

**News and Current Events :: Pastor James McConnell: Trial begins over Islam broadcast****Pastor James McConnell: Trial begins over Islam broadcast - posted by davym (), on: 2015/12/14 18:07**

Saints, please pray for this brother. God has used him mightily in Belfast.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35090649>

Many thanks in Christ

David

Re: Pastor James McConnell: Trial begins over Islam broadcast - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/12/14 18:10

from the article:

Belfast Magistrates' Court heard that Pastor McConnell called Islam "satanic" and "heathen".

His remarks were made at the Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in north Belfast in May 2014 and were streamed online.

Pastor McConnell, 78, of Shore Road in Newtownabbey, County Antrim, is charged with improper use of a public electronic communications network and causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network.

Re: - posted by davym (), on: 2015/12/14 18:17

Some commentary on the trial

<http://ianbrown365.wix.com/martyrs#!Belfast-Courtroom-Dramatically-Transformed-into-an-Evangelical-Auditorium/c1q8z/566ef5000cf274f69811a76b>

Re: - posted by davym (), on: 2015/12/16 10:51

UPDATE

Judgement has been reserved in the landmark trial of evangelical preacher Pastor James McConnell accused of insulting Islam.

The retired head of Whitewell Tabernacle, one of the largest evangelical congregations in Northern Ireland, took to the witness stand today on day three of the case against him.

McConnell, 78, from Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Co Antrim, is being prosecuted under the 2003 Communications Act.

Pastor McConnell is facing two charges linked to a sermon delivered at Whitewell Tabernacle in May, 2014. He branded Islam as "heathen" and "satanic" and said he did not trust Muslims.

The prosecution lay out their case on Monday, while Tuesday was dominated with complex legal arguments as Pastor McConnell's legal team argued the case should be thrown out.

On Wednesday Pastor McConnell took to the witness stand himself and was cross questioned about his sermon, as well as comments he made to the Stephen Nolan Show.

He said: "I had never any intention whatsoever of hurting any one of them and I can say that before the judge and before the almighty God.

"It never entered my head that someone would take me up on that. I was preaching this in the confines of my own church

h. There are Muslims there who know me and understand me. It never entered my head."

The judge, who described the three-day trial as "interesting", is expected to give his verdict on January 5.

District Judge Liam McNally told a packed sitting of Belfast Magistrates' Court: "Obviously I am going to reserve my judgment. I want to consider all the points raised in submissions."

He said: "I should concentrate my mind by giving myself a deadline. I want to wish you all a happy and holy Christmas."

Speaking outside court, Pastor McConnell said he was satisfied at how the trial had gone.

He said: "It has been fair. The prosecution has been fair, everybody has been fair. I can't wait now to January 5."

Supporters sang hymns and clapped as the Pastor emerged from court.

Earlier today under questioning by defence barrister Philip Mateer QC, the pastor outlined his reasons for refusing a lesser punishment of an informed warning.

He said: "If I took that, it would be an insult to the one that I love, for I was standing up for him, for his gospel and for his truth. If I took that informed warning that would be me gagged."

"I will take my stand no matter what happens here today."

Judgement will be delivered on January 5.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/judgement-reserved-in-heathen-islam-sermon-pastor-mcconnell-trial-in-belfast-34293124.html>

Re: - posted by davym (), on: 2016/1/5 8:50

UPDATE

From Belfast Telegraph website

Belfast pastor James McConnell not guilty: 'I want to assure Muslims I love them, what I am against is their theology'
Pastor McConnell said justice has been done after he was cleared in court

By Adrian Rutherford

05/01/2016

Pastor James McConnell today declared that justice had been done after he was cleared of charges linked to an anti-Islamic sermon.

The evangelical preacher walked free from court after being acquitted of both counts by a judge in Belfast.

Outside court he said: "I am very happy that there is liberty to preach the gospel."

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The 78-year-old had been accused of two offences linked to an address delivered at Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in May 2014.

A judge said that while he considered the remarks offensive, he did not consider them "grossly" offensive under the law.

District judge Liam McNally said: "The courts need to be very careful not to criticise speech which, however contemptible, is no more than offensive."

"It is not the task of the criminal law to censor offensive utterances.

"Accordingly I find Pastor McConnell not guilty of both charges."

There was applause at Belfast Magistrates Court as the verdict was delivered.

Pastor McConnell smiled before walking over to shake hands with his defence lawyers.

Outside court, a large crowd sang hymns as he emerged.

Pastor McConnell said justice had been done.

His solicitor Joe Rice added: "You can only expect justice in the next world" on this occasion the law and justice have come together.

Pastor McConnell said that while he would repeat his message in the future, he would word his comments differently because he was conscious he might hurt ordinary Muslims.

