

Christian Bakers Say the Government Cleaned Out Their Bank Accounts

Melissa Klein was checking her bank accounts just a few weeks before Christmas when her face turned ashen. The money was gone—every single penny.

Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries had confiscated all the cash in Mrs. Klein's checking account and savings account as well as a special account set aside for their church tithe.

Yes, friends—the state of Oregon stole money meant for our Lord.

Mrs. Klein and her husband, Aaron, are devout evangelical Christians who own a mom-and-pop bakery—Sweet Cakes By Melissa.

In July, they were ordered to pay more than \$135,000 in damages to a lesbian couple after they refused to bake their wedding cake. The Kleins objected because of their religious beliefs.

The judgment was awarded to the lesbians for “emotional suffering.”

Just a few weeks before Christmas, Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian wiped out the Klein family's bank accounts—taking nearly \$7,000.

Faced with a state-mandated 9 percent interest penalty, the Kleins opted to pay the disputed amount in full—turning over a \$136,000 check to the government. That money, which was not in their bank account, was acquired through donations to the family.

It was the price the Kleins had to pay for following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

"It was like my breath was taken away," Mrs. Klein told me in a telephone conversation. "I panicked. Everything was gone."

And as I said before, Commissioner Avakian even seized money set aside for You Know Who.

"We had three accounts," she told me. "I have one account that's labeled, 'God's money'—our tithing. They just took it."

Attorney Tyler Smith, who represents the Kleins, tells me his clients still plan on fighting the state's decision—even if it means going to the Supreme Court.

"The least expensive option to stay in compliance with the law was to pay the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries funds that will be kept in a separate account until they prevail in their court appeal," Smith told me in a prepared statement.

He said the couple had asked the state to hold off on collection attempts—but that request was denied.

"Aaron and Melissa will continue to work to ensure that every American has the First Amendment right to express their faith-based beliefs, and to conduct their daily affairs according to their conscience," Smith said.

Their trouble started in 2013 when Laurel and Rachel Bowman-Cryer asked the Christian bakers to prepare their wedding cake.

When Mr. Klein explained that they would not be able to prepare the cake, the women filed an anti-discrimination complaint with the state of Oregon.

The state later determined that gay rights trump religious liberty—ruling that the Kleins had violated the lesbians' civil rights by discriminating based on sexual orientation.

Oregon has a law on the books that protects the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people in employment, housing and public accommodations. It also prohibits private businesses from discriminating against potential customers, the newspaper noted.

The Kleins were also slapped with a gag order—banning them from speaking publicly about their refusal to participate in or bake wedding cakes for same-sex marriages, *The Oregonian* reported.

They were ordered to “cease and desist from publishing, circulating, issuing or displaying, or causing to be published, circulated, issued or displayed, any communication, notice, advertisement or sign of any kind to the effect that any of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, services or privileges of a place of public accommodation will be refused, withheld from or denied to, or that any discrimination will be made against, any person on account of sexual orientation.”

“Within Oregon’s public accommodations law is the basic principle of human decency that every person, regardless of their sexual orientation, has the freedom to fully participate in society,” the ruling states. “The ability to enter public places, to shop and dine, to move about unfettered by bigotry.”

On a side note here—I predicted that once gay marriage was legalized, LGBTQIA supporters would attempt to silence all dissent.

After the controversy, the Kleins had no choice but to shut down their retail store and move their business to their home.

Avakian has publicly stated his intentions to target Christian business owners who do not comply with the state’s way of thinking. Here’s what he told *The Oregonian* about Sweet Cakes By Melissa in 2013:

“The goal is never to shut down a business. The goal is to rehabilitate.”

I’ve never met Brad Avakian, but he sounds like a pretty ruthless individual—a person who is using his office to bully and intimidate Christians.

Be warned, friends. In Oregon, gay rights trump religious liberty.