

## **A Full Review of My Debate with Tony Jones**

**By Dan Jensen (2022)**

### Preliminary Remarks

If anyone would like further resources pertaining to much of what I say in this essay, I refer you to my book *A False Kind of Christianity* (AFKC from here forward), and the extensive bibliography at the end of that book in particular. This work can be found on my website. If anyone would like me to hit on a specific point in more detail, that request can be made through the email on my website and it will be granted. I also use some sharp language in this essay. For a defense of my approach to polemics, see the beginning of my essay, “The Errors of Tony Jones,” on my website.

### Opening Statements

#### **My Opening Statement**

I stand by all that was said, with two exceptions. First, I said that Kirsopp Lake made it clear that the Bible teaches its own inerrancy. I meant to say that he was clear that the Bible teaches its own infallibility. But, it should be noted that he was using the term *infallible* here as an umbrella term for both infallibility and inerrancy, as was the common practice in the early 20th century. I do apologize for this mistake though. Second, towards the end of my opening statement I accidentally said “tact,” but meant to say “tack.”

#### **Tony’s Opening Statement**

Tony tries to say that the Synoptic Gospels portray a progressive “Jesus” because “he” was pushing the boundaries at “his” time. He also says that “Jesus” was always

broadening the reach of the gospel. Then Tony goes on to say that “Jesus’s” opponents were always trying to go back to a more conservative past and were always seeking a more strict interpretation of the law, while “Jesus” was always seeking a less strict interpretation of the law. None of this follows. It is true that Jesus said and did many things to indicate that eventually the gospel would go to the nations. But, this was prophesied in Scripture (see Daniel 7 and Acts 15; many other examples could be given). Tony acts as if the Jewish religious leaders were the ones who were in line with the Old Testament (OT from here forward) and it was “Jesus” who came to shake things up on this front. This is a common argument among Progressive Christian (PC from here forward) leaders. The actual fact though, is that it was the Jewish religious leaders who were distorting the OT and became grossly nationalistic. Even here though, this can be exaggerated. They still believed that Gentiles could convert and sought out these conversions. With that said, they did see these conversions as rare.

It should also be noted that Tony exaggerates things here respecting “Jesus.” Jesus made it clear that His ministry was primarily to the Jews (Mt 15:24). It is true that Jesus goes on to heal the foreign woman in this episode, thus pointing to the future preaching to all nations by the church, but it is still important to note that Jesus was first and foremost the Jewish Messiah. On this point, Jesus was not going against the predominant view of the Jews at His time. Thus, He was not always progressive.

As far as the Jews wanting to go back to a more conservative past, while “Jesus” wanted to move forward, this is highly misleading. The Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus wanted to preserve their own corrupt traditions, but that is not the same thing as saying that they wanted to preserve the past, while “Jesus” did not. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees would have said that they were trying to preserve the past, but we know that was not actually the case. They were both trying to preserve many of the extra-biblical accretions that had developed under 2nd Temple Judaism during the Intertestamental Era, and they were specifically trying to preserve the corruptions that had developed leading to their own movements. But they were not trying to solely preserve the OT. The Pharisees added to the OT and the Sadducees took away from

the OT.<sup>1</sup> Both were rebuked for this by Jesus throughout His ministry. Jesus was the one who was truly trying to preserve the past by His repeated quotes from the OT. The obvious implication was that He was rejecting all of the heresies that had developed during the Intertestamental Era. I'm not saying that Jesus did not bring a great deal that was new. He certainly did. But, the general contours of His ministry were prophesied in the OT and He repeatedly makes this clear.

As far as a more strict interpretation of the law, Tony is again mistaken. There are times when the Pharisees certainly took a more strict interpretation, but that is a matter of interpretation. That is a separate issue from inerrancy and Tony conflates the two. I never said that I was in all instances arguing for a more strict interpretation of Scripture or the law. If Tony did in fact read my book (AFKC), he should know this as I make it quite clear that on a lot of issues I'm on the more loose side within the church today. I argued for inerrancy and that only means that the original autographs could not err because they were fully inspired by the Holy Spirit. Further, on certain points, such as divorce and lust, the Pharisees were rather loose and Jesus held to a far, far more strict interpretation of the law. This is made quite evident in the Sermon on the Mount.

Tony talks about how the Jews of Jesus' day were expecting a David like Messiah. All this proves is that they were misinterpreting the OT. The OT plainly talks about both the Suffering Servant Messiah and the Conquering Messiah. The Jews tried to largely explain away the former and so yes it led to a distorted view of the Messiah. But this is not simply a matter of conservative vs. liberal, this is a matter of twisting the Scriptures. As I make clear in my book (AFKC), sometimes the church must take a conservative stance within a given culture, while at other times it must take a more liberal stance within a given culture. We do not decide who is right merely by looking at who is more conservative vs. who is more liberal. We look to Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> It has often been mistakenly asserted that the Sadducees did not accept a canon beyond the Pentateuch. This has been debunked and I don't want anyone to read into my statement here that I believe this erroneous idea as well. The Sadducees believed in the full OT canon; they simply said that everything beyond the Pentateuch cannot add any doctrinal content to the Pentateuch, that it must be used solely to supplement the Pentateuch, and must always submit to the Pentateuch. Where the rest of the OT seemed to be adding doctrinal content to the Pentateuch, it was largely allegorized. Hence, functionally speaking they did take away from the OT and that is what I am referring to here.

Everywhere the true church is found in predominantly Muslim; Catholic; Eastern Orthodox; or Communist countries or cultures; the church must be the more liberal ideology on the table within that culture. Things are by nature very different in our culture because of the fact that our culture was largely started by devout Historic Evangelicals (primarily the Puritans). This does not mean that we should by default always adopt the most conservative position on any given issue. It does mean though, that overall we cannot help but push for conservatism in our culture because the more we as a culture stray from our roots the more we are going to be straying from Biblical Christianity. Tony needs to disprove Traditional Evangelicalism and prove PC on the merits and not essentially say, "We are more progressive, therefore we are by definition more correct." If this is true, then the Atheists are correct for they have "progressed" past any profession of any version of "Christianity" altogether.

With that said, I want to be clear that I am not using the label *Conservative* or *Traditional Evangelical* simply to refer to American Evangelicalism. I am using it in the historical sense to distinguish it from Liberal Protestantism (LP from here forward). The latter came after the former and so from a church history perspective it is the liberal position and is rightfully labeled as such. However, if the gospel ever saw a major resurgence in a culture that had long since become predominantly LP, the church would find itself in the odd position of being the more liberal ideology from a cultural perspective while being the more conservative position from a theological and church history vantage point. My guess is that a term more along the lines of *Historic Evangelicalism* would become more common among those in the true church in such a situation. A new term, along the lines of *Modern Protestantism*, would also probably develop to describe the reigning paradigm. And make no mistake about it, the LP culture would fight against this liberal resurgence with all the tenacity that any conservative ideology fights for its life at any given point in history in any given culture.

Tony then goes on to say that even the original 12 disciples of Christ did not fully understand the nature of the Messiah, even as late as the Jerusalem Council. Tony

goes on to say that Paul had to oppose the apostles in Jerusalem over the question of circumcision and that it was Peter who was chief among these opponents. Tony gets so much wrong here it's not even funny. Tony is so sloppy in his scholarship and arguments. Please read my essay, "The Errors of Tony Jones," where I fully document this. And we see this very sloppiness on full display in this section of his opening statement.

Yes, the disciples were still confused over many details concerning their Lord because they had been raised in a context that was largely ruled over by heretics. There is nothing surprising about this and it proves nothing in favor of Tony's contentions. And Paul was not in opposition to the apostles in Jerusalem, and Peter in particular. Tony is entirely conflating Acts 15 with Galatians 2. These were not the same incident; Galatians 2 describes an incident that took place in Antioch for crying out loud! Paul was opposed to the proto-Judaizers, who went on to become full-blown heretics that the New Testament (NT from here forward) condemns throughout. Acts 15 is post-Acts 10 and so the idea that Peter would be sweepingly opposed to Paul in such an official capacity on this question is untenable. The Jerusalem apostles were initially not sure how to answer this question and the Spirit guided them to the correct answer. And James even quotes from the OT to confirm the point! And it wasn't only that the Judaizers were saying that Gentiles need to be circumcised and go through Judaism in order to be obedient, although that would have been bad enough. They were specifically saying that anyone, Jew or Gentile, had to be circumcised to be saved, which is a false gospel. That is the most important point that was upheld at the Council.

