

lation toward the child—godfathers and godmothers—are an added security, and a double guard about the young Christian. They recognize the organic law of Christianity, and “bear one another’s burdens,” that they may fulfil it. For neighbors and friends and Christian brethren they pledge themselves to care for the highest interests of their children. A brother’s child shall be their child also, to watch over, to instruct, to pray for. If father and mother live, and are blessed, the sponsors’ duty may, indeed be light. The natural parents do all that needs be done. In such case there is only a deeper interest in a child or youth, because “he is my godson,” or “she is my goddaughter.” But if natural parents fail, if natural parents die, or if they forget their duty, then the godfather and godmother are to stand, and have a right to stand—in a Christian parent’s place; to instruct, help, warn, and console.

When we look at this most beautiful and most Scriptural relation, how admirable it is to secure the very end and aim of making a Christian community one family. Suppose it carried out generally. Each young person in the community is bound, in the most sacred covenant, to some neighbors or friends, by a relation strictly and solely Christian. A’s children are bound to B and C’s, and B’s children to A and C, and C’s to A and B again. The whole community is tied together by these bonds of mutual love and help. A sacredly pledges himself to help B bring up his children “soberly, righteously, and godly.” He acquires a near and delicate and loving interest in his neighbor’s children. He watches them grow up as children, as youth, as young men and women. They are, in some sort, his. They are his godchildren. B pledges himself in the same way for A’s children. The two families are so bound together at the font in loving help and counsel, in their most sacred interests.

“They bear one another’s burdens,”—the most solemn and most awful burdens of life. Surely they “fulfil the law of Christ;” Surely they might well wonder that any one, calling himself Christian, but forgetting the spirit in slavery to the letter, should cavil with the tie that binds them, or the relationship in which they stand, and call their loving, mutual help “unscriptural,” because he cannot find the word “sponsor” in his Testament.

Sponsorship is the very crystallizing of that spirit of Christianity which makes men “all one in Christ Jesus.” It seeks to bind the smaller families into the one great family. It would make all grown-up people responsible for the salvation of all young people. It would lay the solemn duty of watching over the young on every grown man and woman in the neighborhood or community. Even childless men and women it would embrace in its relation, and give to the desolate the love of little children. The wisdom of the Church Catholic, grasping the very essence of Scripture, and glowing with its spirit, established sponsorship as a Christian protest against selfishness and narrowness,—as a relation which Christianity alone could have devised, so wise, so farseeing, so loving.

This is, indeed, the ideal of the relation. But, alas! the unfaithfulness of Christians leaves it too often a mere ideal. Sponsors assume responsibilities carelessly. They forget them when assumed. They leave their children in the Lord uncared for. So they shame the wisdom of the Christian past, and disgrace the Church of Christ. But, worse still, they profane a sacrament, and lie unto God.

The pledges of a sponsor are voluntary. One may take them or leave them. They are solemn pledges. They should be taken solemnly and with a clear conscience. And “Pay thy vows” should be written on the heart and memory of every man and woman who has carried a child to the font, and is pledged before God and His Church to see Christ’s little ones brought up for Christ.

We have not written to defend sponsorship. We have rather written to explain its use. But, after all, its living use is its quite sufficient defence. Grasping the very essence of the Master’s teaching, the Church Catholic has, from the first made this loving provision for the little ones. Let us carry it out in His Spirit, and make it real, as “our mother” means it.—(From “Copy” Right Rev. Hugh Miller Thompson.

