

## The Church—part 3

# Collectivism or Individualism—Which?

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We have seen that the hierarchical church/state system originated from the corrupt, anti-God Babylonian religion. The Tower of Babel, which was the first church, was made from clay bricks that were formed in molds for uniformity. The bricks represent the people who were being created into the image of the church/state. This is a form of collectivism. The hierarchical church/state system is detrimental to the spiritual wellbeing of the people, because it attempts to destroy their individualism by making them into nice uniform bricks with which to build their church.

Lord Acton (1834-1902) said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.” The hierarchical church/state system is loaded with corrupt men who seek to have power over God’s heritage, by drawing the people to themselves.

### **The Word that Changed Christianity**

Jesus said, “...I will build My church...” (Matthew 16:18). That is how the translators have translated the verse, but that is **not** what He said. The word translated as “church” in the New Testament is *Strong’s 1577*, ekklesia. It means “an assembly of the people called out.” In the *Septuagint* (Greek O.T.) it is often used for the Hebrew 6951, “*an assembly, a congregation, or company.*” Obviously Jesus did not mean that He was literally going to build a church building. He was speaking of the people who would make up His called out ones—His assembly of people.

*Webster’s* defines congregation as “a congregating or being congregated; a gathering of people or things; an assembly of people for religious worship.” To congregate is “to collect into a flock, gather a flock, to gather into a mass or crowd; collect; assemble.” God’s people are called sheep, and Jesus is “...the good shepherd...” (John 10:11). Three times Jesus told Peter, “...**Feed My sheep**” (John 21:15-17). Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know **My sheep**, and am known by **My own**” (John 10:14). The emphasis is “**My sheep.**” Jesus’ flock **does not belong to a church or to a man.** Jesus is the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4).

The word church in *Webster's* is a “*n.*[M.E. is chireche, chirche, kirke; A.S. cirice, cyrice; Late Greek kyriakon, house of the lord < kyriake (doma), lord’s (house) < Kyriakos, belong to the lord < kyrios, a master, ruler < kyros, supreme power].” It is defined as “a building set apart or consecrated for public worship.” The Greeks were worshipers of pagan gods, so the “lord’s house” is not a reference to the house of the Eternal God, but to a pagan temple.

The English, scholar William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536) was the first to translate the Bible into English drawing directly from Hebrew and Greek texts.<sup>1</sup> (The Catholic Church had claimed for a thousand years that the original language of the New Testament was Latin.) Tyndale’s translation of the Bible upset the Church of England and King Henry the VIII so much that Tyndale was “...tried, condemned, and, on Oct. 6, 1536, burned at the stake.”<sup>2</sup> Such was the power of the church that it could mean the death penalty for anyone caught with a Tyndale Bible in his possession, or even a Bible verse written in English on a scrap of paper.

Tyndale had refused to use the word “church” in his translation of the New Testament. Instead, he correctly translated ekklesia as “congregation,” thus drawing the ire of the Church of England, which had broken away from the Catholic Church in 1534.<sup>3</sup> Tyndale did use the word “church” twice in his translation of the New Testament. Acts 14:13 in old English reads, “Then lupiters Preste which dwelt before their cite brought oxe and garlondes vnto the **churche** porche and wolde have done sacrificise with the people.” Also, Acts 19:37 reads “robbers of churches.” In both cases Tyndale understood church as meaning a building, specifically a pagan temple, which is what the Tower of Babel was.

Why such a furor over the mere use of the word congregation instead of church? It was all about maintaining power and authority over the people. “Richard Bancroft, (baptized September 12, 1544, Farnworth, Lancashire, England—died November 2, 1610, London)” was the 74<sup>th</sup> archbishop of Canterbury (1604-10), and he was “notable for his stringent opposition to Puritanism, his defense of ecclesiastical hierarchy and tradition, and his efforts to ensure doctrinal and liturgical conformity among the clergy of the Church of England. He also played a major role in the preparation of the King James Version of the Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

Bancroft’s third rule of translation was, “The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the

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<sup>1</sup> *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, “William Tyndale,” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\_Tyndale

<sup>2</sup> Charles A. Anderson, “Tyndale, William”, in *Collier's Encyclopedia*, vol. 22, © Copyright 1967 by Cromwell Collier and MacMillan Inc., p. 564.

