

# “Sue As I Say, Don’t Sue As I Sue”

The Secret Philosophy of the Assemblies of God Made Known  
Rev. Raymond M. Barnett<sup>1</sup>

It may surprise you to know the venerable adage – “Do as I say, don’t do as I do” - has a new twist to it according to the Assemblies of God. What is the new transformation of that old, illogical proverb? It is this - “Sue As I Say, Don’t Sue As I Sue.” It is quite a change indeed, as the Assemblies of God hierarchy habitually brings A/G churches into U.S. courts of law.

If one reads the rhetoric of George O. Wood, General Superintendent of the A/G, a man who holds two earned doctorates – one in pastoral theology, and another in law – it is hard to disagree with his thesis on Christians suing other Christians. It is doctrinally sound, and biblically balanced. His reputation for intelligence and affability shine through his essay like sunlight through a stained glass window. His prism of words, eloquent expression, and use of the English language captures the intellect of those who value the Word of God as they produce a beautiful blend of hues, a mélange of wonderful, primary colors that seduces the innocent and unsuspecting heart. That is, they create a hypnotic effect so the average minister is blind to the deeds of the Executive Presbytery and the General Superintendent compared to his words.

- [Please See “Christians And Lawsuits” By Dr. George O. Wood Here - [http://www.ag.org/top/legal\\_matters/christians\\_and\\_lawsuits.cfm](http://www.ag.org/top/legal_matters/christians_and_lawsuits.cfm)].

Yet, when one examines the custom of Dr. George Wood and the Assemblies of God, you will find that their practice is not equal to their pretense. In truth, the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri, and member Districts all over the United States, file charges against their affiliate churches on a regular basis. They have for years. Even though this is directly against their legally stated purpose as listed on their website<sup>2</sup>.

Consider the case filed by the A/G in Southern Missouri last year [2007] and settled earlier this year [2008].

- [Please Read, “Judge Rules Timbercreek Church Property Belongs To Assemblies Of God.” Found Here <http://www.ky3.com/news/local/15120916.html>]

On the other hand, there is the current case in Warren, Michigan.

- [<http://wordpress.com/tag/the-death-of-american-religious-freedom/>]

Then again, there is the tragic and unethical betrayal of one, godly pastor in Niles, Michigan. Like the case in Warren, it is a prosecution that is still pending, and awaits a final outcome.

- [<http://www.michianachristianembassy.com/view/?pageID=369558>]

In contrast, there was a case in California just a few years ago. Read this heartrending letter from the pastor of an Assemblies of God church reaching out for help to an Internet research organization -

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an Assemblies of God minister. I have been ordained with them for over 30 years. The Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God has recently filed a lawsuit against me and they have seized all of our assets (3 million plus) by walking into the Bank of America and telling them that because they are the head of our organization that they therefore have the "right" to take our money. (They have consulted no one in our church, not our Board of Trustees,

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<sup>2</sup> The national church is called "The General Council of the Assemblies of God." In keeping with the original intention of the founding body, the Assemblies of God is considered a cooperative fellowship instead of a denomination. As a result the national headquarters operation exists primarily as a service organization - providing educational curriculum, organizing the missions programs, credentialing ministers, overseeing the church's colleges and seminary, producing communication channels for the church and non-church public, and providing leadership for many national programs and ministries of the Assemblies of God (Acts 16:4, 5; Hebrews 13:17).

[<http://ag.org/top/About/structure.cfm>]

and not our members, and they have not allowed me to have a fair hearing in this matter.) When they tried to take over our checking accounts, the Bank of America took the position that they didn't know for sure who the money belongs to so, therefore, they froze our accounts allowing no one Access to the money until a court can decide who the money belongs to. They have accused me of fraud with regard to the spending of the churches money. I do have an attorney and we have turned over 5 years of financial information both for the church and for me personally. All of our records prove that there has been no wrongdoing or fraud of any kind. Even though I have an attorney, I'm trying to take a proactive approach and not depend entirely on an attorney. Therefore, I need to find similar cases where the Assemblies of God parent organization has sued its ministers and/or churches trying to seize their property and/or money. In other words, I am trying to find legal precedence that will help me win my case if possible. I hope this information helps to clarify what I am looking for. Please let me know if I can answer other questions.

[\[http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=246472\]](http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=246472)

In the California case, the extreme anxiety of the pastor is obvious. Yet, he is not alone. All across the country, the Assemblies of God are dismissing pastors under contrived and trumped - up charges, so they can seize the assets of the local church. Despite the fact the typical A/G constitution and bylaws guarantees the local church – autonomy, sovereignty, and the right to self-government as the General Council constitution does as well, as stated here under “sovereign rights” -

Article xi Section 1c. -

Right of self-government (sovereign rights). Each General Council affiliated assembly has the right of self-government under Jesus Christ, its living Head, and shall have the power to choose or call its pastor, elect its official board, and transact all other business pertaining to its life as a local unit. It shall have the right to administer discipline to its members according to the Scriptures and its constitution or bylaws. It shall have the right to acquire and hold title to property, either through trustees or in its corporate name as a self-governing unit. The fact it is affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall in no way destroy its rights as above stated or interfere with its sovereignty. The governance model adopted by the local assembly shall conform to the guidelines of Constitution, Article XI, Section 1, paragraph a, subparagraph (4).

