PO Box 818
GOSFORD NSW 2250

18th November, 1991

Pastor Andrew Evans
Assembly of God Church
2 Crowle Road
PARADISE SA 5075

Dear Andrew,

I am writing in response to the letter you wrote dated 8th of July. It's taken me some time to get around to writing to you. The letter and executive decision were devastating to me. As I was already in a traumatized state your letter threw me into a state of shock. I was unable to talk for at least a day. I wanted to write and respond to the executive's decision but couldn't face the emotional trauma of dealing with all that had happened. There are a number of things I want to resolve and finalise.

Firstly, it was mentioned that the resolution of the executive was that "Tony Venn-Brown's ministerial credentials be revoked immediately, and that we do not recommend his return to the ministry." Maybe the events of that time are hazy to you as it was in the middle of a busy conference but when I gave you my credential card, I was actually resigning. This was before I confessed to you and Phil anything about my sin. I felt that this was the ethical thing to do. I knew I must resign and that is why I gave you my card, instead of you having to ask for it or having to ask me for my resignation. I'm not sure what is recorded in your minutes but if it is incorrectly stated, I would appreciate it being noted that I resigned.

The term "revoked immediately" implies that my credentials had to be taken from me almost as though I was reluctant to resign or I intended to continue to minister. You know that neither of these was the case. You can't revoke someones credentials if they have previously resigned, you can only accept their resignation. Could you please ensure that no false impression has been recorded in the minutes and that the truth of what actually happened is stated.

As I read the letter I was devastated to find no grace or hope. You did mention the word "may" had been inserted in the A.O.G. documents but your other statements of "we do not recommend his return to the ministry", "it is very difficult for a candidate who has had this problem for many years to ever take responsibility as a preacher of the gospel" and "we all felt maybe the ministry was not something for you" more than cancelled out any hope of restoration. If I can't be forgiven or restored to a place where I could live a victorious life and stand behind a pulpit then there is no hope for me as a christian or are preachers some sort of super breed of christians who live superior lives compared to the average christian. I didn't need to hear that at that time. I needed to hear that I was forgiven, that God's grace was powerful and that there was hope for a victory. All these are the basis of the gospel we believe and preach, aren't they?

It was also difficult for me to receive your letter that contained no recognition of what I had done for the Lord and the A.O.G. I had given years of my life in serving God. Most of that time at great personal sacrifice to my wife and family as well. We own no home today because the majority of our lives have been spent on a shoe string serving the kingdom. We have gone through great emotional strain on our marriage and family to be obedient to the call of God. You see, it was not my desire to be in the ministry, I was just trying to do what God told me to do. I have fought a battle for years. I have never intentionally meant to live a deceptive life. You may recall that I mentioned that there were times that I did seek counsel and openly confess to what was happening in my life only to find myself even more messed up or the issue being swept under the carpet. I kept working for God and fighting the problem hoping that somehow God would do a miracle and change me. It would have been encouraging to have had some recognition from the A.O.G. heirachy as the majority of the work done, was done in A.O.G. circles.

Since my resignation I have tried to do the right thing. I shared with you and Phil everything about my life. I've confessed openly to the church. I've tried to smooth the effects amongst the Lausanne Committee and ensured that there was continued A.O.G. representation by getting David Smethurst on the Committee. Also I have tried to ease the results of my resignation from the Evangelists Association. There are times when I wonder whether it was worth all the extra pain and effort. It seems that my sin has become more important than anything else. All Helen and I wanted to hear was a sincere thanks.

You mentioned in closing that a letter was sent to the N.S.W. Executive requesting them to ensure that the "rehabilitation" programme that was placed in the hands of [redacted] [redacted] and his elders was being achieved. I showed [redacted] the letter and he was shocked as he had only spoken to you once on the phone and nothing about a programme was mentioned. Since my resignation (April) [redacted] has visited our home 3 times. In the last two months I've spoken to [redacted] once. He rang to see how I was going, I said, "terrible" and he laughed. Great programme we've got going here. The only executive members that I've heard from in the last nine months is Frank and Ivan. Frank contacted us twice to let us know that he and Hazel loved as and that their home was always open to us. Because of my efforts to try and provide for my wife and family we have not been able to respond to the invitation but their effort to contact us was greatly appreciated. Ivan and Pauline have taken us out for dinner, contacted us by phone and also called in. Their genuine effort to reach out to us has been an encouragment.

Nine months after the event, the only contact I have with anyone on a regular basis is [redacted] and [redacted] I thought I had lots of friends but obviously I was deceived in more ways than one. I hope they never find themselves in my position.

Dear Andrew, this is not a personal attack on you but to let you know that there are major flaws in "the system". You have been an encouragement to me in the past and at times like a father. "The system" or lack of it have laid burdens on me that were unnecessary and have been destructive.

Please excuse the epistle but I have been waiting five months to say these things. I trust that something positive is learnt from my situation and that the executive and the A.O.G. makes the necessary changes.

Sincerely,

TONY VENN-BROWN