

The preacher against homosexuality

In October 2001, an Evangelical Christian preacher called Harry Hammond held up a placard saying, "Stop Immorality, Stop Homosexuality, Stop Lesbianism." When Hammond refused to stop, a policeman arrested him. Timothy Garton Ash discusses an instructive case.



In October 2001, an Evangelical Christian preacher called Harry Hammond started preaching in a square in Bournemouth, England. He held up a placard saying, "Stop Immorality, Stop Homosexuality, Stop Lesbianism." The words "Jesus is Lord" were inscribed on each corner. An angry crowd gathered around him, arguing, shouting and even throwing soil at him. At one point, someone tried to pull away his placard, causing him to fall backwards.

When Hammond refused to stop, a policeman arrested him. He was subsequently convicted of an offence under Section 5 of Britain's Public Order Act 1986, which [forbids](#) the display of "any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby". The conviction was upheld on [appeal](#), on the grounds that Hammond's words were "insulting", although the appeal court noted that the sign's message was "not expressed in intemperate language".

Free Speech Debate

Thirteen languages. Ten principles. One conversation.

<https://freespeechdebate.com>

Published on: March 22, 2012