

# NEITHER SIGNS nor *SOPHIA* but the CROSS

## 1 Cor 1:18-2:5

### I. SIGNS for JEWS: POWER on DISPLAY

- A. Messiah forcefully restoring Israel to ancient glory
- B. Jesus' signs (miracles) disregarded since his Kingdom was of truth and righteousness
- C. Lust for **power** drives many (N.B. LBJ biographer, Robert Caro, includes "power" in title of each volume: *The Path to Power* et al.) and explains much of human history
  - 1. Augustine, in *City of God*, condemns *libido dominandi* (lust for power) as main mark of earthly city
  - 2. Renaissance features revival of paganism and marks a repudiation of the Christian tradition: Machiavelli's *Prince* ("handbook of despots") implemented by Henry VIII & Thomas Cromwell; Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* influences contract theory of government
  - 3. Marx calls for philosophers to cease trying to understand reality in order to change it—leads to slaughters evident in *The Black Box of Communism*.
  - 4. Nietzsche exalts *The Will to Power*
  - 5. Foucault & Postmodernism obsessed with power—whether in literature or politics or religion, all results of power struggles
- D. Today's Church troubled by factions seeking to "do good" by getting control of her structures
  - 1. "Social Gospel" adopts much of Progressive politics—reforms designed to impose righteousness (e.g. temperance; socialism; end of all wars; abolition of poverty)
  - 2. Liberation Theology follows Marx's prescription re changing the world—Black Liberation; radical feminists & Women's Liberation; activist homosexuals & Rainbow Mafia

### II. *SOPHIA* for GREEKS: special, "insider" kind of knowledge

- A. Cosmologists/Scientists/Metaphysicians endeavor to understand nature in "objective" ways
  - 1. Pre-Socratic Greeks: Thales; Empedocles; Heraclitus; Pythagoras; Democritus *et al.*
  - 2. Contemporary exemplars:
    - a. Atheists: Stephen Hocking, Richard Dawkins, *et al*
    - b. Theists: Creation Research Institute; "Intelligent Design" scholars such as William Dembski; theistic/creationist evolutionists such as Francis Collins and Biologos
- B. Sophists probe human nature, especially how to "get on with" endeavors, most notably getting rich
  - 1. Fourth century teachers:
    - a. Protagoras: "man is the measure of all things" & Humanism
    - b. Thrasymachus: "might makes right" & "real politics"
  - 2. Contemporary exemplars:
    - a. Secular: John Dewey & education; John Rawls & politics; Peter Singer & ethics
    - b. Religious: Prosperity Gospel; para-church movements such as Basic Youth Conflicts & Moral Majority
- C. Gnostics (incipient in 1st century, pervasive in 2d) make Knowledge primary
  - 1. Schools examined in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* show rivalry with Christianity
  - 2. Current currents of gnosticism everywhere evident in week-end seminars, New Age books & films such as *The Da Vinci Code*

### III. BUT: THE CROSS!

- A. Historical event: *Kerygma* declares the Crucifixion took place in space & time; God's Son actually died
- B. Enduring Truth be explained: *Didache*
  - 1. God IS Love—Jn 3:16
  - 2. Man has sinned and needs redemption—Romans 3:21-26
  - 3. Salvation extended through Cross—I Cor 2:2
  - 4. Consequently (I Cor 1:30): Christ crucified becomes for us Wisdom; Righteousness; Sanctification; Redemption
- C. Ultimate Symbol