

Are You a Christian... or a Misguided Clone?

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 31 January 2018 17:14

“This topic is more important than people might think.

If you are bound by conforming to the group then your thinking can be compromised and brought out of sync with scripture and your horizons for doing anything for the Lord will always be subject to the group, rather than directly accountable to God.

This condition leads to apostasy, lethargy and apathy in the Church today. It creates a safe space to be on show and somewhere to go on Sunday and then do nothing but keep yourself respectable.

Sunday should be a ‘filling station’ to do the real work of progressing on the journey of the narrow road during the week.” (James B Waddell, 14 November 2017)

(Note: The major part of this article appeared first as two emails to our mailing list, November 2017. They were an important message to our readers, hence we have now published it as an Article, with added content).

What Do You Learn from Your Sunday Meetings?

In our Sunday meetings many topics arise from our study time. Most of them are not part of the study content, but they tax the minds and hearts of those who are present. Many erroneously might think I want everyone to think and act like me, because I am so strict about doctrine and I insist that EVERYONE believes scripture in the same way. BUT, do not confuse this with being dictatorial!

Scripture itself – God’s own word – says we must ALL believe the same doctrinal issues, and, because God only gives us ONE definition of doctrine, there can be only one way to think about it. (God does not wander about giving several possible ideas – He gives direct commands. If he gave us ‘options’ it would prove He was not God). HOWEVER, all believers are individuals, made so by God, and can often make mistakes. One major error is to think the pastor, preacher, or teacher is obviously acting on behalf of God. It is a major error because, in my estimation, very few of those who adopt these holy offices are called to them by God. Rather, they wear the office like a cloak, because it is not a part of them. This means that much of what

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they teach will be wrong or skewed. Being IN an office does not mean a man has been called and performs that office in true manner.

Like most young men who are saved, I was keen to preach. (EVERYONE at that stage tends to think they should preach!). I knew nothing of needing to be called by the Holy Spirit, or the need for systematically spending many hours reading my Bible to see what God wanted me to say, in the way that was good. Like so many others, I thus went forth and spread idiocy instead of God's truth, giving them my random thoughts in the guise of scripture. Like the others, I preached in Arminian fashion.

I Was a Useless Clone

As a younger Christian I was completely fooled by the old idea that whatever the pastor says must be true. It took me a long time to discover otherwise! I was merely playing out what was demanded of me by not just the pastor but also by the deacons, fellow members and those who asked me to preach. I was, in other words, chained to the traditions of men and falsity.

And when it came to preaching (which I did from day one – this should never have been allowed) I copied my pastor and those in my church who preached. I even adopted their same method – the Geneva Pulpit Method! How slavish was that? This proved to be a disaster, both for my preaching and for my personal spiritual development. I was so eager to please my fellows, I forgot to please God!

It was only when I gave up being a 'collective clone' that my spiritual life started to make sense, and I could clearly see how ineffective my contemporaries were at preaching, pastorship and teaching. This is a simple fact, not judgmentalism. And it led to my present position, hated by my traditional fellows. This is what I am calling you, the saved reader, to do... cast off the shackles and vain tradition, and scrub the word 'clone' off your forehead, for it disparages the Lord and yourself!

Dutiful Copying

I am saddened by those churches that make everyone a clone... every woman wears the same kind of clothing, or the same kind of hat, and men must wear a suit. Many churches make conformity to its internal characteristics a matter of orthodoxy. When you enter them all the members look the same and act the same way. I can even correctly guess the kind of church a fellow attends by the way he speaks. This alone proves my point – that he is a clone.

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There are churches where spontaneity is frowned upon and smiling is almost a sin! In these churches ideas are a matter of suspicion, and individuality is like backsliding! Friends, a spontaneous or smiling person can lose his or her freedom in Christ by obeying a corporate mantra! Those who once were openly happy are forced to comply with the corporate dirge, sing badly with poorly-played music, and be driven into a corporate mundaneness!

Don't let it happen! Be YOU, or your personality will suffer. So will your spirit.

A big reason why cloning occurs is the fear of being different. This fear indicates something even deeper – a fear to act like a true believer, a warrior of the Lord, willing to stand against all error and enemies, even if bad traits are within their own local church. Rather than lose 'friends' they mimic everything and obey the rules, without even checking if they are biblical or needed. In this atmosphere the pastor is king and members are his subjects. (See my book: *"Will The Real Pastor Please Stand Up!"*). His clone-apparel (dark suit, shirt and tie) are the same as vestments!

If you think like a clone, you are not doing God's will. God has made you different. Yes, we must all believe the same about aspects of doctrine, but if ANY church causes you to lose your smile, or wellbeing, or your spontaneity... walk away! It might only be a weak kind of dictatorship, perhaps not even recognised as such, but it is not the way the Lord expects His children to act. There *is* a good tradition, but mostly we see the bad sort that hog-ties every person in a local church so they comply not with God but with the pastor, deacons and other members. Is that living? No.

