *Regeneration* ; and that every one under suffering Circumstances, is regenerated ? How then does *Regeneration* signify *Baptism* only, (as he so strenuously endeavours to prove) if it signifies any Thing else, as well as *Baptism* ? How will this Reasoning serve his Cause, any better than ours, when it is directly calculated to undermine both the one and the other ? But the Comfort is, that it is altogether impertinent and inconclusive.—There is not the least Appearance of a Consequence in this Arguing, that because some distant Allusions to a *Birth*, a *Creation*, &c. are used in Scripture without any determinate Signification, for very different Events, that therefore the Terms *New Birth*, *New Creation*, &c. which are never used in Scripture but with one determinate Signification, and for one Event only, are to be understood in the same loose and uncertain Sense. — Our blessed Saviour and his inspired Apostles have limited the Use of these Expressions, to one most important Event, upon which they assure us that our eternal Interests do most immediately depend ; and it is therefore too bold an Undertaking, to endeavour to represent them as being of such ambiguous and uncertain Signification.—Of what mischievous Consequence must it be to the Souls of Men, to interpret Scripture after such a Manner ! There is something spoken of, as absolutely necessary to our *seeing the Kingdom of GOD*. But what is it that is required ? Mr. *Wetmore* teaches us, that it may signify ‘ a Change from Sorrow to Joy,’ it may ‘ signify the Resurrection,’ it may ‘ signify great Streights and Difficulties,’ it may ‘ signify being in Covenant with GOD :’ — But there is no determinate Idea to be annexed to it ; and yet it does signify *Baptism*. Now (if this Reasoning should be received) what dreadful Danger must we be in, of taking up with any Thing, or Nothing, instead of what

what is required of us, as absolutely necessary to our eternal Salvation!

As for the Texts of Scripture cited by him, to this Purpose, there are but two of them which have any Reference at all to the Subject before us: These only I shall therefore consider.

The first Text alledged by him, which has any Relation to the present Debate, is *Mat. xix 28* *Ye that have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory, ye shall also sit, &c.* He supposes the *Regeneration* in this Text, to express the general Resurrection. (P. 19) But assigns no Reason why it should thus be understood.— There can be nothing more natural and easy, than to understand this Text according to the common and received Interpretation given to it. They followed CHRIST in the *Regeneration* of Sinners to himself; and in his bringing the Church into a new and spiritual State: Or they followed him as his Children, that were indeed born to him by the Influences of his holy Spirit.— This is the Sense, which the Word *Regeneration*, and the other Synonymous Terms every where obtain in Scripture. This is the most natural Interpretation of the Text before us, the Sense which first offers to the Mind; and makes the Text most familiar and intelligible; and he neither does, nor (I believe) can give any Reason at all, why we should here change the received Interpretation of the Word.

The other Text he cites is, *1 Pet. i. 3* *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.* From which he argues, ' St. Peter does not say we are begotten to this Hope by a new Creation in our Souls, as Mr. Dickinson would describe Regeneration or GOD's begetting us; but in a quite different Manner, viz. by the Resurrection.'— To which it is sufficient Answer, that St. Peter does not say, that we are *not* begotten to this Hope by a new Creation, or the Creation of a new Principle in our Souls. And I'm sure, that such a new Principle in our Souls is so far from being inconsistent with our entertaining a lively Hope from the Resurrection of CHRIST, that it's the only Foundation from which such a lively Hope can proceed. — The Words are plain and familiar; and at the very first View represent to us the Sense I am pleading for; and are accordingly so understood, by all the Com-

mentators I have read upon the Text. *God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us*, that is, he hath given us a new and divine Principle of Life, whereby we can entertain a lively Hope, from the Consideration of *Christ's Resurrection from the Dead*.

Upon the whole then, he can find no one Text in the Bible, where *Regeneration* or the other Expressions of the same Significancy are used, in any other Sense than that which I am pleading for. — But on the contrary, we are assured by a Variety of full and clear Testimonies from the divine Oracles, that no Man can have these Characters applied to him, but what has indeed experienced the renewing Influences of the divine Grace.—*We know* (says the Apostle) *that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* It therefore never can be true in any Case whatsoever, that any Man can be born of GOD, and continue in Sin; or be begotten of GOD, and not keep himself from a Subjection to the wicked one. The Apostle assures us, that he knows it is otherwise. And that gives us a better View of the true Meaning of the debated Expressions, than all the unscriptural Imaginations and Surmises of Mr. *Wetmore* and his Brethren. See likewise to the same Purpose *1 Job. iii. 9. Eph. iv. 24. 1 Job. v. 4. cum multis aliis.*

Hitherto Mr. *Wetmore* has been only clearing his Way, for a more full and direct Proof of his Point, which we are now to expect. But having said so much already, before he comes directly to the Business before him, he thinks it proper to proceed in a most brief and compendious Way.

