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S E R I O U S

T H O U G H T S

C O N C E R N I N G

G O D F A T H E R S A N D G O D M O T H E R S.

I. **I**N the antient Church, when Baptism was administred, there were usually two or more *Sponsors* (so *Tertullian* calls them, an hundred Years after the Death of St. *John*) for every Person to be baptized. As these were *Witnesses* before GOD and the Church, of the solemn Engagement those Persons then entered into, so they *undertook* (as the very Word implies) to watch over those Souls in a peculiar Manner, to instruct, admonish, exhort and build them up in the Faith once delivered to the Saints. These were considered as a kind of spiritual Parents to the baptized, whether they were infants or at Man's Estate; and were expected to supply whatever spiritual Helps were wanting, either through the Death or Neglect of the natural Parents.

II. These have been retained in the Christian Church from the earliest Times, as the Reason for them was the same in all Ages. In our Church they are termed (by a proper and expressive Name) *Godfathers* and *Godmothers*. And it is appointed, "That there shall be for every Male Child to be baptized, two Godfathers, and one Godmother; and for every Female, one Godfather and two Godmothers."

III. But it is objected against these, 1. That there is no mention of Godfathers and Godmothers in Scripture, 2. That many undertake this, without ever considering what they undertake, or once seriously thinking how to perform it, And 3. That no serious Man would undertake it, because it is impossible to perform it.

IV. I Answer, First, it is undoubtedly true, Godfathers and Godmothers are not mentioned in Scripture. And therefore it cannot be said, They are absolutely necessary, or that Baptism cannot be administered without them. But yet it may be said they are highly expedient. For when they are prudently chosen, they may be of unspeakable Use to the Persons baptized, and a great Relief and Comfort to the Parents of them.

V. I Answer, Secondly, it is too true, that many undertake this solemn Office, without ever considering what they undertake; giddy, ignorant Persons (if not openly vicious) who never once seriously think how to perform it. But whose Fault is this? It is not the Fault of the Church, which carefully guards against this very Thing, by ordering, "That none but Communicants be admitted to be Godfathers or Godmothers." Now Communicants we may presume to be serious Persons, who will both consider and perform what they undertake. It is altogether the Fault of those foolish Parents, who will on any Account whatever, either desire or suffer those

to be Sponsors for their Children, that do not take care of their own Souls. It is these inconsiderate and cruel Men, who have no compassion for their own Flesh that deprive their Children of all the Benefits of this wise Institution, and bring a Scandal on the Institution itself, by their wicked Abuse of it.

VI. For, Thirdly, There is no Reason why any truly serious Man should scruple to undertake the Office. For if you suppose Godfathers and Godmothers undertake what is impossible to perform, you intirely mistake. And your Mistake lies here: You think they undertake what they do not. Do not you think, the Sponsors themselves undertake or promise That the Child shall “renounce the Devil and all his Works, constantly believe GOD’s holy Word, and obediently keep his Commandments?” Whereas, in Truth, they neither undertake nor promise any such Thing when they answer, “I renounce them all: This I stedfastly believe: I will,” (obediently keep GOD’s holy Will and Commandments.) They promise nothing at all; they engage for nothing: It is another person that promises all this. Whatever is then promised or undertaken, it is not by them, but by the Child. It is *his* Part, not *theirs*, So the Church tells you expressly; “This Infant must for *his* Part promise.” It is *he* promises in these Words, not *they*. So again; *This Child* hath promised—to renounce the Devil, to believe in GOD and to serve him.”

VII. What then is *your* Parts, who are Sponsors for him? This likewise is expressly told you. “It is *your* part to see that this Infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn Vow, Promise and Profession, *he* hath here made by you.—Ye shall call upon him to hear Sermons, and shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the ten Commandments, and all other Things which a Christian ought to know

“ know and believe to his Soul’s Health ; and that
“ this Child may be virtuously brought up, to lead
“ a Godly and a Christian Life.”

VIII. Can any Thing then be plainer, than what you do not, and what you do undertake ? You do not undertake, That he shall renounce the Devil and serve GOD : This the Baptized himself undertakes. You do undertake, To see that he be taught, what Things a Christian ought to know and believe. And what is there in this, which is impossible ? Which any serious Person may not perform ?

IX. If then you that are Parents, will be so wise and kind to your Children, as to wave every other Consideration, and to choose for their Sponsors those Persons alone who truly fear and serve GOD ; If some of you who love GOD, and love one another, agree to perform this Office of Love for each other’s Children ; And if all you who undertake it, perform it faithfully, with all the Wisdom and Power GOD hath given you : What a Foundation of Holiness and Happiness may be laid, even to your late Posterity ? Then it may justly be hoped, that not only you and your House, but also the Children which shall be born, shall serve the Lord.

Atblone, Aug. 6,

1732.



F I N I S.



