### CONTEMPORARY CHURCH OPINION.

The *Church Times*, in an able article on “The question of Reunion,” says:—

Though the mere fact that the Roman Church does continue to hold together, and to contain nearly half of Christendom, is a strong ground for thinking that the good within her far exceeds the evil, yet the evil is at this moment so powerful and hurtful that it is nothing short of mere lunacy to dream of embracing it, as it must be embraced by any act of reunion now. First, the Roman Church has broken down universally and scandalously as a moral teacher. We can see for ourselves how it practically abets robbery and murder in Ireland, and how the Anglo-Roman hierarchy, by its ominous silence, has become the virtual accomplice of its Irish colleagues, probably fearing to offend the Irish element which constitutes the large majority of the Roman body in England. And, as we have stated before, the Roman Catholics, in all countries where there is a Protestant factor in the population large enough to permit practical comparison, commit much more than their ratio of criminal offences; while in places where they have virtual monopoly, so far as any Protestant competition is concerned, the spread of infidelity is wide and rancorous, and the small minority of practising believers are awamped in a sea of unbelief or indifference; while heavy charges of immorality are made against the clergy. Further, while the Church of England has been steadily reforming itself during the last half-century, the Roman Church has, contrariwise, been going as steadily backward in the same period, chiefly from the effects of the disastrous pontificate of Pius IX., the most conspicuous instance in Church history of how much more evil a merely ignorant and stupid man can do in high ecclesiastical place than a positively bad one. The worst doctrinal and practical errors that were partly abated under the stress of the Reformation and partly disused in the influx of more liberal thought which followed the drastic lessons of the French Revolution, have been revived and even exaggerated, with the most baneful results to theology, to piety, and to practical morality. And whereas in the darkest days of former times, there was always a respectable minority at least of eminent men who exposed abuses and called for reforms; now contrariwise, a stray Micaiah here and there is all that can be found, and so far from there being any thought of amendment, the Vatican decrees declare that the Roman Church has nothing to amend or repent of, that it is, and always has been, infallible and irreformable.

Our English Church contemporaries all refer in terms of deserved reprobation to the publicity given to the details of a recent scandalous cause celebre.—The *Family Churchman* says:—

Divorce, or the rending asunder of what God hath joined together, is unapproved by Holy Writ and contrary to the unchangeable teaching of Christ’s Church. The records of the Divorce Court are therefore doubly painful to us, and the shameful, horrible tale which last week was permitted to poison the wells of English morality gives an odious illustration of the evils which the divorce law is bringing upon us as a nation. Mrs. Crawford sinned directly with the purpose of procuring a divorce; her

partner in guilt may probably have been less seducer than seduced; and in the end we have a public confession, more odious and revolting than any conceivable confession to a priest, the effect of which must be to lower the moral tone of the whole country.

An article in *Church Bells*, bearing the well-known initials “G. V.” says:—

The state of morals in this country as now laid bare calls for a very distinct reformation of manners amongst all grades, classes, and masses; and unless something be done to remedy modern degradation it will be no wonder if revolution soon follow, because society has never demoralized long without a social upheaving as the result. The Church has the matter at her feet. The Church alone can touch the frightful state to which society has been brought. And to this end she must do as before. She must lead the people to prayer and to Holy Communion. She must, as her Master taught her, preach. She must, as of old, catechise. She must arouse herself in such a way as to utilize Sunday Schools for teaching and inculcating great and important principles. Systematic teaching from graduated books is wanted in the Sunday Schools. Preparation for Confirmation should occupy a year before the administration of that sacred and useful rite.

In a word, the Church is the true society for the reformation of manners, and all she needs to do is to act with life, energy, humility, and prayerful zeal, day by day. It will be observed in the foregoing quotation, how, after all, the effort amounted to just this, viz., frequent services and Holy Communion. These are now wanted everywhere. Why should the Church delay? Why not put forth her force and stem the torrent of infidelity and the foul stream of filth and immorality which floods Great Britain? It seems as if God were speaking to the Church of the Anglican Communion very clearly just now, nor is there much doubt as to what He says to her. Let it be remembered only that the Church is now the development of the Patriarchal and Jewish Churches, and the words are clear enough which should startle the Church of England into an activity and devotedness that should bring health and blessedness again to the people, and which command her to “go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord: the plague is begun.”

The *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette* points out that:

The hideous revelations in the London Divorce Court last week constitute a painful vindication of the Psalmist when he associates atheism with immorality. They also illustrate the hypocrisy that underlies the republican tendencies of the age. The cry of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality is found to be compatible with the infliction of the most cruel wrongs on the weakest members of society. It is a significant fact that amongst our public men at the present day the loosest morals and least regard for the sanctity of the marriage tie and domestic life are to be found amongst those who profess atheistical opinions. It is also to be noted that these opinions are for the most part combined with advanced Republican sentiments.

—EVERY condition has its trials, and with these its own supports, its own promises, its own rewards. Blessed be that overruling Wisdom that assigns to each of us our own place? Let our part be to learn what that place is by direct counsel from God. When we thus acknowledge him in all our ways we may expect his blessing in one path and his guidance to the end; whereas, when we devise and struggle on without God, not to say against him, it is but one succession of failure upon failure.