You are You because that's how God wants it. Don't be grizzled by a demanding and unduly funereal spirit that lets you lose yourself in a pool of grey compliance. God wants you as an individual, not a clone. When everyone is the same it proves they are also less godly and more traditionalist, unable to 'think outside the box'. We are called to unity of spirit and belief, but NOT to be wearing grey and bleating the same words. We are called to meet together – but not so as to tighten our chains.

Non-Compliance Costs

I never complied and so am usually shunned. But, I don't care, because God is my Lord, not the local pastor or congregation! They might believe all the right things – but if their lives are made

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miserable by their compliance with an human code of conduct... well... such people are hard to reach with truth, because if something contradicts what they have been led to believe, even when the proof is from God's word, they will ignore it. They prefer silence and compliance as a clone to getting out of their comfortable traditional chair, or going against their fellows. Sadly, the majority of Christians I come across are of this type. They are VERY hard to talk with.

The rich young man was so close to the acceptance of Christ, but he refused to give his riches away. Jesus did not ask him to do it to make him penniless. He asked because it was at the core of his being... he loved money more than Christ. He could not comply with Christ's demand. The same goes for those in traditional churches. VERY few are willing to step away from their enforced way of life and the dictatorship of traditionalism. They might be saved, but their lives do not show it. Some know what it means not to comply – their local church will shun them, and the 'friends' they once had prove not to have been friends at all. Most people are sheep and love to be surrounded by others, even if those others mislead them and are not genuine. Being accepted is the priority, not being true to the Lord. They fear being alone or ostracised and forget that Christ went through it all 2000 years ago, for their sakes.

A Fact of Traditional Church Life

I had been in (but not OF) churches since I was born, being taken by my mother and her family every Sunday and, later at other times as I grew up. So I know what I have seen, heard and experienced.

I have also been individual. I don't mean *trying* to be different, which a lot of kids do nowadays, just for the sake of it, or even to show a rebellious streak. That is, I never followed the herd, whether in the world or in the churches. Even when I was writing, singing and playing music, I did my own thing, not following the bands of the day. It was just... ME. Thankfully my parents saw this as good. I did not always do what was right, but I retained my individual mind.

But, I watched as many like me (until about age 18 or 19) – unbelievers – became Christians, saved by grace. I noted how they grew like everyone else around them. They began to develop the same speech, same words, and even began to wear similar clothes, and copied the same behaviour. For example, in some denominations all the women were compelled to wear head scarves worn in a certain manner, their dresses fairly plain, their hair uncut and long; the men were dour-faced, rarely smiled, and always wore suits and ties to services. But, it went much farther...

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Many Christians comply with these unwritten 'codes' because they want to fit in – a psychological need, not of God. They learn that to NOT fit in is to draw attention to themselves. This had a double-effect, because when everyone says and does the same things, it reinforces the idea that what they are doing is 'correct' and this then becomes 'necessary'. Those who stand out as different will be pressured to comply, or to leave. Not necessarily by direct command, but by an instinctive 'atmosphere' exuding from everyone... polite, courteous, loving... but stand-offish and not welcoming! Recognise these signs?

Be 'Loved' Into Submission – Or be Forced Out

They are like it because they fear the one who thinks differently. It upsets their small world and disrupts their conformity. This makes the individual an enemy who must be silenced or got rid of. Think not? Then you do not know much about local churches! This kind of underlying menace once led me to say wryly *"If you want to have enemies, just join a local church"*. Of course there are exceptions, but I invite readers to look at their own local church with a clear head. Is the atmosphere REALLY loving (so long as you comply)? Does the church (that is, pastor and people) allow thinking outside its own stated rules? The individuals I speak of are not heretics, but thinking people who search scripture wisely and wish to show others what they have found. But, tradition says otherwise so everyone MUST be as stale as the traditions.

These churches may be doctrinally true, but their desire to be uniform in absolutely everything has many attendant problems. By smothering personalities and pushing people into a cloned atmosphere, every member becomes spiritually and emotionally malnourished and spiritually disfigured. What is part of a person's real self is slowly buried under the cloned self, and legitimate gifts or talents are stifled, so everything is channelled along the same church paths.

Straitjackets with a Smile

In any other situation this could be called brainwashing or even cult behaviour. But, because doctrine is correct and the overall figure is outwardly nice and pleasant, few draw back from it. Those who begin as individuals slowly accept the restructuring of their souls, but inwardly sigh at the loss. And so everyone is cloned, and speak and act the same way. If few smile, then no-one will smile. If few admit to doubts, then no-one admits to them. If few give new ideas, then no-one offers a new thing... the kind of place that would not tolerate people like myself! I know from experience that those who superficially 'tolerate' me would love me to be put in a straitjacket! Such love!

Every aspect of doctrine can have only one definition - God's (NOT mine). No Christian may have his own definition, and this is what scripture tells us (for example, 2 Peter 1:20). So, when

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many try to tell us they do not share the common interpretation, we know there is a problem. The same aspect of doctrine* can be expressed in a number of ways, but the core definition must always be the same. In this there can be no freedom to pick and choose. But, the rest of life can be expressed in a variety of ways. (*‘aspect of doctrine’ is a term I use to show that ‘doctrine’ is sub-divided into many aspects, but all are the same doctrine. In scripture, the plural, ‘doctrines’, refers to false doctrines of devils. So, there is only ONE doctrine with a number of aspects dealing with a variety of issues and teachings. This is why I always refer to God’s word as one doctrine).