Tony then goes on to again assert that the gospel is always progressive. It is always expanding to be more inclusive. But, if this was always the case, why did God get so mad at those within Israel who were always trying to move the nation in a more syncretistic direction. And why not be universalists and accept all religions as they are? Why do we even need to preach that people need to go through "Jesus?" Isn't it more broad and expansive to simply say that we can believe whatever we want and "god" doesn't care and will give eternal life to everyone? Tony can argue all he wants that this

is on some level what the Bible teaches, but it is a ridiculous contention in the extreme. Yes, circumcision is replaced by baptism and is thus no longer required for Jew or Gentile, but we know this because of God's revelation. That is always the standard and not whomever happens to be the most progressive at any given point of redemptive history.

And why not accept the more inclusive sexual ethic found among the followers of that "Woman Jezebel," in Revelation 2? Tony can say that Revelation is not as authoritative, but why should that matter? Even if one wants to argue that Revelation was not written by the Apostle John and was written very late, it clearly was written by someone professing to be a "Christian" at a certain point in redemptive history. And therefore it cannot be dismissed as a historical witness by anyone, even the most strident Atheist. Hence, we can safely conclude that this group did in fact exist otherwise the author would not have mentioned them. His audience was clearly aware of them. And from that historical witness, it is rather transparent that they were advocating a sexual ethic that was far more progressive than what the church as a whole had been teaching. So this group was in the right. Tony may retort that perhaps they were indeed in the right. But if that is the case, where does it stop? Why would bestiality and pedophilia be condemned? Tony can argue that those are fundamentally different categories because animals and children cannot truly consent and further we know that pedophilia is horrifically damaging to children. The problem for him is that those would be robustly conservative arguments on those points. If we are always to take the more progressive position, Tony cannot consistently make that case.

And while the Judaizers may have been sort of the more conservative party at the time of the Jerusalem Council, eventually they became the more liberal party compared to the early church. In all likelihood, the Judaizers became the Ebionites. And the Ebionites progressed beyond the conservative positions of the church regarding the deity of Christ and justification by faith alone. So, why were the Ebionites wrong? The orthodox were the more conservative party concerning the deity of Christ and yet Tony claims to still believe in the deity of "Christ." And what about the "Super Apostles," the

proto-Gnostics, and the proto-Preterists? All of these groups came after the apostles and therefore were the more liberal groups. So why are they so strenuously condemned throughout the NT?

Tony can argue that he only means to use the term *progressive* in the sense of broadening out the gospel in terms of race; ethnicity; culture; gender; etc.; but how then can he say anything other than that people should be allowed to live however they want and God will accept everyone, no strings attached whatsoever? Who is he to tell Muslims not to be Muslims? Islam in many parts of the world is not only a religion. It is the culture in many parts of the world. Who is he to tell pedophiles that they cannot do what they want? The LGBT+ community today largely sees itself as a cultural subcategory. Why cannot pedophiles see themselves in the same light? Who is he to put limits on things? He can say that these are not racial or gender groups, but why limit things only to those categories? He clearly doesn't do this with the LGBT+ community. Further, the orthodox church has always said that all people are welcome to receive Christ irrespective of race or gender. Therefore, there would be no major difference between us and his position. But, it is plain from his writings and the debate that he means to convey the idea of broadening out as much as possible period. And there is no way for him to consistently hold to this notion.

Tony then goes on to say that he and the PC movement are more in line with Martin Luther and the Reformers. Tony knows full well what nonsense this and what revisionist history this is, but it is a very common tactic among LP leaders of all stripes. It has been a very common argument among them since the inception of their wicked religion. Luther did not see himself as an innovator or revolutionary; this cannot be more passionately emphasized. This is one of the reasons he so despised the Anabaptists. Luther was the chief liberal of his day, but that is only because medieval Catholicism ruled over the culture of Western Europe at the time. How could he be otherwise! Luther was calling the church back to the authority of the Bible and not to his own "progressive" innovations. He would have been highly offended by Tony's representation of him here. According to Tony's own logic, the LDS were the most correct in their day because they

were the biggest innovators in town. Tony can argue all he wants that I am misrepresenting him here, and that his focus is on the fact that Luther made it easier for people to receive the gospel, but again, then why not make it completely easy and say that no one has to do anything? Everyone can continue as they are and “god” will accept them. That would be the broadest way of extending the gospel.

Tony goes on to talk about Luther’s translation. He says that this was one of his most important innovations and that this was unthinkable to the Vatican. This was not an innovation. The OT had been translated into the Septuagint and is often quoted in the NT, thus showing God’s stamp of approval on good Bible translating. The Vatican was just wrong on this point, but not merely because they took the more conservative position of their day. Why not accept Charles T. Russell’s translation? That translation was anathema not only to the Traditional Evangelicals of his day, but also to the LP adherents of his day as well. Tony can argue that what made Russell’s translation so wrong is that he was not going about it in an ethical manner. He had no training and he was changing the meaning of the originals. But so what? How do we really know he was changing the meaning of the originals when each individual has the hermeneutical authority to interpret the Scriptures however they want (as Tony will later go on to say)? Maybe the “spirit” was guiding Russell to help Christians because the doctrine of the Trinity is so hard to understand and because the doctrine of hell is so unpalatable. Russell maintained that he was moving the church in a better direction. Who is Tony to say that he was wrong to do so? Tony’s entire case is incoherent from beginning to end.

Later, Tony also goes on to say that the Reformers believed that all Christians were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They most certainly did not believe this. They believed that all Christians had the internal testimony of the Spirit and the illumination of the Spirit, but these doctrines are not at all the same thing as the doctrine of inspiration, which was given to the prophets and apostles alone. Perhaps Tony merely misspoke here. But, even if that is the case, the testimony and the illumination of the Spirit were never ever interpreted by the Reformers as giving to the believer the right to interpret Scripture



however he or she pleased, as Tony says and implies on multiple occasions throughout the debate.

Tony then goes on to say that the Pilgrims are his people because they were the first Congregationalists. Oh... my.... Wow. The Pilgrims would have been overtly disgusted by Tony and would have swiftly labeled him an arch heretic. They would have been far more scathing in their rhetoric towards him than I am. They would have made me look like a bashful school girl. Merely because the movement has for the most part apostatized and he is now a part of the apostate movement centuries later, in no way makes him one with the original movement on any level. He can say all he wants that he holds to the spirit of the movement, but this is LP rubbish. Reasonable development and change is of course permissible in any movement, but any movement that entirely rejects the fundamental pillars of the original movement is duty bound from an ethical standpoint to be honest and say that they are no longer a part of that original movement in any sense. The fact that LP has routinely refused to be honest on this front only shows how disingenuous and hypocritical the religion is.

And yes, like Luther, the Pilgrims were the liberals of their day compared to Rome. They were even more liberal than the Lutherans. But they were robustly conservative compared to the Quakers and Shakers, whom they could not stand. So, should we be Quakers and Shakers Tony? Again, there is no way to hold to this line of thinking with any modicum of consistency. His statement about how the Pilgrims left Europe because they honored the hermeneutical conscience of the believer above all else is historical gibberish. Tony has convinced himself that the historic Protestant position is that the believer has the right to interpret the Bible however he pleases. No early Protestant leader ever advocated any such doctrine, or any doctrine remotely approaching it. They said that each individual believer has the right and *responsibility* to read and interpret the Bible for oneself. This meant that the believer was not subject to a church hierarchy that would interpret the Bible for him. This means that on secondary matters, there is freedom in the body of Christ to interpret the Bible and come to one's own conclusions. But even here, this does not mean one can interpret the Bible as she sees fit because it

is a secondary matter. It means that we all recognize that the Bible is not unequivocally clear on all doctrines and therefore believers will make mistakes. We are not to condemn each other as brothers and sisters in Christ over these secondary doctrines. And no one has the right to say that the Bible says other than what it says when it speaks with unequivocal clarity, as it does concerning so many doctrines.

