

Word of God and are justly regarded by Protestants as the reproach of the Church of Rome.

“The instructions given in our Prayer Book to the Clergy as to receiving voluntary confessions, are very slight. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in his primary charge as Bishop of London, remarks, ‘The silence of the Church of England formularies as compared with the fulness of the Church of Rome in treating of systematic confession, is itself, to my mind, an irrefragable argument to show that the mind of our Church is quite against the practice.’

“The progress of our Reformers’ views on this subject may be traced by comparing the Second Prayer Book of King Edward Sixth, in 1552, with the First Book of 1549. The Rubric in the visitation for the sick in the first book stood thus:

“ ‘Here shall the sick person make a special confession, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession the Priest shall absolve him after this form; and the same form of absolution shall be used in all private confessions.’ In the second book this last clause, ‘the same form of absolution shall be used in all private confessions,’ was expunged; thus clearly taking away the authority for using a form of private confession. Again, at this same revision, in the Communion office, the passage was struck out from the address to the Communicants, ‘Requiring such as shall be satisfied with the general confession not to be offended with them that do use to their further satisfying the auricular and secret confession to the Priest.’ Here is another unmistakable indication of the intention of our Reformers to abolish private confession from the Church system.

“The three passages in the Book of Common Prayer which bear upon this subject are: First, the exhortation which calls upon us to confess our manifold sins and wickedness, with a humble, lowly, penitent and obedient heart, and that, not only at all times in humble acknowledgment before God, but most chiefly in our daily assembling together in public, before we receive comfort from hearing the declaration, which the Minister is authorised to pronounce, of God’s willingness to pardon and absolve all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His Holy