



The Reverend Eugene Rivers
Senior Advisor to the Presiding Bishop

My response to gcmwatch.com blog d3

The Church of God in Christ believes in God, the Father Almighty, the Author and Creator of all things. The Gospels show the relationship of God to Jesus as Father, and represent Him as the Father in the Godhead (St. John 15:8, 14:20). Jesus also gives God the distinction of "Fatherhood" to all believers (St. Matthew 6:8, John 1:12).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second person in the Godhead of the Trinity or Triune Godhead. We believe that Jesus was and is eternal in his person and nature as the Son of God who was with God in the beginning of creation (John 1:1). We believe that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, and was buried, and that he rose again from the dead (Luke 24:6). In so doing He paid the price of our sins and redeemed all who put their faith in Him. (John 3:16) We believe that Jesus Christ is standing now as mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5)

We believe the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son, is of the same substance, equal to power and glory, and is together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, obeyed, and worshipped. The Holy Ghost is a gift bestowed upon the believer for the purpose of equipping and empowering the believer, making him a more effective witness for service in the world. He teaches and guides one into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8, 8:39).

We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is an experience subsequent to conversion and sanctification and that tongue-speaking is the consequence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the manifestations of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 10:46, 19:1-6).

The Church of God in Christ does not endorse, support or in any way affirm any religion, any spiritual beliefs or positions that are not in accordance with biblical Christianity. In signing the Faith in Human Rights declaration we in no way enter a religious union with any religion or spiritual teaching which is contrary to biblical standards. We nevertheless believe that in the proper context interfaith dialogue that can promote justice and freedom for the oppressed and poor is important for us as Christians who are called to live in the world, even as we are not of the world. (Matt 25:31-46).

Marriage and Family

Since prehistory marriage for the overwhelming majority of human beings in nearly all places, times and cultures, has meant bonds between men and women. In most societies this bond was meant to be permanent and inviolable by others outside the relationship. In many societies the marriage relationship was exclusive between one man and one woman.

As Christians the Church of God in Christ affirms Jesus' definition of marriage as one man and one woman becoming one flesh, in a permanent, exclusive, inviolable relationship of mutual aid, and *agape* love towards each other. "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.' Therefore what God has joined together let no man separate" (Matthew 19: 4 &5). We proclaim in accordance with the teaching of Paul that marriage is a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church, and as such is a model of faithfulness, self-sacrificing love and submission. "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her... This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5: 25, 32-33).

This inviolable bond between one man and one woman is the basis for the family.

Homosexuality

The Church of God in Christ utterly rejects and uncompromisingly denounces the practice of homosexuality. Homosexual relationships are a violation of the biblical teaching on marriage and are strongly condemned in the scriptures. "Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Romans 1: 26-27). The Old Testament teaches the same: "Do not lie with another man as one lies with a woman: that is detestable" (Leviticus 18:22). (See also 1 Co 6:9-10, 1 Kings 14:22-24.)At the same time, as Christians we are called to treat all sinners with compassion and to lovingly proclaim the message of salvation and restoration to all, recognizing that we are all sinners in need of the atoning gift of Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore for the Christian homosexual marriage is not a human right, nor a morally and legally sanctioned entitlement. Sexual preferences do not constitute rights.

The Church of God in Christ supports human rights: all humans, as God's creation, are entitled to adequate education and healthcare, a living wage, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, democracy, life, liberty, freedom from slavery, security, right to own property, the right to vote....

But gay marriage is not a human right; it is a preference. Sexual orientation is specifically not mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding marriage and family.

Article 16.

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

As Christians, we believe that the family, based on the biblical definition of an agape union between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and should be protected. As a Christian, we do not support gay marriage.

And nothing in the Universal Declaration or in the Faith in Human Rights Statement supports gay marriage. By endorsing the statement we affirmed what the Civil Rights Movement affirmed, what America affirms, and what the gospel of Jesus Christ affirms: life and liberty, healthcare and education, a living wage and freedom of speech.