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The Birth of the Black Church by @m_a_mcmickle

In 1787 The Constitution, signed in Philadelphia, began with the words, “We the people of the United States.” That phrase, “We the people,” leads us to the second event that occurred in the same city and in the same year. 1/

A group of African American members of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church went to worship. As they entered the sanctuary, they heard the worship leader say, “Let us pray.” As they knelt to pray suddenly an usher told them they couldn't pray on the 1st flr of the sanctuary. 2/

Instead, they would have to get up and go to the “colored gallery” reserved for so-called “colored” attendees.
Led by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, the worshipers assured the usher that they would proceed to their assigned location as soon as the morning prayer was over.
3/

They reminded the usher that he was creating more of a distraction at that moment than they were. But the usher would not relent. He began to physically pull them from their knees to force them to move. 4/

At that moment, and without any prior coordination or agreement, Allen and Jones and the others with them turned around and walked out of the church. Allen concluded in his autobiography, “They were no more plagued with us.” 5/

In that moment in 1787, the seeds were planted for what would become the first Black Church denomination in the US: the African Methodist Episcopal Church. These believers simply desired to worship God unhindered “in spirit & in truth” & founded the new denomination to do so. 6/

It would be formed officially in 1816 with Richard Allen as its 1st bishop. Though God had created all humans in His divine image (Genesis 1:27) and called all people to love Him and one another, the United States did not even validate African Americans as fellow human beings. 7/

The treatment of African American worshipers in 1787 opposed the principles of equality. Beginning with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Black denominations formed because the we in “we the people of the United States” in practice

did not include African Americans. 8/

The biblical truth of equality in Christ—as expressed by the apostle Paul that “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male & female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)—did not inform the practices inside most white churches. 9/

African American members were forced to worship in a segregated section of the church, or end their worship.
Despite restrictions & limitations, the Black church has emerged as one of the most vibrant locations of praise & worship to be found anywhere in the world today. 10/

Their rich heritage of worship began during the days of slavery with what were called “brush harbors” or “hush harbors”—isolated, secret locations where slaves would gather at night for hours of prayer and singing without fear of being heard. 11/

Those secret gatherings gave birth to the musical genre known as “Negro spirituals” that wedded both their sorrows and their faith into lyrics like “Nobody knows de trouble I’ve seen . . . Glory, hallelujah.” 12/

Black preachers have ministered to the needs of the brokenhearted, to the sins of a broken nation, and to leaders and people all over the world. And their churches have become central cultural institutions for education, training, as well as for civil rights activism. 13/

African American missionaries have put feet and hands to their worship not only by praying and singing but by serving in the United States and across the world.
God has given Black denominations, churches, and individuals cause to celebrate the legacies He has provided. 14/

From African Christian roots to American brush harbors to the wood-framed buildings of rural communities, from the storefront churches & Gothic cathedrals of the urban landscape ... Black churches, and people have cause to praise and hope. “Let the church say, amen!” 15/

Edited & Excerpted from This Far by Faith: Legacies of the Black Church with Reflections from Our Daily Bread. See full article for more history here: https://t.co/RP8SbxM1Al #BlackHistoryMonth @ourdailybread