

These are the instructions that Brother Branham left with us; these are the details of how the physical distribution of this Message is to be carried out. Therefore, I believe that this is the way it must be done by all who seek the Lord's perfect Will and desire to walk honorably and victoriously in the Light of the Restored Word.

We've got to have some source somewhere where there's got to be an ultimate. And the best that I know, I'm giving it under the Holy Spirit, letting Him be my Ultimate. And let this tape be your ultimate on these questions.

Church Order Jeffersonville IN 63-1226

Now, the tapes is a copyrighted¹ article, and they've got to be put on the very best of tapes, like the book. If it isn't satisfactory, send it back, get your money back.

Speak to the Rock Lakeport CA 60-0723

The tapes is by a contract. And if I . . . I don't know just exactly when the contract is expired, but the trustees, this belongs to the trustees; not the deacons, the trustees; not the pastor, trustees. The trustees, ever so often they—they write a contract, as I understand it. And if this—this is wrong, then the trustee correct. These trustees has an agreement with the person who is making the tapes, and the tapes are by a franchise².

No one else can make tapes unless it be permitted by the person that has the franchise, and they cannot be sold unless permitted by the person that has the franchise, because that's the law, see, that the franchise holds it. See? And if the fran . . . the one who holds the franchise wants to let *So-and-so* make tapes, that's up to him. If he wants to let everybody make tapes, that's up to him; he wants everybody to sell tapes, that's up to the person who holds the franchise. He should have a—a little written note signed from the holder of the franchise, to make and sell tapes, because then he's clear in the law; 'cause if he don't, the man that has the franchise on it . . . You'd be liable-ing yourself to a . . . If there'd be a—a foul person that wanted to cause some trouble, he could really do it. You go over that franchise . . . 'cause that's just like a copyright, see, the same thing, you're not allowed to do it. It's a great fine to do that.

Church Order Jeffersonville IN 63-1226

It's none of my business to know nothing about that; it's his [the franchise holder's] business with them and the trustees. And I'm not trying to step in, but I'm just telling you what the law of it is. See? The law of it is that these tapes, from the time that they send for them, them tapes are supposed to be on their road within a day or two, three or four, five days; after they send for them tapes, it's got to be in the mail, or the franchise can be cancelled at any time when these orders are disobeyed. See?

Now, and every six months or a year, this is supposed to be renewed, this agreement is supposed to be renewed. You're supposed to meet on this certain date that this franchise says that you've got to meet. And then it's supposed to be, that's, other people are supposed to come in at that time, and you're supposed to notify others who have been asking about the tapes, and come in with their agreement and set down and talk it over. Now, these orders must be carried out! See?

Church Order Jeffersonville IN 63-1226

Them tapes are absolutely franchised. No one can mess with them. You'd better not. If you do, you got the law on you. But would we do it? No.

*Recognizing Your Day And Its Message
Jeffersonville IN 64-0726M*

WEBSTER'S II *New Riverside University Dictionary*

¹ Copyright: The legal right granted, as to an author, composer, playwright, or publisher, for exclusive publication, production, sale, or distribution of a literary, musical, dramatic, artistic, or electronically produced work.

² Franchise: Authorization granted by a manufacturer to a distributor or dealer to sell its products.

To My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I have just mailed personal letters to several brethren who have either initiated or become involved in business activities that are in direct violation of the orders given by Brother William Branham concerning the duplication, sale, translation, and general distribution of his recorded and printed sermons.

In some cases, this infringement on the copyright and franchise – presently the legal holding of Voice of God Recordings, Inc. – has been ongoing for many years. As you will be reading in this report, we have attempted many times in the past to bring correction to this situation, but to no avail.

We believe that a vital and far-sighted (or, to be even more correct, we should say “eagle-eyed”) protocol was left in place that we must follow. Brother Branham’s statements, regarding the correct manner in which the spiritual provisions that he stored up were to be distributed among the people, left no room for amendments, and no need for interpretation. If followed to the letter, there would be no competitions among the brethren, no discrepancies and variations among the translations, and no shortage of materials.

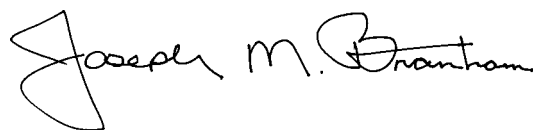
The right to establish a franchised distribution of the physical, personal property by the owner and/or agent of the property should be above question, especially when we consider the fact that the property owner is a person whose words and deeds are regarded as authoritative by all parties involved in this controversy. Yet, there has been a steady increase in the number of people who have chosen to disregard the validity of the regulations that Brother Branham instituted forty-three years ago, and they are now involved in the selling of what can only be designated as “pirated material.”

With the introduction of new technology and the easy access to the very public forum and marketplace of the World Wide Web, the competition among these dissenting parties has become so ruthless and disgraceful, that it is hard to believe that **any** good can ever be the result if this is allowed to continue without correction. We can no longer sit silently without at least trying one more time to point everyone involved back to the position and the wisdom of the property owner himself – Brother William Branham.

Within the pages of this booklet, you will be reading things that may be shocking to you, even hurtful. Please believe me when I say that I am sorry if this causes you distress, but to leave you with half-truths and misinformation would not be fair. I believe that the time has come to publicly clarify my stand regarding this issue, and I believe that you need and deserve to hear, at least once, what I have to say.

May God help us all.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph M. Branham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

In April of 1521, Martin Luther was called before the Holy Roman emperor Charles V to defend his ministry. The books he had written were piled on a table in front of him, and he had but one opportunity to explain and defend their contents. His ministry, and possibly his very life were at stake.

He was not defiant, but humbly presented a truthful account of his deeds, and the reason for his attack against the papacy. When he was finished, his examiners demanded that he publicly renounce all that he had written.

Luther replied, “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.

Then he added, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen.”