<sup>3</sup> *The Geneva Bible 1560 Edition*, introduction, © 2007 Hendrickson Publishers Inc. Peabody, MA

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard Bancroft](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard_Bancroft), viewed July 2, 2016.

word *church*, not to be translated as *congregation*....” Bancroft understood the power of the word “church.” One of the definitions of church is “the ecclesiastical government.” The definition of ecclesiastical is “the organization of the church, or the clergy.” Bancroft wanted to protect the hierarchical authority that the Anglican Church held over the people. *Webster’s* defines a hierarchy as: *1. a system of church government by priests or other clergy in graded ranks. 2. the group of officials in such a system. 3. a group of persons or things arranged in order of rank, grade, class, etc.*

By using the word “church” instead of “congregation,” the intent of the scriptures was completely changed. It gave the church hierarchy power over the people. Without people under its power the church hierarchy would cease to exist. Therefore the church was ruthless in maintaining its authority, even committing murder in order to do so. After all, without church buildings, cathedrals, colleges, and the **money** necessary to acquire and operate those things, where would the church be?

Bancroft’s fourth rule was that words “...be kept which had been commonly used by the most eminent fathers...” Hence such titles as bishop, pastor, and deacon were to be kept because they were used by the Anglican Church. Titles are important to a church hierarchy, because titles such as: Pope (father), Bishop, Reverend, Pastor General (Chief Shepherd), Chief Apostle, etc., show their religious authority to rule over the people.

What does the Living Word say about these impressive titles? “But be not you called Rabbi [4461, *my great one, my honorable sir*]: for **one is your Master** [2519, *a guide, a leader, teacher*], **even Christ**; and **you are all brethren**. And call no man your father upon the earth: for **one is your Father, which is in heaven**. Neither be you called masters [2519]: for **one is your Master** [2519], even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:8-11).

A church system has a central governing authority which exercises control over the farthest reaches of the church empire, much like a secular totalitarian government does. The ministers are trained in the proper (church instituted) formalities and doctrine at their church theological seminaries/Bible colleges. They are then sent out to the churches to instill the church doctrines into the minds of the people. This is how so-called “church unity,” which really isn’t unity, is brought about. True unity can only be brought about through God’s spirit.

A congregation is anathema to a church hierarchy, because it has local autonomy.

Therefore it is not chained to a headquarters church that it must obey. That is why the translators translated ekklesia as “church,” instead of congregation or assembly. It is all about authority, and men love to have authority and the money that it brings.

Ancient Israel was called “...the church [1577, *congregation, assembly*] in the wilderness...” (Acts 7:38), and they were a type of the New Testament congregation of God. In order to enter the Promised Land they had to follow God, because they did not know the way. When the people of God follow after a man or a church, instead of God, they are rejecting God, which is idolatry. Idolatry is spiritual blindness, because you have taken your eyes off of the True Light, and therefore you cannot see to follow God into the Kingdom of God.

### **The Danger of the Hierarchical Collectivist Church**

Does God really want His people to be controlled by a church that determines what they are to believe, and all that the members have to do is stay, pray, pay, and obey? In such a system you don’t even need a Bible, because the church/state provides you with all that you need to know. It is a form of religious socialism that destroys the incentive of the people “...**to work out [their] own salvation** with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). It makes them into lazy bricks.

The church at Laodicea is an example of this socialist mentality. “And to the church of Laodicea write...I know your works that you are neither cold or hot...So then, because you are lukewarm...I will spew you out of My mouth. Because **you say**, I am rich and increased in goods, and **have need of nothing**; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:14-17). These people have been rejected by the Eternal.

They have need of nothing because the socialist church/state supposedly provides for all of their needs. Thus they have become lukewarm, i.e. spiritually lazy. They are spiritually blind, because they are looking to the church instead of to God. **The church is not God!** “...God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Looking to the church instead of “...to the true Light...” (John 1:8) is idolatry. Idolatry is turning away from the Light, which puts them in a state of spiritual darkness, and they cannot see their own nakedness. Nakedness represents the “...sinful flesh...” (Romans 8:3). They are in a state of sin, but they cannot see it because of their idolatry of looking to the church.

