

# Letter In Support of Tony Jones - Troy Bronsink

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Statement offered in response to the questions raised by the #WhyTony hashtag.

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For those questioning the character of Tony Jones,

I have known Tony Jones as collaborator and friend for over 12 years and vouch for his character. He has shared meals with my wife and kids in our home, and I in his. In Tony I witness a loving dad and courageous husband. As a colleague he has taught me how to disagree, to be differentiated, as well as how to remain vulnerable and generous. Tony and I met through Doug Pagitt who, along with many others associated with the emerging church conversation, have been deep friends for my family and I as we've navigated life and ministry—sharing doubts, fears, faith, dreams, celebrations, and losses.

Tony and I have a unique friendship: whereas much of my early life I avoided controversy, Tony seemed to camp out around it. As a public theologian, Tony is a radiantly focused person, which means that he is willing to be both a lightning rod for criticism and a flood light shining upon issues that impassion him. In a culture embarrassed by tension, postures of leaders like Tony can be confused. Sometimes I've found myself in the middle of those mistaking this tension as violent, insisting that tension and violence are two very different things. In such cases I've always asked people to withhold their critique until they meet Tony off line, away from the podium or pulpit, in everyday domestic or outdoors settings—where he, in fact, proves to be quite nuanced, tender, and unassuming.

Throughout the ups and downs of his career in public theology, I never questioned whether Tony loved and wished well even his greatest adversaries. I've never seen Tony act abusive or violent, in public or private.

I also have seen him handle the personal attacks on character with a desire to honor his opposition, and protect family even to the point of protecting the public character of those serving him multiple blows "below the belt".

I call upon those looking to discredit Tony as a public theologian to tackle his public theology. And I call upon those looking to judge him on certain (mis)characterizations of his personal life to base these on the preponderance of public police records recently submitted or on I-Thou encounters with Tony himself. I also invite those profiting from the proliferation of false rumors to consider the family that Tony continues to love and nurture, and the friendships and working relationships he shares.

Finally, I pray that any of us skimming the internet for endorphin-building drama and desiring incessant "likes" in sensational social media posts to pause, observe the bigger picture, and seek generative responses that further clarify and increase transparency and justice rather than bolster one-eyed character assaults.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Troy Bronsink  
author, spiritual director, retreat curator  
about.me/troybronsink

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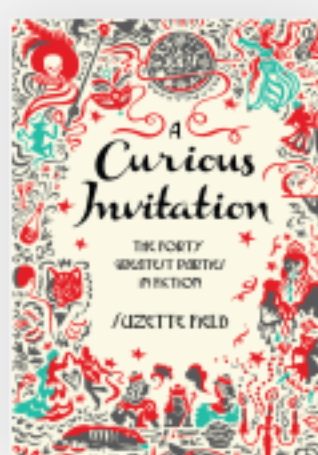
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