The Pilgrims vehemently condemned Rome, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers and Shakers as heretics. This clearly proves that they did not hold to any doctrine along the lines of what Tony attributes to them. Tony goes on to say that the Pilgrims rejected the priests dressing up like kings merely because that practice had been outgrown. Has he ever read anything from the Pilgrims? Good grief. They rejected that practice because they saw zero biblical justification for it and this conclusion was part of their robust theology on the regulative principle. One has to wonder if Tony even knows what that principle is.

He goes on to assume his definition of *Christianity*, a definition I roundly reject. True Christianity is not the largest religion in the world, and it certainly is not the most powerful from a worldly perspective. I reject Rome; Eastern Orthodoxy; LP; and the Pseudo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement; all as heretical and as being fundamentally their own distinct religions. When splitting things up in this manner, Islam is the largest religion in the world. Tony also says that all other religions in the world are bound to an ethnicity. I have no idea what he is talking about. Every major religion today accepts people from all ethnicities. He can say that some, like Hinduism, happen to be very culturally bound to an ethnicity from a sociological viewpoint, but that in no way means that they exclude other ethnicities. He can say that the point he is making is that while on paper other religions don't reject other ethnicities, it is only Christianity that can truly penetrate all cultures. The problem for him is that for most of the history of the church Christianity was limited to Europeans. Other religions can easily argue that in the future they will break out of their ethnic strongholds as well. Islam for example, is found throughout the Middle East, North Africa (including among millions of those of actual African descent as far as race goes), and throughout Southeast Asia. The largest

Islamic country is Indonesia. I would agree with Tony that Islam has not had a tremendous amount of success among people of European and Latino descent, but again, they can argue that this will change as it eventually changed for Christianity.

He also says that every religion we can think of is bound to a geography. Again, what is he talking about? Islam is found all over the world. Buddhism is found all over the world. The LDS Church is found all over the world. Jehovah's Witnesses are found all over the world. If he wants to say that these religions are predominantly found in one geographical region, ok I guess. But as stated above, Islam is dominant in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Southeast Asia. And there are parts of the world where Biblical Christianity is almost completely absent, such as the Middle East. This is not a powerful argument Tony is making at all.

Next Tony tries to get political. He again says that the Jews of Jesus' day were trying to preserve a Judaism of the past. That isn't true. They were trying to preserve the Judaism that they had themselves developed by that day, a Judaism that had thoroughly strayed from God's word and therefore had largely apostatized. Then he goes on to make the completely lame and predictable argument that Traditional Evangelicalism is shamelessly tied to the Republican Party. This is a common PC tactic. They will often erroneously define Traditional Evangelicalism as being limited to white American Conservative Evangelicals. I reject such a definition of Conservative Evangelicalism with all my heart.

As I go on later to make clear, Conservative Evangelicals are found all over the world. It is made up of both genders, all races, and every nationality and ethnicity. And even in America, not all Conservative Evangelicals are Republicans. Most minority Conservative Evangelicals do not vote Republican, especially among our African American brothers and sisters in Christ. Many among them positively despise the Republican Party. Now Tony and many others will retort that they are by definition not Conservative Evangelicals precisely because they so predominantly vote Democrat. This is hogwash and frankly I'm so sick of this misrepresentation. I understand that most

of these fellow wonderful believers get lumped into the “Historically Black” category. But that is largely a sociological category and not a theological or ecclesiastical category. It is true that many in this category are LP. With that fully admitted, many of the denominations and people that get placed in that category are robustly Conservative Evangelical in theology and practice. The Church of God in Christ denomination is one of the most Conservative and Evangelical denominations on the planet. It is also the largest Pentecostal denomination in our nation. I encourage the reader to Google “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” and peruse all the information given there to see that all I’m saying is in fact the case.<sup>2</sup>

Now it is true that many white American Conservative Evangelicals have overly aligned themselves with the Republican Party, and that many have indeed shamelessly supported Trump. I am deeply against this reality. To be clear, I am no “Big-Eva” guy. I absolutely believe that it is sinful for any true Christian to vote Democrat. But I do not believe it is such a serious sin as to warrant any accusation that such a Christian is not truly saved. This is why I accept my brothers and sisters in Christ spoken of above who vote Democrat. And I voted for Trump in 2020 very reluctantly as I make clear in my book *A Simple Guide to the Basics of the Bible*. This book can be found on my website. I encourage the reader to read chapter 3 of that book to get my full take on how I approach the issue of Trump. (And this vote seems all the more wise given the reversal of Roe and so I would without hesitation vote for Trump again despite how repugnant I find much of his behavior and rhetoric). With all that laid out, is Trumpism a huge problem among Conservative Evangelicals in Nigeria? Is it a huge problem among Conservative Evangelicals in Kenya? In South Korea? In Brazil? These are all countries with sizable populations of Traditional Evangelicals. Tony is cherry picking and it is thoroughly unconvincing.

And while he brings up many true believers in his list of offenders regarding shamelessly supporting the Republican Party, not all of them are orthodox Evangelicals. Hagee is highly questionable in this respect, and I and most other knowledgeable

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<sup>2</sup> See footnote 66 on page 306 of AFKC for the full information on this site.

Conservative Evangelicals reject Paula White as a full-blown Word of Faith heretic. Tony should know this. He says he didn't pick fringe folks, but he doesn't define what he means by "fringe." I am assuming he means that everyone on his list is well known and I would agree that everyone on his list does in fact fit that bill. But, that hardly means they are all not fringe for that reason alone. Some of them are fringe figures from a theological standpoint.

Tony also completely misrepresents Mohler. Mohler was a vehement opponent of Trump support in 2015 and 2016. Mohler, like myself, only supported Trump in 2020 as he felt he had no other legitimate moral choice. That is hardly the same thing as shameless Trumpism. And I want to apologize for not making that more clear in my rebuttal section when I addressed the issue of Trumpism briefly. I fully support all the ministry efforts of the great Mohler despite having some theological disagreements with him.

Tony then goes on to talk about white supremacy and Christian Nationalism within the Conservative Evangelical movement. Again, this is hardly a worldwide problem. And where it still is a problem within the church, we must work harder to condemn it and eradicate it. But none of this disproves Conservative Evangelicalism as a whole.

Tony also fails to recognize how ruthlessly political and partisan his movement has become. John Pavlovitz might as well be an official spokesman for the Democratic Party. And while he is the worst example of this, he is hardly alone. The movement as a whole has become extremely wed to the Democratic Party and leftist politics in general. There's an excellent article on this very phenomenon by George Yancey.<sup>3</sup> I referenced this article in the cross section and Tony became rather perturbed as we cannot question PC. It is a tautology within the movement that they are right and we are the dumb fundies and so how dare!! I appreciate Tony's passion in this section, but unfortunately for him, his entire case on this point falls flat.

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<sup>3</sup> The article can be found here:  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/political-progressive-conservative-christians/>.

Tony then brings up the very famous podcast by Christianity Today on Mark Driscoll. This podcast was very entertaining, informative, and well done from a production value perspective. But the podcast had a clear theological slant and goal. Conservative Evangelicals are the bad guys and PC leaders are the grand heroes. Despite Driscoll's huge popularity within certain segments of the American church at one time, and the subsequent scandal, the fact remains that the vast majority of the true church the world over has never even heard of Driscoll. Pointing out flaws in certain segments of the church in no way disproves Traditional Evangelicalism altogether. This is simply a red herring and Tony knows it. It will undoubtedly score him points with those in his movement, but as a broader point it establishes zilch.

And even within the American church, Driscoll had many critics. I was very critical of him. Most in my denomination at the time (the Presbyterian Church in America [PCA]) were quite critical of him. John MacArthur, hardly a Conservative Evangelical slouch or nobody, was deeply and publicly critical of him. Tony seeks to paint with one brush and it isn't going to work.

