

Christians Prosecuted for Reading Bible in Public

Taking the concept of **culture wars** to new heights, two Christians were arrested in front of a California DMV for reading the Bible—and prosecuted.

Pastor Brett Coronado and Mark Mackey were charged with a misdemeanor. Mackey was reading the Bible aloud on Feb. 2, 2011, in front of a group waiting for the DMV to open for business.

A trial court in Riverside County, Calif., on Wednesday heard arguments for the defendants. Advocates for Faith & Freedom are the duo, whose case has generated national news.

When Mackey was arrested, police stated it was illegal to “preach to a captive audience.” The defendants were jailed, but later learned that no such penal code prohibits preaching to a “captive audience.”

The officer issued a citation for “impeding an open business” with threats or intimidation under Penal Code Section 602.1(b). However, the district attorney again changed the charges claiming trespass after the government realized the business was not actually open and, presumably, saw the video showing no threats or intimidation.

The trial judge declined to dismiss the case. Advocates vows to appeal the decision because the trespass law authorities are relying on is unconstitutional. In fact, other federal courts that have reviewed the same statutory language used in the California Penal Code have been declared unconstitutional.

“This is an abuse of power on the part of the CHP,” said Robert Tyler, associate general counsel for Advocates for Faith & Freedom. “The arresting officer could find no

appropriate penal/ code to use when arresting these men. The purpose of the arrests appears to have been to censor them.”

Advocates for Faith & Freedom has filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of these three men for violation of their right to free speech and for unlawful arrest, but that case has been stayed pending the resolution of the state court prosecution.