

# Religious Liberty and the Eternal Gospel



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John Huss's Dilemma  
Authority, Hierarchy, and Infallibility

## 2 Corinthians 3:17

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Where the spirit of Satan is, there is persecution.

When the church exhibits a spirit of coercion, and religious liberty is restricted, we can be certain that **the Spirit of the Lord is absent, and the spirit of Satan is in control of the church.**

# Great Controversy, xi

In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end as in all preceding ages. That which has been, will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. Satan's deceptions will be more subtle, his assaults more determined. If it were possible, he would lead astray the elect. Mark 13:22, R.V.

# Great Controversy, 100

Though he [John Huss] was not prepared, even yet, to accept all the reforms advocated by Wycliffe, he saw more clearly the true character of the papacy, and with greater zeal denounced the pride, the ambition, and the corruption of the hierarchy.

# Great Controversy, 445

When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.

# Matthew 23:8

(Jesus' simple statement on hierarchy)

“One is your Teacher, the Christ,  
and **you are all brethren.**”

# Great Controversy, 102

(Quoting from J.A. Wylie's *The History of Protestantism*)

“The mind of Huss, at this stage of his career, would seem to have been the scene of a painful conflict. Although the church was seeking to overwhelm him by her thunderbolts, he had not renounced her authority. The Roman Church was still to him the spouse of Christ, and the pope was the representative and vicar of God.

# Great Controversy, 102

What Huss was warring against was **the abuse of authority**, not **the principle itself**. This brought on a terrible conflict between the convictions of his understanding and the claims of his conscience. **If the authority was just and infallible, as he believed it to be, how came it that he felt compelled to disobey it?**

# Luke 4:5-7

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”

# Matthew 21:23

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

# Luke 22:24-26

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

<sup>25</sup>And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ <sup>26</sup>**But not so among you;** on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

# Luke 4:31, 32

Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths.  
<sup>32</sup>And they were astonished at His teaching, for **His word was with authority.**

# Luke 9:1, 2

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority **over all demons, and to cure diseases.** <sup>2</sup>He sent them **to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.**

# Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>**teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

# John 7:17; 12:47

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

<sup>47</sup> And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

# John 12:48, 49

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. <sup>49</sup>For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

# Great Controversy, 102

If the authority was just and infallible, as he believed it to be, how came it that he felt compelled to disobey it? To obey, he saw, was to sin; but why should obedience to an infallible church lead to such an issue? **This was the problem he could not solve; this was the doubt that tortured him hour by hour.**

# Ecclesiastical Empire, 583

A. T. Jones

The first and spontaneous impulse in every human soul is to dodge and shelter himself behind anything or anybody in the world, and seek to clear himself by involving another. And if through all he can not fully escape, yet when he does come into it, it is with the least possible degree of blame upon himself.

# Ecclesiastical Empire, 583

It is the spirit that holds tenaciously that *our self* is the last one that can possibly be wrong or do wrong; and even when we have done wrong, argues, “We would never have done it had it not been for somebody or something else,” and are therefore not really to blame, and so are right anyhow.

# Ecclesiastical Empire, 583

Or it will excuse self from wrong, because somebody else does or has done the same thing or worse. **It is the very essence of the claim of infallibility.**”

The mind of Satan — the spirit of self-exaltation —  
is the root of persecution and the enemy of  
religious liberty.

# Great Controversy, 102

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# Great Controversy, 102

The nearest approximation to a solution which he was able to make was that it had happened again, as once before in the days of the Savior, that the priests of the church had become wicked persons and were using their lawful authority for unlawful ends.

# Great Controversy, 102

This led him to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that **God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide.**"

[J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, b. 3, ch. 2]

# The History of Protestantism

This was to adopt **the fundamental principle of Protestantism**, and to preach a revolution which Huss himself would have recoiled from, had he been able at that hour to see the length to which it would lead him. The axe which he had grasped was destined to lay low **the principle of human supremacy in matters of conscience**,

# The History of Protestantism

but the fetters yet on his arm did not permit him to deliver such blows as would be dealt by the champions who were to follow him, and to whom was reserved the honor of extirpating that bitter root which had yielded its fruits in the corruption of the Church and the slavery of society.

[J. A. Wylie, b. 3, ch. 2]

# Signs of the Times, 1/31/1900

Christ was vehemently accused by men holding the highest offices in the church, men whose fathers He had delivered from Egyptian bondage. **The people chosen by God to be the light of the world stood under the black banner of Satan, and reviled and oppressed their long-expected Messiah. Thus they brought their ruin upon themselves. . . .**

# Signs of the Times, 1/31/1900

Transactions such as this have taken place, and will again be enacted. The tide of popular feeling is always fickle. The **hosannas of today** may be followed by the “Crucify him” of tomorrow. In this our day prejudice is deepening and widening. In their **religious bigotry** men will resist all evidence and refuse all light.

# Desire of Ages, 668

We are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. **The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else.** If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. . . .

# Desire of Ages, 668

Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.

# Desire of Ages, 668

Whatever was given to Christ – the “all things” to supply the need of fallen men – was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And “whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” [I John 3:22]