



# ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 6

## ROMANS Part 142

Chapter 16:8-10

### Ampliatos, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles



**Greet Ampliatos, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, attested in Christ.**

**P**aul forgets no one, so neither will I. Even though Paul was a great apostle and a man who, you could say, changed the course of history, he never got too grand in his own estimation (that is, he never got

too titanic for his own tunic) to forget the common yet chosen people who made up the body of Christ. This is what humility will do for you. This is what the truth of “God chooses us, we don’t choose Him” will do for you. This is the opposite of the religious spirit which seeks to build a ruling class that then lords it over others whom it considers to be lesser beings. Look at any religion, ancient or modern, and you will see a ruling/priestly class that lusts for power and lives to lord that power over other people—underlings.

The Catholic church, of course, is the best example of this sickness, with its ruling class decorated like peacocks, pontificating from raised platforms, living in isolation in their gilded/protected palaces, refusing to over-mingle with commoners. The only reason they come out is to be adored.

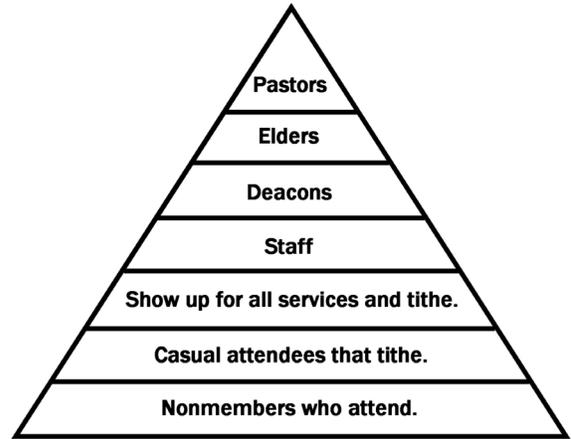
No sector of the Christian religion is immune to this. It is the priestly/pastor caste vs. the people and it infects all manner of religious organizations, both East and West. As far as castes go, this is most obviously witnessed in the Hindu religion, which is famous for high-end snobbery and for considering its lowest rung, the *Pariah* (“untouchables”), to be practically sub-human. Here is a chart of the Hindu caste system:



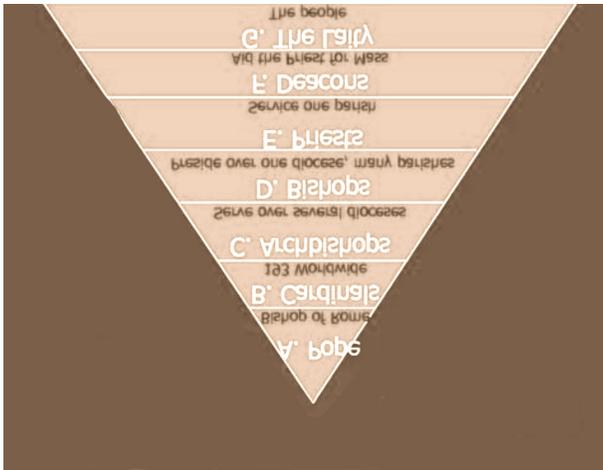
Here is the Catholic caste system.



### The Institutional Church Caste System



If the Catholic church exercised anything close to the spirit and service of Christ, here is how the chart would look—



Oops. The Catholic system is only 180 degrees out-of-phase.

### NOMINAL PROTESTANT HIERARCHY

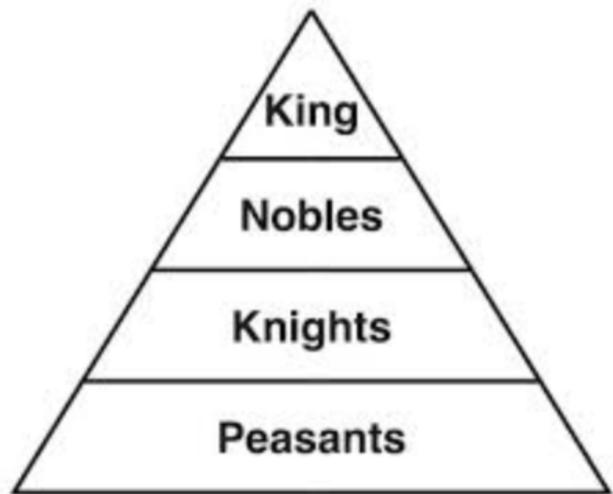
Do you imagine that the “cleaned up” hierarchy of modern-day Christian organizations avoids such a system? Well, have a look (opposite column; top).

