

Cuisine for the New Inquisition

by [Jeff Plude](#) (January 2020)



Restaurant Owner, Boris Kustodiev, 1920

I was eating lunch with the executive pastor of the evangelical Christian church that my wife and I attend and we were discussing my writing content for a new website for the church. He'd suggested we go to this restaurant of a popular national chain, a place where he and the former senior pastor used to regularly meet to discuss church business and spiritual matters. They'd had lunch there so many times over the years, in fact, that they'd gotten to know the manager, a friendly silver-haired guy who came over to our table after we sat down and chatted with the executive pastor. He asked how our former pastor (calling him by his first name) was doing in his new church, which was in another state and several hundred miles away.

After we ate our lunches (a fairly dry turkey and bacon sandwich for me), the executive pastor, whom I'll call Matt, and I started discussing the website in detail. When we came to the "Statement of Faith" page, which was several thousand words long on the current website, I suggested that we rename it "What We Believe" and shorten it, linking to the full statement for those who want to know more. But, I said, we also needed to ensure that the truncated version included the essentials, what I think I called "a deal breaker"—beliefs and practices that would make membership in the congregation untenable—like a person continuing to engage in homosexuality as a lifestyle, for instance.

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Some so-called Christian churches have recently caved in to the demands from many people to renounce its two thousand-

year-old tenet, derived from the Bible, that homosexual activity is a sin. For instance, my father-in-law's sister told him that the Episcopal church in New Hampshire she's been a member of for more than half a century was hosting an LGBT day at one of its Sunday services. And Pope Francis seems to talk out of both sides of his mouth when it comes to homosexuality, which must be strange to Catholics, at least, to whom he's supposed to be infallible. Then there's Pete Buttigieg, the first openly homosexual candidate for president but also a professed Christian. He has attacked Vice President Mike Pence for his traditional Christian beliefs condemning homosexuality.

All of a sudden the friendly silver-haired manager, who wore a nametag on the pocket of his collared sport shirt and whom I'll call Alex, reappeared at our table. But he was no longer friendly: one of the other customers, he announced gravely, complained to him that we supposedly had said: "God hates homosexuals."

I was stunned—neither Matt nor I had said anything about God hating homosexuals . . . or anyone else!

We know, in fact, that the Bible says that God wants *all* people to be saved (even though he knows that many won't be), but they must believe that his Son is who he says he is and they must obey what he commands.

But I shouldn't have been surprised really, especially considering where we were: in a fairly prosperous suburb of Albany, New York, a city whose lackluster downtown has seen

better days. The state capital in the bluest of states and one of the oldest cities in North America, it consistently ranks as one of the most [Godless](#) metropolitan areas in the country.

It took me a few moments to realize what was going on. Both Matt and I told Alex we didn't say that. Which irritated me that we had to defend what we had said to *each other* and to no one else.

But I did use the word *homosexual*, presumably in a way that angered (or perhaps *convicted*, as a Christian might say) somebody in a nearby booth. We were sitting in a semicircular booth about ten feet away from a row of standard booths that were against a short wall that ran down the middle of the place. It was lunchtime on a Friday and fairly busy.

"So we can't say the word *homosexual* in here?" I shot back.

"I'm not accusing anybody of anything," Alex said, glaring at me.

Then what exactly was he doing? Giving us a friendly head's up of an imminent attack? But Alex apparently took this false statement as *prima facie* evidence, even though he'd known Matt and our former pastor for years. But that didn't matter. These days business is not only business, but politics too.

Alex never answered my question, of course.

From here on Matt, who was calm, said nothing. I shut my mouth too, though it took more than a little effort; I had to keep myself from going into full reporter mode. But I also know, as Upton Sinclair said, that it's difficult if not impossible to get a person to understand something when their salary depends upon them not understanding it.

Alex said he wanted us to keep it down. But we weren't talking loudly, though we weren't whispering either—and neither was anybody else at their tables, though I couldn't have heard what they were saying unless I was actively trying to listen. He also wanted us to watch what we said, at least that was the implication.

I told Matt I was angry. Matt said he felt sorry for the person who complained. I can't say I did, at least at the time.

As we were leaving the restaurant, Matt went up to Alex like nothing had happened and thanked him and shook his hand. I didn't say a word to Alex. I'd already decided I'd never come back here again, though that wouldn't be difficult because I'd never been here before and rarely eat at any of the chain's other restaurants in the area.