The Cloned Appearance, Detrimental

Sadly, I can identify people, very often, from the way they speak, think or act. This is because they have adopted a communal spirit that has robbed them of their individuality. This is a great loss to the Church owned by God. Whole churches and denominations have, in effect, told God He can direct their beliefs, but THEY can change the wallpaper as they wish! So, they make sure Christians comply with their earthly demands.

Perhaps many think this is okay. What is wrong with complying? ‘What is wrong’ is why Luther complained in his 95 Theses! (See my article on this). Small acts of compliance with human demands, unspoken or not, make sure everyone looks, speaks and acts the same. God has given us individual personalities and so long as they are not warped by sin, they are how God made us to be.

Those who accept being cloned are usually types who like to be told what to do; they hate being outside the accepted circle; they do not dare to even think maybe a pastor is wrong, or doctrinal statements might possibly need examination. I know all this because I was in such atmospheres for a very long time and know that not to comply is to finally be shunned by those who once were your friends.

In my own case I dared to ask questions and demanded a biblical answer, not a traditional one. This was fatal and I eventually had to leave the church ‘system’ altogether, such was the very evident lack of love and compassion.

Pastors on Pedestals – You in a Ditch!

All believers are compelled to listen to their elders in the Lord, and pastors are there to guide the flock, who should listen to careful counsel. Yet, outside all that is freedom in Christ...

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something few believers know anything about. The trouble is, pastors are annoyed by individuals and dislike their freedoms, because the more freedom exists the less able they are to control the flock.

But, pastors are not there to control the flock, only to look after them and keep them safe. When a pastor wants to control, it means he thinks he is above the others, and the others put him on a pedestal. Raising him above others is the same as digging a ditch to put everyone else in. The pastor must be 'higher'!

The more a person is taught by scripture and the Holy Spirit, the less tolerant he will be of what amounts to dictatorship, and the less he likes the fact that his pastor, perhaps, is put on a pedestal by members (which the pastor accepts).

When I became a Christian, the church I was already attending openly treated me as a great prize! I had long hair, I made my own clothes or wore different kinds of things, I played rock music and sang on stage, I even painted on all the walls of our house (my mother loved it!). That is, they prized me because I was so very different. Almost immediately I was asked to speak!! Sure enough, what I said was also different. Only much later did I see their folly. And so did they, when I refused to comply!

I was not mentored at all. However, I managed to learn very fast! And the more I learned the less I was acceptable to my local church! This was because I retained my individuality and they saw this as a liability. I spoke my mind, and discovered amazing things in scripture. But, it differed from what I was being taught almost by rote. I could see the blue sky from my invisible prison window!

Submit to the Spirit, not to Man

After ten years of trying to comply (badly) and preaching as per contemporaries (again badly) I finally submitted to the Spirit, Who showed me in no uncertain terms, that I was wrong. After preaching for all those years in many churches, even up to middle England, every week, I could no longer justify trying to marry my individuality and growing knowledge to the cloning process of the churches.

That's when churches I once preached in stopped asking me to speak!! On the other hand, in

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my final engagements the Holy Spirit did mighty deeds when I was speaking! But, congregations only wanted novelty, such as I gave them before. They didn't want truth or tough Bible facts. All I needed to do was comply with the ways of all the other speakers! But, I couldn't. This eventually led to shunning, but by that time I had been toughened by the Lord! I was amazed and yet delighted at the way the Holy Spirit led me strongly away from tradition and into something far better, a bit scary, and yet illuminating. (For the sake of strangers – no, I am not a charismatic!).

Think Twice

So, friends, think carefully, if your desire to belong means you lose yourself in a communal personality and cloning. Those who follow the herd do not fly high like eagles, nor do they have fresh insights. Nor do they speak honestly or with care for real knowledge. Instead of flying towards the glorious sun they stay in the shadows of the valley, becoming slow and unresponsive to the dynamic life given to them by God in Christ. Or, they can be like lemmings and follow others as they jump off the cliff to their spiritual deaths.

God does not stop us thinking, but requires it. He does not force us to be all the same with the same personalities and look. Clones are not individual and do not think for themselves. They are too afraid of being rejected or rebuked. In this way the churches combine to be one stagnant pool, of no use and no value and the people who inhabit them are without true conviction and genuine witness.

Yes, being individual can be scary, but it is also full of life and God's promises. Do not lose yourself in a muddy existence where everyone looks and speaks the same drone-like nonsense. Be yourself, so long as your true self is in the Lord and led by Him. Traditional cloning will get you nowhere – it will just make you feel dozy and comfortable, knowing everyone likes you. (At least that is what happens until you break away and dare to speak openly! That is when your 'friends' drop the 'r' and become fiends!).

In Christ we are free. So why allow others to shackle you to themselves and to tradition? Live the freedom in Christ, otherwise you will be of no use and will never develop as God demands. If you do take courage, do not tell anyone you read this – because they already think I am a 'troublemaker'!! Even so, you will be overjoyed.

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