

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

How 'LGBT-Affirming' is Like KJV-Onlyism

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In the book of Judges, after the warriors of Gilead defeated the tribe of Ephraim, the surviving Ephraimites tried to cross the Jordan River back into their home territory. The Gileadites attempted to cut them off from the fords of the Jordan and needed a way to determine if a person was an Ephraimite refugee. The solution was both simple and clever:

The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a survivor of Ephraim said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead asked him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he replied, "No," they said, "All right, say 'Shibboleth.'" If he said, "Sibboleth," because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time. ([Judges 12:5-6](#))

Since then the term shibboleth has become synonymous with any custom or tradition that distinguishes one group of people (an ingroup) from others (the outgroup). On Wednesday a new website, [ChurchClarity.org](#), was launched to distinguish churches using the latest shibboleth: LGBT-affirming.

In a post [examining the problems with the project](#) (which I recommend reading in its entirety), Denny Burk points out, "The leadership team that runs the website is comprised exclusively of those who affirm homosexual immorality and transgenderism. And they seem to be focused on forcing evangelical megachurch pastors to clarify where their churches stand on the issue."

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When I learned about the website and its peculiar mission it sounded eerily familiar, as if I had heard this type of thing before. And, in a way, I had: LGBT-affirming is the liberal fundamentalist equivalent of the conservative fundamentalist KJV-onlyism.

Tale of Two Fundamentalisms

If you haven't spent time around conservative fundamentalist/independent churches, you may be unfamiliar with King James-only views (aka KJV-onlyism). This is a church movement that believes the King James Version of the Bible is not only to be *preferred* to other English translations but is the *only* reliable English translation. All other modern translations, they contend, have been corrupted by a conspiracy of Bible translators.

It may initially seem absurd to claim a group of Christians who believe the KJV is divinely inspired is like a group of Christians who believe gender identity is so fluid it can change several times a day. But as I'll show, both fundamentalist groups are strikingly similar in at least seven ways:

1. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism believe their issue is the key dividing line between Christians.

As [Trevin Wax has noted](#), "Rising to the forefront of the fundamentalist squabbles is the King James Only controversy. Some groups are claiming that this is the hill on which to die, the main issue by which to tell a fundamentalist from a liberal."

Similarly, on the liberal fundamentalist side, the willingness to embrace homosexuality and transgenderism is treated as if it is the most important dividing line. It's telling, though not surprising, that a website like Church Clarity seeks to pin down churches on where they stand on the sexual revolution's latest shibboleth.

2. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism reject church history, tradition, and sound scholarship.

To believe God re-inspired the Bible in 1611 or that Scripture does not clearly and equivocally reject same-sex sexual behavior requires rejecting not only all of church history and tradition but also hundreds of years of sound exegesis and biblical scholarship. This is why in both camps the "scholars" ushered out to defend these positions tend to be self-taught or have irrelevant qualifications (e.g., gender studies) rather than being experts on theology or biblical languages.

3. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism serve as proxies for acceptable cultural preferences.

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If you visit the website of a church and find it is KJV-only, you're justified in making certain cultural assumptions about the congregation. While there may be outliers, in general a KJV-only congregation has a culture that in many ways resembles 1950s white Protestant America. For example, the men and women will have adopted gender roles based as much on traditional American culture as they on the Bible. The church is also likely to have a "traditional" liturgy and hymnody. You won't catch a KJV-only choir singing the latest worship songs by Chris Tomlin.

Similarly, if you know a church is LGBT-affirming you might assume the congregants will not look at you disapprovingly if you mention you watched the latest explicit movie or that you think gender-reveal parties are transphobic. Also, they won't bat an eye when you use the word "transphobic" in referring to other Christians.

4. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism serve as proxies for acceptable doctrines.

Just as LGBT-affirming and KJV-only serve as shibboleths for acceptable cultural views, they also signal the type of doctrines the church will tolerate. For example, most KJV-only churches would disapprove of anyone who did not believe in young earth creationism, while an LGBT-affirming church would disapprove of anyone who believed in complementarianism.

5. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism serve as proxies for acceptable behavior

In both types of churches, there is a broad agreement about what behavior, especially sexual behavior, is considered acceptable.

In a KJV-only church, for example, a heterosexual church member may be subjected to church discipline for violating the church covenant by engaging in fornication. In an LGBT-affirming church, a heterosexual church member would be less likely to anticipate church discipline for living with his girlfriend, because the church probably doesn't have membership, likely doesn't require signing a church covenant, and does not practice church discipline. But even if they did, they wouldn't be disciplined for "fornicating," since the church would consider the lovers to be committed (mostly), in love (presumably), and likely to get married someday (probably).

6. Both LGBT-affirming and KJV-onlyism are rooted in gnosticism.

In the early days of the church, the Gnostics believed they possessed secret knowledge about God and creation—knowledge that made them morally and intellectually superior to those Christians who either didn't know or who had rejected these exclusive beliefs.

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Similarly, the KJV-only and LGBT-affirming Christians believe they possess special knowledge—and everyone who disagrees with them is simply unenlightened. To the KJV-onlyist, the secret is they know the *real* truth about modern translations. As Trevin Wax says, “The King James Only controversy is essentially a conspiracy theory that claims that all modern translations of Scripture are based on tainted manuscripts and that their translators are driven by a liberal Protestant or Roman Catholic (or even one-world government) agenda.”

To the LGBT-affirming believers, the special knowledge is transmitted by knowing or coming into contact with homosexual and transgender people. The implication is that if Christians in previous generations had only been exposed to people who are attracted to the same-sex or who identified with another gender then they would have recognized that God and his Word must be—and must always have been—LGBT-affirming. After all, to be unaffirming is to be hateful, and God is not hateful, so God must be LGBT-affirming.

7. They are mainly just misguided, not intentionally malevolent.

For all the reasons above, we can assume that both the KJV-only and LGBT-affirming churches are not, in general, being intentionally malevolent. Most of each type of fundamentalism are just sinfully rejecting God’s revelation, whether special or general, and choosing to believe what fits their individual preferences.

How They Differ

Despite their similarities, there are significant differences between KJV-only and LGBT-affirming Christians.

One major difference is aesthetic. For some reason the KJV-onlyists tends to have terrible visual taste. Their websites, for instance, tend to look like they haven’t been updated since being [posted on Geocities in 1995](#). Most Christians are embarrassed to be associated with such kitsch. In contrast, the LGBT-affirmationists—like the ones at *ChurchClarity.org*—have a more impressive website. We tend to find their fundamentalism more tolerable because it’s presented with admirable graphic design.

Another key difference is eternal impact. The KJV-only crowd is divisive, sinful, and even a bit cultish. But they aren’t leading a lot of people to hell. In contrast, the LGBT-affirming churches are claiming we can love our neighbor while encouraging them to unrepentantly engage in actions that invoke God’s wrath ([Psalm 5:4-5](#); [Rom. 1:18](#)).

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And that's ultimately the difference that matters. Both groups may be fundamentalists, but a fundamentalism that leads people to hell is always the worst kind of fundamentalism.

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