

National Black Church Initiative

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Dear Howard University Alumni and Pastors,

Re: A Case against Dean Alton B. Pollard of Howard University School of Divinity

We take no pleasure in writing this letter. As a matter of fact, we have spent the last six months asking God to help us make the decision that the National Black Church Initiative and Christ Living Ministry must make. I am an alumnus of the Howard University School of Divinity and like many others I believe it is among the top divinity schools in the United States. There are many proud Howard University Divinity alumni nationwide – making this opposition we are feeling all the more painful.

Many pastors and religious leadership were beyond shocked when the newly installed Dean, Alton B. Pollard III, made comments in support for same sex marriage during his first public meeting with area pastors. As NBCI President I have been told by countless Howard University alumni that Dr. Pollard has a theological and moral right to air his views in the context of academic freedom. I am a strong defender of free speech as it is the bedrock of our society and the essence of the Christian faith. Some of my colleagues argued that the Dean's academic freedom gives him theological protection to say whatever he chooses as an intellectual, clergy member, and theologian. Allow me to express my assessment of this argument.

Dean Pollard is unarguably a distinguished scholar. In many ways we are fortunate to have Dr. Pollard's scholarly presence, especially his research on Dr. Howard Thurman. Often, he is unafraid to air his views on religion and society in the court of public opinion. No past Deans have ever made such a controversial remark in the beginning of their tenure. Howard University Divinity School, like all academic institutions, has leaders with unique and sometimes radical beliefs -Dean Lawrence Jones was an example of an intellectual who made a unique mark on the landscape of Howard Divinity, the University, and area Christian Churches, but never once was his theological position ever called into question on any hot button issues of his day.

It is not the fact that Dean Pollard espouses controversial views on same-sex marriage, sexuality that is most troubling, or that he vocalizes these beliefs. Rather, many of us are unsettled by the fact that Dean Pollard's comments were delivered without the necessary qualifier that his opinion was not that of the Howard University School of Divinity. Howard is one of many divinity schools in the area and Dean Pollard is the only Dean who has publicly supported same-sex marriage, thereby committing Howard University's School of Divinity to a particular theological stance that is, for most of us, inconsistent with Biblical tradition. His public response to this divisive position has been nonchalant, while to most his statement was of incredible import.

There are two critical points here. One, Dean Pollard has not issued a statement to the press or alumni where he clarifies that his support for same-sex marriage is his personal belief and not the beliefs of Howard University School of Divinity. Two, the public was unable to make a distinction between Dean Pollard's personal beliefs and his affiliation with Howard University. Therefore, the public now believes that Howard University School of Divinity is in support of same-sex marriage.

But to be fair and follow the Christian values of mercy and forgiveness,, we must offer Dean Pollard an opportunity to recant his statements on gay marriage. We must be loving enough to forgive him and accept him with open arms as a co-laborer into the full grace of God and reinstate his academic reputation. But if he refuses, we have no choice but to continue our campaign to remove him as Dean of Howard University School of Divinity.

Therefore, NBCI, Christ Living Ministries and many other pastors and alumni must take immediate action based solely on Dean Pollard's refusal to communicate the above points and others. The ultimate goal of this call to

consciousness is to call for Dean Pollard's resignation as we feel he is not morally fit to continue his tenure as the Dean of Howard University School of Divinity.

There are three other important theological issues to be considered here.

1. Dean Pollard has never apologized to the church; instead he arrogantly wants to impose his sexual theology on the Black Church. Many view his apparent stance on homosexuality as counter to the traditional New Testament understanding of human sexuality and family, thus threatening the biblical interpretation of marriage between one man and one woman and church authority.

How can the Dean of our Divinity School openly violate the basic precepts and teachings of Jesus Christ and continue as Dean? Apostle Paul warned us about members of the clergy preaching a 'another gospel' – I fear that is what Dean Pollard has done with his statements on gay marriage. (*See Endnote*)

There are a few well educated, liberal African American church leaders and theologians, i.e. Pastor Dennis Wiley and his wife Dr. Christine Wiley and others, who believe that the conservative Black Church needs to be shaken at its core and challenged on the issue of human sexuality. They believe that God has given them the intellectual insight to move the Black Church from its conservative bedrock which is wrongfully construed as hateful and homophobic.

These liberal Black intellectuals and activists like Rev. Jesse Jackson and others believe that the Black church contradicts its liberal, open, and loving tradition by not accepting people based on their sexual orientation. In other words, they believe the Black Church represents a moral contradiction and they are here to rescue the Black church from its own biblical ignorance. These liberals represent less than one percent of the Black church and somehow overshadow those of us who are biblically-based and faithful - representing the majority as one-dimensional and unable to address the duality and complexity of this issue. How foolish!

The white liberal press (i.e. The Washington Post) seems to only cover liberal African Americans, giving a positive light to those such as Dean Pollard and the Rev. Dennis Wiley while painting dedicated clergy such as myself, Rev. McCleary and others as hateful homophobes. Our adherence to scripture and tradition is considered wrong by both the public and mass media while these liberal clergy are painted as heroes, defenders of gay rights, and holy.