And I grow so sick of PC slanders against God's true church on earth today. The church is far from perfect today. I believe that the church is in a horrible state from a purely biblical perspective. I believe that the church is in need of deep reform, both theologically and practically. I agree with a lot of Tony's criticisms when taken alone as isolated points against certain segments of the church. But I have been immersed in the church for the past twenty plus years, and I can say without hesitation that God's true people are some of the most loving and kind people on the planet. People can say that I am biased all they want, but that has been my genuine experience. I have been in many churches all over the world, and I have ministered in diverse environments all over the world as well. And I have seen the very same types of slander against the LDS Church. Clearly I am not biased towards that religion as I reject it with all of my being on theological grounds. Ex-"Mormons," many Atheists, and those to the left politically, are ruthless in their mockery and critiques of the LDS faith. I have been deeply associated with those in that religion and I can say that this is unvarnished slander. I have met nice

Atheists and PC folks, but they are not the norm. They tend to be angry and nasty. Many PC folks, like Tony, love to spew explicatives as if it makes them cool somehow. And that is not only my experience. Alisa Childers, someone who is almost universally recognized as a genuinely nice and winsome person, has publicly talked about having similar experiences with PC adherents.

And while Tony was far, far nicer to me in our email correspondence leading up to the debate than most PC folks have been to me, something I have been very transparent about with people, there is no question that I was far more polite than he was. He was often very short in his responses. At one point, he refused to respond to one of my emails wherein I made a very reasonable request. He was smug and self-righteous throughout our debate, something many people have commented upon to me. He was rude right before the debate. He proceeded to lecture me after the debate because it did not go how he wanted it to go. And he acted in a very cowardly and unethical manner by bowing out of our scheduled podcast with Justin Brierley to discuss the debate. So Tony can take his lectures towards God's true church elsewhere.

Tony then goes on to talk about the book *UnChristian* and how it allegedly shows that the world sees the church in a negative light. First, how does Tony know that what many have in mind is not PC or some other version of "Christianity?" These surveys are always very broad and so why think that these negative impressions are only a result of Traditional Evangelicalism? This is a gratuitous and entirely circular statement. And even if the surveys were specifically geared towards looking at the orthodox Evangelical church, so much of what gets labeled *Evangelical* these days is not. Tony later in our debate talks about how he considers himself Evangelical on some level. Many PC folks still want to be considered Evangelical. Many sociologists lump pretty much anything and everything that is not Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox into the broad labels of *Protestantism* and/or *Evangelicalism*.

Before I am ever going to take any such studies seriously, I would want to see where true Evangelicalism is carefully defined, and then the surveys that were taken of local

people as to how they feel about specific churches in their area that meet the narrow criteria of the carefully crafted definition of *Historic Evangelical*. And even then, many people are going to hate the true Jesus and His true church no matter what until we capitulate to certain views where they demand we submit. It doesn't matter how nice and kind we are, how much we do outreach to the community, for some we will always be the bad guys until we reject certain core teachings of the Bible that they cannot stomach.

He goes on to insist that when people use these negative words to describe Christians that they are not talking about PC. How does he know this? One of the 4 big ones he says that the world says about us is that we are too political. I have already pointed to an article that demonstrates that PC is largely becoming far too political itself. So again, how is Tony so certain that people do not have PC folks in mind? And then he goes on to say that these descriptors specifically implicate me. However, later in the debate he tries to say that he is not going after me specifically, but only the movement that I am trying to defend. Clearly that is not the case.

Tony then shifts into his attack on inerrancy. He starts by saying that other Evangelicals don't even believe in inerrancy. I reject his definition of *Evangelicalism* as thoroughly unhistorical. He goes on to bring up Fuller and says that it is a thoroughly Evangelical institution. It is not. Ever since it rejected inerrancy, it has drifted more and more from Evangelical orthodoxy, as is always the case when inerrancy is rejected. The mere fact that they have hired someone like Tony more than proves the case (see my essay "The Errors of Tony Jones"). Further, Richard Mouw was President of Fuller for 20 years and advocated all sorts of unbiblical positions. Most notably, he tried to say that LDS folks are true Christians and should be accepted as such.

Tony then tries to attack the doctrine from a historical standpoint, spouting out common lame objections from the LP world. I more than answered all of this in my book (AFKC). The fact that Tony fails to even remotely interact with the extensive case I provide for inerrancy leads me to believe that he never read my book. And I stand by that. I am not



saying that I know with infallible certainty whether he read it or not. I am saying that based on how he acted in the debate, I personally don't believe that he did. But even if he did, how does that fact help him? Is it not unethical to fail to even bring up for the audience the fact that I provided such a robust case for the doctrine, both biblically and historically? If he found the case unconvincing, fine, but then explain to us what about it was so unconvincing. To simply regurgitate LP talking points as if I've never heard them before is very, very weak.

I cannot believe he had the nerve to bring up Augustine; Aquinas; Luther; and Calvin; when I directly interact with them so carefully in my book. If he did read the book and made these statements, he is about as misleading as it gets. And if he didn't read the book, he is an overt liar as he repeatedly and emphatically stated during and after the debate that he did read it. He then goes on to say that these men did not read the Bible literally. This is highly misleading and I again deal with this very objection at length in multiple places in my book. I even provide a quote from Aquinas where he makes it clear that the literal sense trumps all the other senses. I do not believe that Tony read my book or has actually read anything from Aquinas at all. I sincerely do not.

Tony then goes on to erect ridiculous straw man arguments such as the notion that as inerrantists we are forced to posit that "god" put fossils in the layers to test the faith of scientists. Almost no Conservative Evangelical leader believes this. Come on Tony, you can do better.

Tony then goes on to repeat his belief that PC is more in keeping with "Jesus" because "Jesus" was all about bringing in more people to the fold. Again, this is highly misleading. Even during the old covenant era, anyone could become a follower of God. It is true that they had to join the Jewish nation and that this was more restrictive than the new covenant, but it is still worthy of note that this basic principle has always existed throughout redemptive history. And yes, in the new covenant we do not have to specifically become part of the nation of Israel, and God promised to bring in more people as far as sheer numbers and as far as diversity is concerned. But it is still

important to note that Jesus was explicitly clear that only a few would be saved in the big scheme of things (Mt 7:13-14 and Lk 13:22-30). That fact completely undercuts Tony's case.

Tony then brings up secondary, albeit very important, issues. Women's ordination, the preaching of divorced men, etc., are all matters that the Bible is not completely clear on. I certainly have my positions on these issues, but the church can and does often change on secondary teachings. The issue between Tony and I is over matters where the Bible is unequivocally clear. To deny these matters is to deny the authority of the Bible itself, and to do that is to deny the authority of God Himself.

Tony then tries to bring up monogamous gay relationships. Man is he behind the times. Most of the PC movement doesn't even advocate this anymore! Tony seriously needs to stop hunting so much and be more engaged with the theological world. If he doesn't want to do so, he should not continue to call himself a theologian. Read Nadia Bolz-Weber's *Shameless*. This has become the new orthodoxy within PC on the question of sexuality and it overtly denies the necessity for monogamy altogether. And that is clearly the more progressive position, and so according to Tony's own logic he cannot reject it.

Tony routinely conflates essential issues with secondary issues. He says that the church's view on the LGBT+ community will change over time. Of course it will. It already has in many respects. We will continue to debate and adapt concerning difficult issues such as conversion therapy; reverse surgeries; how to address children in the church who claim to be LGBT+; etc. But on the core essential issue, namely that all homosexual acts are sinful and that rejecting one's sex is also sinful, the church will never change. That is because on that issue the Bible has spoken with unequivocal clarity.

Tony then goes on to entirely misrepresent Historic Protestantism once again. Yes, we have hermeneutical freedom and authority. But that also comes with hermeneutical

responsibility. Again, I address all of this in my book (AFKC). I am not calling us back to a hegemonic hierarchy along the lines of what is found in Rome. I make this quite clear in my book. I am actually all for denominations for this very reason. The fact that there are so many denominations is one of the biggest criticisms that is leveled against the church today, but I have always said that it reflects the freedom Christians have to interpret the Bible for themselves. We must allow for freedom on secondary issues. Now this does not mean we should not debate these secondary issues. They are indeed very important and often have very real practical implications for the church. And on certain ones, I think the Bible does get very close to being unequivocally clear, making errors on these points all the more dire. And yet, the freedom still remains.

