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SOC147 Our America

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The Black Church

1. What did you learn about The Black Church after listening to Dr. Charles Galbreath?

This video takes a close look at the history of African American Christian religious education, highlighting essential periods such as the prophetic era, Black theology, and distinctive aspects of the Black church. It covers various topics, including the role of Black missionaries, the use of the Bible, and the challenges faced by contemporary Black missions.

During the antebellum period, when Blacks started joining the church in large numbers, stories, and songs became the primary means of education during the pre-literate era of slavery. In the post-Bellum era, the Black church became the primary institutional response against racism, segregation, and other oppressive devices perpetuated by outside forces. The rise of Christian educational institutions, the civil rights and Black power movements, and biblical studies were essential developments of the 20th century.

The prophetic voice of Black missionaries has primarily been silenced on the issue of justice, and contemporary Black evangelism has failed to connect with the cultural realities of marginalized Blacks. Despite the artistry and elevated rhetoric of Black evangelism, there are limitations to its teaching effectiveness. Many young people in the Black community have no connection to the church's African-American preaching history, and there is an urgent need to re-imagine how Black preaching can re-energize the community.

The Bible has always played a central role in the Black church as a primary source of teaching. The Black pastor is the most critical leader in the educational ministry of the Black church, serving as a biblical interpreter, gifted discerner, cultural teacher, prophet, storyteller, spiritual educator, and sacramental educator.

All in all, the video provides a comprehensive overview of the history and challenges of African American Christian religious education, as well as the unique qualities of the Black church.

2. What stood out from the video?

I am deeply moved by the extraordinary resilience of the Black community. Despite the formidable challenges they face in society, they have managed to hold on to their faith in Christ with unwavering conviction. Dr. Galbreath's lecture shed light on the remarkable history of enslaved individuals and how they created their own worship gatherings, driven by their hunger for "real preaching" and the genuine gospel. These gatherings made them the "invisible institution," and they would gather to worship and read from the Bible, even though it contained verses that once included references to slavery. The Bible has become their chief source of teaching, and they have found comfort, strength, and hope in its pages.

Their unwavering faith is a powerful reminder of Matthew 6:6, which encourages private prayer and emphasizes that God is present even in our darkest moments. It is a testament to the power of faith to sustain us in the face of adversity and to uplift us in times of great need.

The plight of Chinese citizens who are unable to worship publicly in mainland China also comes to mind. They, too, are like the "invisible institution," forced to gather in secret and live with the constant threat of arrest by the government. Having witnessed this firsthand, I yearn for the day when they will be free to worship and pursue their faith without fear of persecution. We must continue to fight for the right to religious liberty for all people, and support those who are struggling to practice their faith in the face of oppression and hardship.