Matt and I lingered outside the restaurant for a while. Matt said he didn't think it was Alex's fault, but I disagreed. Matt said Alex was just doing his job, that if he didn't say anything to us the complainer would've gone over his head and complained about *him*. I thought of *Cool Hand Luke* and what its

charismatic antihero says when he's about to be put in "the box"—solitary confinement in a narrow shed that looks like an upright coffin—for the weekend because the warden fears he might try to escape to attend his mother's funeral: "Callin' it your job don't make it right, boss." Alex could've and I think should've said we have a right to say what we want in the restaurant he oversees as long as we weren't being loud or hadn't left our table to actively proselytize. Of course the reason Alex didn't defend my and Matt's constitutional rights of free speech is because homosexuality has now become sacrosanct in western society, falsely equated with the battle for civil rights of African-Americans, for instance, and blasphemers are punished swiftly and mercilessly by a media and internet inquisition with social banishment, job suspension, business losses, even physical threats. The endgame of these militants is to stop true Christians from freely exercising their religion, another of the First Amendment's provisions that is now routinely ignored.

However, Matt and I agreed that we wished the complainer had come over to us directly instead of tattling to the manager. Then we could've explained exactly what we were saying and why we were saying it.

But I think the last thing the complainer wanted was to hear what we might have to say; nowadays a willingness to debate is perhaps seen as risky; attack and harassment are more effective. He or she simply wanted to silence us, or at least intimidate us. This has become standard strategy, from the congressional impeachment mob right down to your rank-and-file political malcontent, lifted straight out of the cynical pages of *Rules for Radicals*.

But what if our lunch neighbor, who is perhaps homosexual himself (or herself), or is perhaps the parent or grandparent or friend of a homosexual man or woman, had come over to us instead? What would we have said?

First, homosexuality is explicitly forbidden by the Bible, if that most misunderstood and misinterpreted of books is read in context. And this proscription is in the Old and New Testaments, both of which evangelical Christians believe is the inspired word of God based on its record of fulfilled prophecies. Though the Mosaic law, as Paul the Apostle says, was “nailed to the cross” and no longer applies except for the parts reaffirmed in the New Testament.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, describes homosexuality as “vile affections.” And in his first letter to the Corinthians he lists the “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” among the “unrighteous (who) shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Some people—even some who apparently consider themselves Christians—dismiss Paul’s epistles as allegedly distorting the gospels. However, the apostles Peter and John, who made up Jesus’s inner circle, fully consecrated Paul as a true apostle of Christ. As told in the Book of Acts, Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus in one of the most dramatic conversion stories of all time, and God is believed to have later inspired Paul to write his New Testament letters.

But Paul is not Jesus, I’ve heard it said, and Jesus never said homosexuality was a sin. Therefore what was expressly a

sin in the Mosaic Law is no longer a sin for Christians.

But it's incredibly misleading, that is false, in a plain, commonsense interpretation of scripture, to say that Jesus never directly said that homosexuality is a sin. For instance, Jesus does mention *fornication*:

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications . . . These are the things which defile a man . . .

According to *American Heritage Dictionary*, *fornication* means: "Sexual intercourse between people who are not married to each other . . ." And marriage, Jesus clearly says, can only be between a man and a woman:

. . . he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh . . .

And two other times Jesus clearly and emphatically reveals exactly how he views homosexuality in particular. He says in the gospel of Matthew that "it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day" than for any place that rejected him during his ministry. As usual, the Messiah doesn't mince words:

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee (by me), had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Jesus uses the comparison of Sodom and Gomorrah to emphasize the extreme sinfulness of Capernaum and places like it. Today it would be like comparing a country's leader to Hitler and Stalin. Capernaum is only worse than Sodom because to reject Jesus when you've actually seen him perform miracles in front of your eyes is the extreme of unrepentance. Sodom itself was already notorious and instantly recognizable to the Jews as a symbol of unadulterated evil.

Which brings us to why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah to begin with. Genesis 19 recounts the immediate events leading up to their destruction in graphic and disquieting detail. Though the story is well known (or at least used to be), I think a widespread and often willful ignorance of what the Bible actually says in its entirety calls for a closer look.

In the preceding chapter God leads Abraham to believe that He may destroy Sodom and Gomorrah "because their sin is very grievous." Abraham pleads with God to save the cities for the sake of a few righteous people who may live there, like his nephew Lot and his family, and after some lengthy and gingerly bargaining by Abraham, God agrees to not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if he finds ten righteous residents.

God dispatches two angels in the guise of men to the twin

cities of infamy to investigate. After Lot pleads with the strangers to not spend the night in the street, knowing what would probably happen to them, they enter his house. But this only rouses the natives:

. . . the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

In case anyone doubts what *know* means in this passage, it's a polite way of saying *have sexual intercourse with*