Here I Stand

I Can Do No Other

INTRODUCTION Each week, hundreds of tapes that contain the sermons of prominent brothers in the Message are sent around the world. These audio and video tapes are available from their church offices at a reasonable price, and they have men in charge of those offices to oversee the duplicating and distribution of this material. If another brother or group of believers (with the purest of motives) would feel directed to offer these sermons for sale through their own separate business organizations, without first asking for and receiving the permission of the ministering brother, would this be correct? Of course not. It would be a dishonest thing to do. Isn't it both right and logical that the brother who preached the messages would have the right to say exactly how the product of his labors was to be handled? Isn't it his decision to designate how and by whom his sermons are to be distributed?

Let's say that the well-meaning group uses a part of the profits that are realized by the sale of this misappropriated material to support missionaries, and to send large amounts of Christian materials around the world. Does that justify such a breach of ethics? Once again, the obvious answer is, "No, it does not."

But similar misdirected efforts have become such a familiar and acceptable part of our lives that hardly any thought is given anymore as to whether or not it **should** be this way.

In this report, I want to detail exactly how and why I am in disagreement with a growing circle of brethren regarding the validity of the copyright and franchise agreements that Brother Branham placed under the direction of the William Branham Evangelistic Association.

I think that you will soon see that there is a much bigger picture than what you may have been presented with so far.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY I would like to begin by sharing a few words of personal testimony with you, just as I would if we were meeting for the first time and getting to know one another:

I believe that I have been blessed beyond measure in my life to have William Branham as my earthly father. I

was only ten years old when he was called Home, but his words have continually been my council, his character my example, his name my inheritance. I have always felt the comfort of his love, which I hear in his voice every day.

Most of my years as a teenager and as a young man were spent running from the Lord. In my heart I felt that He was calling me into His service, but I stubbornly held to my willful ways, refusing to surrender completely into His hands. Then in February of 1981, God in His mercy stopped me cold in my tracks one day. I knew I couldn't live one more day without Him as the center of my life, and I called a minister friend and asked him to meet me at the church. He stayed at the altar with me until I knew that I had personally met the Heavenly Father Who I had heard my earthly father preach about, and I wondered, "How could I have been so foolish to have resisted Him and wasted all those years?"

I couldn't wait to get to work! I knew I had to do something to help others hear about this wonderful Jesus I had come to know. As I prayed, I felt that God was calling me to become involved in the tape ministry, and it became a conviction that I just couldn't ignore. I knew nothing about making tapes, and nothing about running a business, but my certainty that this was exactly where the Lord wanted me grew stronger every day. I applied for and was granted the exclusive franchise rights by the William Branham Evangelistic Association's board of directors to duplicate the taped messages. I founded Voice Of God Recordings, and started doing business according to the instructions Brother Branham left on the tapes, and in 1986 we assumed the responsibility of Spoken Word Publications. God has blessed us in a mighty way, and allowed our production capabilities to expand steadily to meet the ever-growing demand. In 1981 we produced 2200 English tapes. We are now annually providing more than 500,000 tapes and 7 million books with translations in 45 languages.

Being human, I have failed many times in coming up to the exact measure of what I believe the Lord would have of me, but I keep praying and trying.

And now (suddenly, it seems) I am 46 years old, a father of two grown children and the grandfather of two precious little boys. In all sincerity, I will say that the desire to be a servant to the Bride of Christ around the world still burns in my heart just as intensely as it did twenty years ago when Voice of God Recordings made its first tape!

There is only one position that I strive for, and that is to be in the perfect Will of God. Only then will I have fulfilled that for which He put me on the earth, to be born of the parents I was born of, in order to have the resources to accomplish what He has ordained for me to do.

I have always realized the responsibilities that are mine because of my name, and because of my position as the franchise holder for the past twenty years. Every aspect of my life, and my every action have been subjected to the most public scrutiny and evaluation. Some have dismissed me and anything I have accomplished through Voice Of God Recordings with the

phrase, “Even in the Bible, the sons of prophets never amounted to anything.” There are others who, despite my protest, attempt to elevate me to a role that is both incorrect according to Scripture and personally distressing to me. I cannot change that situation, and I do not feel that I should be held accountable for its existence.

By nature, I would like to please everybody; I desire and seek acceptance as much as the next person. But I have learned that public approval is mercurial, to say the least! The Scriptures teach that you can’t serve man and serve God at the same time, and that is a warning that I have always kept before me. I also know that I can never be a true servant to the people without putting the Word first in my personal life and daily business. I believe that nobody is served, except Satan, if obedience to the Word is not given **top priority** in all things – above family and friends, above popularity and security, and even above harmony and goodwill among men.

VOICE OF GOD RECORDINGS Since the earliest days of Voice Of God Recordings, we have **always** stressed the fact that our goal is to run this arm of Brother Branham’s ministry as closely in line with his instructions as we humanly can. We have sought the cooperation of ministers around the world, and expressed to them our desire to be the *equipping* member of the Body. We promised that no request for materials would be overlooked.

Still, the unauthorized sale of these copyrighted materials has continued unabated for *decades*. At various times, men have called to **tell** me what they were preparing

to do, and were advised not to proceed until we knew more about their plans. But each time they have proceeded without us. There have been other times when we have taken the added step of stressing our legal position to the most persistent transgressors, but we considered that to be a distasteful alternative, and we’ve tried to avoid it whenever possible.

When we attempt to point out the error of this type of situation (not according to our rules or understanding, but by the very words of Brother Branham), then we are accused of being tyrants, and evil people who are out to obstruct the work of the Holy Spirit.

We are accused of restricting the use of Brother Branham’s words, when what we are actually attempting to do is restrict the **misuse** of his words.

I have heard these statements over and over: “They’re trying to copyright the Holy Ghost,” and “Jesus didn’t have any copyrights.” What illogical statements for anyone to make! To make these accusations against brethren in the Message whose ministry is the distribution of the prophet’s tapes and books is unworthy of a Christian.

