

EXCERPT



The Coming Race Wars (Expanded Edition) *A Cry for Justice, from Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter*

June 1, 2021 | \$18, 184 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3175-3

First published in 1993, *The Coming Race Wars?* offered a prophetic view of what was to come in our culture. William Pannell, dean of the Chapel at Fuller Theological Seminary, decried the mainstream idea that prejudice was no longer an issue in the United States and related the reasons why he felt we needed a serious change—before something bad really happened.

Jemar Tisby Reflects on *The Coming Race Wars?*

In *The Coming Race Wars?*, Pannell speaks specifically to White evangelical Christians. He levels a heavy critique of their (mis)understanding of race and their contributions to the persistent problem of racial discord in the United States. Before looking at his analysis, it is necessary to understand a little of the analyst himself.

Born in Sturgis, Michigan, in 1929, Pannell became a Christian in his junior year of high school. He went to Fort Wayne Bible College in Indiana and, later, studied Black history at Wayne State University. From his early days as a follower of Christ he worked with White Christians. He worked with both the Plymouth Brethren denomination and for Youth for Christ, an evangelical ministry with a mission to share Christ with young people. In the late 1960s, during the height of the Black Power movement, he went on staff with Tom Skinner Associates. He later became the first Black trustee at Fuller Theological Seminary and started teaching at the school shortly thereafter. Pannell has filled various roles at the seminary for nearly half a century. The seminary community honored him by naming the William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies after him.

Pannell published his first book in 1968. *My Friend, the Enemy* told White Christians about themselves from the perspective of a Black believer. Pannell's "friend" is the White Christian with whom he shares many similarities but whose ignorance or convictions ultimately work against Black liberation. "We read the same version, believe the same doctrines, probably have the same middle-class tastes, but all he knows about me—or cares to know—is what he sees on the 6 o'clock news."

Pannell caused some commotion among evangelicals for his forthright assessment of White Christianity's shortcomings on the issue of racial justice. A review in the evangelical publication *Christianity Today* read, "A stinging and slashing attack on white complacency, hypocrisy, paternalism, and smugness, the book sharply attacks white evangelicals in particular for failing to practice what Jesus taught."

In the thirty years between *My Friend, the Enemy* and *The Coming Race Wars?*, evangelicals had not changed much. Pannell notes that in the "white flight" from the city to the suburbs, evangelicals took flight too. The White Christians who exchanged the city for the suburbs also developed a comfortable Christianity far removed from the notes of risk taking and solidarity sounded in the Gospels. "Some black leaders would even label the suburban Christian reality syncretistic. Truly, it is hard to tell where the evangelical church leaves off and secular American culture begins." Instead of a prophetic critique of racial injustice, White evangelicals spewed a saccharine and sanctimonious form of religion that proved irrelevant and impotent in the face of police brutality and concentrated poverty in the cities.

More than twenty years later, I found that White evangelicals still hadn't figured out the whole racial justice thing. When Ferguson exploded in righteous Black anger, White evangelicals still looked on with confusion and fear. A few more of them observed with curiosity and earnest attempts to understand. But all too many responded to the assertion that "Black lives matter" with the retort "all lives matter" or "blue lives matter." They still viewed instances of police brutality as isolated events and invoked the "one bad apple" argument to account for rogue cops who tarnished the reputation of an otherwise admirable institution.

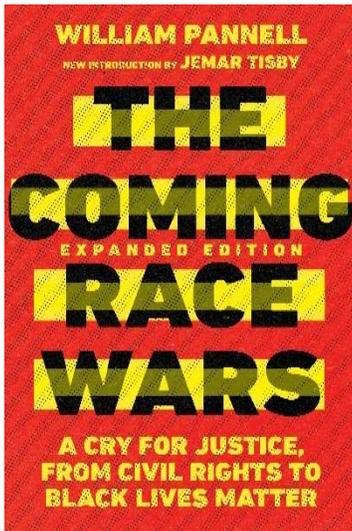


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



The Coming Race Wars (Expanded Edition) *A Cry for Justice, from Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter*

June 1, 2021 | \$18, 184 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3175-3

Pannell was more prophetic than perhaps even he knew when he wrote the following words nearly thirty years ago: “I fear we may be headed into an America with little time to read. We are on the very brink of a police state wherein law and order will mean something far more aggressive than it did when Richard Nixon inhabited the White House.”

What Pannell deftly executes in *The Coming Race Wars?* is weaving together various cultural and institutional realities to reveal the tapestry of oppression affecting Black people. From the stigmas White people attach to Black males to the abandonment of Black communities—what White evangelicals need to learn from Pannell is how “the system” conspires against people of African descent. Platitudes like “just preach the gospel” crumble under the weight of generational poverty, food deserts, underfunded schools, mass incarceration, voter suppression . . . the list goes on.

Pannell does not leave the conversation without offering a way forward. In the final chapter of the book, he asks the same question Martin Luther King Jr. asked in 1967, “Where do we go from here?”

