
Cultural Daily

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White Christianity's Alliance with Racism Is Due for a Soul-reckoning

R. Daniel Foster · Wednesday, September 9th, 2020

I've spent years puzzling out how white American Christianity soured, and long before President Donald Trump came on the scene. Christianity's blend of God, guns, racial bias and aversion of the "other" is stunning — whether that be directed against Blacks, immigrants or the LGBTQ community.

Not all Christians? Certainly, but plenty of white Christian churches have thrown up a theological smokescreen over ingrained white supremacy, thinly veiling a corrupt core value. For decades, the Republican Party has stoked such white grievance and won elections by dividing the races through its "Southern Strategy," which employs coded racist language.

Too many white Christians are on board, creating complicity with today's white nationalist bent (about 70% of Republicans primary voters are white Christians compared with 31% for Democrats).

The American Christian brand

And now, President Trump, rather than urging calm during unprecedented national crises, flirts with encouraging white supremacist violence – and in fact, has openly promoted violence throughout his term.

Trump solidified the White American Christian brand, improbably pairing it with his penchant for cruelty, incessant mockery and demonization of those who are different. Trump wears the moniker "Father of Lies" quite aptly – it's one that Christians usually ascribe to Satan. And yet the President's vile pronouncements are given a pass, if not actually revered, by millions of Christians — an antithesis to the unifying message that their prophet Jesus championed.

So much for "family values" and "values voters."

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Trump Should Be Removed from Office

It's time to say what we said 20 years ago when a president's character was revealed for what it was.

MARK GALLI | DECEMBER 19, 2019



Image: Drew Angerer / Staff / Getty Images

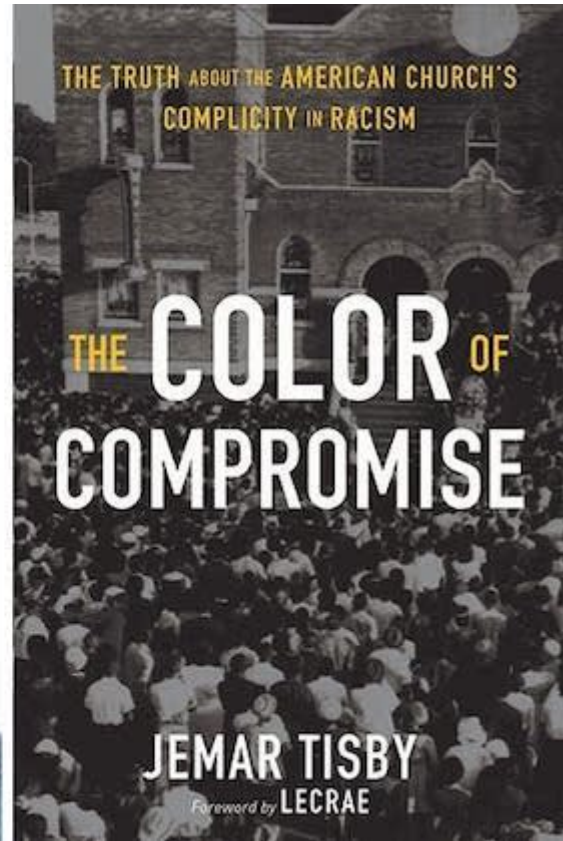
The evangelical magazine Christianity Today has called for President Trump's removal / via Christianity Today

Where is the widespread Christian outrage?

So, my question is this: Where is the great uprising of American Christians who don't buy into their religion's dark modern brand? Where is the denunciation of the rampant perversion of what their prophet taught? Yes, *Christianity Today*, founded in 1956 by Billy Graham, has called for Trump's removal, yet the overall mood of American Christians is meek, not mad.

This, in the face of watching their teachings being gutted day after day after day. I'm not religious, but it stuns me that Christians have largely allowed their own ranks, many now led by Trump as their exemplar, to debase what they hold to be sacred. Their religion has furthered hardened into a kind of tawdry Christian nationalism. Where is their collective outrage to this inconceivable insult?