**The church has become their salvation instead of the Eternal.** The Eternal God says,

“...Hear the word of the LORD all you of Judah **who enter in at these gates to worship the LORD...Amend your ways** and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. **Trust not in lying words**, saying, **The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD**” (Jeremiah 7:2-4). Trusting in the words of men who say, “Stay with the church, stay with the church, stay with the church” will not save anyone.

The people of Laodicea, like the Judeans, were told to repent. “I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:18, 19).

Jesus continued, “I stand at the door and knock: if any man **hear My voice, and open the door**, I will come in and sup with him, and he with Me” (v. 20). The door represents the mind. Jesus is telling His people to open the closed door of their minds, which has been shut tight by church doctrines, and you will eat of the Word of God together. A closed mind cannot advance in the knowledge of the Word of God. When you are in a hierarchical church you are in its prison compound, and you are fed its “junk” food which does not give you proper nourishment.

Statements such as, “Just stay with the church, because this is where God placed you” are nothing more than collectivist rubbish that are detrimental to one’s salvation. It is a trap. Salvation is not granted just because you belong to a certain church. The Bible does not teach collectivist salvation.

### **Individual Salvation**

Salvation requires effort on the part of each individual. “Know you not that they which run in a race run all, but **one receives the prize?** So run, **that you may obtain** [2638, *to seize, to take possession of*]. And every man that strives [75, *a combatant, to fight*] for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore run, not as uncertainty; **so fight I**, not as one who beats the air: but I keep my body, and bring it into subjection...lest I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

God’s people, “...as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). Man makes bricks, but God created stones. Each stone is different from every other stone, just as each human

being is different from every other human being.

The construction of the spiritual house that God is building begins at the altar. “And if you will make an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn [1496, *cut stones*] stones: **for if you lift up your tool upon it, you have polluted** [2490, *to profane, defile*] **it**” (Exodus 20:25). The stones represent the people whose sins are covered by the blood of the sacrifice. If those stones are shaped by man, then they have become defiled and are unacceptable to God.

The stones must be cut and shaped by the Almighty. The Hebrew word used for “tool” is *Strong’s* 2719, which is most often translated as a “sword.” God uses “...the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**” (Ephesians 6:17), to shape His people into His image. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a **mirror** the glory of the Lord, are changed [3339, *to change into another form*] into the same image of the Lord the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). The mirror is the Word of God.

“For if any be a hearer of the **word, and not a doer**, he is like a man beholding his natural [1078, *birth, nativity*] face **in a mirror**: for he beholds himself, and **goes his way**, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was” (James 1:23, 24). He sees his carnal human nature in the mirror of the word, but he makes no effort to overcome it. “But whoso looks [3879, *to look intently, to penetrate*] into the perfect [5046, *of higher excellence and efficiency*] law of **liberty**, and continues therein, he not being a forgetful hearer, but **a doer of the work**, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (v. 25).

Solomon’s temple is a type of the spiritual house that God is building in heaven. “And the house, when it was in the building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought [4550, *a quarry, a departure, a journey*] there: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building” (1 Kings 6:7).

The earth is the quarry where we begin our journey to the Kingdom of God. Our journey is our life of overcoming. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome [3528, *subdue, conquer, prevail*] evil with good” (Romans 12:21). You do not gain the victory by just “believing on the name of Jesus.” Jesus did not die just so you could continue sinning. “You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe and tremble. But will you know, O vain [2756, *empty, fruitless, false*] man, **that faith without works is dead?**” (James 2:19, 20).

Overcoming the carnal nature is a growth process that requires each one of us to work. It is a lifelong process, and it is not easy. The apostle Paul told the Philippians, “Wherefore, my

beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**” (Philippians 2:12).

Each individual is responsible for his own salvation. The Eternal said, “...[I]f I send a pestilence into the land, and pour out My fury in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it...they shall deliver neither son or daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:19, 20).

You do not get a participation trophy just for showing up. There is no such thing as collective salvation. Putting your trust in the church is idolatry and spiritual suicide. The temple/church cannot save anyone. Men love to draw people to themselves, but “...Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39).