

The Color of Compromise

Week 3 | Chapters 2 and 3

- I. Reflections on Chapter 2
 - A. Consider something that has happened in your own life that has left an impression upon you years or decades later. The reality that these chapters begin to open up to us is the ongoing consequences of things that are there in the past.
 - B. Chapter 2 is about the creation of Race in America. As the chapter starts, Tisby talks about how the religious systems wrestled with the question of Baptism among the enslaved. What did you think about this part? Perhaps respond to this quote, “‘It is enacted and declared by this Grand Assembly, and the authority thereof, that the conferring of baptism does not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom.’ This statute encouraged white enslavers to evangelize their human chattel since baptized slaves would not be freed.” (p. 25).
 - C. “Just because race is based on a myth doesn’t mean it doesn’t have real consequences. It becomes a determining factor in who receives advantages and disadvantages.” How has racism shaped the way you view yourself? What does racism affect both the receiver and the giver? As Tisby notes on p. 27, Race is a construct, “There is no biological basis for the superiority or inferiority of any human being based on the amount of melanin in her or his skin.”
 - D. As you read over the chapter, what do you believe those in power had to gain by advancing the idea of race?
 - E. What is hardest to hear about the way in which slavery was enacted, from both the Middle Passage and the eventual practices in North America and elsewhere?
 - F. The baptismal vow for slaves essentially said, “God can have your soul, but we keep your body.” In what ways do you see this sentiment continue to play out in the world?
 - G. How does a kind of theology that values souls but not bodies affect your understanding of how Christians should approach issues of racial justice? How does a faith that values both body and soul an antidote?
- II. Bible reflections on Ch. 2

A. Matthew 23:23

What insight do we gain from Jesus' criticism of the Pharisee's misplaced attention? What insight is there for racial justice?

B. Galatians 3:28

What insight is there about the equality that every person has in Christ? How would that influence our approach to racial justice?

C. James 2:9

Insight about preferential treatment is heavy in James. How does this help guide us?

III. Reflections on Chapter 3

A. You could say that this chapter is about the hypocrisy of America in calling for freedom while enslaving, but it goes deeper into how the church wrestled with the question of Race in a time of spiritual renewal as well.

B. The Great Awakening is not a deep part of German Lutheran heritage. Tisby notes the practices of "Full throated singing, emotional expressiveness and physical movement had cultural resonance with people of African descent. Christianity also held out the hope of Freedom." (p. 45) This moment was hopeful that Spiritual equality might lead to emancipation – but that didn't materialize. Tisby continues, "The messages preached to black Christians leaned heavily toward messages on obedience." (p. 45). How did, and do, those who control message of Jesus shape it to fit their own ends? See the discussions of Whitefield and Edwards.

C. "Many other Christians did not see anything in the Bible that forbade slavery. In fact, the Scriptures seemed to accept slavery as an established reality. Instead, white Christians believed that the Bible merely regulated slavery in order to mitigate its most brutal abuses." (p. 51). In some ways, people seemed to absolve themselves of the terror of slavery by their benevolent or paternalistic attitudes, rationalizing the continued existence of slavery as a Spiritual good. Are there places in which we tolerate terrible things for the sake of "spiritual good" or is that a relic of history?

D. The black church was created because of a refusal to countenance any type of Christianity that sanctioned their enslavement.

IV. Bible Reflections on Ch. 3

A. Amos 5:24 – what insights do we have about the importance of Justice in the kingdom of God? How does that affect our approach to racial justice?

B. Isaiah 1:17 – what insight is there for us about doing right by defending others? How does that affect our approach to racial justice?

V. Prayer