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Evangelical Theologies of Liberation and Justice

Available September 10, 2019 | \$36, 360 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5246-8

Despite the current evangelical focus on justice work, evangelical theologians have not adequately developed a theological foundation for this activism. In this insightful resource, evangelical academics, activists, and pastors come together to survey the history and outlines of liberation theology, opening a conversation for developing a specifically evangelical view of liberation that speaks to the critical justice issues of our time.

Gendering Race: The Womanist Perspective

The exclusion of women's racial experiences from dialogue on racial reconciliation is not simply a problem for women; it precludes any real understanding of the dynamics of race and racism. Race and racism are far more complex than typically acknowledged in Christian racial reconciliation efforts. Nowhere is this revealed more than in the lives of women of color, whose experiences are located on the margins of the margins. In discussions where race is the primary lens through which we view identity, women of color are marginalized by virtue of their gender. When gender is the primary concern, they are marginalized by virtue of their racial identity.

Race is intertwined with gender and other categories of identity, just as racism is intertwined with sexism and other forms of systemic oppression. Indeed, the "isms" often collude in support of one another. Historically, women's bodies have been the sites on which racial boundaries have been policed and racial wars have been fought. In the United States, for example, two of the primary ways by which white-supremacist patriarchy has exercised its power has been by controlling what white women could do with their bodies and by demonstrating that black women's bodies were violable. Thus, to discuss race and racism without simultaneously addressing gender and sexism is not only shortsighted; it is ineffective.

In order to develop more robust theories and practices of reconciliation, we must not only integrate the perspectives of women of color; we must center them. The nature of marginalization is that it obscures, denies, and devalues the stories and histories of targeted groups. At the same time, those who live on the bottom rungs of social hierarchies are often more keenly attuned to the interlocking systems of oppression because their survival depends on navigating them. Centering the experiences of women of color is consistent with a womanist theological perspective. The term *womanist* was coined and defined by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker in the preface to her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.

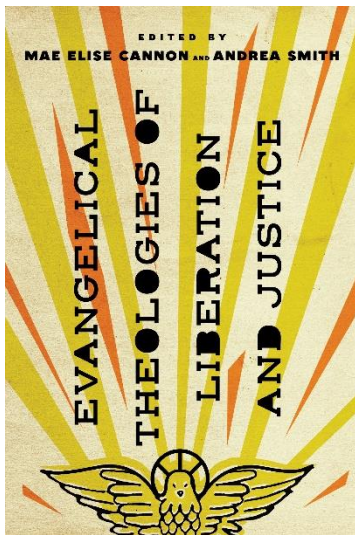
Womanist 1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanist," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. **2.** Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."



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Womanism, broadly, can be characterized as an approach to scholarship and activism that begins with and focuses on the needs, histories, and experiences of Black women in the US. It encompasses both faith-centered and secular perspectives. Within the realm of theology and ministry, womanism “minds the gap” in black liberation theologies, which were developed primarily by black men to address racial oppression, and Christian feminist theologies, which were developed primarily by white women to address gender oppression. Emerging in the 1980s as a response to those schools of thought,

womanist theology is the systematic, faith-based exploration of the many facets of African American women’s religiosity. Womanist theology is based on the complex realities of black women’s lives. Womanist scholars recognize and name the imagination and initiative that African American women have utilized in developing sophisticated religious responses to their lives.

In other words, womanist theology approaches, interprets, and interrogates Christian Scripture and tradition from the vantage point of black women’s experiences of struggle and survival. This viewpoint enables womanist theologians to attend to elements of Scripture, tradition, and contemporary practice that are frequently overlooked and neglected by other theologians. For example, a signal text for womanist scholars and preachers is the narrative of Hagar, the slave woman who is discarded after being sexually exploited by her master and mistress.

It is critical to note that not all intellectual thought by black women is womanist. Indeed, some African American female theologians have critiqued the dependence on Walker’s terminology and definition. In a roundtable dialogue featuring notable womanist scholars such as Emilie M. Townes and bell hooks, Cheryl Sanders, a professor of ethics and a pastor at a Holiness-Pentecostal church, deftly articulated a critique on Walker’s notion of sexual flexibility. In addition to this, womanist theology’s hermeneutic of suspicion may seem to make it an ill-fitting conversation partner for evangelical theology, with its emphasis on the inerrancy of Scripture. However, many evangelical women of color, particularly young women, have found womanist theology to be an indispensable lens for engaging issues of faith and justice. They see no disjuncture between affirming Scripture as divinely inspired and interrogating the racist and patriarchal cultures through which the interpretation of Scripture and the practice of the Christian faith have been filtered. Indeed, they view womanist interpretive frameworks as not only challenging but also deepening and enriching their understandings of faith and justice.