All that will therefore be necessary (says he) to determine this whole Controversy with Mr. *Dickinson*, is to shew, that such a Change of State and Relation is made in Christian Baptism, that the Persons baptized are truly said to receive the Priviledge to be called the Children of GOD, according to the Acceptation of that Phrase both in the old Testament and new; and that this Change is wrought by the Operation and Influence of GOD's Holy Spirit, in and with the Application of Water, according to CHRIST's Institution. (P. 24.)

Is this all that is necessary to determine this whole Controversy? Then it seems, there is no necessity of answering, nor indeed of taking any Notice at all of the clear and full Scripture-Evidence brought against his Hypothesis. The Gentleman might probably think, that was too hard a Piece of Work; or would take him up too much Time.

Time. He therefore chooses a more concise and easy Method of dispatching his Business, lest the tedious Task of answering Arguments would have quite spoiled the Plausibility of his Harrangue.

Is it sufficient, 'to shew that the Persons baptized, are truly said to receive the Privilege, to be called the Children of GOD?' —But how becomes it sufficient, to shew one Thing, when his Business was to prove another of a very different Nature?—The Point in Debate between him and me is, Whether *Baptism* be *Regeneration*. What he attempts to prove is, that professed Christians may in some Sense or other be called the *Children of GOD*. By the same Argument he may as well prove, that all Orphans are regenerate; for *a Father of the Fatherless is God in his holy Habitation*, (Plal. lxxviii. 5.) And that all Men every where are regenerate; for *there is one God and Father of all*, (Eph. iv. 6) That the holy Angels are regenerate; for they are called *the Sons of God*, (Job xxxviii. 7.) And that even the Gentiles who were neither circumcised nor baptized, were regenerate; for these were called GOD's Sons and Daughters, (Isa' xliii 6.) *Bring my Sons from far, and my Daughters from the Ends of the Earth*. Is it because Mr. Wetmore could say nothing at all to the Purpose, that he thus seriously undertakes to prove a Point quite foreign and impertinent to the Matter in Debate?—As GOD is the Father and Creator of the Universe, all Creatures are *his Offspring* (Acts xvii. 28, 29.) and all intelligent Beings, whether holy Angels, Men or Devils, may in this Sense be called his Children.—As GOD is pleased to bring some Part of Mankind into a nearer external Relation to himself, by their spiritual Priviledges and Covenant-Obligations, these may in a more appropriate Sense be called his *Children*, or the *Children of his Covenant*. But what is this to *Regeneration*?—Are they all who in these Respects are called the Children of GOD, so *born of the Spirit*, that they are *Spirit*, or spiritual (a)? Are they so freed from Sin, that they cannot commit Sin (b)? Have they all *overcome the World* (c)? Are they all *begotten to a lively Hope* (d)? Does the *Seed of GOD* remain in them all (e)? Do they all *keep themselves, that the wicked one toucheth them not* (f)? Are they all *created anew in Christ Jesus unto good Works, that they walk in them* (g)? These, all these, are the neces-

(a) Job. iii 6 (b) 1 Job. iii. 9. (c) 1 Job. v. 4. (d) 1 Pet. i 3.
 (e) 1 Job. iii. 9. (f) 1 Job. v. 18. (g) Eph. ii. 10.

fary and actual Characters of every regenerate Person. And if they are not (as certainly they are not) the real Characters of all, that in some Sense or other are called the Children of GOD in Scripture ; then this Reasoning of his is the Height of Impertinence.

But to be *regenerate*, or to be the *Children of GOD*, is the same Thing. (P. 23) — I answer, they are just so much the same Thing, as to be regenerate, or to be in Heaven, is the same Thing. Both *Adoption* and *eternal Salvation* are the Consequence of *Regeneration* ; and therefore cannot be the same Thing. As natural Generation precedes Sonship, and cannot for that Reason be the same Thing with it ; so *Regeneration* does, in Order of Nature, precede *Adoption* ; and cannot for that Reason be the same Thing with it.

