

# WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

I Cor 1:1, 9:1-2, 15:9-10; II Cor 1:1

## I. PAUL'S AUDACITY: "CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE"

- A. "Apostolic" authority, self-assigned, self-anointed—working out of Damascus Road vision, somewhat akin to Moses' call and successful mission as well as Jesus speaking with "authority," not as scribes
  - 1. Yet Jesus ordained disciples to be apostles—granting them (Peter especially) *exousian*
  - 2. Inasmuch as Paul was not in line of Christ-ordained apostles/bishops how could he make such claims?
- B. Antioch church ordained him, along with Barnabas, to undertake first missionary journey—valid ordination if not done by Jesus's original apostles?
- C. Self-evident theological gifts: scholarship, insights, Gospel message of Christ the Messiah
- D. Zeal apparent, persuasive, evidence of Spirit's presence?

## II. PROBLEMATIC HISTORICAL RECORD of self-anointed prophets & "apostles" encourages rightful suspicions re their claims

- 1. Early Church: Marcion, Montanus
- 2. Medieval Church: wandering preachers urging crusades
- 3. Reformation: Zwaikou prophets challenging Luther
- 4. American: tapestry of "spirit-led" preachers
  - a. Mother Ann & Shakers
  - b. Joseph Smith & Mormons
  - c. Ellen White & Seventh Day Adventists

## III. HUMAN NATURE NEEDS LEADERS (Aristotle says): inevitably Political/Social & structured systems

- A. Three basic types of political systems
  - 1. Monarchy, good when Louis IX reigns—but its abuse, tyranny, evident in revolutionary progeny
  - 2. Aristocracy, good when Venice flourished—but its abuse evident in Sparta
  - 3. Constitutional/Republican good when U.S. federal system balanced—but abuse evident in Greek city-states' failures as well as today's American "democracy"
- B. Historical record favors "mixed" or "constitutional" forms for justice & longevity

## IV. CHURCHES INEVITABLY SETTLE INTO ONE OF ARISTOTLE'S CATEGORIES

- A. Monarchical, granting final authority to one person
  - 1. Roman Catholic: Pope Ultimate (e.g. Leo I; Gregory I; Gregory VII; Pius IX clarifies papal infallibility)
    - a. "Apostolic" Church from Peter on.
    - b. "Catholic" inasmuch as world-wide
  - 2. Eastern Orthodox tendency to Caesaro-Papism (e.g. Justinian; Russian Tsars)
  - 3. Protestant "Magisterial" Reformers—kings select & decree; 30 Years War consequence
    - a. Lutheran/Catholic/Reformed states in Germany
    - b. Anglican in England
  - 4. American Independents (John Humphrey Noyes at Oneida; Mary Baker Eddy & Christian Science; Aimee Semple McPherson & Foursquare; Oral Roberts & ORU; Robert Schuller & Crystal Cathedral/Hour of Power; scores of lesser messianic types establishing monarchical rule
- B. Aristocratic, relying on synods, councils, general assemblies
  - 1. Dutch Reformed, as evident at Synod of Dort (1619)
  - 2. Scottish/English Presbyterian (dissenting from Anglicanism)
  - 3. Puritans in New England
  - 4. Apostles leading Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- C. Constitutional/Republican, mixed, overlapping jurisdictions—democratic tendencies
  - 1. Methodists in America give much power to bishops, but have district superintendents, general assemblies
  - 2. Congregationalists in England & America grant autonomy to each congregation
    - 1. United Church of Christ
    - 2. Southern Baptist Convention

**In light of the incredible fragmentation, disagreements, animosities within the Christian world, who's in charge? To whom should we turn? Whom should we obey?**

**Ought independent, non-denominational congregations (such as CFC) be accountable to anyone else?**