

**ESSAYS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS. TO
WHICH ARE ADDED BY THE PUBLISHERS,
ECCLESIASTICAL
CHARACTERISTICS, OR THE ARCANA OF
CHURCH POLICY. VOL. III; A PRACTICAL
TREATISE ON REGENERATION**

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JOHN WITHERSPOON

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E S S A Y S

O N

Important SUBJECTS.

Intended to establish the DOCTRINE of
SALVATION by GRACE, and to point out
its INFLUENCE ON HOLINESS of LIFE.

By JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.

To which are added by the PUBLISHERS,

Ecclesiastical Characteristics;

OR THE

ARCANA of CHURCH POLICY,

WITH

A SERIOUS APOLOGY; which have
been generally ascribed to the same Author.

V O L. III.

L O N D O N:

Printed for EDWARD and CHARLES DILLY,
in the *Poultry*, near the *Mansion-House*.

M.DCC.LXV.

A PRACTICAL
TREATISE
ON
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A PRACTICAL
T R E A T I S E
O N
R E G E N E R A T I O N .



J O H N iii. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

TH E condition on which ministers of the gospel hold their office, is extremely awful. "They must render an account unto God" of their fidelity to the souls committed to their charge. Their duty and danger, as servants of God, are jointly and strongly express-

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ed in the commission given to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word of my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, so save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet, if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul *."

It is natural for us, in such a situation, to be often revolving in our minds this great and weighty trust. It is at once our duty and interest, to consider with all possible care, in what way we may have the easiest and most effectual access to the hearts of sinners: what views of divine truth will be most convincing; what forms of address will make the strongest and most lasting impression: in one word, how we may acquit ourselves of our ministry, so as to be a "savour of life unto life," to many of those who hear us, and to "deliver our own souls" from the blood of those that perish.

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19.

Such, indeed, is the undeniable moment and importance of the truths of the gospel, that I am often ready to think, it will be easy to set them in so clear and convincing a light, as no person of common understanding shall be able to resist. I am often ready to say within myself, Surely, if they be warned, they will no more dare to rush on the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler; surely, the boldest sinner must tremble at the thoughts of death, judgment and eternity, fast approaching, and from which it is impossible to fly. But, when we see, how many are able to sit unmoved under the most awful threatenings from the word of God, how many continue unchanged under the most alarming dispensations of Providence, our thoughts are immediately carried to the unsearchable depth of divine counsels; and we must say with our blessed Saviour, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight *; or with the apostle Paul, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them †."

The secret counsel of the most High, however, though we must adore with reverence, it is impossible for us to comprehend. What influence

* Luke x. 21.

† 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.