What then will become of Mr. *Wetmore's* two Propositions, by which alone he endeavours to establish his Doctrine of *baptismal Regeneration* ? Suppose it true, that such a Change of State and Relation is made in Christian Baptism, that the Persons baptized are truly said to receive the Privilege, to be called the Children of GOD : Suppose it is also true, That this Change is wrought by the Operation and Influence of GOD's Holy Spirit, in and with the Application of Water, according to CHRIST's Institution : it is all no more to the Purpose, than if he had undertaken to prove any other Propositions whatsoever. And yet this is all the Evidence which he pretends to offer in Confirmation of his Principles ; and upon which he would have Men run the Venture of an Exclusion from the *Kingdom of GOD*. — It would be to mispend my own and my Reader's Time, to take any distinct Notice of the Method he uses to illustrate and confirm his Propositions ; since both the Propositions and their Illustration, are such an egregious trifling, and wandering away from the Subject in Debate.

I therefore proceed to take some Notice of his *Corollaries*. He first infers, that 'it will appear very natural, to understand the Washing of Regeneration (*Tit.* iii. 5.) to mean Baptism ; especially considering, what is predicated of it there is expressly predicated upon Baptism, (*1 Pet.* iii. 21.) that it now saves us, according to our Saviour's Promise (*Mark* xvi. 16) *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved*. This being then the most natural and obvious Interpretation, which according to the best Rules of interpreting Scripture, should always be received, when such Interpretation

' Interpretation, is neither contrary to Reason, nor any other ' Text of Scripture.' (P. 34.)—Had Mr. *Wetmore* quite forgot, that I had largely prov'd from a great Variety of Scripture-Testimony, that this Interpretation is both contrary to other Texts of Scripture, and to Reason too? And is it not something diverting, to see him with a grave Countenance take that for granted, and draw his Consequences from it as a *Postulatum* not to be disputed, which is so largely disprov'd in the Discourse he is animadverting upon, without taking any Notice of the Evidence brought against him?—Let us however attend to his Reasoning.

It will appear (he tells us) very natural to understand *the Washing of Regeneration* (Tit. iii. 5) to mean *Baptism*, especially considering, that what is predicated of it there, is predicated of *Baptism*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. — Well then he allows, that being *saved by the Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, is predicated of *the Laver of Regeneration* in Tit. iii. 5. His Words can have no other Meaning; for there is nothing else predicated of *the Laver of Regeneration* in that Text. Whence it follows, that all who are *regenerated*, are *saved* by the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*. For if this be predicated of *Regeneration*, it is applicable to all who are *regenerated*. It is therefore an inevitable Consequence, that if all who are *baptized*, are *not saved* by the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, then all who are *baptized* are *not regenerated*; and therefore that *Baptism* is *not Regeneration*: — I can't foresee what Answer Mr. *Wetmore* can give to this. He can't pretend, that all *baptized* Persons are *saved* by the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*; for he allows that there are some that *come in Hypocrisy*, and are *wicked after Baptism* who may be *consider'd as Exoticks*. (P. 30.) Which Characters are just as contrary to the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, as Light and Darknes, GOD and Belial. There can't be a greater Solecism, than to speak of wicked Hypocrites being (while such) renewed by the Holy Ghost. — But perhaps he intended to represent no more, as predicated of the *Laver of Regeneration* than being *saved*. Let him however remember, that the Salvation spoken of in the cited Text, is by *the Renewing of the Holy Ghost*; and he has no Authority to separate what GOD has joined together.

But Salvation is predicated of *Baptism*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. — By this he must doubtless intend, that all who are *baptized* are *saved*; for what is predicated of *Baptism*, is applicable to

to all the *baptized*. If therefore — being *saved* — means the same Thing in this Text, as it does in *Tit.* iii. 5. then all that are *baptized*, are *renewed by the Holy Ghost*; which is not only most notoriously false in Fact, but contrary to his own Concessions. — If being *saved*, does *not* mean the same Thing in this Text as in *Tit.* iii. 5. then this Text is most impertinently cited, to prove that *Baptism* is meant by the *Laver of Regeneration*, and is nothing at all to his Purpose: For how can the Use of the same Words in one Text, shew us how they are to be understood in another, where they are used in a very different Sense, and with a very different Design? How can being *saved without* the Renewing of the Holy Ghost, signify the same Thing with being *saved by* the Renewing of the Holy Ghost? — This Text therefore, in what Sense soever he understands it, is far from justifying his Interpretation of the *Laver of Regeneration*.