The fact is this: Contrary to what we are being accused of, we haven’t copyrighted anything! We are only trying to enforce the copyright that Brother Branham put into place!

However, there have been many others that have attempted to copyright the Message for their own use, (WHICH MEANS THAT THEY HAVE REFUSED TO ACCEPT BROTHER BRANHAM’S STATEMENT THAT THERE WAS ALREADY A COPYRIGHT IN PLACE.) Some have succeeded in obtaining copyrights on their particular formatting of the text. Others have taken even more disrespectful steps to secure exclusivity on a part of the Message for their own agenda (an issue that will be covered in further detail later in this report).

A PERSON MUST DETOUR AROUND THIS PART OF THE WORD IN ORDER TO JUSTIFY THESE DELIBERATE ACTIONS AGAINST THE EXISTING COPYRIGHT.

I do not like being continually forced into a defensive position, where I must always be on the outlook for an ambush from the ranks of the very people that I am trying to serve. But when I must, I will defend this work! There is a host of believers around the world who are depending on the materials that we send them for their spiritual welfare, and I will do all that is in my power to honor the commitment I have made to them. I have no choice but to take precautions.

WRONGDOING A tremendous amount of time, manpower, and finances have gone into the establishment and maintenance of many other outreach ministries, both locally and overseas, each with large production facilities for tapes, translations, and printing. Much work has been accomplished, and we thank the Lord for the good fruit that has come forth as a result.

But sadly, there has been much wrongdoing in the process. There is competition, name-calling, legal entanglements, empire building, and other disgraceful situations, all taking place under the banner of the Bride's ministry.

Without regard for the simple protocol that the prophet put in place, even the various translation activities that are in operation around the world are not able to be as effective as they should be. In many languages, several versions of the same sermon are available, often with inaccurate and misleading translations.

As we have tried to bring order to this vital work, we have been forced to deal with situations involving the most severe moral issues, such as homosexuality and polygamy. We do not feel that men that are living perverted lives have a right to handle the Word, and that it is unfair for the people to have to rely on their work for spiritual Food. But when we tried to stop their translation work, do you know what happened? Brothers immediately published information on the Internet, accusing us of trying to destroy these "God-ordained" ministries! They laid every accusation at our door they could think of!

In many countries unauthorized translators are being paid to turn out one translated message per week for the local print shop. We know that it is impossible to produce a quality translation at that speed. We have sent these translations to an independent, professional translation service to be checked. These translations have consistently failed to meet their standards, much less ours.

Until now, we have maintained a public silence on subjects such as these, but I assure you, it has been very frustrating!

THE PROPHET'S DECISION When a product is made available to the public for a price, it is called "doing business." Brother Branham did not want to become involved in business matters, but he recognized that to maintain order in this area of his ministry, standards would have to be set, and rules would have to be followed. He also realized that he would have to contend with the issues of quality control and competition for the sales of his recordings.

In the early years, anyone with access to a recorder was permitted to record as Brother Branham preached. In the campaigns, normally there would be about a half-dozen

men set up with their equipment. But there was no one particular person officially designated to record, and neither was there any assurance that a recording would be made at all! On the other hand, at the Tabernacle in Jeffersonville there would sometimes be as many as 20 or 30 people recording, yielding a confusion of wires and microphones.

Each of the men who recorded at that time would have a list of people who would purchase copies of the tapes that they made. Usually the fees involved would be the cost of the blank tape with a few pennies added for their efforts.

By 1955, confusion reigned. The number of tapes being produced had increased substantially, and so had the number of complaints of faulty recordings, tapes promised and not delivered, and various pricing practices. When Leo Mercier and Gene Goad asked Brother Branham if they could travel with him and make quality recordings that they would sell for a reasonable price, he welcomed the idea. They formed a business, Audio Mission, and from June 1955, until November 1959, they competed with others for their share of the 'tape business.' But the quality of their recordings, and their efficient methods of handling orders set them apart from the rest.

On November 23, 1959, the trustee board of the Branham Tabernacle made it official that all **recordings** and **literature** of Brother Branham's sermons were to be sold only through the Branham Tabernacle. No one other than Audio Mission was permitted to make tapes. Brother Mercier and Brother Goad were to receive a salary from the Tabernacle, and at a meeting of the board of trustees in December, a resolution was passed stating, "There will be no tapes taken or sold other than by the individuals hired by the Tabernacle."

Still, there were a number of people who obstinately continued to make recordings of each service "for their personal use." As long as they behaved in an orderly fashion, no effort was made to restrict their activities.

In August of 1960, Brother Branham stated publicly that "the tapes is a copyrighted article." Still, his words and the authority of the Tabernacle's board of trustees to govern the production and sale of recordings were questioned by many, and ignored by a few.

In January of 1962, permission to record Brother Branham's sermons passed from Audio Mission to Fred Sothmann and James Maguire for a period of six months. At the end of that period, a contract between the Branham Tabernacle, Fred Sothmann and James Maguire written by the attorneys for the Tabernacle and signed by the board members, became the first officially franchised tape

ministry of the copyrighted material. On June 4th, Brother Sothmann and Brother Maguire were notified that a royalty of \$.25 per tape sold was to be paid to the Branham Tabernacle, effective immediately.

From 1962 through 1965, the contract between Brother Sothmann, Brother Maguire, and the Branham Tabernacle was renewed yearly. In 1963, due to complaints from the public regarding the quality of the tapes and the length of time it took to receive an order, Brother Branham decided to address the issue. At a meeting that took place on December 26, 1963, he opened the service with these words:

“Brethren, we’ve called this meeting together here tonight for the purpose of knowing how that to operate the Church of the Living God...”

And by what Authority was he setting forth these instructions?

“May the congregation here understand that these men [deacons and trustees] are duty bound to God, as their oath in this church, to help hold these principles. You may disagree with them; and if I let you run it, then I’ll disagree with you. We’ve got to have some source somewhere, where there’s got to be a – an ultimate. And the best that I know, I’m giving it under the Holy Spirit, letting Him be my Ultimate. And let this tape be your ultimate on these questions.”