It’s just not called a caste system or a hierarchy. It’s simply known as, “We are better and smarter than you because we were formally educated and grasp the fine points of delivering effective speeches (sometimes known as “sermons”), growing church membership, and squeezing the most money from the most people using obsolete Israelite laws. You would think, from this chart, that “Non-members who attend” would be the

lowest of the low of the caste, for these are those who attend church only for Christmas and Easter, and they never give money. These are the dregs of the whitewashed cup. But the chart could go lower if it were honest, to include those who never attend church at all—otherwise known to the Christians religion as “unbelievers who are going to hell.” Now there’s a caste system for you. *There’s* a bottom rung to beat all bottom rungs.

These religious caste systems are not unlike the heathen variety, speaking now of the Feudal system common in Europe beginning around 900 A.D. Here is a chart illustrating the pecking order of Feudalism—

### European Feudal System



### REVERSE HIERARCHY

I am not saying that there are not different roles in the body of Christ. I am not saying that some in the body of Christ are not greater than others—as far as roles and duties

go. I do believe that all of us would consider Paul to be the greatest member of the body of Christ, in that he was the first member, he heard directly from Jesus Christ, he saw and spoke to Jesus Christ, and he suffered the most for the cause. But there is one important aspect of this that should not escape us. In a true spiritual system, the greater serves the lesser. The greater becomes the slave of all. Do you think this is the way in any of the systems among the leadership castes in the charts published here? Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:15-25—

If the foot should be saying, “Seeing that I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” not for this is it not of the body. And if the ear should be saying, “Seeing that I am not an eye, I am not of the body” not for this is it not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where the scent?

Yet now God placed the members, each one of them, in the body according as He wills. Now if it were all one member, where were the body? Yet now there are, indeed, many members, yet one body.

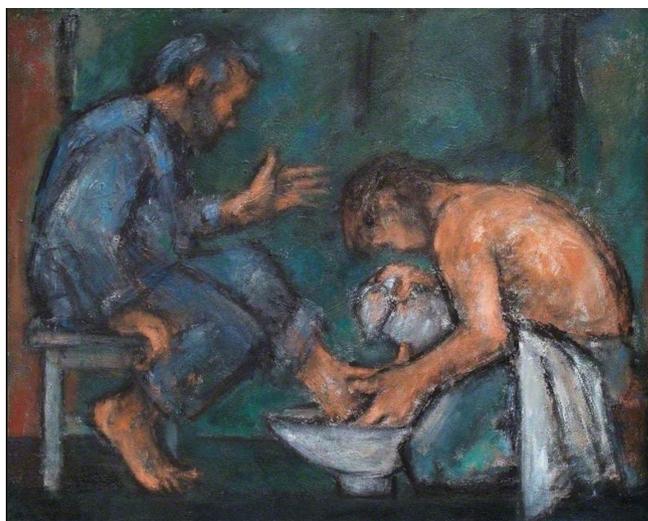
Yet the eye can not say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” or, again, the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” Nay, much rather, those members of the body supposed to be inherently weaker are necessary, and which we suppose to be a more dishonored part of the body, *these we are investing with more exceeding honor*, and our indecent members have more exceeding respectability. Now our respectable members have no need, but God blends the body together, giving to that which is deficient more exceeding honor, that there may be no schism in the body, but the members may be mutually solicitous for one another.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this spirit that inhabits a spirit-filled Being, for He came, not to lord it over others, but to die for these others. He not only mingled with the commoners, He voluntarily suffered and died for them. For His disciples, He chose fishermen and tax-collectors. And yet who washes the feet of whom? Jesus girds himself with a towel and washes the feet of His working-class learners. This lesson cannot be seen or heard enough. I cannot write about it too often. Concerning this marvel, John writes in John 13:12-17—

When, then, He washes their feet, and took His garments and leans back again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You are shouting to Me ‘Teacher!’ and ‘Lord!’ and you are saying ideally, for I am. If, then, I, the Lord and the Teacher, wash your feet, you also ought to be washing one another’s feet. For an example have I given you, that, according as I do to you,

you also may be doing. “Verily, verily, I am saying to you, A slave is not greater than his lord, neither is an apostle greater than He Who sends him. If you are aware of these things, happy are you if you should be doing them!”

Jesus Christ here acknowledges that some people are greater than others. “A slave is not greater than his lord,” He says. And, “neither is an apostle greater than He Who sends him.” Jesus must establish this fact in order for the shock of Him kneeling at the feet of His disciples to sink in. The Lord came to serve, not to lord. This cannot be appreciated if there is no Lord.