The path forward, urges Pannell, is a fusion between evangelism and conversion on one side and social justice and equity on the other. If White evangelicals have practiced a separation between preaching the gospel and working for social change, then genuine reconciliation begins by restoring these two elements to their rightful unity. “What we should be striving for is a spirituality that will inform both evangelism and social transformation.”

As much as the church in the United States has failed in leadership and love in the issue of race, Pannell still expresses confidence that church folks must be part of the solution. This steely eyed hope is what stands out as Pannell’s enduring legacy and the continued importance of a book like *The Coming Race Wars?*. There aren’t a lot of authors or practitioners who have seen the failings of White Christians up close and for such a long time as William Pannell. He lived through the civil rights and Black Power movements. He saw the rise of the religious right and what it did to his White evangelical “friends.” He taught at an evangelical bastion that influenced the course of religion in the nation. Pannell knows better than most the horrors of race wars.

Yet to see “Bill” face-to-face is to catch the gleam in his eyes that emanates from an inner joy. He chuckles and laughs almost as much as he talks. His wit in conversation is as quick as it is in his writing. And while many, including myself, have been tempted to turn away from white evangelicals as hopelessly lost in their racism, Pannell has maintained genuine friendships that hold space for growth. He is wise enough to know that all human beings are a mix of good and bad, and seasoned enough to know that cynicism will not bring about the kingdom of God.

As is the case with many saints, their most powerful testimony resides not simply in their words but in their lives. William Pannell’s life is a book that guides us away from the coming race war and toward the path of peace. If we can emulate a man like this—his faith, his long suffering, his love—then we break centuries-long patterns of racial oppression and marginalization. William Pannell shows us that whether our nation embraces the “beloved community” or descends into further chaos, the cause of justice is worth pursuing. It is in that pursuit that we ourselves become peacemakers. And blessed are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God.

—Adapted from the foreword by Jemar Tisby, author of the *New York Times* bestselling book *The Color of Compromise*



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



BIO



The Coming Race Wars (Expanded Edition) *A Cry for Justice, from Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter*

June 1, 2021 | \$18, 184 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3175-3

"I support this thoughtful, controversial work because it must get on more tables for discussion among evangelicals. Numerous undeniable truths expose blind spots that have caused dysfunction within God's collective family in America for decades. Bill's wit and ability to see signs of hope encourage serious reflection even where we may disagree. I strongly agree with his overall concern that for US evangelical Christians, the integrity of the Gospel is at stake." (From 1993)

William E. Pannell, a Prophetic Voice of Race Wars

William E. Pannell joined the Fuller Seminary faculty in 1974, teaching for forty years and receiving emeritus faculty status in 2014. The seminary recognized his tremendous service to Fuller and the whole church with the January 2015 renaming and dedication of the [William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies](#).

"Bill" Pannell was born in Sturgis, Michigan. He gave his life to Christ during his junior year in high school, thanks to some Christian friends. The seeds to his conversion were sown many years previously in Sunday school at a local Plymouth Brethren Church. Pannell received his bachelor of arts from Fort Wayne Bible College in Indiana, in 1951. He went on to study Black history at Wayne State University in Detroit. In 1980 he earned a master of arts in social ethics from the University of Southern California.

Pannell has had far-ranging evangelistic experience at both the practical and the academic levels. After graduating from Fort Wayne, he became an evangelist, preaching and teaching throughout the United States. From 1955 to 1965, he served as an assistant pastor in Detroit, as well as area youth director for the Brethren Assembly youth. In 1964 he was named assistant director of leadership training with Youth for Christ, serving in that capacity until 1968, when he joined Tom Skinner Associates as associate evangelist and vice president.

He remained with that ministry until 1974, when he joined Fuller Seminary as assistant professor of evangelism and director of the Black Pastors' Program (later the African American Church Studies Program). Before joining the faculty at Fuller, Pannell was the first African American to serve on Fuller Seminary's board of trustees (1971–1974). In 1992 he was appointed as the Arthur DeKruyter/Christ Church Oak Brook Professor of Preaching, a role in which he served until 2000. He also served as dean of the chapel from 1992 to 1998. In 1993 he was selected by his faculty colleagues to receive the C. Davis Weyerhaeuser Award for Excellence.

In addition, Pannell received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Malone College in Ohio, an honorary doctor of Christian service degree from Geneva College in Pennsylvania, and an honorary doctor of humane letters from Taylor University in Indiana.

Pannell has served on boards of Youth for Christ USA, which he chaired in 1980, and the Academy of Evangelism, which he served as president from 1983 to 1984. He has been an active participant in conferences on evangelism throughout the world and is a sought-after guest lecturer at Christian colleges and universities throughout the United States. He currently serves on the board of Taylor University in Indiana.

His books include *My Friend, the Enemy* (Word 1968), *Evangelism from the Bottom Up* (Zondervan 1992), and *The Coming Race Wars?: A Cry for Reconciliation* (Zondervan 1993). His research interests include preaching and spirituality.

Pannell and his wife, Hazel, live in Altadena, California. They have two sons, Philip and Peter.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media