Later in the meeting, he was asked the question, “Now, what about the tapes?”

He proceeded to cover the subject forcibly and conclusively, leaving no stone unturned. I have printed a portion of his answer on page 1 of this report for you to study. Note this comment he made regarding the people who had continued to make and sell tapes, disregarding the franchise agreement: *“No one else can make tapes unless it be permitted by the person that has the franchise, and they cannot be sold unless permitted by the person that has the franchise, because that’s the law, see. That... The franchise holds it.”*

If Satan can convince you that this one statement is not authoritative, then he will also be able to convince you that another convenient part is not authoritative.

Incredibly, even after this very direct, public notice, spoken by the prophet himself, not everyone was willing to abide by the rules. Here is what happened in one instance:

A joint meeting of the deacons and trustees was held in the office of the

Tabernacle on July 30, 1965. Present at the meeting was a

man who had been duplicating and distributing tapes free of charge. His “Free Tape Ministry” had a broad base of support and was active in the U.S., Canada, and several English-speaking nations overseas.

He had written to the board asking their permission to operate this ministry, and they had referred his request to Brothers Sothmann and Maguire, the franchise holders. They had refused to grant permission, and so he asked if he might appeal his case directly to the board. By unanimous decision, the board upheld the authority of the franchise holder to make this decision, and a resolution was drawn up.

I would like for you to read this very revealing document before continuing further in this report. (Page 15) Please note that the resolution, written on Branham Tabernacle letterhead, is not dated. It was issued in perpetuity.

This statement by the board, and signed by Brother Branham and all the board members, was read from the pulpit on Sunday morning, August 1, 1965, before the service began. Afterwards it was posted on the bulletin board in the vestibule of the Tabernacle.

Brother Branham would set out guidelines, but it was the job of his trustee board to work out the details. He believed that the members of the board were men led by the Holy Ghost, and he respected that leadership in their lives.

Regarding the tape franchise, he stressed the fact that he wanted this to be under the direction of the board of trustees: “This belongs to the trustees. Not the deacons, the trustees; not the pastor, trustees.” He even went so far as to say, “It’s none of my business to know nothing about that; it’s his business [the franchise holder] with them and the trustees.”
Church Order Jeffersonville IN 63-1226

People have tried to infer that this act was not in character for Brother Branham, and that he was not in agreement with this action, even though he signed it!

When I hear statements such as that, this quote always comes to mind:

“He [Jesus] was a kind man, a humble man. And yet, he was a man of power. When He spoke, He was very humble and gentle. But when it come time, between...to separate between truth and error, Jesus was very stern. Picked up some ropes and tied them together, and kicked over the money charger’s table, and beat them out of the temple. Called the Pharisees, those religious people, said,

‘Well, you bunch of hypocrites, you serpents, snakes in the grass,’ and all those things, see. He was a man who could speak when it come time to speak. He was a man who was full of love. But He loved His Father so much, till He stayed in harmony with His Father. And anything that interfered with that harmony, then Jesus drew the line.”
Thou Knowest All Things Hammond IN 52-0716

SO DID BROTHER BRANHAM!

The man who had made the request was extremely frustrated by the board’s decision. Unable to accept this as the final authority, he went to Brother Branham’s home that afternoon and demanded to see him. Brother Branham was in his study, preparing for the evening service, and he could not be disturbed. Completely distraught, the man refused to leave until he had seen the prophet, creating such a commotion that, from his study, Brother Branham was actually able to overhear everything that was being said.

Finally, after more than an hour, the man became convinced that he was not going to see the prophet, and he left. As soon as he was gone, Brother Branham dictated a note, signed it, and gave instructions for it to be delivered to the man before service that evening. A part of the devastating contents of that note are being printed here for the first time:

“Because of your defiant attitude, you are no longer to be called ‘brother’ in our congregation.”

Later Brother Branham made the statement that the Angel spoke to him and said “You no longer need to call him ‘brother.’” The man continued to attend meetings, but the “Free Tape Ministry” ceased operating.

Brother Sothmann continued to hold the franchise for tapes until October 12, 1981, when the board of trustees transferred it into my hands, and The Voice of God Recordings was established.

Many people saw Brother Branham in service, but not everyone had the opportunity to watch him in battle. He was serious when it came to separating truth from error, and, as you have just read, he was serious about the way the Food he stored up was to be handled. And he was willing to back up the Word of the Lord with action, when necessary. Just like Jesus, he “drew the line!”

PRESENT TENSE Think about this for a moment: Given all that you have heard, read, and know from first-hand experience, if there were no franchise or copyright today, if Brother Branham had never said a word on the subject and everyone was free to make and sell tapes and books, and to use Brother Branham’s words in any way

they chose, do you think that there would be peace among the brethren, and this “business” of the Message materials would now be running smoothly?

I think you know better than that. Just look at the facts: Right now people around the world are making tapes and printing books, **claiming** that they don’t even believe in a franchise or a copyright, and that everyone is free to do as they please. And yet, they are fighting and trying to shut one another down in order to protect their own self-interest! Satan has schemed to cause competition to arise from a situation where there should never be any competition.

Popular opinion among some Message believers is that Brother Branham’s recorded messages have now been relegated to the unprotected, easily assailable state of “Public Domain,” meaning that there is no viable copyright in place. Furthermore, materials that are not copyrighted cannot be franchised, so that position and any authority that it may imply is also null and void. Anyone who so chooses is free to do as they please with the 1100 sermons that Brother Branham preached, and sell any product derived from these sermons, with immunity from prosecution.

Don’t believe it.

The main characteristic of popular opinion is that it is often the product of man’s reasoning, and when man decides to reason against the Word, it opens the door for every demon that Hell has to offer.

