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Trademark Issue: January 15 VGR Response to Opposition Letter From Pastors

Posted on Monday, March 15 @ 19:43:22 EST by [WMB1](#)

January 15, 2004



Dear Saints,

Greetings in the Name of Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you today in order to both inform and clarify for you the news of a distressful course of action that is being pursued against Voice Of God Recordings by a group of brethren who are in disagreement with us regarding the trademark rights to my father's name.

Recently, we were notified, via our attorney, that litigation is now underway and we have been called to answer before an Administrative Tribunal of the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board (TTAB) of the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Identical proceedings are also underway in the Federal Court of Canada, Intellectual Property Office. There are presently four individuals and one church in the United States that have legally opposed our position regarding the trademark on the name William Branham. Six churches in Canada have **oppositions** that are now pending.

I would like to review with you some of the background that has

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brought us to this position we find ourselves in today:

In December of 2001, in a publication titled Here I Stand, I announced my intention to reclaim my Daddy's name.

The brethren who had taken it upon themselves to procure a trademark on the name William Branham were unwilling to re-assign the trademark to Voice of God Recordings, the outreach ministry that is directed by myself and my brother, Brother Billy Paul Branham. We were informed that rather than assign their control of the name to Voice Of God Recordings, they would institute legal proceeding, necessitating a legal battle that could last for many years and cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars.

To reinforce their position, they sought like-minded brethren, and formed an alliance for the purpose of preventing Voice Of God Recordings from obtaining the trademark. After we applied to the Patent and Trademark Office, we were told that an **opposition** - a proceeding before the TTAB in which the plaintiff seeks to prevent the issuance of a registration of a trademark - had been registered. Ten pastors were the signers on the original document.

The case will now be brought before a tribunal for litigation, preventing us from moving forward to protect Brother Branham's name. We have 12 days from this date to file a written response to the written opposition filed by these brethren.

We were dumbfounded (to say the least). After all, the Scriptures strictly forbid this course of action! We sincerely believed that it would never reach its present status, but unfortunately, that is not the case. This action continues to be as incomprehensible to us today as it was the first day we were made aware of it, especially when we consider the fact that all parties involved are brothers in Christ.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saint?" Corinthians 6:1

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Although some may be under the impression that this is not a legal proceeding, you may rest assured that an **Administrative Tribunal is litigation** in every sense of the word! It could involve depositions, the taking of evidence, a wide range of possible motions, and a hearing **before three administrative judges**. After months of legal discourse and costly attorney's fees, the Tribunal Court will make a decision. If the plaintiffs continue to oppose, this process could take years to come to a resolution.

Black's Law Dictionary, 7th Edition (resource widely used by

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lawyers and courts) gives this description of an Administrative Tribunal: "**An administrative agency before which a matter may be heard or tried. It is an administrative agency exercising a judicial function.**" it is a legal body that has the authority to operate as a court, with the power to take evidence, consider evidence, and issue a decision. If neither party appeals that decision, it is binding. A hearing before the TTAB is like a trial, the principle difference being that, people do not show up and testify. Usually, all the testimony is provided in writing.

A description of an opposition, which is found at the TTAB web site, states: "An **opposition proceeding** is just like a case in court. Even if you do not have an attorney, you will be expected to follow the Rules of Practice for the TTAB and the Federal Rules of Evidence, which are followed by the TTAB."

One Christian legal expert, who is also a follower of the Message, made this comment: "To say that the TTAB is not a judicial body would be like saying that a Military Tribunal is not a judicial body. Try telling that to somebody that is court-martialed and hauled away in handcuffs!"

For someone to say that this is not a lawsuit, but merely an opposition would be a misrepresentation. We are presently engaged in legal proceedings - litigation - a Latin word meaning "lawsuit."

Also worth noting is the fact that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, which was the highest Jewish judicial body during the time of Christ, is identified in the Greek Lexicon as a **tribunal**. [Strong's #4892]

It is of great concern to me that in the past months, a firestorm of fear has been fanned from some pulpits and sent out on videos and tapes around the world. It is being implied that ministers would not be allowed to speak or use the name William Branham if Voice Of God Recordings were to become the holder of the trademark. Believers are being warned that VGR would use the trademark to "shut down" any ministry that did not agree with them doctrinally. Saints are being made to believe that VGR has brought lawsuits against brothers who are trying to distribute the Message.

The people are being misinformed regarding letters which we have sent out through the years, letters in which we readily admit that we have asked, begged, and yes, even **insisted**, hoping that this would succeed in bringing the actions of certain brothers back into line with the Word, and with the indisputable instructions that have been left to us by God's servant and prophet, Brother William Branham.

Now these letters are being circulated as evidence that we have brought a legal action against the brethren! But contrary to

what you are being made to believe, **we have never sued anyone, at any time.** Neither has it ever been our intention to cause separation among the brethren, or sow discord among the churches. Voice of God Recordings has devoted its every resource to the furtherance of this Message, and to doing all things according to the instructions that Brother Branham left to us on the tapes. We strive to come into the unity that the Holy Spirit is waiting and desiring to see manifested among the Bride! Not to be united under a common doctrine, or a personality, but united **in the Word.**

With this letter, we are taking our case before the saints. I have written to each of the brothers and churches that are participating in the above-mentioned proceedings, expressing to them that I feel they need to make this thing that they have done right before the Lord. This legal case needs to be dropped! I also feel that Voice Of God Recordings is owed an apology, and here is why:

Already, we have spent thousands of dollars - dollars that were intended for the spreading of the Gospel - on legal fees. And that could be just the beginning. We will need to spend thousands more, unless this issue is resolved. Along with the cost of the attorneys, there could be hundreds of man-hours wasted, spent by myself and VGR employees on depositions, research, filing papers with the court, and so forth.

I also believe that asking for an apology is not out of line, because an apology to us is an apology to you. This money that is being spent comes from tithes and offerings that you have given, both to us and to our accusers. And that is why we are determined to have the trademark registered in the name Voice Of God Recordings, and not the Branham family personally. That way, it will be **you** - the believers of this Message - who will control the way in which the name William Branham is used.

Right now, it is God working through you, our supporters, making it possible for this ministry to exist. If we step out of line, or are found to be using the name in a wrongful manner, then we must answer directly to you - not before the unjust, but before the saints, just as Paul adjured us to do in First Corinthians. The bottom line is, if we are wrong, we believe that you will stop supporting us! Voice Of God Recordings simply cannot exist without you. We will gladly welcome you, **the saints who support this ministry**, as our **Administrative Tribunal.**

We believe that these brethren have made an error in judgment, and we would like to see this entire issue place under the cleansing Blood of our Lord Jesus so that we can go forward. I have asked for their expedient response in this matter, and I am asking that you be in prayer and stay before the Lord while these things are being resolved. **This is a dangerous situation.**

I will keep you posted, via our web site [www.branham.org], as there are further developments regarding this controversy. We trust that the confusion that Satan is trying to spread among us will soon be history, for we believe that God's Word for His Bride is **Shalom**: God's Peace to the Elected Lady, who He called-out and ordained before the foundation of the world.

May the Lord richly bless you, and keep you in His care.

Bro. Joseph Branham

"Don't fight one another. As long as the devil's got you fighting one another, he don't have to fight at all. He will set back, and has a picnic, watching you fight one another, and laugh at you professing to have the Holy Ghost, and fighting one another."

William Branham

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