Dean Pollard believes that the American ideology valuing freedom and academic tradition trumps the Biblical tradition which bans homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Our goal is to reassert the conservatives within the Black Church as defenders of faith which we believe to be of the utmost importance. Removing Dean Pollard as Dean of the Howard University School of Divinity will uphold the Biblical tradition that Jesus Christ has set forth and rightfully reassert the Church's historic conservative position. The reinterpretation of the Bible will not go on under our noses – God's modern revelations speaks to us all, not just to the liberals.

What we are saying here is simple – either you are going to uphold Biblical tradition or you will give way to a modern interpretation of what you *think* the Bible lays forth as a moral code. If your beliefs align you on this side, the side that upholds the sacred traditions of the Scripture, then we invite you to appeal for Dean Pollard's resignation. We understand that not everyone will be standing beside us on this matter but our faith is stronger than modern reinterpretations. (*See Endnote – Romans 1:25-32*)

Our request is simple-- please point out to us in the scriptures where same-sex marriage is allowed and that Christ Jesus justifies it in his own words. We will then stop our action against Dean Pollard. (*See Endnote*)

2. Dean Pollard is the modern-day Bishop Carlton Pearson who took it upon himself to redefine Christian theology through a new understanding of what constitutes salvation. Carlton Pearson believes that you do not need to do anything to achieve salvation – it is given to every human unconditionally by God. These beliefs are directly contradicted in the Bible as one does not need to accept the divinity of Jesus Christ nor confess their faith before salvation is granted.

Both Pearson and Deal Pollard represent a modern form of Christian heresy. In Pollard's defense at The Missionary Baptist Ministers' Conference he argued that the Biblical notion of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you trumps God's prohibition of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Dean Pollard clearly stated that Christ would permit same-sex marriage. He also declared that gay marriage has an inconsequential effect on the church despite the fact that God established marriage between a man and a woman and gave the church authority over it.

Under Dean Pollard's theory of sexual liberalism, like Pearson's redefinition of salvation, God has left the interpretation of his Holy Word in their hands --- charged with teaching the church a new Christian understanding of gay marriage and salvation.

May God have mercy on both of their souls.

3. Those of us who accept the current theological landscape clearly understand the evolution of the Gospel and use God's teachings in a way that is relevant to our modern congregations. Theology helps to explain the application of the Gospel across time. Christian tradition cannot contradict the fundamental, bedrock teachings of the Bible – as much as Dean Pollard and other liberal African American theologians would like it to. While there are many modern applications for the teachings of God, never in the history of the Church have Christian leaders advocated for wholesale fortification and homosexual marriage.

Dean Pollard, along with other liberal African American ministers, is trying to impose new sexual theology that is contrary to our Biblical tradition which cannot be accepted if we expect the spirit of God's teachings to survive in this modern climate.

This is why we must protest and advocate for the removal of Dean Pollard – we must stand up to preserve the Gospel and to uphold Biblical traditions and teachings of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

We encourage all Pastors to support us in the following manner:

- All Pastors and Churches withhold any and all financial contributions to Howard University School of Divinity.
- Do not send nor recommend your young ministers to attend Howard School of Divinity.
- Write or call the President of the Howard University to express your disapproval of Dean Pollard's position on gay marriage.

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- **Finally, we are asking you and your church to join us in a preaching protest. The protest will be located in front of the Divinity School on Thursday February 17, 2011 at 12 noon.**

Your humble servant in Christ,

Rev. Anthony Evans
President
National Black Church Initiative

Rev. Mark McCleary, Pastor
First Seventh day Adventist Church

Romans 1:25-32 (English Standard Version)

²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for^(A) a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,^(B) who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason^(C) God gave them up to^(D) dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another,^(E) men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God,^(F) God gave them up to^(G) a debased mind to do^(H) what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know^(I) God's decree that those who practice such things^(J) deserve to die, they not only do them but^(K) give approval to those who practice them.

Cross references:

- A. [Romans 1:25](#) : [Isa 28:15](#); [44:19, 20](#); [Jer 10:14](#); [Amos 2:4](#); [2 Thess 2:11](#)
- B. [Romans 1:25](#) : [Romans 9:5](#)
- C. [Romans 1:26](#) : [Romans 1:24, 28](#)
- D. [Romans 1:26](#) : [Col 3:5](#); [1 Thess 4:5](#)
- E. [Romans 1:27](#) : [Lev 18:22](#); [20:13](#)
- F. [Romans 1:28](#) : [Romans 1:24, 26](#)
- G. [Romans 1:28](#) : [Jer 6:30](#)
- H. [Romans 1:28](#) : [Eph 5:4](#)
- I. [Romans 1:32](#) : [Romans 2:26](#); [8:4](#)
- J. [Romans 1:32](#) : [Romans 6:21](#)
- K. [Romans 1:32](#) : [Luke 11:48](#); [Acts 8:1](#); [22:20](#); [1 Cor 13:6](#); [2 Thess 2:12](#)

"The Genesis passage is very clear, that the sin of Sodom that brought on the destruction of the city was indeed linked to homosexuality." A. Mohler, president of *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*. Time.com called him the "reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S".

Or

"I want God's gay and lesbian children to know of God's unconditional love and acceptance of them as well. We cannot find any condemnation in scripture for committed monogamous same-sex relationships." Rev. Charles Coppinger, Chaplain of the Arizona Legislature in a letter to legislators, sent 2000-NOV-7, announcing that he is gay.