None of this means however, that we as Christians can interpret the Bible in any manner we please. Such is a monumental stretch and Tony knows this. To argue as Tony does is to make the individual the authority and not the Bible itself. And that is precisely the achilles heel of all forms of LP, PC very much included. And as I point out in my book, think of the vile hypocrisy here. Tony would be livid if we interpreted his works however we wanted. What if I said that he teaches racism, sexism, homophobia, and many other things Tony hates. He can respond all he wants that there is no way to interpret him in such a manner, but if I have full hermeneutical authority to interpret as I please, he cannot make this objection. The idea that we have the right to interpret God in ways that we would never allow towards ourselves is grave evil. It is truly blasphemous. Tony can say that he never interprets the Bible in such outlandish ways, but he clearly does (see my essay “The Errors of Tony Jones”).

## Rebuttals

### **Tony’s Rebuttal**

Tony begins by whining about how I allegedly engaged in *ad hominem*. The charge only stands if I said something that was not true or was in no way relevant to the debate. I did neither. Everything I said was true and was exceedingly relevant to the thesis of the

debate. It is the PC side that constantly lauds itself as the great exhibitors of biblical orthodoxy, while our side allegedly engages in ungodly behavior. We saw that on full display throughout his opening statement. Therefore, it is entirely relevant for me to address that, especially since, as I make clear at the beginning of my opening statement, many in his camp probably wouldn't even be willing to totally listen to what I had to say on point two if I did not first address point one as I did. And Tony's errors are egregious, especially for someone of his stature, and they do not only implicate him as I make clear in my opening statement. They plainly implicate the movement as a whole because the major leaders of the movement are all implicated as well. He and others can say that I made the same exact error that I chastise him for above in regard to trying to implicate the whole movement of Traditional Evangelicalism based on a few bad actors. But that isn't the case at all. Many of the people Tony mentioned are not even considered leaders by most Conservative Evangelicals. The people I pointed to are universally recognized as the leaders of the PC movement throughout the world.

Tony then goes on to misrepresent my opening statement. This is *highly* significant and I ask the reader not to gloss over this fact. Later in the debate he became very upset by my statements that I do not believe he read my book. But am I supposed to believe he actually read my book when he is not even willing to take the time to listen to my opening statement with any care in real time during a formal debate with me? And this is so indicative of the PC movement. They don't even need to deign to listen to us carefully. We have not earned their respect. And in case it seems like I am reading too much into things here, I was able to see him during my opening statement even though the audience cannot see him on the recording. During his opening statement, I was listening carefully and taking notes as quickly as I could. During mine, Tony sat back with his face in his hand looking bored to death.

I made explicitly clear that while I do have serious disagreements with his radical voluntarism, that was not specifically what I was attacking in my opening statement. I was attacking the way he defends that doctrine, and the way he defends many other doctrines as well. He routinely misrepresents the most basic of facts. I fully defend this

in my essay “The Errors of Tony Jones.” And I did not provide only one anecdotal piece of evidence. I made it clear that there were three other pieces already posted on my website at the time of the debate. He could have asked me to address any one of these and I would have been happy to do so. And I’m well aware of the fact that many in PC do not ascribe to his radical voluntarism. I never said otherwise. Again, he was not listening. The point I was making is that some of the biggest leaders in the movement endorsed his book in spite of the fact that it is littered with some of the most overt and basic errors of fact. That does in fact implicate them.

I never said that the vast majority of biblical scholars over the past 150 years held to inerrancy. Again, he is incapable of actually listening. And I hope the defenders of Tony take notice of this. Why is it that he can’t actually debate the issues without misrepresenting the other side? He does it here and he does it throughout his books. Is this not extremely telling? I understand that Tony is a better speaker than I am. I understand that he comes off as more authoritative than myself throughout the debate. I understand that he got in some good jabs at points. I understand that he has more credentials than I do on paper. So, I fully understand all of the reasons why many in his camp may think he won the debate. I am more than willing to concede that he did in fact do so on style points. But, when it came to actual content and argumentation, there is no way to say this. And clearly I don’t say that because I am such a good debater. I showed that I really am not. This is because the case for PC is so weak. Once you take away the smoke and mirrors, PC leaders are left with very, very little.

Continuing with his inability to listen to me during the debate, I said that the vast majority of the best biblical scholars over the past 150 years have held that Jesus believed in and taught inerrancy despite the fact that many of these scholars themselves rejected inerrancy. And I was quite clear that all of the scholars I referenced did not embrace the doctrine. Tony then goes on a tirade about current biblical scholars on the question of Jesus and inerrancy. I did not say current biblical scholars, I said the best biblical scholars of the past 150 years. And he’s the one who is plain wrong there. Far more do believe that Jesus taught inerrancy than he lets on. They think Jesus was

wrong. Inerrancy was not an invention of the 19th century and the fact that so many current biblical scholars repeat this nonsense only shows the paltry state of current scholarship. I thoroughly debunk all of this in my book (AFKC). Tony says that Jesus misquotes Scripture without providing a scintilla of evidence for this.

I do not use the terms *infallibility* and *inerrancy* interchangeably. Again, I make this point quite clear in my book and if Tony had actually read it, he would know this. The terms were used somewhat interchangeably though, at the beginning of the 20th century and that is reflected in some of the quotes I gave from the scholars I cited. Tony does not know this because he is not actually that knowledgeable of historical theology, despite the fact that he pretends otherwise. With all that said, it was later LP theologians who tried to sever the two terms and that was an absolutely made up distinction. It was not the orthodox that were making things up. Tony takes this severing for granted, repeats the LP doctrine as if it is fact, and acts like that is that. Anyone can look up all the quotes I provide and you will see that all of the scholars I cite who use the term *infallible* are using it as an umbrella term for infallibility and inerrancy. This is because while the terms are not identical, inerrancy is implied in infallibility. These scholars knew this and it was only later when LP theologians woefully distorted the meaning of infallibility that the terms had to be more sharply distinguished and clarified. Look up the quote I paraphrased from Kirsopp Lake in particular. It can be found in my book (AFKC) on page 233. He specifically uses infallibility to describe the doctrine of the Fundamentalists!

And why does Tony assume that I have not read Marsden and Noll? I have not read a ton from Marsden because what I have read I have found terribly unimpressive. Marsden is biased and it shines through in his works. Many might say that I only feel this way because he disproves much of what I say, and that is precisely why Tony references him. Marsden does not. He often does offer sound historical analysis of much of what happened during the 20th century, but theologically he proves nothing. And while I have deep theological disagreements with Noll, his bias rarely comes through in his writings. He is truly one of the best church historians of our age and I

have devoured his works. I list 11 of his works in my bibliography! And Tony would know this if he had read my book. Seeing a pattern here? I don't say that I am very skeptical about Tony's claim to having read my book to be mean or petty. I have many convincing reasons for coming to this conclusion from our debate. And again, if he did read it, that only makes things all the worse because why does he repeatedly make statements that plainly imply I have not already addressed a certain issue when he would know full well that I have in my book?

And Tony's entire representation leading up to his statement on Marsden and Noll reflects an astounding ignorance of church history and historical theology. I highly doubt based upon what he said that he's even read much of Marsden or Noll. Tony often name drops in his books and speaking engagements, and he did that as well in our debate. He does this to make him look to his unsuspecting audience like he is more informed than he is. He made it sound like inerrancy was basically invented in the late 19th century, then basically disappeared, and was only revived when a bunch of hyper-conservatives decided to abandon the great Fuller, leading to the alleged modern inerrancy craze towards the end of the 20th century. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fuller was a bulwark of inerrancy and abandoned that doctrine. He makes it sound like Fuller never held to inerrancy, but that it only held to the LP doctrine of infallibility, and that it was later conservatives who were trying to rock the boat. That is the exact opposite of how things went down. And the entire Fundamentalist-Modernist debate was largely centered around inerrancy! And that debate took place at the beginning of the 20th century! It is true that the term *inerrancy* was not as common as the term *infallibility* because the latter term was used as an umbrella term, as I have stated. But the latter term was the battle term that was used by the Fundamentalists. It was only later that the LP theologians twisted the meaning and the former term began to become more prominent as the term both sides used to either affirm (the conservatives) or despise (the LP side) the biblical doctrine.

