

The Messiah Clone
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Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

Matthew 24:3

PROLOGUE

Beth, my wife, is clutching the broken forms of our grandchildren. She and they are dead a few feet above me. Beth threw herself over the children in an attempt to protect them from the falling debris of the house. Their mother, my daughter, is somewhere under the rubble of our mountain home. Their deaths were quick.

I'm trapped in a pocket under the rubble. I had gone down to the basement to gather my notes and files. At that point, I was still undecided. Should I print what I know? A whisper of me unveiling the truth had put my family in our mountain hideout. One option was to burn the last of the proof, and to live quietly in the pain of knowing that somehow the world's end had its beginning in me. My name is Matthew MacDonald. I used to be a good bio-geneticist and a good husband. Now I'm neither.

The earthquake came without warning. It devastated every home on the mountain-side. For a while after it hit, I heard an occasional moan coming from nearby piles of wood and rock. Those who survived their houses collapsing faced the terror of dying from starvation underneath their once comfortable homes. I should be weeping for them and my family. Instead, I am writing. I can't stop writing. As I scribble these notes, I can see out of the hole I've dug in the side of the rubble. It is my light and my air.

Nothing much is left. How did we in California ever think the colliding faults of the world would somehow miss us? The quakes started in Eastern Europe and then Japan was ripped open. Long dead volcanoes spit up their molten guts into the seas, spoiling and poisoning most of the water. At times, noon was like midnight when the sun was covered by the heavy volcanic ash drifting through the air. I knew it wasn't long until California would crack as well. But we couldn't leave. Our family had no decision in the matter. Prayers became our only protection. Possibly my family's quick death was the final answer to our heavenward whispers; I don't know. At this point, I know little except that what I have to say may bring some sanity back into a world that is spinning on an axis of madness.

I'm compelled to tell my story. But what I'm writing isn't easy to believe. As you read this, open your mind to the fact that not everything is as it appears. Not everything comes from the source you think it's coming from.

The people I'll tell you about are not what you think. In fact they may be the opposite of everything they say. I've spent years watching and talking to them. I've gathered my notes from various news magazines, papers, biographies, journals and a misplaced diary. Before returning it I made a photocopy. Its proven very valuable. I also had two other sources from deep inside their circle. In one case, only a few people could know and tell me what they have. In the other case, the letters are simply signed "Faithful."

I'm writing because I've got to stop them. Somehow I need to survive. I've been able to gather a few salvageable cans of food and bottles of liquid from the rubble of our basement. I pray I make it out alive. If I don't then I ask that whoever finds my words can put an end to what, I'm sorry to say, I started. Whoever you are that is reading this—let the world know what is contained here. I caution you, if you do prepare to be hunted. For they'll stop at nothing.

*...and the whole world lies under the sway of the
wicked one.*

I John 5:19

CHAPTER 1

It was nearly thirty-four years ago that Father John Russo, an American priest attached to the Vatican, walked into my laboratory in Zurich, Switzerland. Russo moved quickly up the ranks of the priesthood. Born in Chicago, he made easy connections with the financial director of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The Chicago diocese had been suspected of passing underground funds through the Vatican bank for laundering purposes. Russo attended St. Mary's Seminary in Mundelein, IL, where he met Monsignor Callahan. The aging Callahan was the primary contact for underworld money. The old man liked something in the seminary student Russo. Maybe it was the same thing that he saw in himself when he stared in the mirror. It was that "do whatever you have to do to reach your goals" look. Once Russo graduated, Callahan brought the new priest onto his staff.

In a few years, the Vatican bank needed a new financial director. The last chief of Catholic finances had run into an "accident." Callahan was the logical choice. He already knew where the money came from and he simply would work now on the receiving end, the laundering process. Callahan had brought his most trusted aid, John Russo, on to Rome with him.