Thus, Paul, the greatest among us, becomes the least. He deflects his great power, distributing it all around. He deflects his great influence by recognizing these members of the Roman ecclesia who have influenced him to no insignificant degree. They are listed here, by name, because to Paul they are great. They are not only dear ones, but they are great. Paul has authority in the evangel—make no mistake—but he uses this authority with love, to acknowledge the importance of each member. The premier apostle flexes his apostolic muscles when needed—as with the Corinthians and the Galatians—but never without love. Never without considering those he serves to be, in many ways, better than himself. Philippians 2:2-3—

Fill my joy full, that you may be mutually disposed, having mutual love, joined in soul, being disposed to one thing—nothing according with faction, nor yet according with vainglory—but with humility, deeming one another superior to one’s self.

This is why I have looked forward for three years, to writing about these people here in the final chapter of Romans. It is why I have spent so much time on them. It is my joy to remind you that they were real people with real pains, sorrow, concerns and joys—just like us. It is important to me to honor these great ones, to not let them be forgotten, to not let them be overlooked or taken for granted. They are *us*.



### AMPLIATOS

The anonymity of this man is his most enduring feature. I can't find anything about him, positively, online. Some think that he was a member of Caesar's household which would be, in a way, even

better. It's even better than anonymity—in my humble opinion—to be a lowlife in the household of a raving Roman lunatic, namely, Nerō Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, lovingly referred to by we moderns simply as “Nero,” a guy who would intellectually oppose everything that Ampliatos did and thought, and who would respond to any query concerning the man with, “Who the hell is Ampliatos?,” but of whom the *actual* most important man in the world, namely, Paul of Tarsus, says “my beloved in the Lord.”

I will trade you ten “Who the hell is Ampliatos?”s by the Caesar of Rome for one “beloved in the Lord” from the apostle to the nations.



### URBANUS

Urbanus was “a fellow worker.” This guy didn't just sit there; he did stuff to help Paul. I'm not sure what he did; Paul withholds details about him. When we see Urbanus, we'll ask him.

A saint such as Urbanus, grasping Paul's message and mission, need not have risked his neck—as did Priscilla and Aquila—to be considered by Paul a fellow worker. He needn't have been an active teacher, writer or speaker on behalf of the evangel. Neither was it required that Urbanus travel the globe, sleep in a swamp, or get beaten by rods in Philippi. Knowing Paul, I am certain that he would

have considered someone “a fellow worker” who perhaps “merely” contributed financially to the cause, or went out of his or her way to lend Paul an encouraging word—or even someone who baked cookies for the home meetings that the apostle attended.

The Latin name “Urbanus” means “belonging to the urbs, or city.” This suggests that Urbanus gutted it out in the heart of Rome. (Names in Scripture mean something; they are not random; they quietly announce some underlying spiritual truth.) He was what we would call an urban guy. He lived in the heart of it all.

Well, just look at him. He is intensely interested in what Paul is doing. (Judging from those eyes, he's just as engrossed by our goings-on as well. He's one of our own.) I don't think that Urbanus is the retiring type. He's not cut out for the suburbs; it would be too relaxing for a man of his intensity. He doesn't want to miss anything.

After all, remember, Urbanus is one of Paul's fellow *workers*. I think he's doing more than baking cookies for the Bible studies. He may very well be helping Paul out financially, but I think that, in Paul's absence, he's taking the Roman ecclesia by the horns. I see him as the pastorly type; he's not just wishing you well, he's making *sure* that you're well. He's leveling out your driveway, fixing your roof, or helping your mother-in-law through the gout. And being a man of the city, he looks for every opportunity to share the evangel of the grace of God. He won't force it on anyone, but there are a lot of people in Rome at the vegetable markets and baths, and Urbanus is just the type of guy to spy out an opportunity.



### STACHYS

Here is a truly ignoble gentleman—Stachys. His name means “an ear of corn.” How utterly rural. If his name had meant, “an onion,” at least we could have considered him multi-layered or multidimensional. It makes

the dull and ordinary suburbanite Urbanus look like a dandy; a pretty-boy. But consider this—

What you are sowing is not being vivified if it should not be dying. And, what you are sowing, you are not sowing the body which shall come to be, but a naked kernel, perchance of wheat or some of the rest. Yet God is giving it a body according as He wills, and to each of the seeds its own body (1 Corinthians 15:36-38).

