

## A Statement Concerning the Allegations Made by Julie McMahon against Tony Jones

As some of you will be aware, serious allegations have been made by Julie McMahon against Tony Jones.

I have known Tony Jones for approximately 8 years, and while we operate within quite different schools of thought, I have respected his work, his commitment to equality and his tireless efforts to promote new voices on the margins of Christianity. In addition to this I have shared a platform with him in at least half a dozen conferences.

I had known that his marriage to Julie McMahon had been difficult for both parties and ultimately ended in an acrimonious way. But I did not learn of Julie McMahon's claims of abuse until September 2014, when they began to appear on the religious website of a Canadian cartoonist.

Having spent time with Tony Jones over the years, time that has included witnessing the loving nature of his second marriage and the compassionate bond he has with his children, I was shocked by what I read. The accusations were disturbing and I, like my colleagues, took them very seriously. I felt both a professional and personal responsibility to uncover the facts and, if necessary, take action.

Having carefully read Julie McMahon's claims I went on to collect all the available documentation that might corroborate or contradict what was being said.

While refraining from public comment, I've spent time reviewing various documents pertaining to the claims. This has been a long process, and one that I have not taken lightly.

Having looked carefully at the evidence I can, with a clear conscience, say that I find no basis for any of the claims. Indeed, as I reviewed the material, I was genuinely distressed to find that the accusations were not simply groundless, but were contradicted by clear evidence.

My findings corroborate Tony Jones' statement on 27th January, a statement that references all the necessary documentation. If new evidence surfaces I will take it seriously. But I have not seen anything to date that contradicts the material I have examined. Indeed, it is hard for me to imagine how the evidence could be dismissed except by one committed to the idea that hundreds of people - from judges and law enforcement, to pastors, teachers, children's workers and employers - have been part of a large-scale systematic cover up.

I'm saddened that this situation has escalated, as it will do nothing but hurt all parties involved. But a public response has become necessary in light of the fact that a seemingly highly visible, carefully coordinated and tightly orchestrated campaign has grown online that is dedicated to ruining Tony Jones' personal and working life.

A campaign that has not only targeted Tony Jones, but also anyone who is critical of treatment he is receiving. This campaign has tempted many conscientious people, people dedicated to fighting injustice, to quietly distance themselves from Tony and remain largely silent. The fact that standing against this type of injustice is still largely taboo in comparison to others has made some fear for their reputations. To remain silent at this point is most certainly the path of least resistance, and would be the easiest one for me to walk. Yet I must answer to my conscience and do what I believe is right regardless of whether it damages my reputation, undermines my project, or provokes personal attacks.

Let me finish by unequivocally stating that claims of abuse must be taken with absolute seriousness so that those who are targets of violence can feel more confident that they will be listened to and supported when they come forward. For this reason we must also take seriously those times when claims turn out to have no basis in reality, whether because of wanton deceit, or due to other less nefarious reasons. For false claims not only damage the one who is accused, but also ends up significantly undermining the plight of people suffering real abuse, people who are in danger of being viewed with unwarranted suspicion as a result.

Peter Rollins