Father Russo did well inside the sacred walls of the Pope's domain, often debating theology and social matters with the Pontiff himself. The youthful priest rose quickly but had wanted it to be faster. He had set his sights on his goal—to be the Vicar of Christ, the Pope. Russo knew every pathway, every pitfall and, looked for all avenues to fulfill his dream. But it wasn't until he read my doctoral thesis that his vision cleared and he set his direction. In his diary he wrote, "It is an idea that would bring me to the pinnacle of power within the Roman Catholic Church." It was from his diary, mistakenly left behind in my office years later, that I discovered the real Father Russo and the thoughts behind the man.

I remember our first meeting clearly. Father Russo's olive-skinned, slight form moved gracefully toward me as he extended his thin, tight hand. "I'm Father Russo. Your lab assistant said I'd find you in here. You are Dr. Matthew MacDonald, aren't you?"

"Yes, how can I help you Father?" I asked. I felt tense like in the old days at Catholic school when a priest walked into the room. There was always a sense of nervousness, and the lingering question "What did I do wrong?" I had continued my association with the church after college and into grad school. Even while working on my doctorate, I never gave up on the church. Lots of my friends had left to search for what they called "the truths of life." Instead they found themselves chasing after mammon while letting their faith evaporate. In my mind, I saw the connection between my work as a genetic engineer and the works of God as a genetic designer. Of course, if the Vatican had known that I was writing my thesis on cloning a human being they wouldn't have been overjoyed with their Catholic educated biologist.

I watched as Russo guided his gaze along my reddish face. His diary's entry read that he knew there was something inside my young scientific mind that could help revolutionize the religious world, or at least refocus it to fit his plans. I noticed how different we looked from each other. My reddish blonde hair and slightly freckled face towered over the dark-skinned priest. We shook hands and Russo spoke again. "Dr. MacDonald, I'm with the Vatican. We are investigating the theory of cloning and I wondered if you could explain the process to me."

I was preparing a slide for the microscope and as was my procedure I set it meticulously aside before answering. I was being cautious and this gave me the time to think. I wondered if the Pope considered it a mortal sin to believe and experiment with cloning. I decided that I needed to be careful of what I said. When I spoke again, I asked Russo, “That’s not an easy task. Do you have any particular questions on the matter?”

“Actually, I do. I read in your thesis that you believe that cloning a human from DNA samples is possible. I was wondering, is it just theoretical or is it really possible?” the priest quizzed.

I was concerned. Was the Pope angry over my thesis? Was there a possibility of excommunication? I rarely held back my thoughts so I blurted out, “Am I in trouble with the Pope?”

Father Russo laughed, turning his mouth’s corners up and then opening it widely so his white teeth could accentuate the humor of my question, and the harmlessness of his own query. Russo swung his arm around my shoulder and pulled me to a slouch. “No, no. I guess I’m being a little vague here. I have a very special situation, and I’m trying to find the right biologist to assist me in fulfilling the wishes of the Holy See.” Father Russo continued, “It seems that you’ve done ample research on its plausibility. Please, don’t fear my questions. I’m sure I can pass on from the Vatican that you are appreciated as one of the brightest young men to come out of our educational system.” Russo paused and noticed that disbelief covered my face. The priest spoke again, “Maybe this isn’t a good time to talk. May I come back tomorrow?”

“I guess so. I’ve already put in too many research hours this week, at least my wife thinks so. You pick the time and we’ll get together, but I would prefer that it would be soon.”

“What about breakfast? Say about 9 a.m. at my hotel?” Father Russo scrawled the address, shook my hand and left. I was puzzled but my scientific curiosity was definitely sparked. I hung my lab coat on the hook behind my door, and turned off the equipment and lights. I was still thinking about the conversation as I headed home. My car tooted through the streets of Zurich, and arrived at the small apartment that the Amrich Corporation had found for my pretty wife and me nearly a year before.

My work on the thesis seemed so long ago. I knew my concepts would work. All I needed was the equipment and time to work out a few variables. Amrich talked about funding the project somewhere in the future. In corporate talk, that meant “don’t hold your breath.” I tried to convince them that once the DNA code was deciphered it was simply a job of replacing the DNA of a fertilized human egg with the new code. And bang, you would have it—a clone with the original DNA of another being. The equipment to do this didn’t exist then but I had already designed it.