If you choose to reason against the Word, you may think, “But there is so much good being done, surely this is not wrong. If *this* or *that* brother was not taking the initiative and setting up this print shop, or getting the Message into this new format, then people around the world might just starve to death!”

Some brothers even see themselves as the Robin Hoods of the Message, stealing from the “rich” to feed the poor.

You might be eating stolen bread, my friend, but it is not because there is a famine among the Bride or because I have schemed to keep Food from your table, as some would have you believe!

The Food has been stored up! Why should the Bride be starving? The granaries are stocked. Food is available in 45 languages, but until we come into line with the prophet’s instructions, the DISTRIBUTION is being hampered. I believe that even **one** tape or **one** book is enough to feed and sustain a hungry soul. But we are going to need a lot of help and a united effort if we are

going to complete this job, which is to reach every predestinated soul.

We are always ready and willing to meet any genuine need. We are producing tapes and books by the millions, AND WE CAN DO MORE! Indeed, we must do more.

I think that some of you have been ambushed! Think on this for a moment: Among brethren, should it matter if this symbol © is printed on the Message materials? Among brethren, should it matter who has the responsibility of getting the tapes and books produced, so long as the work is being done? If we're honest, we will say, "No, it should not." Brother Branham made a decision as to who would be in charge and how he expected the job to be carried out. **That should be all that matters to us.**

Could it be that Satan has cloaked his true agenda in the technicalities and legalities that surround this issue of copyrights, franchises, and trademarks, just long enough to get our eyes off the far more threatening plot that is his true intention? Can you imagine how delighted he is to see Message believers questioning the authority of the Word?

Have you considered that the real issue may be as simple as this: WHAT IS YOUR ABSOLUTE? Is it the words of the prophet, or man's reasoning?

There is but one final authority for the believer, regardless of the source or the nature of the situation we face. We must go to the Word. It is our Absolute, and it takes precedent over any reasoning, emotion, self-will, ambition or agency that, in the weakness of our flesh, we might employ. And I believe that the decisions we make will reflect our Absolute.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES I was reading a brother's opinion that he had expressed on his web site recently, and it blessed my heart. He was utterly convinced that we had no evidence to back up our position concerning the existence of a copyright and franchise on the Message materials. He said, "The only thing they have is Brother Branham's words."

I said, "AMEN!" I thought, "When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, what did Jesus use to defend himself? Was it His ability to call the Angels from the Heavens? Was it His Power to control the lightning, and the elements of the earth? No. "He used the Word."

They may look weak in their eyes, but to me these statements that Brother Branham wove into the cloth of the Message are like threads of homespun wool – a little rough at times, but strong and enduring. They are there to protect the "fabric" of the garment that will clothe the Bride. I do not have to defend this Word; the Holy Spirit will do that.

And when it comes to defending our rights as human beings, the Apostle Paul has definitely put limitations on what we can pursue, and what we need to leave alone! If you were expecting to be presented with a lot of legal gibberish in this report, I hope that you are pleasantly surprised by its absence. I simply could not find it in my heart to respond in that manner. I wanted these words to reflect what I feel, not what our attorneys suggested.

In the letter that I sent to the brothers who are involved in the various tape and book ministries around the globe, I made this statement:

I cannot help but believe that if we were following, to the letter, the instructions that the prophet left for us, the results would be greater than anything we have ever seen or imagined.

You might say, "But Brother Joseph, how can one office supply the entire world?"

I have never said that I wanted to work alone, and I don't believe that is what Brother Branham had in mind. He placed a handful of men, a board, in service as overseers, to supervise the work that he knew needed doing. I want to work together with others who have been called into His service, just as I have been.

Does this task sometimes seem impossible? Yes!
Is it impossible? NO!
Not when we have the WORD.

It may not make any sense to you at times, but that is because you try to reason *against* the Word. When you reason against the Word, you separate yourself from God.

If we simply follow the Prophet's Instructions, we will fulfill the plan of God.

In ancient Greece, there was a famous mathematician and inventor by the name of Archimedes. He is credited with discovering the law of the lever and the compound pulley, which makes it possible to move a great weight with a small force. "Give me where to stand, and I can move the earth!" he declared.

But unfortunately Archimedes had no place to stand except **on** the earth, and therefore his position kept him from fulfilling his vision.

That is not so for the Bride of Christ. We can stand above the earth and everything that is connected to it, a position that is above personalities, nationalities, offices, friendship, family, loyalties, and ambitions. We can stand on the revealed Word of our day, and through our lives demonstrate the leverage (strength) that Christ-like character affords the believer.

When we stand in that place, we **can** move the world!

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

FREE TAPE MINISTRY Brother Branham referred to a free tape ministry that operated from the Tabernacle. That was in reference to the free tapes that were being shipped overseas each month, subsidized by the **royalties** (\$.25) paid by the franchise holder on all tapes sold in the U.S..

Today that work has been expanded to include hundreds of free lending libraries around the world.

Royalties are an important part of this picture, but only because Brother Branham made the payment of royalties a part of the responsibilities of making and selling his recorded messages. And, as he plainly stated, it was not because of a desire for financial gain. He left it in the hands of the board, and said that we must do it because it is the law, and it **must be obeyed**. Since 1981, we have paid a royalty of \$.25 on every tape that has been sold by The Voice of God Recordings. Every franchise holder since 1962 has done exactly the same. Everything we sell in the U.S. helps to subsidize the free tapes that we send overseas.

With MP3 technology, a single portable player capable of holding all 1100 recorded messages is available. The question of royalties will need to be addressed in light of these developments because, as always, we want to stay true to the instructions given by the owner of the property. For example: The royalties alone on 1100 messages in MP3 format, at \$.25 each would be \$275.

All decisions regarding royalties are a part of the jurisdiction of the William Branham Evangelistic Association's board of directors. But no one should presume that they are exempt from these charges that Brother Branham himself levied against the duplicating of his recorded messages.

