

Tyshawn Gardner. *Sacred Anthropology: Prophetic Radicalism for Pulpit and Pew*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. 188 Pages. \$22.99.

In *Sacred Anthropology: Prophetic Radicalism for Pulpit and Pew*, Tyshawn Gardner invites pastors and parishioners to adopt the radically prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ through both preaching and living. Sacred anthropology uses a prophetic methodology in which humanity and their social relationships are examined through the lens of Scripture for the purpose of affecting a biblical response to justice issues. For Gardner, sacred anthropology brings together a critique of the social order with biblical truth for the sake of employing a prophetic response to the racial ills of the world. Gardner asserts that “through the power of the Holy Spirit, prophetic radicalism is the key to unlocking the closing doors of equity, justice, and prosperity” (6).

In chapter 1, Gardner lays the foundation for a theology of sacred anthropology by exploring the relationship between cultural and theological anthropology. Cultural anthropology examines historical and cultural data for the sake of understanding humanity and social relations. Gardner uses cultural anthropology as a tool for understanding race and racism as an outgrowth of sin and the causes of inequity in the U.S., as well as a resource to help preachers understand the people who listen to their sermons. Theological anthropology is a hermeneutic that foregrounds the Bible as the main source for understanding God’s purpose for creation and humanity. Together, theological anthropology and cultural anthropology create a sacred anthropology that centers the Bible as the source for a prophetic response to racial injustice.

Chapter 2 presents the prophetic radicalism in the life and proclamation of Jesus Christ as a way of life for the pastor and those in the pew. Applying John Calvin’s notion of Jesus Christ’s theocratic offices of priest, prophet, and king, Gardner contends that through these roles Jesus performed prophetic radicalism by the exposing evil and injustice in the material world of his day (22). Similarly, pastors and congregations communicate to evil forces what is God’s justice through proclamation of the word and the resulting activism.

In chapter 3, Gardner situates sacred anthropology within the work of prophetic radicalism which he argues is necessary for confronting racial injustice. Prophetic radicalism begins with the biblical claim that all humankind is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). From here, he provides four practical steps for “pulpit and pew” to become sacred anthropologists: 1) awareness of one’s own culture and appreciation of the ethnically other; 2) analysis of data about and experiences of the socially disadvantaged; 3) making tangible and measurable amends, and 4) collaboration with other ministries and agencies.

In chapter 4, Gardner builds on the work of Kelly Miller Smith Sr. to argue that social crisis preaching is the primary tool for employing sacred anthropology. Social crisis preaching is about intentionally developing congregations through the power of the Holy Spirit to care about and confront the injustices experienced in their communities (64). Using Aristotle’s modes of persuasion applied to Kelly Miller Smith Sr.’s life and ministry as a model, he establishes the three elements of social crisis preaching as “the descriptive use of language, interdisciplinary content, and pastoral courage” (69).

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to the personal matters of sacred anthropology: suffering and self-care. In chapter 5, Gardner asserts that in the history of the African American church, the work of social justice activism through prophetic radicalism has left many wounded. He invites sacred anthropologists to practice Christian spirituality to sustain them through suffering. Chapter 6

identifies the need for clergy who employ prophetic radicalism to practice self-care as they experience the weariness that results from engaging in the burdensome work of justice.

*Sacred Anthropology* is a necessary book for pastors and parishioners who are in search of a biblical response to racial injustice. It invites readers to consider the role of Scripture in their assessment of racial injustice as well as in their everyday lives as they work to dismantle social ills in their communities. While Gardner argues that the work of sacred anthropology involves both pastor and pew, his concluding chapter on self-care misses an opportunity to consider how parishioners, too, experience weariness in the fight for justice. It would have been helpful if Gardner had also explored the weariness experienced by those within the congregation who employ prophetic radicalism. Nevertheless, this text is a wonderful resource for those who are committed to preaching and living with the prophetic radicalness of Jesus Christ.

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