If only the Amrich Corporation would’ve supported me on this. I wanted desperately, too desperately, to have the opportunity to perform the experiment but there were two limitations—both money and lab space. Lab space I could find, but the money? Well, on my salary, and with the living expenses in Zurich, I was not able to afford it.

As I reviewed the process, my car seemed to pull automatically into the driveway. My wife, Beth, a beautiful, thin waisted blonde with deeply expressive eyes, was always worried that I’d have an accident while in this Jerry Lewis *Nutty Professor* mode. It’s not that I wasn’t careful, but on this one subject of cloning this scientist was

almost possessed. My last thought before entering the house was “if I get the opportunity to clone a human, then where does the money come from?”

Beth had started to clean up the dinner dishes when I walked through the door. I remember her sweet, laughing smile as she said, “Let me try to guess. This time you were almost done with the experiment when one of the chimps escaped, grabbed a secretary, climbed up the side of the building, and you had to save the whole world from destruction.”

“How do you know what happens at work before I tell you? Do you have a camera in my lab? I smiled back and brushed her cheek with a kiss. We had an understanding. A tense one, but still it was an understanding. Dropping my black tweed overcoat on the antique chair in the hallway near the staircase, I kept talking to her as my ever-present briefcase and I went into the kitchen, “Actually I got the most interesting visitor today. I almost felt like I was back in Catholic grade school.”

“Who was it, Sally Field, the Flying Nun?” It was Beth’s humorous attempt at keeping up with my incessant referencing of old TV shows. She always thought it unusual that I, a Mensa member, stuffed my mind with more TV trivia than any other Baby Boomer in the U.S. And she said that to me, often.

With a smirk, I barely acknowledged her attempt at humor, and went on with my story. “No, it was a priest named Russo. He’s out of the Vatican. Can you believe that, a Vatican priest? And he came all the way up here to see me.”

Beth’s interest was raised. I still remember how her soft slippers sounded like satin on our hardwood, kitchen floor when she crossed to sit near me at the table. When she sat, I continued, “He had read my doctoral thesis on cloning.”

“What? Someone actually reads those things?” she exclaimed with a mixture of surprise and cynicism.

“Yeah, I guess they do. He wanted to know if I could actually do what I said in the paper. Yeah, if I had the...”

Beth finished the statement, “. . . lab and the money. Does it seem like this Father Russo is serious? Do you think the Vatican wants you to clone someone for them? Maybe one of the Popes? You know, after the loss of that earlier one so soon after being elected, maybe they’re trying to protect themselves. Kinda like in the movies where they have a stand-in. Like a body double.” Her fast paced, rattling speech demonstrated her excitement.

“I don’t know, but I plan to meet with him tomorrow morning for breakfast. I’ll see then what he wants. And speaking of food, I am starved. Have you and Capri eaten already?” My hunger moved me to the refrigerator. As I yanked on the door, Beth moved up behind me with a warm plate from the oven. “Matthew dear, are you looking for something?” When I turned, she planted a firm kiss on my mouth and handed me the plate.

We continued to talk about the small items of the day like Capri’s cute little actions, the mail, and in particular, the letter that came from my old college friend, Mary Grace. But my mind was still on the earlier meeting, and the one coming the following day. I wondered if I could really do what I spent years developing in theory. Somewhere in the back of my mind there was a fear. It rarely showed but Beth could see it. Then again, she used to see everything that went on inside me. She watched my eyes as I ate and talked. Later she admitted that she also wondered if I could do everything I wrote about? Was it possible?

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary
the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking
whom he may devour.*

I Peter 5:8

CHAPTER 2

As Beth and I were talking, Russo recorded these words in his diary in a hotel room on the other side Zurich, Switzerland.

“Tuesday, March 28. Once again I am staring at my glass bottle and the small bloody fibers. The fibers look old and brittle. I hold in my hands a true religious relic with enough miraculous power contained within its molecules to bring the nations to their knees. I understand this power. This is the power I’ve needed.