The Words of this Text are, *The like Figure whereunto, Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the Filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God,) by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.* In these Words are several Things worthy of particular Notice. It is observable, that the bare Administration of this Ordinance of *Baptism*, or the Application of *Water*, here called the *putting away of the Filth of the Flesh*, doth *not* save us. Whence it follows, that this Ordinance may be administered to those, who are no way Partakers of the *Salvation* here spoken of. For there are some *baptized*, who have no gracious Qualifications; but are in Hypocrisy and Impenitence (as our Author himself allows) and therefore have nothing but the outward Application of the Ordinance. There is no Reason to suppose these to be Partakers of any divine Blessing with the Ordinance, who do but mock GOD in their Attendance upon it: These therefore are *not saved* by it. — It is further observable from this Text, that those whom *Baptism* *saves*, are such in whom is *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God*: which (according to Mr. Wetmore's own Interpretation of these Words, P. 8) implies 'to profess Faith and Repentance; and promise future Obedience to GOD, with a good Conscience, i. e. honestly and sincerely.' They therefore who do not act sincerely, but come in Hypocrisy (as he allows, some may do) are not saved by *Baptism*; because they want the Qualification of a *good Conscience*.

to which as a necessary Means, this Text ascribes the *Salvation* here spoken of. — It is moreover observable from this Text, that they whom *Baptism* saves, are saved by efficacious Grace or Virtue derived from the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Whence it follows, that they who have no Interest in the Benefits proceeding from the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, but are excluded by their Unbelief, Impenitence, and Hypocrisy, are not saved by *Baptism*. — Upon the whole then, it is most clearly and unquestionably evident from this Text, that *Baptism* is not the *Laver of Regeneration*. If the *Laver of Regeneration* saves all the Partakers of it, by the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, [and *Baptism* does not save] all that Partake of it, by the *Renewing of the Holy Ghost*; if it saves none but those who have a good Conscience, and have experienced the *Power of Christ's Resurrection*, then *Baptism* is not the *Laver of Regeneration*. — I hope, this Gentleman will no more pretend to press this Text into his Service, till he has removed these Difficulties, out of the Way.

His second Corollary is, 'that it will appear the most genuine and easy Interpretation of Joh. iii. 5. *Except a Man be born of Water and the Spirit, to understand the baptismal Regeneration I have described.*' (P. 34.) This he endeavours to confirm by two Arguments. The first is taken from *Ver. 10. Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these Things?* Whence he argues: 'The Ground of our Saviour's Question to *Nicodemus* must necessarily be, a known Practice among the *Jews*, of near Affinity to that of which he spoke; and such a Practice was known among them.' — I might here enquire of him, how he proves that such a Practice was known among the *Jews* as *baptizing* Profelytes; and calling them *new born*, or regenerate? Was there any Institution in the *Levitical Law*, upon which such a Practice was founded? If not, can it be supposed, that our blessed Saviour would do so much Honour to an humane Invention and Tradition (if there had been that Tradition among them) as to put so much Stress upon it: — Or can he so much as prove, that this Practice had ever obtain'd among the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time? The Authorities he pretends to bring, are much too late to prove any such Thing; and what he cites from them, is nothing to his Purpose. If they called Profelytes *new born*, or *new born*

born Infants, what is this to *Baptism*, of which they say nothing at all? Or how does this prove that they esteemed *Baptism* to be *Regeneration*? In short, the whole Notion (as far as appears by any Thing brought either by Dr. *Waterland* or by Mr *Wetmore*, in Confirmation of it) is but a mere chimerical Fiction.— But suppose it true, suppose that such a Practice was known among the *Jews* as *baptizing* Profelytes, and calling them *new born*, or regenerated; How could *Nicodemus* know by this, the Necessity of *Christian Baptism*, an Ordinance not yet instituted, nor ever heard of in the World? How could he know, that because *Heathens* were washed with Water when admitted Profelytes into the *Jewish Church*, that therefore a *Jew* must be baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, if he would ever enter into the Kingdom of GOD our Saviour? How could he know, because Profelytes to the *Jewish Church* were baptized with Water, that therefore they who would hope for Salvation according to the *Christian Dispensation*, must be *born of Water and of the Spirit*? — It is most certain, that *Nicodemus*, tho' a Master in Israel, could know none of these Things; and it is therefore certain, that our Saviour did not, could not mean *Christian Baptism*, in the Text before us.— This Matter is largely and particularly clear'd up in my *Remarks on Dr. Waterland*; to which I refer the Reader for further Satisfaction. But Mr. *Wetmore* has rather chosen to overlook all that is there said against this trifling Notion, as unworthy of his Regard, than to undergo the Drudgery of answering it.