REFUSAL TO PRINT/ SEND BOOKS It is a very common thing for brothers overseas to come to us with requests for the printing of certain books. Understandably, these requests must be investigated, and then scheduled, sometimes months in advance. No request is ever ignored.

However, there are times when the decision is made not to pursue a particular request. For example, the reason could be that we have been able to ascertain that there is no immediate need for a particular item. In the past, there have been thousands of books printed that are still setting in storage overseas simply because a few people were without a personal copy of a particular book and felt frustrated. In cases like this, wouldn't it make more sense to make a few "photocopied" books for those in need, so that more urgent needs can be dealt with first? We have learned that it is always important to investigate the extent of the need, and respond in proportion.

Most of the time, the need is very real. Still, we must prioritize the work, and it may take a few weeks, or months, for this work to be completed. But sometimes brothers interpret this *production time* to mean "denial," and they will take their requests to a pastor in the U.S. or Canada, accompanied by this charge: "Brother Joseph has refused to print this book for us."

As a result, books are frequently translated, printed, and distributed without my knowledge. Then, these unchecked translations are spread among the people, and another, inaccurate "version" of the Message takes hold and adds to the confusion already among the people.

There are many issues that my brother, sister, and I may disagree on, (a common situation in most families). Even though we share the same blood, we still have different personalities, different methods, and even different points of view on some subjects. Thankfully, we try not to allow these things to come between us as a family. Instead, we do share a common respect for the Word, a desire to serve in whatever capacity He sees fit to allow us, and a love for the Message that overshadows all else in our lives.

However, there is no dissention among us when it comes to this particular issue. We believe that the words of our father allow no wiggle room on this matter for anyone, including ourselves. And we assure you, we are not out to discredit any individual, church, or corporation. Even though they may think their motive is pure, and their cause just, if it is not in harmony with the Word, then we must draw the line, just as Jesus did, and just as our father did.

THE TRADEMARK: Brother Branham did not address the issue of trademark, and since our actions and motives are simply directed towards fulfilling what Brother Branham set in order on tape, we never pursued the issue of a trademark on his name. When our lawyers were investigating the various aspects of the ministry in order to update some legal paperwork, they came across a stunning fact. Two years ago, another ministry obtained a legal trademark on the name "William Branham" for their exclusive use.

Perhaps most surprising to us was the instigator of this legal action. For years they have opposed Voice Of God Recordings' position concerning the copyrighting of

the Message, and have proclaimed that all of Brother Branham's work is a part of the "Public Domain", and a copyright or franchise doesn't exist.

From their perspective, there was only one item that belonged to Brother Branham that was still obtainable, and that was his name. So they took the necessary steps to secure it for their own use.

This could not possibly have been done to protect the prophet's name, or to bring honor to the Message in any way.

If our attorney had not discovered the fact that someone had obtained a trademark on our father's name, no member of his family would have known about this action.

Speaking as Brother Branham's son, I will say that I consider this to be the ultimate act of disrespect against our father. William Branham's name is now the legal possession of: Bible Believers of Washington [Cloverdale Bibleway, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada]. We cannot think of a more insulting way to dishonor the prophet and his life of sacrifice than to take from him something as personal as his very name.

In this circumstance, I have chosen to take the necessary steps to correct this personal affront to my family. As I stand here today I feel that I have been left with no other recourse but to reclaim my Daddy's name.

In closing, I would like to say that no matter how good the intentions, any work that is not being performed in a manner that is in keeping with God's ordained way, is being done in vain. As Brother Branham has warned us, we could be doing God a service without it being in His will, and if we don't repent, we can get caught up in a delusion and soon find ourselves in a tragic predicament.

Truth and error must be separated, and I feel that the time has come for me to make public my stand on what Brother Branham said regarding the copyright and franchise of his sermons.

Now, it is a deciding time for everyone.

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

II Corinthians 4:1-2

This is the general text of the letter that I mailed to all brothers who are presently involved in the unauthorized use of Brother Branham's sermons, in any format.

Dear Brother,

I would like to have a few moments of your undivided attention today as you read this letter. I trust that what I have to say here will be of benefit to us as brothers in the Message, and that it will be a positive step for both ourselves and the family of believers around the world, whom we serve.

To begin, I would like to review with you just one of the statements that Brother Branham made regarding the consequences one could be facing if his instructions regarding the reproduction and distribution of the materials of his ministry were not followed precisely as he gave them.

These words are not something that has been inserted into the Message. They are not being taken out of context; they are not being manipulated. Here is what he said:

"If there'd be a – a foul person that wanted to cause some trouble, he could really do it. You go over that franchise... 'cause that's just like a copyright, see, the same thing. You're not allowed to do it; it's a great fine to do that." He continued his instructions by saying, "I can't take care of all of it; I'm just telling you the way it should be and must be run. That... You understood, I said, 'Must be run!'"¹

He left no room for interpretation. He did not give a closing date.

A prophet of God has emphatically declared that the tape recordings of his sermons are both copyrighted and franchised. **To deny the inspiration of that declaration is to reason against the Word of God.**

When a prophet dictates a certain action, saying, "It must be done *this way*," any person that respects the authority of that office should be anxious to follow precisely the instructions he has been given. That is what it means to "follow" a prophet. But, do you honestly believe that the numerous agencies around the world today that are involved in the duplicating of tapes, printing of books, and the sale and distribution of these materials are operating in strict accordance with the way Brother Branham expressed that it *must be run*? Does it line up with the Word? Are they really *following* the Message?

This was one brother's response when he was asked that question, "I know that Brother Branham said the words *copyright* and *franchise*, but today there is so much to be done, surely he didn't mean to place such limitations on it as those words would imply. Surely he would do it differently if he were here today, because the scope of the Message is so much greater now than it was back then."

I've also heard, "I have sought the Lord every step of the way, and He has miraculously opened up doors for this outreach I am doing for Him, and that is proof enough of His approval to satisfy me."