“I remember the Chicago incident again. How they left me twisting in the wind to take their blame. When the investigation occurred, I was left unprotected. The Monsignor from Chicago, who directed the Vatican’s banking operation, knew that, as a young priest, I would only get a slap on the wrist. The investigators said that I was simply stupid about the monies I accepted. They all thought it would be quietly dismissed. The Monsignor had no idea what it did to me. Actually, he didn’t care what destruction would come to me. All he cared about was covering his own exposed behind. Tonight, as my eyes study my clear glass bottle, I’m thinking, ‘God, I know you understand. I gave everything to your church. I compromised my being for her. Thank you, God. Together, we will get even.’

“I feel strange as I write tonight, I feel tired, yet I feel empowered. Something is strengthening me. It must be my holy faith. Much to do tomorrow. Need sleep.”

When morning came for me, my anticipation seemed to throw my body from the bed. A million thoughts ran through my head. I wondered where I’d order the lab equipment? What about the egg once it was produced? Who would carry the child to term? How much contact would I have afterward?

At that time I imagined the papers I’d write for the journals and the conference speaking to be done as the first man to clone another human being. I showered, dressed, and was about to leave when Beth came down the stairs. She smiled and said she hadn’t seen me like this since the night I asked her to marry me. She told me that I still had all the idealism of a boy.

“Come have a cup of coffee with me before you leave,” she said. As she filled our cups, her eye caught the brisk movement of a thick, murky shadow across the floor. Her eyes snapped to the window to see what had glided between her floor and the sun. She blinked. The blind was closed. A shiver ran through her body creating goose bumps and raising the hairs on the back of her neck. At first, she tried to shake it off with a flip of her hair but it grew into a deep, disquieting fear. Then she said, “Matt, I’m frightened. Something doesn’t seem right. I feel like we should pray.”

I felt a little strange, too. “OK, Beth. I’ll pray.” It had been so long since I had prayed out loud and for some reason the ‘Our Father’ or ‘Hail Mary’ hadn’t seemed right for this occasion. I wasn’t very practiced in the art of heavenly communication and I was surprised when out of my mouth came these awkward words: “Lord, help us!” Our fear subsided and she noticed last night’s dirty dishes. Cari must have been startled by my prayer and woke up. Her cry kicked Beth into her daily routine and I bolted out the door for my meeting with Father Russo.

On the other side of town, Father Russo was up early. He had written several letters. One was to an internationally known television evangelist who went by the name Prophet T.N. Thompson. I noticed the address when he dropped the letters in the mail box as we met for breakfast.

At that time, I knew nothing of this Thompson but soon we'd be colleagues. It wasn't until his authorized biography was published that I read his story. A source close to him told me the truth behind the book's script. Thompson had risen from a small Florida church to be one of the most recognized and earliest religious figures on television. The Florida days stayed fresh in the Prophet's mind. He remembered those lean times, and that Sunday night service when Laura Severson came forward for prayer.

To the world, the Holy Ghost spoke to the Prophet. To those closest to him it was a low, reverberating male voice that started to speak inside his head. At first he ignored it. Thompson thought that he was extremely tired. The little church kept him jumping seven days a week. The church's slow growth left the deacon board with little money to hire more help and lots of work to be done. Most of it fell to Rev. Thompson, as he was called then. It was when he had neared exhaustion that Thompson experienced the voice before. The voice began when he was a teen but it came rarely then. He barely remembered it, according to the biography. He tried not to remember much of his childhood. His parents had made that easy. He wanted to force from his mind the memories of their abuse and alcoholic rages. But on that night the voice told him something about Laura.

She had asked to be forgiven. Laura confessed that she had grown to hate her husband. Willy Severson was an alcoholic who often beat Laura. She had turned to the church for support and some answers. Thomas Nigel Thompson rarely had any of the answers she needed or wanted. But that night the voice spoke about Laura. *Laura's husband will die after complications caused by an accident*, the voice stated. Thompson had fought the urge to speak those words to her. Several thoughts went through his mind. "What if I am wrong? What if it really is my typical Sunday evening energy drain that is causing this?" He hadn't felt exhausted though. It was just the opposite. It felt more like his entire body pulsed with electrical current.