He said his only regret was the response from the Muslim community that he was "out to hurt them".

"There was no way I was out to hurt them - I wouldn't hurt a hair on their head", he said.

"But what I am against is their theology and what they believe in.

"If there are Muslims out there, I want to assure them I love them and, if they need help, I am there to help them, but their theology and their beliefs I am totally against them."

He added: "I would do it again but I would word it differently because I would be conscious I was hurting innocent Muslims, I would be conscious I was hurting Muslims who have come here to work hard and are doing their best - there's no way I would hurt those people, but I would do it again, yes."

The pastor said he did not realise how far his sermon would travel.

"As far as I was concerned I was preaching to my own people, I was preaching in my own church - I didn't realise it would go out there and so forth," he said.

Pastor McConnell also said he believed he had said "worse things" in other sermons that had been streamed online.

Pastor McConnell, from Shore Road in Newtownabbey, had faced two charges linked to the sermon delivered from the pulpit of his North Belfast church on May 18 2014.

He was charged under the Communications Act 2003.

Pastor McConnell was accused of improper use of a public electronic communications network, and causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network.

In the internet-broadcast sermon the preacher described Islam as "heathen" and "satanic" and "a doctrine spawned in hell".

He also said he did not trust Muslims.

Pastor McConnell later apologised following a public outcry.

He was questioned by police at the time, however, last June it emerged he would be prosecuted.

The three-day trial took place last month.

A prosecution lawyer had argued Pastor McConnell's comments were not "a slip of the tongue".

He said the pastor was "not on trial for his beliefs", but for what he said and using words that were allegedly grossly offensive.

However, a defence lawyer said the case essentially revolved around five words in an hour-long religious service.

He said the pastor was a man with an unblemished record who should be recognised for his good work in society, not convicted in court.

Judgement had been reserved until today.

REACTION

Ulster Unionist Party

Part of the price we all pay for living in a democracy is that we will hear things that we may judge offensive and that is the case in this instance, as the judge has made clear in his ruling.

People must be free to express themselves robustly, particularly in matters of faith, but we would urge the avoidance of unnecessary offence. Northern Ireland needs to be able to respect diversity whilst allowing those who hold deep religious convictions to express them within the law.

Presbyterian Church 'The right to express a point of view in a public setting, or in the public square, including the liberty to express strongly held beliefs, is one of the marks of a healthy democracy'

Dr. Norman Hamilton, Convenor of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland said: "As a church we are increasingly troubled that the state is seeking to limit freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of conscience in the interests of political correctness. It is essential that the Christian church and all Christian people are at the forefront of promoting such freedoms for the benefit of every citizen, as far as they are consistent with the building of a genuinely free and pluralistic society.

"At the same time, whether our outlook on life is shaped by a faith-based perspective, or none at all, for us all to live in a peaceful and cohesive democratic society, there will always be self-imposed parameters that support important freedoms such as the rights of free speech and of free assembly.

"In this there is a profound tension, especially in a global and social media-driven age. The law must properly value and protect a citizen's right to freedom of speech and expression, while at the same time protecting each of us from unacceptable abuse."

Pastor McConnell vows he won't pay any court fine if convicted

By Suzanne Breen

Pastor James McConnell has vowed that he won't pay any court fine if he is convicted today over controversial comments he made about Islam - a stance that could see him sent to jail.

The firebrand preacher said he remained optimistic that he would be acquitted but pledged that should he be found guilty he would refuse to pay any fine imposed by the judge.

The public gallery of Belfast Magistrates Court will be packed as Judge Liam McNally delivers his verdict today.

The pastor is charged with grossly offending Islam after branding the religion "heathen" and "Satanic" at a sermon in his Belfast Metropolitan Tabernacle church in 2014.

Last night, a defiant Pastor McConnell told the Belfast Telegraph: "If the judge imposes a fine, then I won't be paying it and I don't want anybody else to pay it on my behalf either."

"It's a matter of principle. Paying a fine would be an admission of guilt and I have said from the beginning that I am an innocent man. I know that not paying a fine means that people eventually end up in jail and I am prepared to accept that."

The 78-year-old Christian preacher said that while he didn't want to go to prison, he wouldn't be backing down. "I have said from the beginning of all this that I am willing to go to jail for my beliefs and that is still the case. I'm not going to start running scared at this late stage."

"I don't want to sit in a prison cell but I'd rather do time than pay a fine for something that I don't believe is a crime."

Pastor McConnell said that he "felt sorry" for Judge McNally.

"He is in a very tricky position. This case is a hot potato. If he finds me guilty, he will have all the evangelicals in the country against him," he said.