These are both fine statements, and I would not want to question the motives of either brother for one moment. But I believe they both have done something that the prophet warned us not to do. They have presumed; they have ventured without authority.

Perhaps if I were to ask your reason, Brother, for the activities that you have pursued that appear to be contrary to Brother Branham's directives on this subject, you would have a similar response. But my questions to you today are somewhat different, and I do not need to hear the answers. I would like for you to **ask yourself** this: Would I be willing to go into a court of law and argue before a judge that William Branham was mistaken when he declared that this body of work that he produced and left for us was protected by a copyright? Would it be my assertion before a judge that he had misrepresented the truth in all statements he made to that effect? Would I be willing to put my hand on the Bible and say that Brother Branham was wrong?

We are not in man's court today, but we are in the Presence of an even Higher Authority. He has already declared that no matter how good our intentions may be, if the work we present to Him is not in keeping with His ordained way, it is done in vain. As Brother Branham has warned us, we could be doing God a service without it being in His will.

When we put our own interpretation on the Word we are doing the same thing that Satan did in the Garden. "And what does this do? It makes a strong delusion for the people to believe a lie and be damned by it."² What a tragic circumstance! What an awful responsibility we have before us.

It is my assertion that Brother Branham's words to us on this subject are **the highest law**. No litigation is necessary, because the Highest Authority has already ruled on the subject through His prophet!

There is a correct, God-ordained manner in which the physical distribution of the stored-up Bride food is to be carried out, and it is already in place and in operation. My purpose in writing to you today is to remind you, once again, that you are out of line by encroaching on the authority of this ministry.

I have never asked you to accept a set of rules and regulations that I have formulated on my own. I can't really say that I know all the reasons why Brother Branham chose to set things up this way, but shouldn't we be able to take it for granted that his understanding on the subject is clearer than our own? I most certainly do.

We are thankful that the Lord has permitted good to be done, even in our present state of confusion. Lives have been blessed and enriched. **But I cannot help but believe that if we were following, to the letter, the instructions that the prophet left for us, the results would be greater than anything we have ever seen or imagined.** And, there would be no competitions among the brethren, no discrepancies and variations among the translations, and no shortage of materials. How much more could be accomplished if this part of the ministry was operating in perfect accord with the Word!

I believe that in the Body of Christ, we each have a post of duty, and each duty is equally vital to the wholeness of the Body.

God equips every man spiritually for his calling, and I believe that it is my calling to physically put materials into the hands of the people that will allow them to grow in the knowledge of the revealed Truth.

Since the earliest days of Voice of God Recordings, I have **always** stressed to you the fact that my goal is to run this outreach of Brother Branham's ministry as closely in line with his instructions as humanly possible. I have requested your cooperation in allowing us to perform our job as the *equipping* arm of the Message, per his orders, and I promised that no request for materials would be overlooked.

Still, you have chosen to continuously expand your activities that involve the unauthorized production and sale of these copyrighted materials.

I do not know the reason why you have chosen to take a detour around this portion of the Message, but I do not believe that finances motivate the manner in which you operate your business or your ministry. I trust that your motives are pure, and your desires are honorable (and I hope that you view my ministry with the same fairness).

You are a successful businessman, as well as a minister of the Gospel. Perhaps you have said to yourself, "If I were in Joseph Branham's position, I would not do *this* or *that*, and I definitely would do *this* differently than he does." It would be natural to think that way, and I am sure that I would do the same if our situations were reversed. And there may have been times when your decision would have worked out better than my own, for I'll admit that my job continues to be a learning experience for me every step of the way.

I have even speculated that perhaps it is my personality that just "rubs you the wrong way," and perhaps it is a disregard for me personally that has provoked this response and these actions that, in my view, seem to be out of character for a minister of the Gospel. If in my heart I have wrongly judged you, then I am sorry, and I ask you to forgive me. I believe that you would agree that we want to be found right in our doctrine and in our spirit when Jesus returns.

I realize that the position of an anointed minister is a sacred one, and I most certainly do not want to be guilty of showing disrespect for that holy office.

I would be naïve (to say the least) if I did not recognize that, if you chose, you could use the influence that your pulpit provides to try and pull the rug from under the ministry of Voice of God Recordings. I'll admit that sometimes it seems to me that you are progressively determined to do just that.

You know that I have never interfered with your ministry, or tried to tell you how to operate your ministry, or kept you from performing any part of your ministry, or tried to kill the influence of your ministry among the people. I have too much respect for your office to even consider doing that.

But I would like to know what I need to do in order for you to respect my ministry! Yes, I do believe that this work that I do is a ministry to the Bride. And as long as I continue to feel that He is calling me to this ministry, then I will strive to carry on with whatever means He puts into my hands.

Recently I noticed that you have once again expanded your business interests and are now including MP3 technology in your product line. I also noticed that you have protected your own personal MP3 files with a copyright, even though your work was accomplished using the already-copyrighted taped sermons of the prophet. Of course, I understand why you would want to legally protect all the efforts you have put into this, especially seeing just how cut-throat the atmosphere among the competition has become.

Yet, it seems that you expect us to sit silently by while **our** work is being pirated – work that represents years of labor and great financial investment on our part.

I believe that if we do not try with all that is within us to hold up a standard against misdeeds such as those you and others are committing against the Word, God will ultimately hold us responsible as unworthy stewards of His resources. After all, it is His investments and His treasures – the Provisions for His Bride – that are being misappropriated.

Your actions have proven to me that you no longer feel it is necessary to maintain even a semblance of respect for my position as the franchise holder. I realize that as long as you are going to rationalize your actions, then nothing that I say is going to make any difference to you.

Even so, I am still pursuing this with you, because it is my greatest desire to see everything operating in continuity with the Word.

For that reason, and by the authority of the Word which has been spoken by His prophet, I am asking you to come into line with Brother Branham's instructions regarding this copyrighted/franchised material.

