

A Daystar Reader

Colleagues,

*Though the cloud from sight received him
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget his promise,
"I am with you ever more?"*

We sang those lines from Wm. C. Dix's Ascension Day hymn, "Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus," at the breakfast table this morning. The word promise in the second last line is my segue (in more ways than one) to this review of A DAYSTAR READER. For the opening chapter in the reader is titled THE PROMISING TRADITION. Nearly half of my lifetime ago I too scissored and pasted together a "Reader in Systematic Theology" and gave the whole collection that very title. Mine had 30 selections by eight authors—none of them women. Daystar's reader has 22 articles by 22 authors, three of them women.

[The specs on A DAYSTAR READER are: By Matthew L Becker . . . [et al.], edited by Matthew L. Becker. 2010, xx, 245 pp. To purchase your own copy, check in at <http://www.daystarnet.org>]

Matt Becker, Valpariso University theology professor, has done the scissors and paste job on this one and thus offers to the wider public some promise-centered theology that has been orbiting in cyberspace for the last decade—in, with (well, sometimes) and under (under the radar, at least, of)—the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. I referred to the Daystar folks a fortnight ago (TT620) as representing a third kind of LCMS on the scene today—the other two kinds being the two factions wrestling for public leadership in the denomination. Though ostensibly on opposite sides of the fence on many LCMS issues,

both of these two groups, I thought, were still tied to each other with their primal commitment to verbal inspiration of the Bible as the cornerstone for Christian theology.

Au contraire the Daystar crowd—and other still small voices within Missouri—whose theology begins with the Gospel's authority and grounds the Bible's authority there on what the Bible itself calls the "chief cornerstone."

Well, if you want to see how they do it, get the book. Steve Krueger's opening essay with the "Promising Tradition" title is a magna charta introduction to the collection. Other contributors are, some more, some less, explicit in grounding their essays there, but none depart from it.

Matt Becker's introduction gives the history of this cyberspace collegium. He names the predecessor theologians within the LCMS who were the earlier advocates of promising theology, many of whom were the teachers of those now in the Daystar network.

In the Preface, Daystar president David T. Stein provides a "snapshot of the intellectual footings" of the organization that is fundamentally a "cyberspace listserv." He lists them as follows:

- to serve as a voice of the Christian gospel within and to the LCMS and to the wider Lutheran and Christian community
- to gather evangelical members and to strengthen them in their gospel witness, mission, and service for the sake of the whole church and the world.
- to seek out relationships with other Lutherans and Christians consistent with the evangelical goals of the organization.
- to publish materials both in written and electronic forms, to maintain private and public websites and other information venues, and to encourage the public discussion

of issues consistent with the evangelical goals of the organization.

Editor Becker groups the essays under 6 headings:

- For the Sake of the Gospel
- Preaching the Gospel
- Church and Ministry
- Church Fellowship
- The Ordination of Women
- Science and Theology

Folks in the know will recognize the “hot potato” aspect within the LCMS of the last three of these captions. Missouri’s tradition has been “no” to all three even when nuanced in temperate language. The Daystar folks say “yes” and in this reader give their reasons for saying so.

As an ex-Missourian who went to the ramparts for most every one of these flashpoints half a lifetime ago, I yin-yang-ed between “hurray!” and “enough already” as I read these authors. A number of them were my own dear students, who did have their own Augsburg Aha!—and thus my “hurray!” for seeing them put that Aha! into practice, often in dicey situations and still with gusto.

But, but But will it never end in Missouri? Not just the Bible vs. Gospel cornerstone debate, but the voice for the Gospel itself that these essays demonstrate? Is that in danger of coming to an end? Is the Platzregen moving on? I checked the brief biog of each of the 22 writers. Thirteen are retired and two are already R.I.P. Seven are still in the sprinkling business. But most of them aren’t youngsters anymore either.

And the ELCA has its own set of problems with the same cornerstone issue, as today’s “Inbetweener” illustrated.

So we're back to the hymn verse up at the top on Ascension Day – whereon, as Bob Bertram liked to say, Christ's first words doubtless were: "Abba, look at all the lost kids I've brought back with me!" And that means we're back to the cornerstone of the promising tradition:

With clouds still obscuring Christ's homecoming in lots of places, there's only one place to hang your heart, . . . his promise, "I am with you ever more." That is the golden thread in A Daystar Reader. Take a look and you too will say hurray!

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder