

Two Christian Leaders Have Branded Me 'Dangerous'; Here's My Response

In a remarkable interview on "Too Wretched for Radio," Todd Friel and Phil Johnson branded me "dangerous," called me "sub-orthodox," said I was "willfully self-deceived," stated that I've done "enough damage" and alleged that I'm "on too many radio stations," just to mention some of the charges they brought. In doing so, they joined a recent wave of hypercriticism which included social media posts by people like Pastor J. D. Hall, who referred to me as more dangerous than most murderous jihadis. (He since removed that post, as far as I know.)

What do we make of such charges? And are they worthy of response?

To put this in context, I get slandered, maligned, misrepresented and attacked on a daily (or hourly) basis for standing against LGBT activism; critiquing radical Islam; presenting Jesus as Messiah to my Jewish people; challenging atheism; confronting doctrinal errors in the body; not being a Calvinist (or a Catholic or something else); being pro-life; being pro-Israel; being pro-Holy Spirit.

I actually have a "hate mail" file where I store the latest attacks, which often include death wishes (like, "I hope your heart fails," or "You're an idiot; I hope you die slow from pancreatic cancer"—misspelled in the original, of course) and even death threats.

To me, this is a crown of honor, a sign of the Lord's favor and another indication that our message, by God's grace and to His glory, is making an impact. I rejoice, in accordance with the Lord's words in Matthew 5:10-12.

And so, when I was informed that Todd and Phil had branded me "Dangerous Dr. Brown," I took this as a compliment from heaven (the exact opposite of what they intended), and their malicious words were like water to my soul.

You see, I have often prayed that the Lord would make me dangerous: dangerous to the kingdom of darkness; dangerous to the devil; dangerous to dead religion; dangerous to the status quo of a sinning world. May we all be dangerous in that sense of the word!

As for Todd saying I was on "too many radio shows," aside from being shocked that a brother in Christ would say such a thing—was he calling for some kind of censorship? Was he suggesting that only shows that line up with his particular definition of orthodoxy should be on the air?—I felt great encouragement here too. To me, it was another sign of coming ministry expansion, allowing us to reach more and more people with the Word of God.

So, these zealous brothers have not hurt me in any way, and I hold no ill will towards them. Sadly, though, they have hurt themselves; they have hurt those who follow them and they have dishonored the name of the Lord by being divisive and sowing discord. (See Prov. 6:19, which teaches that it is hateful in God's sight to sow discord among brothers.)

You might say, "But you're missing the whole point. These men are doing God's work. They are exposing error and rebuking false teachers. This is healthy and positive."

I don't doubt that in some cases, they are doing God's work, and I deeply appreciate that. Constructive criticism is a lifesaver. And I don't doubt that there are plenty of problems in the charismatic movement, of which I serve as a leader. (For more on this, see below.)

Unfortunately, their criticism, which can only be branded hypercriticism, does far more harm than good. It is

destructive, not constructive. It tears down without building up. It strains out a gnat and swallows a camel. It uses double standards. It pronounces people guilty by association. And much more.

The recent wave of hypercriticism says this: We will not evaluate you by your life work. We will not evaluate you by what you have written (in my case, more than 30 books and more than 1,000 articles) or taught (thousands of sermons and teachings and broadcasts and debates). We will not evaluate you by the fruit of your ministry (souls won; disciples made; churches planted; Bible schools launched; humanitarian works started). We will not evaluate you by your character. No, we will evaluate you by this criterion: If you will not condemn so-and-so as a false teacher, you yourself are suspect.

Not only is this unbiblical, it is ugly, it is judgmental and it is self-righteous.

So, in recent days, on social media and elsewhere, I have been challenged to condemn Heidi Baker, Bill Johnson, Mike Bickle and Carl Lentz (among others), since they are allegedly false prophets and false teachers, all of them hell-bound (I kid you not). And if I don't say they are hell-bound sinners? That proves that I'm willfully self-deceived and dangerous (in the bad sense of the word).

And what does that say about friends of mine, like Dr. James White, who is a cessationist and a Calvinist? He is now suspect too, since he remains my friend! (For our responses to this nonsense, see [here](#) and [here](#).)

To repeat: These hypercritics do not hurt me at all, since I live for God's favor, and His favor is more than enough. Plus, by His amazing grace, we are reaching more people today than at any other time in our ministry work, by far. (Any good that comes of this is all to His glory.) But these hypercritics do hurt many others—sowing discord, engaging in unequal weights

and measures and even rejecting wonderful biblical truths in the name of a hyper-narrow orthodoxy. In short, they have things totally upside down, majoring on the minors and throwing many healthy babies out with some bathwater. (In their view, there are no healthy babies in the bathwater.)

For example, during the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards wrote *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) "in which he gives a list of signs which are *not* evidence that a work is *not* from the Holy Spirit." In other words, these things do *not* prove that a work is *not* from God. "He elaborates that if a work (1) is unusual, (2) is attended by bodily effects such as groanings, tremblings and outcries, (3) occasions attention and talk about religion, (4) constitutes great impressions on the mind, (5) incorporates various means, such as good examples, for its success, (6) has imprudences or irregular conduct, (7) is intermingled with delusions from Satan, (8) has someone who falls into errors or (9) earnestly promotes judgment from God's law, none of these signs indicates that a work is *not* from God" (B. J. Oropeza, *Time to Laugh*).

Instead, the work was to be judged by the fruit it produced. Did it draw people to the Jesus of the Bible? Did it bring people under the authority of God's Word? Did it produce repentance from sin to holiness? Did it result in a burden of love for the lost?

If it did these things, Edwards reasoned, then the work was clearly from the Lord, since the flesh can't produce this and Satan won't produce it (nor could he).

The hypercritics are either ignorant of these wise words or reject them, since they are willing to condemn charismatic brothers and sisters to hell because some of them shake or fall in meetings or some of them have been guilty of secondary doctrinal aberrations. Forget the overall fruit. Forgot your otherwise orthodox teaching. You shake too much in the

meetings!

In the case of Heidi Baker, forget about the thousands of gospel-based churches she and her husband Rolland have planted in Mozambique; forget about their sacrificial ministry to the poorest of the poor; forget about her Ph.D. in systematic theology from the Kings College in London; forget about the content of her books. Just look at her shaking and acting like she's drunk. She's obviously a false teacher, going to hell, and if I won't condemn her, then I'm willfully deceived. (If you think I'm exaggerating, go here.)

What's interesting is that I have no official ministry relationship with Heidi. I've ministered with her in a conference once (in Germany, a few years back), and I had her on my radio show once. That's it. Her ministry in Germany was great; our fellowship between meetings was solid, I found her to be very serious about the Lord and quite compassionate, not to mention a woman with high ethical standards, and I was blessed by two of her books that I read.

Is it possible that she might sometimes minister in ways that would be out of my comfort zone? Could be. Is it possible that I might question whether she was always under the influence of the Spirit when ministering? Maybe so. (I'm simply answering hypothetical questions. Nothing controversial happened when we were in Germany.)

But even if I differed with the way she ministered in a meeting, the last thing in my mind would be to condemn her as a non-believer. Yet that's exactly what hypercritics do (and want me to do). In fact, some of them have damned me to hell for simply affirming what the Bible says about the gifts and power of the Spirit for today.

Truly, my heart goes out to these critics. They have no idea what they are missing.

What's ironic is that I wrote a book in 1991 titled *Whatever*

Happened to the Power of God: Is the Charismatic Church 'Slain in the Spirit' or Down for the Count, addressing abuses in our movement. And in April of this year, I have a new, quite different, and far more detailed book coming out titled *Playing with Holy Fire: A Wake-up Call to the Charismatic-Pentecostal Church*. So, yes, there are serious abuses in our movement, and we've done a poor job of self-policing, hence the need for this book.

But none of this is enough for the hypercritics. Unless I affirm that Bill Johnson and Mike Bickle are hell-bound false teachers, I am sub-orthodox and highly suspect, if even saved. May the Lord have mercy on these critics.

Phil Johnson once commented that Bethel Church's Jesus Culture worship was a "bigger" and "far more important issue than abortion" since the leaders of Jesus Culture were "false prophets who are ushering people into hell." (This is an exact quote.)

Todd Friel once said, "Take a look at 2,000 years of church history. The only time you see any of these miracles, signs and wonders within the last 2,000 years, since the time of the apostles, were from fringe wingding groups." I guess he'd include people like Augustine among the wingdings.

Augustine once held to Todd's view but had to change his position after documenting more than 70 miracles in a two-year period. In his *magnum opus*, *The City of God*, he explained that he "realized how many miracles were occurring in our own day and which were so like the miracles of old and also how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these marvels of divine power to perish from among our people," noting that these miracles attest "the faith which proclaims that Christ rose in the flesh and ascended into heaven with the flesh.")

And Pastor John MacArthur, whom I respect and honor, and with whom I have some deep disagreements, once said that: "The

Charismatic Movement as such has made no contribution to biblical clarity, no contribution to interpretation, no contribution to sound doctrine.” (It would appear that he has forgotten men like Oswald Chambers and A. W. Tozer, whose deep spirituality was directly connected to their experiences in the Spirit, along with leading charismatic biblical scholars like Gordon Fee, Craig Keener, Ben Witherington and Peter Davids, among many others, or leading charismatic philosophers and theologians, like J. P. Moreland and Wayne Grudem, among many others.)

Pastor MacArthur also alleged that, “there is essentially zero social benefit to the world from the charismatic movement. Where’s the charismatic hospital? Social services? Poverty relief? This is a scam.” (This statement boggles the mind and is refuted thousands of times a day by charismatic churches and ministries worldwide. Yet Phil Johnson affirmed it on my radio show.)

Pastor MacArthur even said that the charismatic “movement itself has brought nothing that enriches true worship.” (Sorry about that Hillsong, Bethel, IHOP and an endless stream of other charismatic songwriters and worship leaders. For documentation of all these statements, with fuller responses, see my book *Authentic Fire*.)

Yet it is aberrant statements like this which have become the test of hypercritical orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that is sadly out of step with the testimony of Scripture and the ongoing ministry of the Spirit worldwide.

The real shame is that the world is dying without God, and America is sinking into moral and spiritual oblivion, yet rather than us coming together as believers to make a glorious impact for Jesus, we are condemning each other and sniping at each other and warring against each other.

My appeal, as always, remains the same: My brothers, if you

have differences with me, then let's sit down behind closed doors and open the Word together and pray. And, if you're a respected leader in the body and want to engage me in a constructive, non-name-calling, formal debate on the essential issues, let's do it. The more, the better!

If, however, you insist on branding me "Dangerous Dr. Brown," then I will wear the insult with honor, remembering that Paul's accusers called him a plague, an agitator and a troublemaker (see Acts 24:5). Sounds pretty dangerous to me.