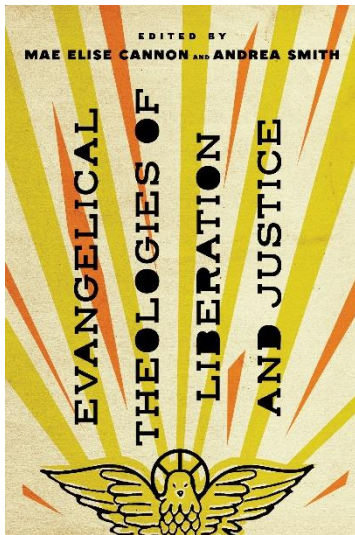
—Taken from chapter three, “Is It Time for a Womanist Theology of Reconciliation?” by Chanequa Walker-Barnes



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A Conversation for Evangelical Liberation Theology

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon is executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace and an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Cannon formerly served as the senior director of advocacy and outreach for World Vision US on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC; as consultant to the Middle East for child advocacy issues for Compassion International; as the executive pastor of Hillside Covenant Church, located in Walnut Creek, California; and as director of development and transformation for extension ministries at Willow Creek Community Church. She is the author of *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* (InterVarsity Press, 2009), which won the 2010 *Outreach Magazine* Resource of the Year Award in the category of justice. She is the editor of *A Land Full of God: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* (Cascade, 2017). She is also the author of *Just Spirituality: How Faith Practices Fuel Social Action* (InterVarsity Press, 2013) and coauthor of *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith* (Zondervan, 2014). Cannon holds an MDiv from North Park Theological Seminary, an MBA from North Park University's School of Business and Nonprofit Management, and an MA in bioethics from Trinity International University. She received her doctorate in American history with the minor in Middle Eastern studies at the University of California (Davis), focusing on the history of the American Protestant church in Israel and Palestine. She has also completed a doctorate of ministry in spiritual formation from Northern Theological Seminary.

Rev. Dominique Gilliard is an ordained minister of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). Dominique serves on the board of directors for the Christian Community Development Association and the board of Evangelicals for Justice. Dominique is also the director of racial righteousness pilgrimages for the Pacific Southwest Conference of the ECC. The ECC named Dominique to its list of "40 Under 40" leaders to watch, and the Huffington Post named him as one of the "Black Christian Leaders Changing the World." Dominique is a graduate of North Park Theological Seminary, where he also served as an adjunct professor.

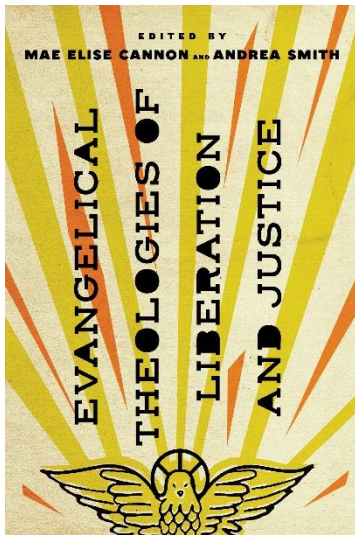
Dr. Drew G. I. Hart is an author, activist, and professor in theology in the Bible and religion department at Messiah College, with ten years of pastoral experience. Hart majored in biblical studies at Messiah College as an undergrad, attained his MDiv with an urban concentration from Biblical Theological Seminary, and received his PhD in theology and ethics from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Dr. Hart's dissertation considered how Christian discipleship, as framed by black theologies and contemporary Anabaptism, gesture the Western church toward untangling the forces of white supremacy and the inertia of Western Christendom, which have plagued its witness in society for too long. Hart finds the practice of reading Jesus not only for the church but also against it to be a vital dimension in salvaging Western Christianity from itself. Hart's work beyond teaching and writing has included pastoring in Harrisburg and Philadelphia, working for an inner-city afterschool program for black and brown middle school boys, delivering lectures and leading antiracism workshops, collaborating with faith-based organizers in his neighborhood, and doing a broad range of public theology. Hart sees his current role as a theology professor as an extension of his ministry vocation that began with pastoral leadership. His book *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* was chosen as a 2016 book of the month by the *Englewood Review of Books*. As a text, *Trouble I've Seen* utilizes personal and everyday stories,



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Jesus-shaped theological ethics, and antiracism frameworks to transform the church's understanding and witness.

