

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Volume 7.1 of *Didache: Faithful Teaching*. As we begin our seventh year of electronic publishing we offer a “reprise” of our previous edition as well as new articles on the nature of holiness and community, worthwhile topics for our consideration as faithful educators. The primary content of this edition re-visits the Global Theology Conference held at the deBron conference center in The Netherlands. This edition includes not only conference proceedings but the various responses and plenary addresses either in print or via audio download. It should be noted that many of the responses were to original conference drafts, some of which were re-edited this edition. You will find new revisions by Brower-Latz, McCormick, Manswell, as well as Brower & McEwan. In addition the English translations for Melendez and Julca were revised to improve clarity for our English speaking readers. The new edition includes two excellent student papers by Nell Becker-Sweeden on the dynamics that revolved around the Global Theology conference as well as a poignant treatment on African community life under apartheid by Madela Mashinini. Henry W. Spaulding also offers an intriguing treatment of holiness in dialog with Radical Orthodox theology.

For Wesleyans who were not able to attend the Global theology conference I would like to offer a bit of background. The event was the second of its kind, the first occurring in Guatemala five years ago. The conference included approximately three hundred church leaders, educators, theologians and ministers from fifty-six Nazarene educational institutions, at least two other Wesleyan schools as well as various ministry settings. In addition the conference included the presence of the six General Superintendents from the Church of the Nazarene and several other key leaders within the denomination. The gathering afforded an interesting turn as Nell Becker-Sweeden notes. While the first global conference seemed particularly focused on plenary events, the second revolved more around the small group discussions and informal gatherings between the larger events. In most of the small groups each participant contributed an important “voice” to the overall impact of the event. What we experienced was a marvelous example of the potential of global conversations around the issues of faith, culture and education. The plenary presentations contributed to the depth of conversation, including the responses, raising fresh challenges for those attending. Overall the conference received a high approval rating by those attending. Audio recordings of the various events were provided through the Eurasia region of the Church of the Nazarene. We deeply appreciate the region’s willingness (particularly John Haines who ably superintended conference logistics) to provide these downloads which are also available online (accessed June 6, 2007) at <http://www.eurasianazarene.org/wmeurasia/>

In addition you might review some of the papers from the Global Missionary pre-conference that occurred just prior to this event and linked through our journal or available direct through the NTS Center for Intercultural studies available online (accessed June 6, 2007) at <http://cis.nts.edu/>

The collaborative spirit was modeled in several of the papers that were developed by “conversation” partners from different global settings. These papers reflect the incredible challenges many faculty face merely completing a writing project in the midst of a myriad of commitments. Some papers were more closely “co-authored,” while in other writings the conversation partner merely offered strategic comments and additions. However, the vision of papers written together from multiple global settings may be an option for future publications here in *Didache*.

The success of the conference has already sparked interest in yet a third such global gathering. Professor Mary Hayse, a friend and colleague from Mid America Nazarene University, offers one approach that would intentionally utilize regional conferences with a third gathering (with enough lead time to accomplish both). I offer his reflections directly as one example of how a third conference might be conceived.

Mark Hayse's reflections,

Reflection: The spirit and process of GTC 2 were conciliatory, presumably due in large part to the careful planning of the steering committee. In particular, I appreciated Dr. Middendorf's call to *keep* the unity of the Spirit, a unity which we have received as a *gift*. Although we confess this unity, we do not conjure it. God by prevenience makes us one, a perichoretic reflection of the divine nature. It is such confidence that should lead us—a diverse and global community—to practice discernment through dialogical Christian conference. I left GTC 2 with hope for our denominational future and with a proposal in mind for GTC 3.

Proposal: Building upon the success of GTC 2, I'd like to see GTC 3 open up more space for dialogical and intercultural Christian conference in order to address the question, "Does the center still hold?" or another common theme. Taking a phenomenological approach, each region in turn might present a paper in plenary session, following a format like that below:

1. Regional Assessment: Identify the unique problems and challenges that are felt in the region.
2. Regional Survey: Describe the dominant, varied theological responses from among the churches (universal) in the region.
3. Regional Response: Articulate an alternative, integrative and indigenous theological response that is distinctly and locally the region's own.

Following each paper:

4. Off-regional Inquiry: One or two brief, plenary responses that a) affirm the paper, b) seek further understanding and clarification, c) invite further reflection at one or two points.
5. Regional Summation: Briefly address points 4.b. and 4.c. above
6. Small-group Responses: Small group discussion and dialogue following each paper.

At the end of the conference:

7. Panel Synthesis: A plenary response from a wide, selected range of denominational representatives in order to address the question, "In the midst of our diverse contexts, what common concerns/convictions/strategies bind us together? Does the center still hold?"

How does this format build upon GTC 2?

8. It is both directed and open-ended: This format invites contextual discussion "from below" in an emergent—yet orderly—way.

9. It teaches a political model: This format implies an egalitarian, “flat” model for “being church” that this writer hopes will more broadly characterize the administrative procedures of the Church of the Nazarene.

Our Wesleyan epistemology invites dialogue, yet dialogue always encompasses the risk of misunderstanding. However, when dialogue is disallowed, we run the greater risks of mistrust, cynicism and fracture (particularly in global institutions). I’d like to see GTC 3 present the Church of the Nazarene with a concrete model for dialogue, trust and hope, grounded in our confidence that God’s prevenience indeed makes us one. It is our part simply to create space for listening, conference and discernment of the center which already exists in our midst, and toward which God is already calling us to go.

One final but very important note

As mentioned, with the culmination of this conference we begin the seventh year of *Didache: Faithful Teaching*. The journal was conceived originally out of an earlier global gathering of educators and theologians in Johannesburg Africa where the spirit of collaboration was fostered around themes of ministry preparation and theological education. That gathering, as well as those that followed both regionally and globally around the Church of the Nazarene, occurred in large part through the vision and efforts of Jerry Lambert, Education Commissioner of the International Board of Education for the Church of the Nazarene. Dr. Lambert will be retiring in the near future. Participants from each conference, contributors to this journal, and those who benefit from all of these efforts, need to extend a prayer of appreciation to God for Dr. Lambert’s efforts for global theological education. He has not done it alone, there have been key participants from world mission, other educational institutions, and foundations which helped fund the efforts. However, Commissioner Lambert proved to be the primary motivating, connecting, and sustaining force behind these efforts for the sake of “Preparing Global Christians for Serving in the 21st Century” (IBOE mission statement). We owe him a debt of gratitude.

As always we extend an invitation for future submissions. Independent submissions receive juried review. Student papers are welcomed as sponsored by faculty. Writing guidelines are available on the website. Enjoy reading.

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