**“Spiritual Impotence of Civil Government” American Sentinel 14, 14.**

E. J. Waggoner

**“Present Truth.” (London, England.)**

A motion was lately made in the House of Lords that a report be provided showing the number of cases in which confessional boxes have been introduced into the Church of England. Lord Salisbury, while agreeing to the request, pointed out that whatever steps were taken by the government, they were powerless to deal with any spiritual evil. He said:- {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 211.1}

“If there are any means of repressing or discouraging the practice of habitual confession, they would deserve all our consideration. I fear, however, that you are undertaking an effort to *coerce consciences*, which greater powers have failed to effect, and that you are more likely to increase the disease than to stop it. but allow me to point out that this return will not tell you one hundredth part of the evil. {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 211.2}

“If there is to be confession, which I most earnestly deprecate, I would rather have the open box in the church than the secret interview in the vestry. It is between these two that you have to choose, and my fear is, in the first place, that you will not get an accurate return of the boxes there are, because everybody who returns the existence of a box returns a confession that he has broken the law. You will not get people to do that; they will simply put your circular in the fire. And beyond that you will be giving a vicious stimulus to a certain mistaken spirit of religious courage which will most undoubtedly, and I think unfortunately, induce a more extended practice of the evil which you so justly deprecate. {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 211.3}

“I greatly fear that if men wish to confess to men or-perhaps I should put it more accurately-if women wish to confess to men, all the power this Parliament possesses will not avail seriously to arrest the process. The power of arresting it lies with the organization over which the right reverend prelates preside. It is for them to teach their flocks-they cannot do it too earnestly and too often-the evils which may attend habitual and systematic secret confession. But let us be careful lest we hinder their work, and prevent them from doing that which it is their proper charge to carry out, by bringing in the arm of the flesh which never yet beat down a religious error, and has often made the evil worse than before.” {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 212.1}

Lord Salisbury recognizes that it is the work of the church to attend to matters of religion, and that the “arm of flesh” never yet mended matters. If the church is corrupt and powerless for good, it is only by reason of its unlawful connection with the world, and the first step in reform must be a separation from this entangling and corrupting alliance. If the church neglects its work, the State cannot take it up. It should not be necessary for a statesman to remind the church of this truth. {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 212.2}

A merely political disestablishment will not suffice to correct the evil. The forbidden connection with the State arises out of a lack of faith in the power of the Word, and a sinful yielding to worldly influences. The friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4), and the duty of every believer in the church is to repent and do the first works, not trusting in the arm of flesh, but returning to his first love. Revelation 2:4, 5. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, and the church which loyally recognizes its obligation to its Lord will, forsaking all other, cleave only to him, content with the riches and the power which he bestows. {AMS April 6, 1899, p. 212.3}

**“A Frank Admission” American Sentinel 14, 17.**

E. J. Waggoner

**“Present Truth.” (London, Eng.)**

A gentleman who has recently visited Rome writes ad follows in the *Christian World:*- {AMS April 27, 1899, p. 263.1}

Rome would, if she had the power, still force her creeds by fire and faggot. I was talking ore, day while in Rome with a prelate of the Church on the question of heresy. “As a matter of fact,” I said to him, “I could not believe many of your doctrines. They are to me simply unbelievable.” “Ah, well,” he replied, “we distinguish in cases of heresy.” “In what way?” I asked. “Well,” he said, “there are two kinds of heresy-there is passive heresy and active heresy. Passive heresy is simply to doubt, but active heresy is to propagate the doubt. In the former case the Church is very merciful.” “But,” I asked, “suppose you as a Church had supreme power to-day as you once had, and suppose I felt it my duty to openly oppose certain articles of your faith. What would the Church do?” “*It would stop at nothing to stamp out the heresy*,” was his reply. {AMS April 27, 1899, p. 263.2}

There is nothing to be surprised at in this, but there is danger that men will regard Rome as having a monopoly of the persecuting spirit. Persecution began with Cain. It was seen in Ishmael, and it will appear in everyone who is not born of the Spirit. As then, “he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even suit is now.” People may think that they will never persecute, but they certainly will unless they be born of the Spirit. Those who do not gather with Christ scatter abroad, and this is persecution. There is no such thing as “passive heresy” against the false doctrines of Rome. {AMS April 27, 1899, p. 263.3}