Rev. Dr. Peter Goodwin Heltzel is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and is the director of the Micah Institute and associate professor of Systematic Theology at New York Theological Seminary. He also serves as assistant pastor of evangelism at Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City. Rev. Heltzel holds a BA from Wheaton College, an MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and earned his PhD from Boston University. He also completed coursework at the University of Mississippi in Southern fiction and creative writing. These courses, combined with his childhood years in Mississippi, inform his work with a deep commitment to the power of words and music, to social justice and to a global movement of radical change and collective activism. A gifted writer, Rev. Heltzel has contributed to seven books as author or editor. He has published numerous articles in journals such as *Books & Culture*, *Science & Theology News*, *Sojourners*, *Political Theology*, *Princeton Theological Review*, and the *Scottish Journal of Theology*. Rev. Heltzel won a theological research fellowship from the Association of Theological Schools (2006–2007) and a Sabbatical Grant for Researchers from the Louisville Institute (2008–2009). He is a participant in the Luce/AAR Program in Comparative Theology and Theologies of Religion. He serves on the Metro Commission on the Ministry and the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Team of the Northeastern Region, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Dr. Pablo A. Jiménez was born in New York and grew up in Puerto Rico. Prior to joining Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. Jiménez served as senior pastor of the Iglesia Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo) in Espinosa, Dorado, Puerto Rico. Dr. Jiménez previously served as pastor of the CCDC in Sonadora, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico; director of the Rev. Juan Figueroa Umpierre Bible Institute of the CCDC in Puerto Rico; and executive director of the Association for Hispanic Theological Education and manager of the Hispanic Summer Program. He has also taught in numerous positions, including as professor of New Testament and preaching at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, Costa Rica, and as instructor of homiletics at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, in Austin, Texas. He earned a BA from the University of Puerto Rico, an MDiv from the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, an STM from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, and a DMin from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Pablo is the coauthor of *Pulpito: An Introduction to Hispanic Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2006), among other materials. He is married to Glorimar and has three children: Antonio José, Paola Margarita, and Natalia Isabel.

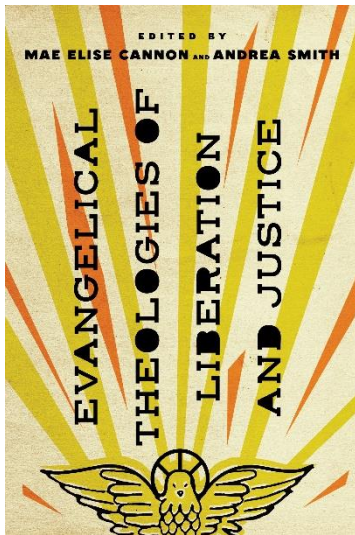
Dr. Rajkumar Boaz Johnson is a professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park University in Chicago. He grew up in the slums of New Delhi, where he encountered the realities of poverty and injustice. The son of parents from different castes, he was told to never reveal the identity of his mother's outcaste family. After studying Hinduism at Ramakrishna Ashram and being dissatisfied with the answers it provided, Dr. Johnson began to search for answers in other world religions. Jesus the Messiah, as seen in the Gospels, captured his mind and imagination. He realized that in Jesus lay the answers to questions that plagued him. Dr. Johnson earned his PhD in Hebrew Bible/theological studies from Trinity International University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, his ThM in Hebrew Bible and Semitic languages from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, his MDiv from Union Biblical Seminary (Pune, India), and his BA in economics from University of Delhi.



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Sarah Withrow King is deputy director of the Sider Center at Eastern University and an associate fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. She and her family live in Philadelphia and are covenant members of Circle of Hope. She is the author of *Animals Are Not Ours (No Really, They're Not): An Evangelical Animal Liberation Theology*, and *Vegangelical: How Caring for Animals Can Shape Your Faith*.

