

UK Court Rules Christianity Harmful to Children

✖ In a landmark judgment, which will have a serious impact on the future of fostering and adoption in the UK, the High Court has suggested that Christians with traditional views on sexual ethics are unsuitable as foster carers, and that homosexual 'rights' trump freedom of conscience in the UK.

The Judges stated that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be 'inimical' to children, and they implicitly upheld an Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) submission that children risk being 'infected' by Christian moral beliefs.

Monday's ruling relates to the dispute between married couple Eunice and Owen Johns and Derby City Council. The Johns applied to the Council in 2007 to foster a child but the Council blocked their application because they objected that the Johns were not willing to promote the practise of homosexuality to a young child. In November 2010 both parties jointly asked the Court to rule on whether the Johns were able to foster children, or whether they could be excluded from doing so under equality law because of their Christian beliefs.

Monday that judgment was released. The judges declined to make the statement that the Johns, wanting to re-establish their fostering application, had sought. Instead, the judgment strongly affirms homosexual rights over freedom of conscience and leaves the Johns currently unable to foster a child as desired, despite their proven track record as foster parents. There now appears to be nothing to stop the increasing bar on Christians who wish to adopt or foster children but who are not willing to compromise their beliefs by promoting the practise of homosexuality to small children.

The nature of the judgment means that Christians who hold orthodox Christian views on the family, marriage and sexuality will continue to face difficulties in the fostering and adoption process and the Courts will not intervene to stop this from happening. In fact, the summary contained in the judgment sends out the clear message that orthodox Christian ethical beliefs are potentially harmful to children and that Christian parents with mainstream Christian views are not suitable to be considered as potential foster parents.

In their judgment, the judges stated:

- That if children are placed with parents who have traditional Christian views like the Johns “there may well be a conflict with the local authority’s duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked-after children”, [1]
- That there is a tension between the equality provisions concerning religious discrimination and those concerning sexual orientation. Yet, as regards fostering, “the equality provisions concerning sexual orientation should take precedence”, [2]
- That a local authority can require positive attitudes to be demonstrated towards homosexuality, [3]
- That there is no religious discrimination against the Johns because they were being excluded from fostering due to their moral views on sexual ethics and not their Christian beliefs (This is incredible and very disingenuous as the Johns moral views cannot be separated from their religious beliefs), [4] and
- That “Article 9 [of the European Human Rights Act] only provides a ‘qualified’ right to manifest religious belief and ... this will be particularly so where a person in whose care a child is placed wishes to manifest a belief that is inimical

to the interests of children". [5]

The tax payer funded EHRC played an important role in this judgment. They intervened in the Johns case, and they suggested to the Court that a child should not, in their own words, be 'infected' with Christian moral beliefs. Suggesting that Christian moral beliefs on sexual ethics could 'infect' children is an extraordinary position for a statutory body to take. It is also deeply insulting both to the Johns, who have a proven track record of successfully raising children, and to Christians in general.

The judgment was greeted with disbelief and sadness today by Eunice and Owen Johns. In a statement, the couple said: "We wanted to offer a loving home to a child in need. But because of this ruling we are unsure how we can continue the application process. We have been excluded because we have moral opinions based on our faith, and a vulnerable child has now probably missed the chance of finding a safe and caring home. We do not believe that our ordinary Christian moral views are infectious, contrary to what the Equality and Human Rights Commission believes. Being a Christian is not a crime and should not stop us from raising children. Today, it looks as though a child has missed out on a home."

Andrea Minichiello Williams, CEO of Christian Concern and the Christian Legal Centre said the Johns are a mild mannered, ordinary Christian couple, yet they may never be able to foster children again. They were willing to love a child regardless of sexual orientation, but not willing to tell a young child that practising homosexuality was a positive thing. Now, Williams said, a child has likely missed out on finding a home, at a time when there is a desperate shortage of willing parents.

"Eunice and Owen Johns have been humiliated and sidelined and told by a Government body (the EHRC) that their mainstream Christian views might "infect" children. They have also

effectively been told by British Judges that their views may harm children.

“The Judges have claimed that there was no discrimination against the Johns as Christians because they were being excluded from fostering due to their sexual ethics and not their Christian beliefs. This claim that their moral beliefs on sex have nothing to do with their Christian faith is a clear falsehood made in order to justify their ruling. How can the Judges get away with this?” Williams asks.

“What has happened to the Johns is part of a wider trend seen in recent years. The law has been increasingly interpreted by Judges in a way which favours homosexual rights over freedom of conscience. Significant areas of public life are now becoming out of bounds to Christians who do not want to compromise their beliefs. If Christian morals are harmful to children and unacceptable to the State, then how many years do we have before natural children start being taken away from Christians?

“At the Christian Legal Centre our clients have included, amongst many others, a nurse suspended for offering prayer; a Council worker suspended for talking about God to a client, a teacher suspended for offering prayer; a nurse forced off frontline nursing because she wouldn’t take off her cross. We have dealt with Civil Registrars who have been demoted because they did not want to officiate at civil partnerships, and a Christian counsellor who lost his job for not wanting to give sex therapy to homosexuals. In the last few years, several Catholic adoption agencies have been forced to close because they refused to place children with homosexual couples.

“There is a great imbalance in the law at the moment, resulting in ordinary people suffering. The situation must be addressed by Parliament as the Judiciary have failed to stand for civil liberties but have capitulated to the agenda of the homosexual rights lobby. We cannot have a society where you

are excluded just because you don't agree with the sexual ethics of the homosexual lobby. Britain is now leading Europe in intolerance against religious belief."