Even Dorrien and FitzGerald (in *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* and *The Evangelicals* respectively), two historians that are hardly sympathetic to the

Conservative Evangelical cause, both go into great detail in these works concerning the central place inerrancy played in the debates between Historic Evangelicals and LP theologians throughout the 20th century. They both do try to say that inerrancy was essentially an invention of the 19th century and on this score their scholarship is atrocious (the latter largely relies on the former for this point). But the focus of these works (which is for the most part well-researched and presented in both works) was Evangelicalism in the 20th century, and they both make it quite clear that inerrancy was hardly a doctrine that was dormant until the late 70's as Tony says.

Chicago was not about inerrancy vs. infallibility at all. The Council makes this quite clear. Infallibility is a stronger concept that embraces inerrancy, and the leaders at that Council have made this clear time and time again in their writings since the Council. They were repudiating the distortion of the concept of infallibility that had developed within LP in the middle of the 20th century.

### **My Rebuttal**

I stand by everything said here with a few exceptions. First, as said earlier, I should have carefully distinguished Mohler from the rest of the people Tony referenced and that I critiqued. I apologize for not doing so. I was trying to go fast and so mistakes were made. Second, I said that it was Scripture that brought Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy back. They did not come back to Scripture, but have only gotten worse since the Reformation. I meant to say that the true people of God were brought back to God by Scripture. Those that were already truly saved at the time of the Reformation left these communities and joined Protestantism because of Scripture. Third, I later misspoke and said that I had taken notes on Tony for the past 100 years. Woops!! I meant to say over the past one and a half years. My bad! Fourth, I again misspoke when I said that two hundred years from now Atheists might be wrong, when I meant to say that they may be right according to Tony's standard. Fifth, I again misspoke (I'm so sorry for misspeaking so many times; it is embarrassing, but I tend to do that when I get riled up) when I said that the Congregationalists were certainly the conservatives of their



day compared to Rome, but they were not the conservatives of their day compared to the Quakers. I meant to say that they were certainly the liberals of their day compared to Rome, but were not the liberals of their day compared to the Quakers.

## Cross Examination

### **My Cross of Tony**

Tony starts out by trying to weasel out of my question, but in the end is forced to grant what I'm asking. He then says that while formal terms for doctrines do appear later than the actual doctrines themselves, that this does not happen often. I then pointed out, rightfully, that such a statement reflects a gross ignorance of historical theology. This is entirely true. I recommend the reader thoroughly go over Jaroslav Pelikan's 5 volume work on the subject and one will quickly see that there is no doubt Tony is wrong here. Tony then gets extremely upset at me and threatens to stop the debate. I admit that from this point on until I really got rolling in Tony's cross of me, I was somewhat walking on eggshells. I am not trying to make excuses, but I was from then on worried that he would follow through with this threat and people had paid good money to put this debate together. I pointed out to Tony that he was trying to go after me as much as I was trying to go after him, and he responded by saying that he was only trying to go after the movement. We have already seen that this is not true.

I then go on to correct a number of things Tony says, but I admit that I was over-talking here. I needed to get to a question. Now, it should be noted, that we both agreed that the cross would have a more conversational back and forth feel unlike the traditional model, but I still should have gotten to a question sooner. And it is unfortunate that I specifically used the example of Lake because I misspoke at that point in my opening statement. But I did not realize that at this moment of the debate. The basic point I was making was still valid that infallibility and inerrancy were not sharply distinguished in the early 20th century. I admit that I should have asked about the label "PC," which is even later than the term *inerrancy*, but again I was pretty thrown off by him at that point.

I then go on to ask a question about Kugel. And Tony proceeds to go on a rant. I now have to admit that I did in the heat of the moment dogmatically say that he didn't read my book. I should not have done that and I apologize. As far as continuing to refer to my book, I reiterate that it was unimaginably frustrating that Tony kept making gratuitous statement after gratuitous statement when I had already dealt with many of the issues in those statements in a robust manner in my book. It makes it appear to the audience that I have not. And I believe that either this was quite intentional on the part of Tony or that he did not in fact read my book.

Tony then goes on to show that he did not listen to my opening statement with any care. I was explicitly clear that not a single one of the scholars I cited was conservative or held to inerrancy personally. And I hardly referred to relatively unknown scholars. Anyone calling himself a "Christian" theologian, as Tony does, would know who Harnack and Bultmann are. Either Tony is even far more ignorant than I thought or again, he was not listening very carefully. If it is the latter, as I suspect is the case, this is another very strong piece of evidence that leaders in the PC movement don't even feel like they need to deal with our arguments. We are not even worthy of their time. And this as Tony is literally accusing me of not being willing to directly deal with his arguments. And his comment about Ezra and Nehemiah was rather slick as I had specifically mentioned that part of my book in my rebuttal. Very convenient that that happened to be the very portion he was allegedly reading earlier in the day. And his statement about rolling his eyes is rude and deflective. Why is it ok when PC leaders engage in such tactics, but they get so upset when we allegedly do the same?

Tony's dismissal of Kugel is rather remarkable. Kugel is one of the foremost experts in his field and he could not be more clear that the Jews of Jesus' day held to inerrancy. I have seen no substantive rebuttal to Kugel in the entire field of biblical scholarship. And my question here, once I was finally able to get Tony back on track, was quite relevant as the PC movement incessantly scolds us for not always going along with the scholarly consensus in any given area. Tony's answer to this was lame and dismissive. He sort of

vaguely refers to global warming and says that is totally different from trying to understand a sacred text. My question wasn't even about the hermeneutics of sacred texts, it was a historical question about the view of the Jews in regard to their sacred text as a whole. That is actually quite similar to scientists looking at the scientific data in connection with global warming. If Tony and others want to say that the way the Jews interpreted and approached the Bible was primitive and off, that's fine, but I was asking a historical question about what the community as a whole thought of the text as a whole. Kugel answers this definitively. And, as I proved, he was backed up by over 150 years of the best biblical scholarship on this point. The PC movement cannot have its cake and eat it too here. If we are always to go with the scholars, then we must conclude that the Jews of Jesus' day held to inerrancy. That fact makes it almost impossible to say that Jesus had any other view given so many of his statements found throughout the Gospels.

Tony then goes on to say that we cannot make the debate about individuals in my movement or his. Oh... my... goodness.... That is precisely what he did during a huge chunk of his opening statement! And Evans was hardly some random individual in the movement that I sort of just picked off the internet. She was the Martin Luther of PC. And I was only using her as a key example of a phenomenon that is found ubiquitously in the PC movement. He then goes on to say that the debate is about American Protestantism. It was not and was never presented to him in that matter. I was quite clear with him on multiple occasions that I would be defending Traditional/Historic/orthodox Evangelicalism as it went back to the Reformation. This is sleight of hand and I don't appreciate it.

He goes on to act like I am referring to randos on the internet. He says that I referred to two in the last few minutes of my cross. That was not the case. I only referred to Evans. He was clearly talking about my earlier reference to Pavlovitz, but that was in my rebuttal. That aside, these are not two people that only represent much smaller segments of the broader movement. These are universally recognized leaders worldwide, especially Evans. That cannot be said of the people Tony referenced, some

of whom like White, are not even Conservative Evangelical at all! He then goes on to imply that both Pavlovitz and Evans painted with too broad a brush. But that undercuts a huge portion of his thesis because what Pavlovitz does is *precisely* what Tony was doing in his opening statement! I then wrap things up by reiterating what I said here above on the scholars I cited, and I still stand by what I said because Tony did nothing to substantively refute me.

If it seems that I was being inconsistent there by appealing again to a scholarly consensus when I had earlier appealed to the fact that often my community does go against the scholarly consensus on certain issues at times, I did not have time to fully clarify that there and I apologize if that was confusing. My position, and the position of most Conservative Evangelical leaders, is that we should only go against a scholarly consensus when we have overwhelmingly firm reasons for doing so. For instance, sometimes we might have to go against a scholarly consensus in the area of science due to historical reasons, and vice versa. Despite what so many think, academia is often not united. The days of seeking a synthesis in all areas of academic inquiry as in the Middle Ages, are long over. But as Christians we believe that all truth is God's truth and therefore must be united. More commonly, we have to go against a scholarly consensus in a given academic field for extremely strong philosophical or theological reasons. But this should be done with a tremendous amount of caution. And my greater point is that I am not basing my belief on inerrancy solely on the fact that the best biblical scholars of the past 150 years believed that Jesus taught inerrancy. Far from it. I lay out my foundational case in my book (AFKC). The scholarly consensus I point to is simply icing on the cake. But that icing is rather thick. And I see no reason how the PC movement can consistently dismiss that consensus. I was honestly pretty taken aback that Tony did so, and worse, really didn't even listen to the case that I laid out.

