

Gospel Second, the invitation which concludes the first form of warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion, 'Because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means (i.e., confession to God, repentance and restitution) cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.' The third passage I have already quoted from the order for the visitation of the sick, wherein the Pastor is directed to move the sick person to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, 'that if he seems truly penitent he may have the consolation of hearing from his Pastor's lips before he dies that God of His great mercy in Jesus Christ is ready to pardon him.'

"The first of these passages enjoining the confession of sins publicly before the congregation gives no countenance whatever to the practice of the confessional, and as to the other two, it is sufficient to point out that they plainly, in their honest interpretation, have reference solely to the ordinary pastoral intercourse of the Clergyman with his people. This intercourse should be of the most sacred character, dealing with the spiritual condition of those entrusted to his care, as well the sick as the whole, as need shall require and occasion shall be given. It is to be feared that we are not generally faithful enough to our duty and our opportunities in this respect; a good deal of plain speaking, admonition, remonstrance, searching into the state of the heart, is, no doubt, necessary on the Pastor's part, if he would lead his people individually to repentance and the seeking of God's pardoning mercy; but this is a very different thing from what some have attempted to introduce into our system as habitual confession to the Priest."