Jeanine LeBlanc is Mi'kmaq/Acadian and her people are from the Gaspé Peninsula of Eastern Canada. She is the wife of Dan Lowe, daughter of Terry and Bev LeBlanc, and sister to Matt and Jenn. She lives with her husband in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She studied history, sociology, and anthropology at the University of Winnipeg, obtaining her bachelor of arts in history in 2001. In 2008 she graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary with her masters of divinity academic degree in anthropology. She has contributed two articles to issues of the NAIITS journal, one documenting the history of NAIITS and the other examining and celebrating some traditions of hospitality within the Maori context in New Zealand and the First Nations context.

Terry LeBlanc is Mi'kmaq/Acadian. He and his wife, Bev, are in their forty-fourth year of marriage. They have three adult children—twin daughters and one son. In addition to being the executive director of Indigenous Pathways, Terry is the founding chair and current director of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community. Terry holds an interdisciplinary PhD from Asbury Theological Seminary, specializing in theology and anthropology. Terry serves as adjunct professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Oregon, Acadia University and Divinity College, William Carey International University, and Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, where he also serves as program elder for the University BED program. Terry has accrued over thirty-eight years of community work in Native North American and global indigenous contexts, including as an educator in theology, cultural anthropology, and community development practice. Author of numerous articles, papers, and assorted book chapters, Terry has won several awards for his varied writings. In June 2010, for his work on the creation of NAIITS, Terry became the twenty-eighth recipient of the Dr. E. H. Johnson Memorial Award for Innovation in Mission—an award he holds in common with such distinguished recipients as Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In May of 2015, Terry was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Acadia University.

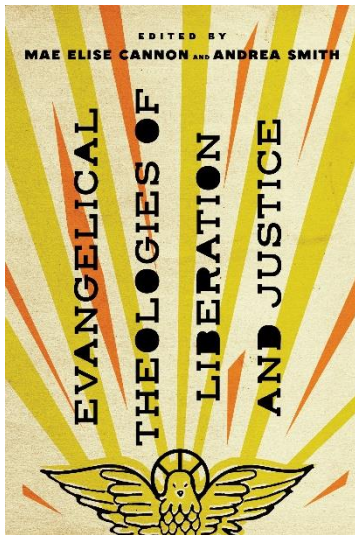
Dr. Paul Louis Metzger is professor of Christian theology and theology of culture at Multnomah University, director of its Institute for the Theology of Culture: New Wine, New Wineskins, and editor of its journal, *Cultural Encounters: A Journal for the Theology of Culture*. He is the author of the following works: *Evangelical Zen: A Christian's Spiritual Travels with a Buddhist Friend* (Patheos, 2015), *Connecting Christ: How to Discuss Jesus in a World of Diverse Paths* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), *New Wine Tastings: Theological Essays of Cultural Engagement* (Cascade Books, 2011), *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town* (InterVarsity Press, 2010), *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (coauthored with Brad Harper; Brazos/Baker, 2009), *Consuming Jesus: Beyond Race and Class Divisions in a Consumer Church* (Eerdmans, 2007), and *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eerdmans, 2003). He also edited *A World for All? Global Civil Society in Political Theory and Trinitarian Theology* (along with William F. Storrar and Peter J. Casarella; Eerdmans, 2011) and *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology* (T&T Clark International, 2005). Dr. Metzger blogs regularly at his column *Uncommon God, Common Good* at patheos.com.



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J. Nicole Morgan, MTS, is the author of *Fat and Faithful: Learning to Love Our Bodies, Our Neighbors, and Ourselves* (Fortress Press, 2018). Her work on ending antifat bias in the Christian church has been featured in various places including *Christianity Today*, *Sojourners*, and Moody Radio. She earned her master of theological studies from the Palmer Seminary of Eastern University.

Dr. Emmett G. Price III is a leading expert on the music of the African diaspora, Christian worship, and the black Christian experience. Price is dean of chapel; professor of worship, church, and culture; and executive director of the Institute for the Study of the Black Christian Experience at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Dr. Price received a BA in music from the University of California, Berkeley, and earned both his MA and PhD in music (ethnomusicology) from the University of Pittsburgh. He also obtained an MA in urban ministry leadership from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has spent much of the past few decades writing, lecturing, and conducting cutting-edge research on bridging the generational divide. A well-regarded scholar, educator, and public speaker, Dr. Price has the unique ability to capture the hearts and minds of the most diverse and versatile audiences with his compassionate sense of humor, his amicable intellect, and his quick wit. He is a noted print and broadcast media expert as well as a widely sought-after keynote speaker and preacher.