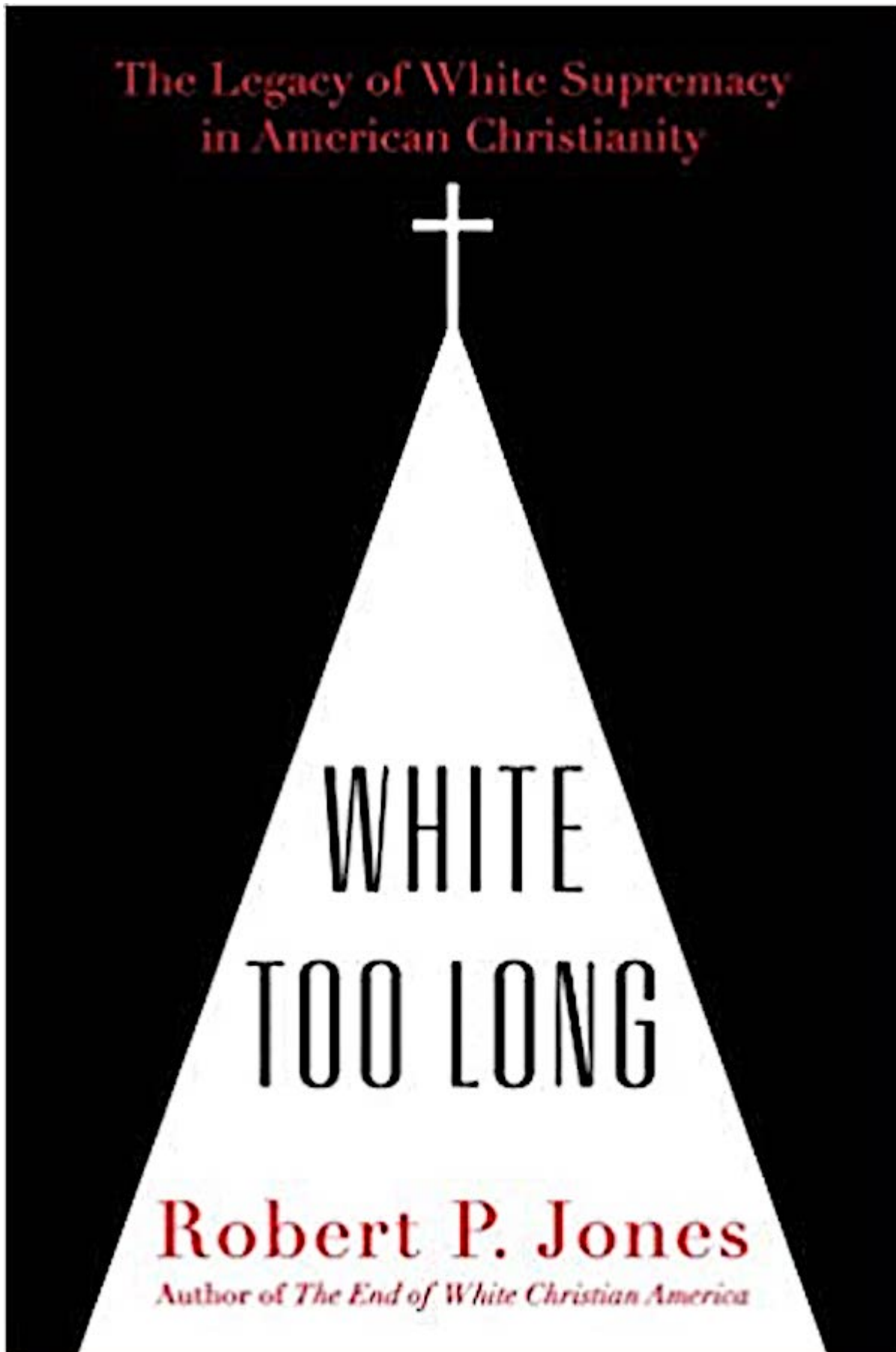
White Christian America has largely become an assimilationist theology, soured by its decades-long unholy alliance with white supremacy and the Republican party.



Jemar Tisby, author of “The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism.” / via Amazon

“White Christians have to face the possibility that everything they have learned about how to practice their faith has been designed to explicitly or implicitly reinforce a racist structure,” writes Jemar Tisby, author of *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*. Tisby is president of *The Witness*: a Black Christian Collective, that engages issues of religion, race, justice and culture from a biblical perspective.

The choice: white Christianity or Jesus



Robert P Jones' book, "White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity," was published in July 2020

Tisby references Robert P. Jones' latest book, released in July: *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*.

In his book, Jones details a “racism index” that’s based on 15 survey questions that gauge racism. “The more racist attitudes a person holds, the more likely he or she is to identify as a white Christian,” Jones writes. That holds true for dedicated Christians, occasional church-goers, Catholics, evangelicals, Protestants – and the findings are also stable across geographical lines and regions.

Tisby writes: “In the end, *White Too Long* seems to present a stark choice: Hold onto white Christianity or hold onto Jesus. It cannot be both.”

America’s dark spiritual era is a matter of heart

Much like the great awakenings that the Me Too and Black Lives Matter movements are undergoing, I look forward to the moment when Christianity awakens to the darkness that’s corrupted it for decades. When it finally hews en masse to the essence of Jesus’ teachings. I’m not Christian and I don’t consider Jesus to be my “savior,” but it seems the man offered up some decent life lessons, which if followed and furthered by the bulk of Christians — leaving out the claptrap of political affiliation — would immensely benefit the country. And no doubt increase the ranks of that sect.

The dark era in which Christianity finds itself is a matter of heart and the walls and encrustations that can shield that heart — partly created from self-interest and hewing to a rigid nationalistic ideology. Thirsting after the promises of heaven — with the attendant political purity tests that can entail (often resulting in the destruction of families, the very foundation of religion) — has created a hell on earth. God knows then, what such a white Christian heaven would look like.

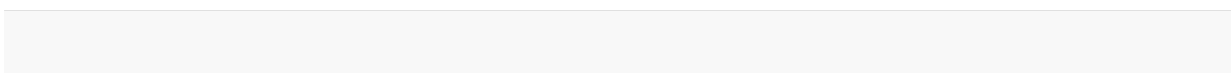
The November 2020 election hangs upon the moral crux of white Christians’ redemption and soul-reckoning — both as individuals and as a group. An initial vote for Donald Trump in 2016 is perhaps (somewhat) understandable. A second vote for Trump by white Christians in 2020 is arguably amoral.

The cleansing of the Temple

I’m not certain what needs to occur for a collective soul-cleansing, but I do hope and look for it — in truth for all of America. I feel in my bones that this awakening is the aegis of American Christians since we are a supposed “Christian nation” — we aren’t of course, we are so many things. But that’s the foundational myth that’s been promulgated and so that’s what needs to be cracked open; it’s where the hardest and most transformative work lies.

The start to that agonizing deep work is a matter of timing, the day when American Christians begin to turn over tables — with attendant holy rage — finally disgusted, having realized that their Temple has become a den of thieves.

Top image: “The Cleansing of the Temple” by Carl Bloch (1834-1890) / public domain



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