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The Color of Compromise
Due: March 29, 2023

Jemar Tisby is a writer, narrator, and historian whose concentration is on race, religious conviction, and the cleansing of cultural ethnicity in America. He pens this thought-provoking and challenging narrative, “The Color of Compromise,” which investigates the position of the American Church in disseminating and aiding racism throughout history. In this chronicle, he implores the Church and Christians to reckon with their past and proactively confront racism and injustice. Tisby thoroughly examines the American Church’s lengthy history of collusion in racism, which began from the colonial period to the present.

The writer discussed the role of Christian leaders, theologians, and evangelists who have backed or protected racist beliefs and practices. He believed that the Church has often been more driven by holding on to power and control rather than fighting for justice and equality for all. As the late Civil Rights Leader was famous for stating, we sometimes need to get into “Good Trouble.” It is Tisby’s thought that to address and challenge racism within the Church, one must first recognize the history of complicity and make the necessary efforts to reverse the damage done. He further suggested that “By surveying the Church’s racist past, American Christians may feel the weight of their collective failure to confront racism in the Church. This should lead to immediate, fierce action to confess this truth and work for justice.”¹

¹ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About The American Church’s Complicity In Racism*. (Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2019), p.24.

Tisby's narrative centers precisely on the American perspective, and its subjects and implications have a broader outcome for Christians worldwide. However, my worldview is based on my understanding that racism and prejudices are not a problem for America only; these are global issues that affect people of all races and backgrounds, and many Christian communities struggle with similar challenges when it comes to promoting equality for all. Tisby's book offers a powerful call to action for Christians worldwide to be a part of the solution by acting against racism and working towards building a more just and equitable world. He stated, "Christians must undertake courageous and urgent action to correct historical wrongs and their ongoing ramification."² I recognize that my spiritual responsibility is to add to the conversation by stepping out of my place of comfort and addressing the uncomfortable issues that still plague our society whether in the office or Church.

Dr. Martin Luther Jr. in his powerful and timely "I have a dream" speech, foretold some of our present-day issues and his expectations for us as a people, some of which we have already experienced. However, he expressed his thoughts on the racial temperature of the country, but more profoundly, he urged an urgent push for change. Face forward sixty years later, that urgency is ever-present. He stated, "This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism...Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice."³ I also agree with Tisby that for us as a nation to shake off the patterns of the past four centuries, the American Church will need to become more innovative in our endeavors than what was initially required to begin the demolition of the racial barriers. On the other hand, even though I agree with the writer's acknowledgement of the progress made, such as by the Civil Rights Movement, I am not sure

² Ibid., p.197.

³ Ibid., p.192.

how the Church would be able to work outside their position by engaging in actions that might create a financial detriment to them.

In speaking at Birmingham's all-white Young Men's Business Club, Charles Morgan Jr., a young white attorney, reflected on the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that took the lives of four young girls by posing the questions, "Who did it? Who threw that bomb? Was it a Negro or a white?"⁴ Charles expressed to the audience, "We all did it." His questions resonated with me philosophically as I think we all bear some responsibility when we close our eyes to racism and injustice. It is my thought that Christians hold greater ownership in this regard.

As the black historian John Hope Franklin said, "I cannot imagine how knowing one's history would not urge one to be an activist."⁵ Tisby's narrative on *The Color of Compromise* is an inspirational tool that has added scope to my theology and equipped me with a greater understanding of how I can navigate the challenging aspects of my ministry, especially knowing that racism remains an issue in many Christian communities. I realize it will be necessary to push past fear and speak out with courage, knowing that God will anchor me the way He did for Joshua when he commanded him three times; "Be strong and courageous." (Josh. 1:6-7,9).

⁴ Ibid., p.14.

⁵ Ibid., p.193.

Bibliography

Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Zondervan, 2019.