

(Continued from previous page)

taining strength in us (which certainly helps him finesse the nettlesome “submission” and “household” pericopes). Allen parses every verse in depth, sometimes going word by word, celebrating grace as the eternal and omnipotent will of God in making us a people that glorify his Son as the Spirit shapes us into his beautiful image.

Douglas Farrow’s *1 & 2 Thessalonians* is a tale of two commentaries. His exposition of Paul’s first letter is a meditation on the Apostle’s encouragement to the *ecclesia* to be joyfully steadfast to one another and to the Lord Jesus while discerning the way of grace and peace amid a hostile culture. Drawing comprehensively on patristic sources from Irenaeus to Chrysostom, as well as contemporary Christians as diverse as N.T. Wright and Joseph Ratzinger, he

addresses the text thematically, paragraph by paragraph.

The treatment of 1 Thessalonians 1-3 is devotional, in the deepest and most encouraging sense. Farrow’s articulation of Catholic teachings on human sexuality (provoked by 1 Thess. 4:1-8) is particularly trenchant, and I found his exposition of purgatory as an essential aspect of God’s graceful desire to make us capable of truly receiving and loving him to be irenic and enlightening.

However, Farrow’s tone changes dramatically at 2 Thess. 2:1-5ff, as the

“man of lawlessness” gives rise to 70 pages (of 300) of dark ruminations on that mysterious figure, the infidelities of the Church’s clergy, the utter corruption of our culture, and the just perdition of a good part of humanity. The commentary simply does not recover from a shockingly negative and disappointing ending to an exposition that begins in such a thoughtful, charitable, and catholic manner.

The Very Rev. Rob Price is dean of St. Matthew’s Cathedral, Dallas.

Reaching the Next Generation

A Letter to the Church and the Next Generation

Spiritual Growth through the Witness of James

By Robin T. Jennings

Elk Lake Publishing, pp. 202, \$15.99

Review by Sloane Graff

The Church is losing the next generation. Extensive research has shown that younger people are not participating in Church life, at alarming rates. This is true across denominations. The phenomenon is a growing challenge for both clergy and laity.

The Rev. Robin T. Jennings, former rector of St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church in Harrods Creek, Kentucky, became acutely aware of this in his ministry and decided to do something about it by writing his latest book, *A Letter to the Church and the Next Generation: Spiritual Growth through the Witness of James*.

Research by the Barna Group provides the empirical data that show the Church is losing the next generation. Jennings uses several of Barna’s studies as a springboard to discuss why this generation is losing touch with the

Church. He spends the bulk of his efforts building a case for what can be done about it.

He uses the Letter of James as a guide for what can be done to help stem the tide of declining Church participation among younger people. The book is composed of 12 chapters, each with a bullet-point summary and a short spiritual exercise to reinforce concepts. This structure makes the book ideal for a small group or class study. Jennings writes in a comfortable, casual style.

The book is grounded in the biblical truth articulated throughout the Book of James. One of the challenges of reaching young people is that they have an endless supply of truths they can follow. Jennings builds the case that the first call of the Church is to profess the Truth as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Soft-peddling or diluting the gospel is not the way to reach the next generation, as churches that use this strategy will not be successful. Jennings is clear on this point.

Perhaps the most significant takeaway of the book is the contention that reaching the next generation is not primarily the job of the clergy. It is the



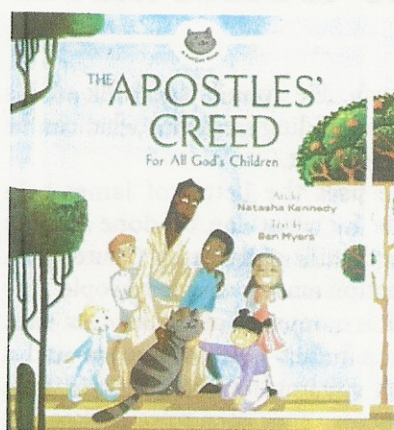
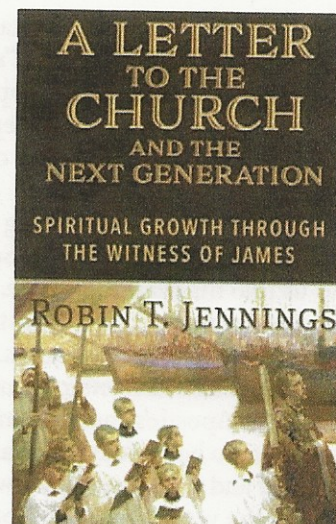
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job of the person in the pew. Certainly clergy have a key and absolutely essential role in teaching and preaching the gospel, but the laity has the numbers and reach for the greatest effect. In a sense, every Christian is, or should be, a priest.

Jennings builds the case that restoration will come through spiritual mentors and their relationships with new or younger Christians. Much of the emptiness and alienation of many in the younger generations is the result of their looking for ultimate satisfaction in all the wrong places, such as material suc-

cess, power, or sensual satisfactions. These things are not dead ends in themselves; used for God's intents and purposes, they are true blessings. It is when they become ultimate ends and sources of meaning that their futility is apparent. It is the task of spiritual mentors to help the next generation understand the true source of fulfillment, which can only be found in a relationship with God.

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The Apostles' Creed

For All God's Children

By Ben Myers.

Art by Natasha Kennedy

Lexham, pp. 48, \$17.99

Making Catechism Beautiful

Review by Emily R. Hylden

Beautifully illustrated, with Jesus and scenes from his first-century Middle Eastern life in accurate hues, this volume in the FatCat series shows great intentionality in both its “showing” and “telling.” An opening page expounds on the series’ strange title, affirming catechism as a fat, or rich and deep, offering of faith.

Each spread explicates a line of the Apostles’ Creed, using repetition — just like the creed and traditional catechisms — to draw young minds

into the Christian imagination as it’s been shared and taught for centuries. Echoes of Scripture and hymnody abound in facing pages as the book moves through the doctrines of the creed, provided by Dr. Ben Myers of Brisbane, Australia.

As the series name suggests, there’s great richness and depth to mine. There are biblical resources, as well as prayers and offerings for short family liturgies, at the back of the book, making this volume appropriate for most of elementary school. My 5-year-old anticipated some of the questions

and answers offered in the text, impressing upon me the book’s ability to pitch an appropriate pedagogical level and tone.

Let me be clear: unless you want to search for theological answers long past bedtime, this is not a book to pull off the shelf for winding down at night. Nor is it a volume that demonstrates in vivid language or inspiring scopes the height and depth and breadth of God’s love for us, but neither does the creed often leave me in raptures, or our catechism bring me to tears!

The Rev. Emily R. Hylden lives in Lafayette, Louisiana, with her scholar-priest husband and three young boys. She blogs at emilyhylden.com and hosts the podcast Emily Rose Meditations.