

# Stylish Sins: Transgenderism and the Contemporary Church

“The church’s response to those who identify as transgender,” Andrew T. Walker [writes](#), “must be, immediately and with integrity, ‘You are welcome here. You are loved here.’”

This position reflects the broad inclinations of contemporary [evangelicals](#), who generally seek to [intentionally love](#) and [welcome](#) those in the transgender movement. Though scripturally grounded churches may disagree with much of transgender ideology, they still strive to [love](#) those within the movement.

While [loving](#) all people is an honorable aim, seminary professor Dr. Kevin Bauder [prods](#) at the assumptions behind the church’s welcoming of transgender people, imagining two contemporary non-Christians—Gail and Aelfric—to make his point.

Gail, though possessing male genitalia at birth, has recently undergone a variety of surgeries and medical treatments with the goal of appearing more feminine. “Gail’s beliefs,” Dr. Bauder writes, “have become Gail’s identity, and Gail tries to live them consistently.”

Aelfric, on the other hand, is a racist. His body has been changed—not surgically but with racist marks and tattoos. He believes that white people are the “true sons of Israel,” and—if he visits a church—he will refuse to sit next to any black person.

In many ways, Gail and Aelfric are alike. They’ve both committed to a specific idea, and that idea determines their self-identity. In Dr. Bauder’s words, “Both [Gail and Aelfric] truly rely upon their ‘lived experience.’ Gail claims to feel like a woman trapped in a man’s body and points to stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Aelfric feels superior to

peoples of color and points to stereotypes involving vice and crime.”

Many Christians would agree that both Gail and Aelfric’s beliefs are wrong and sinful. It’s curious, then, that Gail and Aelfric receive such profoundly different treatment within the contemporary evangelical church. Churches bend themselves over backward loving Gail, trying to foster sincere relationships and deep compassion. “[Evangelicals] insist,” Dr. Bauder says, “that our churches must become open and welcoming to people like Gail, and that any failure to do so is a failure to follow the example of Jesus.”

When it comes to Aelfric, though, evangelicals recoil. Churches may take special pains to denounce his specific sin. “With Aelfric, it seems impossible to distinguish the sin from the sinner,” writes Dr. Bauder. Contrary to how they treated Gail, “[evangelicals] do not want their churches to be open and welcoming to Aelfric. They do not want to understand whatever sufferings may have brought Aelfric to this particular situation. They do not want to build relationships with Aelfric or to demonstrate compassion toward people like him.”

Why this disconnect? After all, it wasn’t terribly long ago that the social or cultural tolerance of these two unbiblical worldviews was reversed: Aelfric’s worldview would have been seen as more acceptable, and people like Gail would have been ostracized. To quote Dr. Bauder,

*A couple of generations ago, people who held Aelfric’s views on race were generally tolerated (and in some circles, celebrated). Now, however, any expression of Aelfric’s views will make one a social pariah. On the other hand, until very recently people who shared Gail’s perspectives on gender were seen as perverted, and they were pushed to the social margins. Now someone who expresses Gail’s views gains immediate and widespread sympathy and support. In a word,*

*Aelfric's sins are out of style, while Gail's are the height of fashion.*

It seems, then, that the church's perceptions and reactions to sin are being formed more by the whims of culture than they are by biblical truth. Why is the church so quick to embrace those with socially acceptable failings, compared to those whose sins are no longer in style?

Certainly, Christian beliefs are incompatible with both transgender ideology and racism. But to change the hearts and minds of people who hold such views, the church needs to stay grounded in the timeless truths in the Bible. Faithfulness to these truths [dictates](#) ministry unrestricted by current social fashions or taboos.

Yes, focusing on loving all people—regardless of the cultural acceptance of their sins—might prove harmful to church attendance lists or surface-level popularity. But, if the church wants to remain committed to the true obedience of God, it will wisely love *all* people—not just the fashionable ones.

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