Next we got into chapter 18 of Tony's book *Did God Kill Jesus*. I will hand it to Tony, he masterfully weaseled his way out of my attempts to pin him down there. But that section was unbelievably frustrating as Tony knew exactly what I was talking about. I encourage the reader to read chapter 18 of the above book as Tony plainly teaches a separation

between “the father” and “the son” that cannot be harmonized with either logic or especially Scripture. It does not matter that both in the debate and in his works he makes it clear that the three persons of the “godhead” are united in love. This union for him is obviously not so tight that they cannot be temporarily separated from each other. If he prefers the language of “personal interiority,” as he puts it, fine. He never uses that phrase in his book, but it still leads to the same doctrine of separation. He used that phrase in the debate to sound highly technical for his audience. His quip about me reading up on that concept was also designed to do the same thing. But the concept is not difficult or profound. It is essentially saying exactly what I was attributing to him in this part of my cross, to which he proceeded to dance around.

Tony says in the above chapter, “Of the various biblical metaphors for God, among the most prominent is that of a parent.”<sup>4</sup> Tony then goes on to use this analogy in a robust way to describe the relationship between “the father” and “the son,” precisely as I said. At one point in our exchange Tony accused me of anthropomorphizing God in ways that made him uncomfortable, when all I was doing was describing the analogy as he was using it in his book! Tony goes on to say, “Jesus wasn’t pushed from town to town and eventually to Jerusalem by the invisible hand of God. And Jesus wasn’t nailed to the cross by God.”<sup>5</sup> And then, “... God the Father withdrew enough to let Jesus follow his own fate.”<sup>6</sup> And, “God is love, and love means freedom. It means autonomy.”<sup>7</sup>

There is no possible way to reconcile this conception with the word of God (John 5:19-47; 6:38; 8:28-29; 54; 10:17-18; Isaiah 53; John 3:16; and 2 Corinthians 5:20-21). And no, despite what Tony kept passionately trying to contend, this is not solely a point in regard to him. Yes, the way in which Tony tries to explain how “Jesus” could go to the cross apart from the direct will of “the father” is unique to him, but the basic idea that it is wrong to say that “the father” nailed “the son” to the cross in some manner is something

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<sup>4</sup> Tony Jones, *Did God Kill Jesus?: Searching for Love in History’s Most Famous Execution* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 210-211.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

that is universal to PC. And the passages above show that such an approach to the atonement is not merely mistaken, it is overtly heretical.

And Tony does sound terribly Nestorian here in this debate and in his works (see my essay “The Errors of Tony Jones”). The historic church has never sought to sharply distinguish between Jesus of Nazareth and the Logos. It has always said that Jesus of Nazareth Himself was and is one person, the second person of the Trinity, with two natures. Yes, the two natures must be carefully distinguished, but this is a distinction between the human nature and the divine nature, not between the divine nature (the Logos) and Jesus of Nazareth, as Tony states. It is true that the name *Jesus*, taken itself, is primarily a human name. But the church has always maintained that this name is applied to the person of Jesus, namely the second person of the Trinity, and not only to the human nature, which certainly seems to be what Tony is teaching. It is true that Nestorianism is not universal within PC, but pointing this out is still very relevant as it shows the extent to which all sorts of heresies are allowed and tolerated within the movement, even among its biggest leaders.

I admit that after going back and reading chapter 18 even more carefully in light of what he said in the debate, he is probably referring to the humanity of Christ when he refers to “the son” throughout this chapter. It seems for him that the humanity of Christ is Jesus of Nazareth and “the son.” But, this fact only highlights his Nestorianism all the brighter. It also seems to suggest that Tony either denies the Sonship of Christ in regard to the divine nature, or that he teaches a double “sonship” in “Christ.” All of this is woefully heretical, both biblically and historically even when positing a far more PC definition for the church.

I then go on to ask how a Christian can come to know what he or she should believe and Tony basically says that Rome is bad, don’t be like Rome. This is a non-answer in every respect. It basically means that we all can believe whatever we want. We can believe that “Jesus” is a skunk. I’m genuinely not trying to be irreverent, but that is what it boils down to. If that seems like an absurd stretch, many PC leaders today teach that

Jesus was sinful, racist, transgender, and I could go on. I document in my essay “The Errors of Tony Jones,” how many heresies Tony embraces. Tony’s hermeneutic, and that of the movement more broadly, leads to theological anarchy, period.

I admit that I did too much talking in my cross, but I was thrown off by Tony threatening to end the debate and by his weasel tactics. Still, I should have done better.

### **Tony’s Cross of Me**

Tony begins by asking me an extremely below the belt question that had no relevance to the debate or to the direction he was seeking to go in his questioning. Tony knows full well that most pastors, theologians, and apologists do not fully read all of the biblical languages. Some certainly do, but that is rare. Many fully read one of them and are well-versed in the others. And given Tony’s later gaffe over the *Textus Receptus* (TR from here forward), I highly, highly doubt Tony fully reads Greek himself, making his question all the more underhanded.

When I was in seminary, I studied Hebrew, Koine Greek, and Latin. I do want to be clear in case someone wants to accuse me of dishonesty down the line, that I did not take these actual classes when I was in seminary. Only Hebrew and Greek were offered, which is fairly standard for many seminaries, and since I wanted to be somewhat familiar with each of the above languages and wanted to take as many church history courses as I could, I opted to study the languages on my own. And I never became fluent in any of them, and I have never ever at any time claimed otherwise. Every theologian and apologist has to make choices about what areas he or she is going to place the bulk of his or her focus. That is not a cop-out, that is a fact. No one can be an expert in every subject of theological inquiry. So, I made a choice early on to familiarize myself with the languages and the key resources we have today behind the languages, and to focus my efforts in other areas. I have labored diligently to be adequately familiar in all areas of theological inquiry, while paying particular attention to systematic theology

(especially systematic theology from the Conservative Evangelical world in the 20th century), and church history (especially historical theology).

With all that said, I have the key resources needed to address the languages when necessary. And no, I do not solely go by what Conservative Evangelical scholars in these areas say. I interact with scholars from a wide variety of worldview backgrounds. It should be said that very few Jehovah's Witnesses and LDS scholars have written scholarly works on the languages. But, many Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and LP scholars have and I am aware of most of the arguments. Very rarely do these debates have a major bearing on doctrine though. I am not saying that raging debates do not take place over certain words and texts that do in fact have a significant impact on doctrinal disputes. They certainly do. What I am saying is that rarely (honestly really never) do these disputes fully decide a doctrinal question. For example, massive debates take place over the proper translation of John 1:1. At the end of the day though, pretty much all the scholars agree that the traditional translation is certainly possible. And when we look at the fact that the Bible is quite clear that there is only one God who alone created, it is rather obvious from the rest of the prologue of John that the traditional translation must be adopted. Now, some scholars will argue that point with me, but those arguments are largely theological in nature and do not have much to do with the proper translation of other texts. I will be posting an exegesis paper I wrote a few years ago on my website in the section on Tony in order to demonstrate my ability to utilize the languages when required (this paper is now up on the website).

Tony's intent was to make him look well read and me like the lay wannabe one in the debate, knowing that much of his audience would not know the above. You will notice that he did not ask me if I know Greek or had studied Greek. He specifically asked me if I read Greek, knowing that was unlikely. If I by chance read Greek and said yes, I think he was planning on saying something along the lines of, "Ok, so you are aware then of all the textual issues we have with the Greek text?" That would have looked like a reasonable line of questioning while giving him the opportunity to possibly make me look bad if I had to admit that I do not fully read Greek, but at the same time causing



him to lose nothing if I said that I do read Greek. The reality is that he did not need to ask the question at all in order to proceed with his eventual line of questioning, which is why I do not believe he was being genuine with this question at all.