Another Argument he brings to confirm his Interpretation of this Text, is taken from the 12th Verse of this Chapter. *If I tell you of earthly Things and ye believe not, how shall you believe, If I tell you of heavenly Things?* From whence he argue: 'To be born again of Water and the Spirit, are called earthly Things, as the lowest Gospel-Mysteries — which tis much more natural to apply unto Baptism, than the other Sense of Regeneration.'

But why may not the other Sense of *Regeneration* be called an *earthly* Thing, that is, what can be represented in an easy and familiar Manner, and exemplified by common and well known Simillitudes; and what was plainly represented and explained in the Old Testament? Why (I say) may it not in these Respects be called an *earthly* Thing, in comparison of those sublime and heavenly *Doctrines*, taught in the

the remaining Part of this Discourse of our LORD's with *Nicodemus*? Such as *his coming down from Heaven*, and being in Heaven at the same Time (*ver. 13*) His being lifted up upon the Cross, that *Believers* in him might have *eternal Life* (*ver. 14, 15*.) His being the *Son of Man in Heaven*; (*ver. 13.*) and yet the *only begotten Son of God* here upon *Earth*: (*ver. 16*)—And such as the *eternal Life*, to be obtain'd by all that *believe* in him; and the *Condemnation*, that all *Unbelievers* are already under. (*ver. 18*) These are plainly the Things here compared, by the Denomination of *earthly and heavenly Things*. This Text therefore is nothing to *Mr. Wetmore's Purpose*.

His third *Corollary* is, 'that a persevering Piety and Virtue by the renewing Influences of the Holy Spirit, must be added to Regeneration, to qualify Men for the final Happiness of CHRIST's Kingdom.' Under this Head he has some very useful Admonitions, with which I heartily concur: But lest his Reader should fall into some dangerous Mistakes, with respect to the important Truths therein represented; I shall take leave to add a few Things, which are absolutely necessary, in order to procure and secure this *persevering Piety*, which he recommends.

1. It is *necessary*, for those who would obtain a *Principle* of Piety, to be *emptied of themselves*; and to have a sensible feeling Impression of their own *Impotence and Misery*. It is necessary, that they should have a realizing View, that they are by *Nature Children of Wrath*, (*Eph. ii. 3.*) that *their carnal Minds are Enmity to God*. (*Rom. viii. 7.*) that while they remain *in the Flesh*, in their original and natural State, *they cannot please God*. (*Rom. viii. 8.*) And that they therefore as guilty perishing Sinners lie at God's Mercy, and cannot by their own Power help themselves. — It is therefore dreadfully dangerous for any to imagine, that 'Baptism seals the Remission of their former Guilt, tho' they make their Profession hypocritically;' as taught by this Author, (*P. 31.*) and that those baptized Persons, who 'want a Covenant-Claim to eternal Happiness, don't want to be regenerated, but reformed;' as we are taught by *Dr. Waterland*. (*P. 11, 12.*)

2. It is *necessary*, for those who would *persevere* in Piety and Virtue, that they obtain a new living *Principle of Grace* in their

Hearts by *Regeneration*: otherwise, whatever Streams there may be, without a living Fountain to supply them, they must quickly dry up. It is necessary, that *they be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good Works, that they may walk in them*, Eph. ii. 10. It is necessary, that they *put on the new Man, which is renewed after the Image of him that created them* Col. iii. 10. It would be very dangerous for them to suppose, that 'by Baptism they are brought into a State of Favour in CHRIST, and thus quickned and saved;' as Mr. *Wetmore* teaches (P. 29.) and that 'this is not from any new Creation of any Principle in the Soul of the regenerate; but something indeed specifically different from it;' as he also teaches. (P. 23.)