- YOU MUST NOT SELL, REPRODUCE, OR DISTRIBUTE THE RECORDED MESSAGES OF BROTHER WILLIAM BRANHAM IN ANY FORMAT IN THE US, CANADA, OR ANY FOREIGN NATION.

- YOU MUST NOT TRANSLATE AND/OR PRINT BROTHER WILLIAM BRANHAM'S MATERIAL.

I am not asking this for personal gain in any way. I **do** believe that we, as the representatives of this Message, can work in unity and in peace. God has determined exactly what work **MUST BE COMPLETED** before Jesus takes His Bride from this earth.

Can you imagine how much more could be accomplished for the Kingdom if only things could be run the way they were designed to run? But in order to run correctly, it cannot be according to my opinion or your opinion. Remember, I am not the one who initiated this course of action. These are not my ideas. We all stand equal before the authority of the Word.

If the franchise agreement would someday pass out of my hands, I would just as readily take this same stand with whoever would replace me in that position.

This is all that is in my power to do. I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit will defend and protect the Word. If you can show me, in the Message or in the Scriptures, where I am wrong in anything that I have said to you today, then please contact me. I will gladly listen.

I realize that whether your approach is right or wrong, whether you feel the accusations you've made toward Voice Of God Recordings are justified or not, that is between you and God. I know that what God desires to see in me is a response that will reflect just how much this Message means to me, how it has changed me and strengthened me. I know that I am nothing in myself. My life and every fiber of my being are totally dependent upon Him, and this work is His to do with as He sees fit.

I know that many of the things that I have said are strong, and I have probably upset you. What I have said and done may anger you. I'm sorry to be the object of your anger, but I am equally sorry that things have gotten so out of hand that I have been forced into this action. But instead of discarding this letter and dismissing its contents from your mind, would you pray about the matters that I have brought before you?

In the statement that I quoted at the beginning of this letter, Brother Branham warned of "*a great fine*" that would be levied against a person that did not accept the authority of the copyright/franchise he put in place. I do believe that if you continue on this path that you are presently on, one day you will be fined by an Authority that is higher than any we could employ. I believe it, because a prophet of God has said that would be the consequences of doing exactly what you have persisted in doing. **Please stop now**, because I don't want to see that happen.

"HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE"--Philippians 2:16

The Branham Tabernacle

INTERDENOMINATIONAL

EIGHTH AND PENN STREETS
JEFFERSONVILLE, INDIANA

PASTOR - REV. WM. BRANHAM

THESE RESOLUTIONS WERE MADE AND PASSED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND DEACONS IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH THE PASTOR AND THE ASSISTANT PASTOR.

I/ All tapes of Rev: William Branham's sermons are to be made by Fred Sothmann Only, until further notified by the Board. We do not at this time recognize any Free Tape Ministry. These tapes are Franchised, and cannot be reproduced by any person other than Fred Sothmann with out his written permission.

II/ No person holding meetings, selling books or tapes, writing tracts, giving out prayer cloths or cards of any kind, or soliciting any gifts, are not recognized by this church or its pastor. They are doing this under false pretense, and have not been given the authority to do so.

III/ This church does not send out any Ministers other than its pastor Rev: William Branham to hold services elsewhere.

The reasons for these resolutions are as follows:

It has been brought to our attention that ministers are crossing the country entering into other fellowships, saying they are associated with, and are sent out by this church to hold these meetings.

It has also been brought to our attention that people are printing cards and tracts, sending out prayer cloths etc. as though they were Authorized to do so by this church and its Pastor, which is not True. It will be appreciated if you will notify the church of any person found doing this.

These resolutions have been read and approved by the Pastor Rev: William Branham, Associate Pastor Rev: Orman Neville and the Trustee and Deacon Board.

REV: WILLIAM BRANHAM

William Branham

REV: ORMAN NEVILLE

Orman Neville

ROY E. ROBERSON

Roy E. Roberson

MIKE LEO EGAN

Mike Leo Egan

BANKS WOOD

Banks Wood

FRED SOTHMANN

Fred Sothmann

HOLLIN HICKERSON

Hollin Hickerson

TONY ZABLE

Tony Zabel

CARL WHEELER

Carl Wheeler

BILLY PAUL BRANHAM SEC. TREAS.

Billy Paul Branham Sec. & Treas.



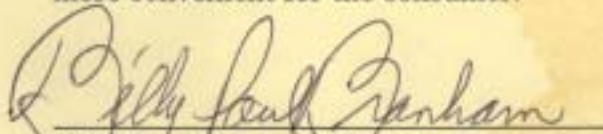
The William Branham Evangelistic Association

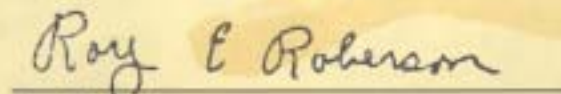
P.O. Box 325
Jeffersonville, Indiana 47131
United States of America


Transfer Of Franchise

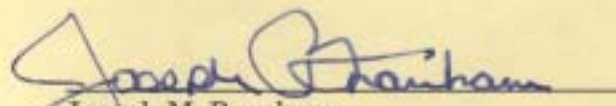
This is to certify that as of this date, April 16, 1981, **The William Branham Evangelistic Association**, being the sole owner of the tape recorded sermons of **Rev. William Marrion Branham**, and as the missionary arm of **The Branham Tabernacle** of Jeffersonville, Indiana, does hereby grant **Voice Of God Recordings** the exclusive franchise to duplicate, translate into other languages, sell, and distribute all such recorded sermons of **Rev. William Marrion Branham**, as well as any and all films and photographs of him.

Voice Of God Recordings is further given permission, as technology permits, to explore new mediums that will allow better reproduction of the original message, including reprocessing, restoring, and bringing them to a high fidelity and also make the product more convenient for the consumer.


Billy Paul Branham, President


Roy E. Roberson


Fred Sothman


Joseph M. Branham



"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8