Perhaps, a letter I have from a leading US attorney will put all of this in perspective. It reads thus –

August 8, 2005

Raymond M. Barnett, Senior Pastor  
Calvary Assembly of God  
Amsterdam, NY

Dear Pastor Barnett:

Greetings in Jesus wonderful name!

Thank you for your response declining to engage our firm to represent you and your church per my proposal and recommendation. I must very respectfully advise you and your board that you and your board have made a regrettable decision if you wish to preserve for your congregation the assets of Calvary Assembly; the New York District is going to gobble them up like a counterfeit thief in the night. Districts throughout the nation are commandeering churches to an almost epidemic number. The same applies to the epidemic of certain districts declining to accept resignations in favor of a kangaroo trial and conviction to punish the local pastor that dares buck the “Sanhedrin.” I was saved 31 years ago in [Name withheld] Assembly of God church in Irving, Texas and continue to serve on the Board, Finance Committee and teach and represent the church and the North Texas District from time to time. I wish wonderful District was the template but such is not the case; the situation is brutal in your case.

He was right. The circumstances in our case, turned out to be just that – brutal! The leadership I had trusted, for 23 years, not only betrayed me, but also destroyed a work of God that took me 18 years to build. Because I resigned in order to keep the casualties at a minimum, they also took from us, by default, our church building that had about \$1,000,000 dollars worth of work put into it. Now, it lies in ruins, broke in spirit, and struggling financially. Thus, one may ask – “Who won?” Well, George Wood and the New York District did. Yet, the victory was pyrrhic. That is, they won in the same way that King Pyrrhus “won” against the Roman army in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. It was a victory gained at the expense of far too many souls that are now dead or indifferent to that local church, the Assemblies of God, and me as well.<sup>3</sup> Above that, the division it caused between brothers and sisters that had been close friends for many years is inestimable and perhaps - permanent. What a pity! All of this happened for the love of money, power, and the right to brag about who “won!” In the end, we *all* lost!

Perhaps this anonymous blog, by a former employee of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, sums up the sad state of affairs that is now at pandemic proportions in the Assemblies of God.

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<sup>3</sup> **pyrrhic** adjective (of a victory) won at too great a cost to have been worthwhile for the victor. Pyrrhus, a Greek king, invaded Italy and defeated the Romans in 279 BC but sustained heavy losses. [Oxford English Dictionary]

"I would like to say that those of you that are loyalists to the GCAG, please be careful. I have seen many a blessed life ruined in order to keep to their agenda and with little publicized as possible. You, who said that they were a bank, are true- you who said they care only to feed their own bellies, was telling truth as well. If you do not think so, the parking lot alone will hint at it: For a non-profit denomination claiming to have only the best interests at heart for its churches and claim they have tight budgets, it's hard to see that with Lexus SUVs, Escalades, and Mercedes SUVs parked there. There was even a member of the BOA that ALL of you knew of or heard of for sure, that had traded one \$60K Corvette for a brand new \$85K one the following year...just 2 years ago. I have met some cold hearted lost souls in my life, but it wasn't until I came to work there that I feared for the church when I saw such selfish, gluttonous hidden snakes working under the name of God's church. I myself no longer work for them and am even moving out of state, away from what I've experienced there. I pray for all those lost and corrupted and for all of us who are affected by their leadership."

[<http://www.topix.com/forum/religion/assemblies-of-god/THFTMC10TG0QR4SRI>]

It seems that George Wood, doctor of jurisprudence and a well - beloved icon of Pentecostal holiness and integrity, may not be as innocent as appearances may suggest. Do you want to know if all of this is true? [The list, by the way, is not NEAR exhaustive of the many lawsuits filed by the Assemblies of God all over the country]. Then try this.

If you are an Assemblies of God pastor with a congregation - try to leave, *with* your people. Do you think that you are a sovereign, autonomous, self-governing body that is part of a "cooperative fellowship?"<sup>4</sup> You will soon find out, and all too painfully, that all is not as it seems at the Grey Vatican. They have adopted a miserably depraved credo: "Sue As I Say, Don't Sue As I Sue." In addition to that, they do not care *what* you think about it. No, they do not care at all. For if they did, Dr. Wood and the Executive Presbytery would follow the treatise he wrote with his own hands. Better yet, they would obey the words of Jesus Christ Himself and the Apostle Paul.

- *(Mat 5:40 KJV) "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."*
- *(1 Cor 6:4-10 KJV) "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. {5} I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? {6} But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. {7} Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? {8} Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. {9} Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, {10} Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."*

In conclusion, you would be well advised to heed the words of Jesus Christ our Lord when He said –

*"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: {3} All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."* (Mat 23:2-3 KJV)

Yes, do as they say, just don't sue as they sue.

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<sup>4</sup> Sovereignty of Local Assemblies

Within the fellowship of the Assemblies of God there are two classifications of churches - General Council affiliated churches and district affiliated churches. General Council affiliated churches enjoy full autonomy, having developed to the point of where they are self-governing and self-supporting. These fundamental principles have been catalysts for growth in the Fellowship. District affiliated churches are those which have not yet developed to the point where they qualify for full autonomy. All assemblies are required to adhere to the Statement of Fundamental Truths and a biblical pattern of conduct. From – "Structure of the Assemblies of God" - Our Local Structure and Form of Government.

[<http://ag.org/top/About/structure.cfm>]

From its beginning in 1914, the Assemblies of God has never considered itself a denomination. It has always considered itself a "voluntary, cooperative fellowship." From – "Little-Known Facts in Assemblies of God History"

[[http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/006\\_facts.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/006_facts.cfm)]