"If he acquits me, people will say that the case was a terrible waste of taxpayers' money. They'd be right to say that. My prosecution took 18 months and this is my seventh time in court."

"The public funds that have been used to pursue me would have been put to far better use in hospitals or schools."

The pastor said he would bear "no ill-will" towards the judge if he convicted him. "He treated me very well in the court and made many witty remarks. When I was being questioned about the Devil, he jokingly asked me if I was looking towards the prosecution as I was answering," he said.

While Pastor McConnell denounced the Public Prosecution Service's decision to charge him, he said that prosecuting counsel had treated him with "professionalism, courtesy and fairness" throughout the trial.

"The best bit for me was when they played my sermon in court," he said. "The clip with the controversial comments was only 35 seconds long but they played the full hour-and-a-half sermon. I was delighted. I don't think I converted anybody in court but at least they all had to listen to the gospel."

The pastor said he wasn't nervous as he awaited the verdict. "I am in the Lord's hands now. Those who made the decision to prosecute me may have thought I'd buckle under the pressure but I haven't, though the trial has been hard on my wife Margaret. She tries to keep it from me but I know she has found it stressful."

DUP MP Sammy Wilson, who will accompany Pastor McConnell to court today, said: "I hope the judgment will reflect common sense. There are preachers, politicians, comedians, and journalists who say things which some people may object to but that's part of a free society."

"If we start eroding people's ability to do that you will have a chill factor with individuals frightened to air their views in case they end up in the dock. I hope that is foremost in the judge's mind when he delivers his verdict."

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2016/1/5 16:39

Praise God for the outcome. Sense prevailed and I am glad that things were dealt with in fairness. It was probably the earnest intercession of many that spared Pastor McConnell from jail.

Nevertheless, I do believe we will have more of these trials in the future and not all of them will turn out the well.

It is really nothing new - posted by dohzman (), on: 2016/1/6 14:43

I thank the Lord for this brothers victory in the Belfast courts. I think it is important to understand that these things have been happening all along even in America, the Social Media has made the stories more accessible to people outside of the local areas that's all. We had the same thing happen here back in the early 90's where someone took one of the witnessing team to court over a track that they were offended by, basically just a 100 dollar bill with a salvation message and on the front it was the cross, anyway the outcome was Jesus won the case and the courts dismissed the charges. I think this sort of thing has been happening for a long time, but now we are hearing about it because of the internet, that's all.

Re: It is really nothing new, on: 2016/1/6 14:48

I believe as the time grows darker more of these cases will come to the forefront. Also because of the hostility of Western nations toward the things of Christ. The outcome of these cases will go against the Christians.

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2016/1/6 19:29

I think you are right in the sense that open hostility will become more socially acceptable and the court system will become ever increasingly corrupt in their judgements. That's why I believe this presidential election is important, it will dictate how much time this nation has left. I saw revival in this Country with the Judgement of God pouring out on America and the Statue of Liberty Face down, and the Children of God being called to enter into the secret pavilion and hide themselves for awhile.

Re: - posted by staff, on: 2016/1/7 20:43

Hi All
It's great to see the Judge separating and dividing the truth correctly. One thing though that was important to preachers going forward from this case is that they should qualify and explain their comments better so as not to give accusers ammunition to fire at us. This Pastor McConnell did not do as was pointed out by the Judge and it's a good lesson for us all. There's a dangerous agenda out there and these people will use false accusation against us,
Thank God and Bless fair wise Judgement, Amen
Urs Staff

Re: - posted by murrcoir (), on: 2016/1/8 4:31

Yip at the start of any sermon where you are about to address a hot topic you could always start off with a disclaimer, covering the basic tenets of Christianity towards people.

So if they do drag you to court you can always point to the disclaimer at the start of the sermon.

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/8 8:15

I don't understand why preachers have to preach "against" anything.

No one has to preach against homosexuality, it seems to me that all one has to do is present scriptures on fornication.

I'm sure God would be quite pleased with us just presenting HIS word as opposed to our word on the subject.

And for other religions, preach the wonderfulness of Christ's birth and how He alone is Lord of lords and King of kings and leave every other religion out of it.

There is so much wonderful good news in the Scriptures!!!

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2016/1/8 15:22

Isaiah 56:10 says that His watchmen who do not warn the people "are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."

Every preacher in the land needs again to hear the word of God in Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. "1 Timothy 5:20

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. "2 Timothy 4:2

This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. "Titus 1:13

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/8 23:11

I am in total agreement with all the verses you've presented, brother!! They can be accomplished by not preaching "against" something but by presenting the Word!

God bless,
Lisa

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2016/1/9 5:18

Lisa - it doesn't matter what you do you'll still be hated.