He tried to shake it off. He couldn't. The voice came back again. *Her husband will die after an auto wreck. Tell her those words*. He struggled but finally the voice overpowered him. T.N. Thompson spoke to her as he gripped her head between his hands. He lowered his own head and spoke into her ear. It was nearly inaudible.

"What was that Reverend? I didn't hear you," Laura said.

He spoke louder, "Your husband will die in an auto wreck. As we pray together he is out drinking. On his way home, a pick-up truck will run a red light, pinning him in the car. Two days from now he'll die."

Thompson was stunned when Laura called the next day to ask him to meet her at the hospital. Her husband had been drinking and got into an auto accident. The doctors didn't expect him to live. Rev. Thompson spent many hours consoling her in, as she called it, "special ways" after that. Laura continued her support and ministry to his needs as his personal secretary and assistant.

When the news of the prophecy spread, more people came to that little Florida church building each evening to hear the prophet and to have him prophesy over them. The collection plates filled to the top as they passed through the unpadded, cracked pews. Books were written. Television programs were produced. And before Thompson knew it, a prophet was born and profit was made. Now, the Prophet T.N. Thompson sees millions of dollars given to his ministry each year.

The deep, masculine echoing voice in his head got stronger and the lust for the unholy trinity of money, power and flesh strengthened. Something great was about to

come, the voice said. A few days after I met with Russo, the voice gave the Prophet this message: *Look for the priest*, it said. *Look for the priest*.

...for the ruler of this world is coming...
John 14:30

CHAPTER 3

As Russo dropped his letters into the mailbox, we shook hands and entered the restaurant. “Good morning, Dr. MacDonald. I’m glad you could make it. I have so many things I want to go over with you,” the priest said through his grinning teeth. I was more than glad to be there. The young Vatican attaché just might be my ticket on the train to science history and to the top of my field. Working for Amrich had been profitable but nothing would compare to finalizing my greatest project—my dream. I knew I’d do anything to make it a reality.

“Father Russo, I could hardly sleep thinking about our conversation yesterday,” I said as I turned and took my seat.

“Good, because I hope what I have to say this morning will stir your scientific mind to a new height, and in turn we can form a union that will bring about peace to this world.” Russo was interrupted by the waiter. He ordered and returned to his conversation. “As I asked yesterday, can you really clone a human being from DNA?”

I’ve always relished any chance to explain my thesis. I talked rapidly and animatedly about my favorite subject, and then summed it up, “In short, Father Russo, it can be done. But it will take a lot of money and I’ll need an outside lab to work in. I’ve got a commitment to Amrich that I can’t break, so this will need to be done in the evenings and weekends.”

“How long?” asked Russo.

“Maybe two or three months. Do you realize it could cost close to two or three million for us to clone just one egg? Then we need to find someone willing to carry it to term,” I stated.

“Those will be my problems. I should have the money in another month. Then we’ll begin,” the priest answered as he sipped his coffee. “Now, I’ve got to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“Who have you told about this?”

I twinged and answered, “Only my wife.”

“Good. Keep it that way, because this is totally secret. I want no one to know about your work. Tell your wife nothing else from this point on,” instructed Russo with a hushed, serious tone.

“Okay,” I agreed but somewhere inside me was an unfounded yet nagging suspicion. I looked down at my coffee as if it were more interesting than our conversation, thought for a moment, raised my head and asked, “Are you sure this is on the up and up? Where does the Pope fit into this?”

“The Vatican is totally behind it but they want no one to know. This is far too sensitive an issue. It’s extremely important and we don’t want some kind of public outcry to stop the project before we begin. That can happen, you know. It must be kept secret at all costs. We’ll make the announcement when the time comes.” Russo stared at me intensely.

I was frightened and jokingly said, “It sounds a little more like a ‘Man From U.N.C.L.E.’ TV show than a scientific endeavor.”