3. It is *necessary*, in order to their obtaining this Principle, that they depend only upon GOD's free and sovereign *Grace*, remembering that such guilty unworthy Sinners can have no Claim to *Mercy* that they are *Clay in the Hands of the Potter*, that GOD will have *Mercy on whom he will have Mercy* (Rom. ix. 18, 21.) and that if ever they are Partakers of his Salvation, it will only be *because it has so seemed good in his sight*, Matt. xi. 26. It is necessary that they should for this Reason be in earnest, in *working out their own Salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in them both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure*. Phi. ii. 12, 13.—It will be very dangerous for 'em to suppose with this Gentleman, that 'a good Conscience and a good Life, comprize all the Requisites to a comfortable Hope.' (P. 7.) Or that if we 'sincerely endeavour to do the best we can; and are daily gaining Ground of our Vices and Passions; and after strictest Examination find ourselves upon the improving Hand, we are in a State of Salvation' (P. 5) For GOD will bring all to *his Foot*, to depend only upon his sovereign *Grace* in CHRIST, whom he makes Partakers of his saving *Mercy*.

4. It is *necessary*, that besides active Diligence in Duty, Believers firmly depend upon the gracious *Promises* of the Covenant, for persevering *Grace*; that they depend upon it, that *whom God hath called, he hath also justified; and whom he hath justified, he will also glorify*, (Rom. viii. 30) that *Nothing shall separate them from the Love of Christ*. (ver. 35) that *none shall be able to pluck Christ's Sheep out of his Hands*.

Hands, (Joh: x. 28.) that he will never leave them nor forsake them, (Heb. xii. 5.) but they shall be kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation. (1 Pet. i. 5.)— This is necessary, in order to keep up their Hope, to invigorate their Duties; to fill them with Thankfulness to GOD for the unspeakable Gift of his Grace, and to enable them to rejoice in Hope of the Glory of GOD.—It is therefore very dangerous, to teach with Dr. Waterland, that ‘ all christian Blessings may be forfeited and finally lost, if a Person revolts from GOD, either for a Time or for Ever; and then such a Person is no longer in a regenerate State, or a State of Sonship, with respect to any saving Effects. ’ (P. 11, 12.) And it is equally dangerous, to teach with Mr. Wetmore, that Men may be ‘ admitted into a Covenant of Favour and Friendship with GOD, have their former Guilt removed by a gracious and free Pardon; and yet be finally impenitent. (P. 31, 32)

5. *It is necessary, that they who have this Hope in them, should feel the Power of the divine Grace in their Hearts; and find by examining themselves, that Christ is in them, and they not Reprobates. (2 Cor. xiii. 5) They should know, that they abide in him, by the Spirit which he hath given them. (1 Joh. iii. 24.) They should find, that they are not in the Flesh, but in the Spirit, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them. (Rom. viii. 9.) And they should have that Experience which worketh Hope, which will not make ashamed. (Rom. v. 4, 5.) How very dangerous is it therefore, to teach with Dr. Waterland, that ‘ the Marks of a renewed Heart and Mind have a Tendency to perplex some, and to deceive others; and therefore may prudently be thrown aside, as Things of human Invention. ’ (P. 42, 43.) Or to teach with Mr. Wetmore, that ‘ we may properly be said to be Children of Hope, or begotten to Hope; as those that enjoy great Advantages to know GOD, and the Way to be happy, are called Children of Light. (P. 21.)*

I would intreat all who have any Value for their Souls, to consider these Things, not as mere Matters of Speculation; but as Affairs of highest Importance to their eternal Welfare. I would intreat them, that they be not soon shaken in Mind; but that they continue in the Faith, grounded and settled; and that they be not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel, which they have heard.

It

It may be expected, that before I conclude, I should make up the Account with this angry Gentleman, with Respect to the very rough and abusive Treatment, I have met with in this Discourse of his. But as personal Matters don't at all affect the Debate between us, and such Invectives ordinarily recoil upon the Author himself, doing very little Harm to those against whom they are levelled, I shall wholly pass them over : and conclude with my hearty Prayer to GOD, that both he and his Readers may so be *born of Water and the Spirit*, and so experience the Effects of *regenerating Grace* in their Hearts, as to be qualified for, and finally be Partakers of the Glory and Blessedness of the *Kingdom of GOD*.

A M E N.

