

be prophetic, which means standing up to the powers that destroy God's creation.

This book would serve as an excellent source for an undergraduate or graduate course in theology of justice, Catholic social teaching, or the Church's mission. In fact, when I concluded reading this book, it gave me an inspiration to develop a course based on this title: A Prophetic Public Church. I recommend that this book be placed in college libraries.

EILEEN M. FAGAN
College of Mount Saint Vincent

The Politics of Mercy: Catholic Life in an Era of Inequality, Racism, and Violence. By Matthew T. Eggemeier and Peter Joseph Fritz. New York: Herder & Herder, 2020. xii + 169 pages. \$49.95 (paper).
 doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.39

In a 1966 essay on the teachings of Vatican II, Thomas Merton writes, "The Christian cannot be fully what he is meant to be in the modern world if he is not in some way interested in *building a better society*, free of war, of racial and social injustice, of poverty, and of discrimination" (*Love and Living*, 156). Almost sixty years later, one wonders if Christians in the United States have yet gotten the message. Breathing new life into Catholic social teaching and drawing lucidly from Pope Francis, Matthew Eggemeier and Peter Fritz set out, in five tightly argued chapters, to offer a "fresh apologetics" for "a holistic vision of Catholic life centered on mercy" (2). Structured in three parts corresponding to "Inequality, Racism, and Violence," part 1 addresses the crisis of "Wealth and Poverty"; part 2 treats "Migration" and "Mass Incarceration"; and part 3 addresses "War" and "Ecology." Originating from the authors' team-taught course at the College of the Holy Cross, the book is thoughtfully conceived for use in the undergraduate classroom, in parish study groups, or for deepening the theological context for any number of social-pastoral ministries. (I recently used the chapter on mass incarceration as linked to structural racism with volunteers in Catholic prison ministry.) The book's form reinforces its content. As Pope Francis insists, these multiple crises are of one fabric and cannot be treated piecemeal. The discussion of ecological devastation alongside war under the rubric of violence was especially powerful for this reader.

What makes *The Politics of Mercy* stand out is the authors' rhetorical clarity and range in showing how inequality, racism, and violence are so deeply interconnected. Although their judicious presentation of Catholic social thought alongside contemporary sociological and political analysis is impressive, it is the sensitive use of narrative and the occasional turn of poetic

imagery that finally yields for me a credible hope for a politics of mercy: “a way of gathering people together into community based in the ability to feel another’s suffering in one’s own heart” (9). The images of “windows and horizons,” for example, “can allow us to poke holes” in the *windowless* and sprawling US prison industrial complex and begin to imagine restorative justice “not just as an idea, but as a comprehensive expression of ransoming the captive” (86). Concluding each chapter are clear-eyed, beautifully rendered accounts of organizations that embody a politics of mercy, encounter, and accompaniment—Catholic Worker communities, Jesuit Refugee Service, Homeboy Industries, Catholic Relief Services, and Bethlehem Farm—helping the reader to “taste and see” the possibilities for a truly fresh and courageous *apologetics of hope* in an age of polarization, meanness, and violence. Eggemeier and Fritz want to show us “that the politics of mercy is not just possible, but actual. Not only *can* it be lived; it *is* being lived” (9).

No less than in Merton’s tumultuous era, Catholics today appear more deeply divided than united around the critical social issues of our time. And given the ongoing sexual abuse crisis in the church, it is no small task to illuminate for skeptical readers “the moral and theological resources that remain in the Catholic tradition despite the church’s institutional failures” (1). I came away from the book both reinvigorated by the power of Catholic social thought and heartened by the witness of Catholic organizations in their grassroots responses to the social and planetary crises of our times. I also came away imagining that Eggemeier and Fritz must be very adept classroom teachers. To borrow again from Merton, *The Politics of Mercy* reflects their shared commitment to an authentic Christian hope that “is inseparable from an incarnational involvement in the struggle of living and contemporary human beings” (*Love and Living*, 156). The book more than succeeds in demonstrating that Catholic theology “provides some grounds for imagining something better than the life we currently live” (5), even when that same teaching calls Catholics in every aspect of our lives “to strive for the seemingly impossible” (83).

CHRISTOPHER PRAMUK
Regis University

A Theology of the Christian Bible: Revelation—Inspiration—Canon. By Denis Farkasfalvy, OCist. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018. xii + 239 pages. \$34.95 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.27

It seems both enterprising and risky to ask for a review of this book from someone who is an Anglican (with Barthian sympathies), a Brit, an exegete (of