

Judge Rules Activist's Beliefs on Climate Change

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A Judge, in the context of an employment case, has ruled that a particular individual's views on the environment were so deeply held that they were entitled to the same protection as religious convictions. It is clear we are moving to a situation where there is legal recognition of certain secular 'transcendences'. Concern for the environment is one of them, as is, almost certainly, a concern for human rights. These concerns are important, but are they ultimate? The Judge's five tests are interesting in this regard:

The belief must be genuinely held.

It must be a belief and not an opinion or view based on the present state of information available.

It must be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life.

It must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance.

It must be worthy of respect in a democratic society, not incompatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

Religion has a concern beyond the human – in the mystery and the majesty of the ultimate. In a religious understanding concern for the environment and for human rights may be signals of a transcendence which is taking us beyond ourselves to the mystery of our place in creation, and to the nature and dignity of the human ('made in the image of God').

David Stevens