I admit that I then stumbled a bit over his question on the exact age of the earliest manuscripts. Again, I was pretty thrown off at this point by him threatening to end the debate, his weaseling out of my questions regarding the key chapter from *Did God Kill Jesus?*, and from the Greek reading question out of left field. I am no expert on textual criticism, I have never said otherwise. But I have still studied the subject a fair amount. With that said, I did not know off the top of my head the exact date for the earliest fragment we have (what is often referred to as the *John Ryland Fragment*). I fully admit that asking if he was talking about the earliest fragment we have, the fragment from John, that “people” talk about was not the most professional way of putting it. Again, I was very thrown off by Tony and he deserves credit for throwing me off, although I do believe he was often being rather deceptive in order to achieve this goal. I meant to ask if he was talking about the fragment of John that scholars so often discuss as it is the earliest fragment we have. I certainly knew and know that the earliest manuscripts date to the second century, and that the fragment of John is probably the earliest fragment we have. But I did not know the exact date off the top of my head. And that fact is largely irrelevant. I am not saying that the fact that this fragment is so early is irrelevant, it is highly relevant. I looked it up and it dates to probably the mid-2nd century, and some would say to the first half of that century. But, as far as a more precise date, that is not terribly relevant.

After this point, I felt like I finally got rolling and was the best part of the debate for me by far. Many others that I have talked to thought the same. I stand by everything I said throughout the rest of his cross time and I thought I was able to show the weakness of his case. I will make some comments about some isolated moments throughout the rest of the cross, but for the most part I believe this section speaks for itself. I am not going to address these in the chronological order they came up in his cross, but in the order of importance from least important to most important. If anyone would like me to clarify

anything further from this section, the request can be made through the email on my website and it will be granted.

At one point Tony talks about how I deal with textual variants in my book. This could look to the reader like he did in fact read my book. But he must have been talking about one of my other books, *Harmonizing the Gospels*, because I do not address any textual variants in AFKC. I do address the broader discipline of textual criticism in the latter book, but I do not address any actual variants. Further, Tony then goes on to say that I did not address the differences in the Gospels concerning the sign on the cross. But that is not an issue of textual variants, it is an issue of harmonization. Tony constantly conflates and confuses various issues throughout his writings and speaking engagements (See my essay “The Errors of Tony Jones”). Our debate was no exception. And the only reason I didn’t address this issue in my harmony of the Gospels is because it is so ridiculously weak! The various accounts are not even remotely difficult to harmonize with each other. The fact that the enemies of the faith have to resort to such trifles only shows what shaky ground they stand upon.

Tony again became very agitated with how often I was referring to my book. He even mocks me for trying to make the debate a book selling contest. Anyone who knows me at all knows that I couldn’t care less about money. I am a minimalist and am deeply passionate about defending the truth. I was getting irritated with myself in real time for bringing up my book so often. And others, including those very favorable to me, have also said that this was a weak point for me. So, I totally get it. But again, it was so frustrating that he would throw out these objections and gratuitous statements concerning issues that I had dealt with in great detail in my book as if he had no knowledge of my detailed responses whatsoever. I found, and still find, this to be beyond unethical. If he truly read my book, why not say something along the lines of, “Ok, so I want to discuss the issue of head coverings. I know you address this objection in your book, but I found it wanting because ....” That would have made sense to me. Tony’s approach did not and I stand by that.

Tony's question about whether or not I believe him to be a heretic was pure, unadulterated, unvarnished show. And anyone who says otherwise doesn't know what they are talking about. If Tony wanted to ask that question to show his audience what a "McMeany Pants" I am, that is fine. But his reaction to my answer was rather comical given the fact that he knew the answer. Him feigning shock, disgust, and disappointment is smoke and mirrors, plain and simple. If he had actually read my book, there would be no question in his mind. If he had merely read the title there would be no question! Through our emails and a group Zoom call with Paul, he knew that I fully support the ministry of Alisa Childers. And it would take about five minutes of research to discover where she stands on this issue. Again, the title of her book alone would demonstrate this! And Tony had already asked me this very question in our Zoom call and proceeded to lecture me regarding my answer. He was not in the dark about how I would answer this question. Again, the question is fine and fair game, but his reaction says a lot.

Finally, I wish to comment on Tony's utter debacle over the TR. If you are not familiar with the TR or the Nestle-Aland edition and all the surrounding issues regarding these texts, I urge you to take some time and research these topics carefully. If you do so, you will be borderline shocked at the extent to which Tony revealed his ignorance of broader theological issues. And the fact that he would take such a risk, hoping that I wouldn't notice or that he would be able to talk his way out of things, shows how he views us as Conservative Evangelicals and the extent to which he believes he can just slick his way out of things. I genuinely hope that if any true seekers are reading this essay that they will really take notice of this section of the debate. At various points throughout the debate Tony says things that are utterly and demonstrably false. Some examples would be that Augustine; Aquinas; Luther; and Calvin; knew nothing of inerrancy and interpreted the Bible symbolically. With his credentials and very authoritarian tone, one can easily become intimidated. But Tony does not actually know what he is talking about. And that is not an empty accusation. His statement on the TR more than proves this point.

I have had some who are favorable to me say, “Ok, well maybe he misspoke and you are making too much of this.” Trust me when I say that the only people who would say this are those who have not researched these subjects. That isn’t intended as a jab at all to those who have said this to me. They were trying to play devil’s advocate and would freely admit that this is not a subject with which they are very familiar. Some admitted to me that they had never heard of the TR before watching our debate.

If you listen carefully to how I told him he was wrong and how he responded to that, there is no way to say that he only misspoke. Any knowledgeable PC leader would be embarrassed with his or her head in his hands over how Tony handled that section. He did not misspeak, but showed a complete ignorance regarding the very issues he was seeking to question me on. I hope any true seeker will not take his word on anything else he said in this debate for this very reason and will read my AFKC and continue to do further research on his or her own. I promise you, you will only find PC more and more wanting and that true, biblical, orthodox, historic Christianity is the only rational and defensible worldview on the market. Jesus Christ is Almighty God and the Bible, and the Bible alone, is His perfect word. Give your life to Him! You won’t regret it, you have no idea what you are missing out on if you have not done so already.

If anyone wishes to say that I’m not being charitable here over his statement on the TR when I freely admitted that I don’t read Greek and did not know off the top of my head the date for the fragment from John, I would have to respond that this is simply not the case. For anyone knowledgeable in the field, his gaffe would be like me saying that modern Greek is the same thing as Koine Greek or that we don’t have any manuscripts for the NT until the 5th century. Tony was wildly off and ignorant of the TR. Further, he was the one asking the question! If I was specifically asking him a question on the precise date of the fragment of John, I certainly would have made sure I knew the date myself!

Concluding Statements

### **Tony's Concluding Statement**

I believe everything Tony says here has already been sufficiently answered in this essay, or in the previous essays on my website in the section on Tony, or in my concluding statement.

### **My Concluding Statement**

I stand by everything said here. I do believe some other things could be said about this section, but that they have already been made clear in my essay "My Thoughts on My Debate with Tony Jones."

### **Conclusion to this Essay**

In spite of everything I have said about Tony in this essay and in my other essays on him on my website, I still believe Tony to be a good guy overall. I think he is a good son, father, husband, and friend to many. I still do not believe the vast majority of what was said about him online about his divorce. I believe that he genuinely believes in his worldview on some level, and as part of that worldview he sincerely believes that Conservative Evangelicalism is quite dangerous. I do believe that he is often disingenuous, that he stretches the truth, and that he is a terribly sloppy theologian. I know those are very serious accusations, but I have given ample evidence in my essays for coming to this conclusion. I think Tony is a "the end justifies the means" guy when it comes to theology. I am not accusing him of being this way in any other area of his life. But, I do believe this absolutely when it comes to his approach to theology. I think he is very willing to stretch the truth in this arena in order to "defeat" us dangerous Traditional Evangelicals. With all that said, I sincerely wish him the best and pray for his salvation.