

RESPONSE TO AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE “RESEARCH GROUP” BY JOHN LANGLOIS, CHAIRMAN OF THE PANEL OF INQUIRY SET UP BY AVANTI MINISTRIES LIMITED TO INVESTIGATE CERTAIN ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST TONY ANTHONY

I thank the Members of the Research Group for their kind words to the Panel members. The task was exceedingly onerous, time-consuming and frustrating. When we were approached we agreed to undertake the task as we wanted to play our part in resolving this long-term issue. There had been allegations since 2004 that Tony Anthony’s life story was just a pack of lies but apparently this was the first time that the Avanti Board of Directors had investigated the allegations. The Evangelical Alliance, who were convinced the evidence could not be ignored, persuaded the board of directors of Avanti Ministries Limited (David Duell, David West, Paul Salter, Heather Crosskey and George Osborn) to appoint my colleagues and me as a panel of inquiry. We signed an investigation agreement with Avanti on 26th March 2013, which provided that we would send a written report to Avanti within three months with a copy to the General Director of the Evangelical Alliance. We delivered the Report to Avanti on 26th June 2013. Throughout the inquiry we were committed to bringing finality to the issue once and for all.

Before any representor gave evidence he or she was informed of our terms of reference as set out in the Agreement, including that the Report would contain:

- (a) a record of the witnesses who have been interviewed by the Panel and of the evidence that they adduced,
- (b) a record of all documentary evidence provided to the Panel,
- (c) the Panel’s conclusions,
- (d) the Panel’s recommendations to Avanti and
- (e) a separate diplomatically discreet executive summary of the Panel’s findings which would be suitable and appropriate to be made available to a wider audience by agreement between Avanti and the Evangelical Alliance.

On 14th July 2013 Avanti and the EA issued a Joint Statement according to which “***large sections of the book [Taming the Tiger] ...which claim to tell the true story of Tony Anthony's life, do not do so.***” Two days later the Avanti board made a statement which said that “*The panel produced its report on 26 June 2013 challenging the integrity of **some of the facts** of Taming the Tiger. Tony has since confirmed that he is considering a revision to the book.*” That was a deliberate deception. The Joint Statement stated that “**large sections of the book**” were untrue. [emphasis added]

The separate Avanti statement merely repeated an earlier statement of 12 February 2013 which said “*It is important to acknowledge that there are some relatively **minor anomalies** in relation to dates and certain narrative structure in the original manuscript. However, **these will be corrected** when a revised edition of the book is released later in the year*”.

Contrary to the impression given by Avanti, they appointed the Panel to investigate “***all principal allegations***” against Tony Anthony, not to consider whether some facts in *Taming the Tiger* were true or not. One of the principal allegations presented to us by representors was that virtually the whole of his story was a pack of lies.

The Research Group have urged me to release our Report. I shall not do so without undertaking in-depth discussions with my fellow Panel members. However, I can say that **from the clear evidence of the Research Group and other third parties**, including documentary evidence which corroborated it, and **without reference to any information submitted to us by Avanti or Tony Anthony, I concluded** that:

1. Tony Anthony never went to China as a child as claimed,
2. He was never involved in Kung Fu as claimed, and
3. He was never involved in Close Protection as claimed.

I am of the opinion that Tony Anthony had a normal childhood in the London area, attending Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School, Eagans Close, Market Place, East Finchley, London N2 8GA as a child, which was followed by secondary education at Christ's College, Finchley. If anyone doubts this they can simply contact the school or have this confirmed by Tony Anthony's mother.

In accordance with the express wording of the Agreement we anticipated that upon completion of the Inquiry the Directors of Avanti would make available to their financial and other supporters and to a wider audience the Panel's findings and implement any remedial action required.

We expected the Avanti board to comply with the terms of their Agreement with us. This has not happened. A day or so after the Report was delivered to Avanti they announced that Avanti was ceasing all operations. The office was closed and the telephone was cut off. We were informed that all communication had to be through Avanti's solicitor, Mr Duncan Elson, Head of Litigation & Dispute Resolution, at Charles Russell LLP.

I was shocked that the directors of a charity registered with the Charity Commissioners – indeed any charity or any company, let alone a Christian ministry - would do this. I asked myself "How will the supporters of Avanti know what is going on?" "How will financial supporters ever know how their money has been spent?" "How will they ever get to know the truth?" After all, it was specifically to establish the truth that the directors of Avanti appointed us. We had embarked on this task, as required in the Agreement, namely "*in a professional manner and in a spirit of Christian conciliation as set out in Scripture, [our] prime goal being the glory of God, the honour of His Name and the healing of any divisions in the Body of Christ*". The closing of Avanti meant that **Christian conciliation** as set out in Scripture and the **healing of any divisions** in the Body of Christ could not be achieved.

I intend to fulfil my obligations to the body of Christ. That takes precedence over any gagging order. For the past two months the Evangelical Alliance has been restrained from telling its constituency the truth by a secular legal device. I shall not be so constrained. For the past two months I have been an "insider", knowing the truth, seemingly being an accomplice after the event to deception and obtaining money by false pretences but unable to tell those who have a right to know.

It appears that Tony Anthony is still undertaking speaking engagements claiming his life story is true. He appeared on Premier Christian Radio three days after the publication of the joint statement, stating that there were **minor** errors in his story which would be remedied. I am aware of a similar case some time ago where an evangelist was dismissed by his board after an internal inquiry. The

directors in that case intended to write a letter to the supporters of the ministry explaining the truth of what had happened, but prior to the letter being mailed a letter was received from his lawyer threatening legal action if the details of the dismissal were disclosed to anyone. The Board issued a vague statement. Six months later the ministry was wound up. The end result has been that the evangelist justified himself, vilified his past board members, started up another ministry and is back ministering in churches who have no idea what he is really like. There have been no signs of genuine repentance. We have to ensure that this does not happen in the present case.

As a Panel member to whom the directors of Avanti gave the responsibility to establish the truth, I am aware that should I fail to fulfil my obligations the same thing may happen again and there will be more hurt churches and people will wonder why this has been allowed to happen. This is the very opposite of achieving **Christian conciliation as set out in Scripture and healing divisions in the Body of Christ**, as required in the Agreement that Avanti signed.

I shall do all I can to ensure that supporters of Tony Anthony and past supporters of Avanti are made aware of the truth in accordance with the Panel's mandate. There are other more serious things in the Report than those I have stated above.

As Avanti has closed down it is not available to release the report. Any Avanti supporter wishing to read it should therefore contact one of its former directors, David Duell, David West, Paul Salter, Heather Crosskey or George Osborn. They all received a copy.

I shall consult with my fellow Panel members.

John Langlois

Dated 30th August 2013