Stachys is not merely a single kernel, but an entire ear of resurrection fodder. He's the building block of life after death—and lots of it. He carries within his name, and thus within himself, the rescript of death, that he should be of the resurrection also—

But we have the rescript of death in ourselves, that we may be having no confidence in ourselves, but in God, Who rouses the dead, Who rescues us from a death of *such proportions*, and will be rescuing; on Whom we rely that He will still be rescuing also (2 Corinthians 1:9-10).

A death “of such proportions.” An entire ear of corn—this guy. Good old Stachys. Maybe not so much fun at a party (an onion would probably be funnier), but never underestimating or undervaluing the need for resurrection, which can only follow on the heels of being planted in the likeness of Christ's death. As such, he is beloved by Paul.



#### APELLES

Apelles was, according to Paul, “attested in Christ.” The root word in the word “attested” is “test.” This guy somehow went through the wringer. Satan somehow attacked Apelles in some terrible way, which tried his faith.

Maybe it was a sickness; maybe a divorce; maybe a business failure; maybe one of his kids renounced the faith. Who knows? One doesn't have to be shipwrecked en route to Rome in order to be tried for the faith. Satan wants to wreck us any way he can. We know that Satan can't do anything that God doesn't commission, but nevertheless the trial is real, the testing is real, and it's for our ultimate good. Satan doesn't know that, of course, so tough for him.

Every trial is real, though. It was that way for Apelles. That man is our brother. Trials test our faith, as they tested his. They wrack us.

I must remind you that the test is for us, not God. God doesn't conduct experiments; He doesn't need to find anything out. He does it for our sakes, to give us something to fight against and conquer. We will receive rewards for staying tough through severe trial. God has the rewards laid up, and now He puts us through the necessary hardship so that we can collect the reward. It's never pretty, but

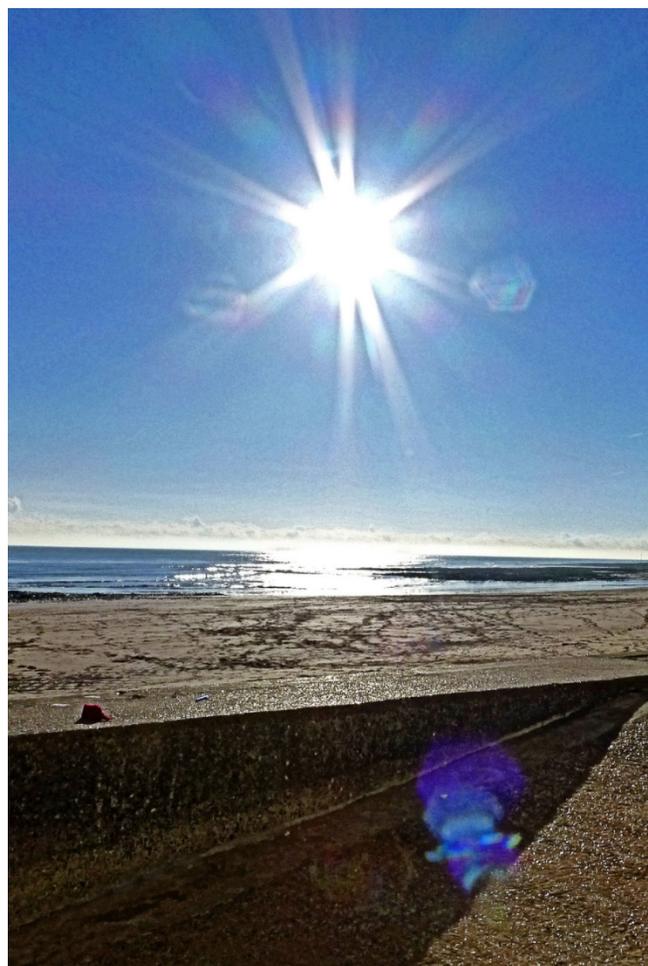
if you still have even a shred of faith remaining after trial, then congratulations. You're doing well.

The name “Apelles,” in the Greek, means “separation.” Wow. I might not have been too far off with 1) the poor guy went through a divorce, or 2) his kids renounced the faith. Or maybe 3) people who used to be his friends refused to talk to him anymore. This hurts very badly. I would know.

\* \* \*

Now that I think about it, I'm glad that these people are dead. They don't have to suffer any more. Good for them. They made the grave. They put in their time, and now they're done. All that awaits now is their resurrection to immortality.

I bet people will talk to them *then*—MZ



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