

Statement Regarding Tony Jones

Because of recent and current sadness in my family life, I have been at a considerable remove for the last month from the blogosphere and, as a result, from the burgeoning commentary about the failed marriage between Tony Jones and Julie McMahon Jones. Having just this morning had an opportunity to read some of what is being exchanged on the net and in the blogosphere, I come with a heavy heart to the business of sorting out my own thoughts and, even more to the point, with the serious reservations of a very old woman about adding anything to the cacophony already circulating. I am going to do so here, however, for two reasons.

First, I am moved by the irony of all of this. No contemporary theologian of my knowledge has more accurately or efficaciously introduced the work of Rene Girard to the Christian conversation than has Tony Jones. As most of us know, the keystone of Girard's line of argument is that scapegoating is a principal way among human beings of relieving communal guilt and communal anxiety. Girard, of course, directs his observations toward an interpretation of, and deep appreciation for, the crucifixion. That directing of emphasis does not in any way change, however, the centrality or accuracy of Girard's observations about scapegoating as a phenomenon of enormous and unruly and irrational power that, ironically, still also always exercises a dramatic, almost irresistible, and absolutely mesmerizing power. That is, it seems to me, precisely the phenomenon we are witnessing...no, rather, we are enacting...currently on the blogosphere. Every part of me mourns for us that it should be so.

My second reason is far more personal. I love Tony Jones as a friend and colleague, and also as a fellow-Christian and astute theologian. While I understand that love can blind us to faults and errors—thank God for that. Otherwise, we would have no friends or lovers—I reserve the right to mourn the public flailing of one whom I hold dear, just as I roundly question the accuracy of many of the flails.

To that end, may God have mercy on all our souls...both flailed and flailers...and may His Spirit comfort us as we perceive and then endure the shame of what we do and have done...every one of us.

Phyllis Tickle