

Book analysis

The Color of Compromise

The Truth About The American Church's Complicity In Racism

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Course: Leadership in the Urban Church

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Overview

Thesis statement: American Christians are called to abandon complicit Christianity, and embrace courageous Christianity in order to dismantle sustained racism. To desist from devaluing the image of God in people of color; and eradicate systemic and institutional injustice and inequity, in the church, states, and nation.

In the first nine chapters Tisby focuses on different eras of American history disclosing untold and hard truths ranging from white supremacy, chattel slavery, the church's role in racism, and their erroneous theological stance to justify the egregious acts against humanity. He laments how some of the heroes such as Edwards, Whitfield and Finney, who were deemed Evangelical Revivalists blatantly perpetuated inequality between blacks and whites; and treated Blacks with such indignity. Others like Thornwell of the South reduces the church's role in society to "Only ministerial and declarative."¹ It begs the question, what blinded the evangelical forefathers? Greed or insecurity? Or, was their consciences so seared that all that remained was cognitive dissonance? What's blinding the church in the twenty-first century?

Analysis

The target audience is White Christians caught in the web of silence on the issue of racism, systemic and institutional injustice, and inequality. "Christians who saw no contradiction between their faith and racism while they practiced in subtle yet ubiquitous ways."² Yes! I believe the writing style and content is appropriate and timely.

Throughout the narrative there's plethora of evidence how white Christians actively opposed residential desegregation especially in Georgia. Pastors/theologians, and other church

¹ Tisby, Jemar. *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*
² *Ibid.*, 145

leaders exhort their congregations to keep Blacks out of their communities by not selling them their homes. Please help us “Keep Kirkwood White, *preserve* whiteness.”³

The Jesus portrayed here is definitely not the Christ of Calvary. The Jesus who offered paradise to thief at the eleventh hour would never deprive anyone of housing; He who said, “I am the Door” would never close a church door on His created because of melanin pigmentation. “The Eurocentric Jesus they’ve “fashioned into a particular and visualized body, the ‘white’ Jesus of partiality, that advanced the status quo, has smooth white skin, long flowing brown hair, full beard and blue eyes.”⁴ Someone must have removed Matthew 25:31-40 from their Bibles.

The clarion call now is to examine the jacked-up theology of the past and lament, confess and repent so reconciliation can be realized. The status quo must be dismantled. “Although the truth cuts like a scalpel and may leave a scar, it offers healing and health. The progress is worth the pain.”⁵

Strengths

First, “The same Bible that racists misused to support slavery and segregation, is the same one the civil rights activists used to animate resistance.”⁶ I agree with the author that whenever there is racial injustice, there have been Christians who fought against it in the name of Jesus. So, despite the distortion of the gospel by slaveholders, white supremacists; and preachers, enslaved Blacks were spirited by God’s previous works and believed He would bring them deliverance from their oppressors. They hoped for their own exodus.

³ ibid., 147

⁴ ibid., 145

⁵ ibid., 22

⁶ ibid., 19

Second, “The refusal to act in the midst of injustice is itself an act of injustice. Indifference to oppression perpetuates oppression.”⁷ As the author eloquently states that “The festering wound of racism in America must be exposed to the oxygen of truth in order to be healed” because, Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

“One of the primary reasons . . . enthusiasm about reading . . . finally able to read the bible for themselves. The blessing of literacy means reading and deciphering God’s Word on their own.”⁸

Usefulness

I believe the book’s overall usefulness is irrefutable. The Color of Compromise exposes “A chasm between black and white Christians in theology, politics, and culture.”⁹ This chasm hinders productive communication on issues of racism, equity, justice and honoring humanity. The urgency for change according to Tisby requires an uncomfortable surgery and rehabilitative healing. This healing can be achieved when an antidote is found for “The nation’s seemingly overdose on the tranquilizing drugs of gradualism.”¹⁰

Take-a-ways

“We all did it!”¹¹ This statement from Charles Morgan Jr. must have sent shock waves, and stirred anger in that all-white business meeting. “Morgan confessed that all the city’s whites were guilty of preserving an environment of hatred and racism.” He forged the path of leadership; speaking truth to power at the expense of becoming a pariah; and even at the risk of been killed; (Ezekiel 33:3-14), King James Version.

⁷ ibid., 15

⁸ ibid., 90

⁹ ibid., 192

¹⁰ ibid., 193

¹¹ ibid., 14

“They saw their efforts as a divine mandate for the white man to take his rightful place atop the social hierarchy. They referred . . . **“Redemption.”**¹² Redemption refers to God’s plan to **save** people from their sins and make them into a holy nation.” What blatant disregard? Corrupt leadership breeds corrupt government, society, communities and people. (1 Kings 16:30-34; 21:20).

“Fear is the major factor that prevent millions of Christians, black and white from tackling racism and ripping it from its roots.”¹³ The fear of people, the fear of getting it wrong, the fear of losing jobs, money/perks, caused Christians to remain silent, inactive and indifferent while racism, inequity, prejudice and injustice remains pervasive.

Significance

Tisby declares that “Racism represents prejudice and power; and its imposition exceeds personal bigotry.”¹⁴ The house built by racism dishonors all the sacrificial work of Christ the Revolutionary. The travesty of racism in and from the church deeply impacts our politics, churches, schools, neighborhoods, and the wider society. The walls of the church stand in need of repair; but the church remains either in denial or deafening silence. “Like a ship . . . cracked hull . . . , Christianity has run aground on the rocks of racism and threatens to capsize – it has lost its integrity, Therefore, “The Church needs the Carpenter from Nazareth to deconstruct the house that racism built and remake it into a house for all nations.”¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*, 96

¹³ *Ibid.*, 213-15

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24

I firmly believe that the church needs more leadership with true allegiance to God. We need more godly politicians, teachers, policemen, parents and people in all spheres of our nation to enforce the fierce urgency of now; for the inbreaking of God's kingdom.

Bibliography

TISBY, JEMAR. *COLOR of COMPROMISE: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Place of publication not identified: ZONDERVAN, 2020.