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/9 10:51

Quote:

-----by murrcolr

Lisa - it doesn't matter what you do you'll still be hated.

Amen brother! We need to make sure we're hated because of the Holy Spirit and His ways, not our own ways.

It's a narrow-way, not a narrow-minded way.

God bless

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2016/1/9 12:46

Certainly the pastor mention on this thread would not have been in court if he had not said what he had said..

But does that make the pastor a narrow minded aka a bigot?

What about the Street Preacher In Scotland arrest by the Police for calling homosexuality a sin. Does that make the street preacher a narrow minded aka a bigot?

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/10 8:23

Colin, it was not my intention to start a war with you and neither were my comments "against" you or any other person, that you choose to put in the context of "aka a bigot."

Didn't you say at one time that you've been called to be a prophet? The only reason I ask is that around thirty five years ago in a meeting I was in, it was another prophet who spoke by the Holy Spirit: "it's a narrow-way, not a narrow-minded way."

I have never got the feeling that through that statement the Lord was calling anyone a bigot.

Re: , on: 2016/1/10 12:18

Quote:

-----by Lysa on 2016/1/8 23:11:24

I am in total agreement with all the verses you've presented, brother!! They can be accomplished by not preaching "against" something but by presenting the Word!

"Presenting the Word", is not a neutral thing. The Word is against many things, namely the world, flesh, sin and Satan. The world wants to shut up Christians, completely.

There is no way to present the Word in a neutral way. Someone will always be offended.

Luke 7:23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Just preaching about Jesus being the only way offends the majority, and then you are accused of religious bigotry.

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2016/1/10 16:14

Lysa - I was just clearing up what you meant; because they way I understand what the word bigot means - is small minded.

This preacher who prepares people for false accusation by saying: If you follow the standard of the Bible, you will be accused of being a narrow-minded, old-fashioned bigot; and you will be viewed as being unreasonable.

He also links the accusation of narrow-mindedness to bigotry.

Another prophet once said: he who is not with me, is against me and the one who is not against you, is for you.

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2016/1/10 16:22

Quote: Just preaching about Jesus being the only way offends the majority, and then you are accused of religious bigotry.

Art Katz says: Our absoluteness is the very height of offence to a world that is relativistic and pluralistic. They do not want to be told that there is anything that is absolute, that there are only two alternatives, but they need to be told, not by people who bring the correct doctrine but by those who come with a burning conviction.

Do we really believe that God has fixed a Day in which He will judge the world in righteousness? Our apostolic task is to bring an unwanted and unwelcome message to an indifferent world, and it is a message we can only bring in the same proportion that we can demonstrate it.

Re: , on: 2016/1/10 16:39

Colin,

I believe you nailed it with that quote from Art Katz. That is the whole truth of the matter, isn't it?

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/1/11 7:42

â€œNot guiltyâ€™ verdict for North Ireland pastor who criticised Islam

A Northern Ireland pastor has today been found not guilty of using â€œgrossly offensiveâ€ words during a sermon made available online.

Pastor James McConnell was on trial for comments he made about Islam. Speaking today, he made clear that he was standing against Islam as a belief, rather than individual Muslims.

Giving his decision, District Judge Liam McNally said the courts should be cautious of clamping down on speech â€“ even if some found it â€œcontemptibleâ€.

Free expression

The National Secular Society said that while it â€œstrongly disagreedâ€™ with McConnellâ€™s words, the ruling was a â€œwelcome reassertion of the fundamental right to freedom of expressionâ€.

McConnell was being prosecuted under the 2003 Communications Act for saying in a sermon: â€œIslam is heathen, Islam is satanic, Islam is a doctrine spawned in hellâ€.

Speaking after the result, McConnell said that he loved Muslims, but he was against â€œtheir theology and their beliefsâ€.

read more: <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/not-guilty-verdict-for-ni-pastor-who-criticised-islam/>

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/12 0:10

You guys are right, offenses will come and this proves it even on SI, I've definitely offended some of you with my own personal beliefs, even though none was intended.

God bless,
Lisa

Re: - posted by murrclor (), on: 2016/1/12 15:00

Here is Pastor James McConnell message that landed him in court but remember he was found guilty of all charges..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUJFIMciQA8>

Maybe you should listen to it before spouting off the next time.

Re: - posted by Lysa (), on: 2016/1/12 21:56

Ya know, I usually stay quiet and don't reply but all I did was voice an opinion, decide to defend it AND all without saying one word against anyone in particular (go back and read my words).

It's been you and your trumped up charges against me who's been spouting off.

Maybe you should read Henry Drummond's book "The Greatest Thing in the World."