The priest put down his fork. “Son, your church needs you. We may create the answer to the world’s ills in the next few months. The Pope, the Vatican and the clergy around the world are counting on what you’ll be doing.”

“All my life I’ve wanted to be a good Catholic. I feel as though I have little choice in this matter. If my church needs me, I’ll go through with it, but let me repeat, it will cost a lot,” I stated with emphasis on the cost of the project.

“For a project of this magnitude, money will be no object. We must have it done, and it must be done quickly.” Father Russo unlocked his leather brief case and pulled from its pockets a glass bottle. “This bottle contains the DNA. I’ll turn it over to you when the lab is ready. Now, you need to give me an idea of how much money you would like for doing this.”

I was flip and threw out a figure, “A million.” I thought the amount would show the priest’s cards. It didn’t happen.

“It’s done,” Russo answered.

“That simple, huh?” I was still smiling from my new million dollar salary and jokingly asked the priest, “You’re willing to put all this money up for one experiment. Who is it we’re trying to clone—Jesus?”

Without moving his coffee from his lips, Russo answered, “Yes.”

...and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Revelation 19:20

CHAPTER 4

I sat frozen by the shock of the answer. “C’mon. You’ve got to be kidding. Don’t you realize that I need some type of DNA sample that actually belonged to the person before I can clone them. I can’t clone Jesus. Where in the world are we going to get DNA from Jesus? I’m a scientist, a biologist, not some kind of miracle worker.” My staccato statements peppered the priest.

Father Russo only smiled. He fingered his bottle for a moment then began to speak. “In this bottle there’s...”

“There’s just a bunch of strings.” I was animated in my disappointment as I finished his statement, threw down my napkin and began to rise. The few people in the restaurant began to look our way. “You’re starting to sound like a religious nut. You come into my lab, and you get my hopes sky high that I’m going to finally do the one thing I’ve been waiting for, and then you tell me I’m going to clone...”

Russo held up his hand facing the palm towards me. “Stop, don’t say it. I want no one to hear the next few words. Give me time to explain. The fibers in this bottle have been tested. They contain enough DNA material to perform the task I’ve asked of you.”

“OK, but where does the Jesus part come in?” I asked.

The priest sucked in a breath. I could tell that he knew he needed explain this correctly or the whole project would fizzle. I was, most likely, the only scientist that could do the cloning, and at that point I was anything but happy. Russo held the bottle in the air twisting it like some type of holographic visual aid. “The cloth, these fibers are from, came from the body of Christ. When the Lord died, Joseph of Arimathea and others took his bloody body and prepared it for burial. They were in a hurry and had to wrap his form without ceremonially washing it, before the sun went down and their Sabbath began. When He was wrapped in the cloth, it soaked up his blood, leaving enough DNA code for you to work with.”

I sat quietly, listening to Russo finish his pointed explanation. “That burial cloth is the same one that was left behind when Jesus rose from the dead. It was so indelibly marked by his powerful transition back to life that it has his image fused to it.”

I started to track with the priest. I spoke again displaying interest, “You mean these threads are from the Shroud of Turin? But how in the world did you get these? I mean, that is a religious relic. I can’t imagine the curators of that museum in Turin are going to let you walk in and cut fibers from the Shroud.”

“You’re right, Matthew. If you, as a good Catholic, were to walk in and ask to see the Shroud privately, and take fibers to test, you would be refused. Now, if you were an attaché of His Holiness, closely connected to the Vatican, with all the right papers and credentials, you could walk in and take away what you wanted,” answered Father Russo.

My emotions were on a wild up and down roller coaster ride. After hurtling downward a few minutes before, I was racing back up with the realization that Russo was not a demented priest that should be locked away. He looked to be a wise and powerful comrade. “I’m sorry, I didn’t understand. Forgive me for speaking so quickly and not giving you a chance to explain. I’ve got to say that I’m still a little taken back by this. Cloning Jesus Christ is a more than I bargained for. It’s possible, but is it right?” By this point, I had lowered my voice to a near whisper.

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