Soong-Chan Rah is the Milton B. Engebretson Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. He is the author of several books, including *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (InterVarsity Press, 2009). Rah is formerly the founding senior pastor of the Cambridge Community Fellowship Church, a multiethnic, urban ministry-focused church committed to living out the values of racial reconciliation and social justice in the urban context. He currently serves on the board of several organizations including *Sojourners*, *World Vision*, and the Christian Community Development Association. Rah received his BA in political science and history/sociology from Columbia University, his MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, his ThM from Harvard University, and his DMin from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Robert Chao Romero is an associate professor of Chicana/o studies and Asian American studies at UCLA, and a pastor. Also a lawyer, he received his JD from UC Berkeley and his PhD in Latin American history from UCLA. His book, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882–1940* (University of Arizona Press, 2010), received the Latina/o Studies Section Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association. It was also recognized in *Critical Mass: The Blog of the National Book Critics Circle Board of Directors* as one of the top ten small-press books published in the United States in 2010. Romero is also a pastor to activists; he codirects the nonprofit organization *Jesus for Revolutionaries (J4R)*, together with his wife Erica Shepler Romero. The mission of J4R is to train and mobilize activist students in issues of justice and race from a Christian perspective. Robert and Erica are also cochairs of the Matthew 25 Movement in Southern California.

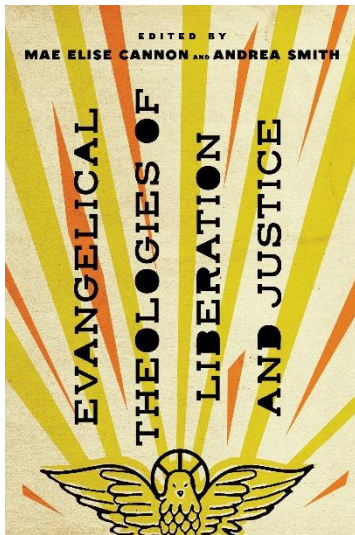
Rev. Alexia Salvatierra is a Lutheran (Luther-costal) pastor, coauthor of *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (InterVarsity Press, 2013), and serves as adjunct faculty for six seminaries and graduate programs, including Fuller Theological Seminary, Azusa Pacific Theological Seminary, Eastern University, New York Theological Seminary, and El Instituto Bíblico Virtual in Argentina. She is a doctoral candidate at Fuller in missiology. She also works as a consultant and trainer for *World Vision*, *InterVarsity Christian Fellowship*, and the *Christian Community Development*



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Association, as well as a variety of other national and international ministries. She has been a national leader in engaging evangelical churches in the struggle for immigration reform. She is also assisting pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Hollywood.

Andrea Smith is a cofounder of Evangelicals4Justice and a board member of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies. She is currently chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at UC Riverside. The author and editor of several books, including *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* and *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, her next book, *Unreconciled: The Christian Right and Racial Reconciliation*, is forthcoming from Duke University Press. She is also the cofounder of a number of organizations, including Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, and the Boarding School Healing Project. She previously served as the US coordinator for the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. She is Southern Baptist.

Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes is a prophetic voice for healing, justice, and reconciliation. She has authored over a dozen journal articles and book chapters, as well as the book *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength* (Cascade, 2014). Dr. Walker-Barnes has earned degrees from Emory University (BA, psychology and African American/African studies), the University of Miami (MS and PhD, clinical child/family psychology), and Duke University (MDiv, certificate in gender, theology, and ministry). She is an associate professor at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology. A candidate for ordination in the United Methodist Church, she serves as the discipleship pastor at the Nett Church in Lilburn, Georgia.

Dr. Amos Yong is professor of theology and mission, and director of the Center for Missiological Research at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. His graduate education includes degrees in theology, history, and religious studies from Western Evangelical Seminary (now George Fox Seminary), Portland State University, and Boston University, and his undergraduate degree is from Bethany University of the Assemblies of God. He has authored or edited over three dozen volumes. He and his wife, Alma, have three children—Annalisa, a junior at Point Loma University; Alyssa, a graduate of Vanguard University; and Aizaiah (pronounced like the biblical Isaiah, also married to Neddy), who oversees the local missions initiatives at Azusa Pacific University—and one granddaughter (Serenity Joy, from Aizaiah and Neddy). Amos and Alma reside in Pasadena, California.



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