Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, No. 5

Held on 25 September 2001, 2 to 4 pm
at Canadian Mennonite University

Helmut Harder welcomed participants to the meeting. Noting that **Ardith Frey** was absent on sabbatical and that **Henry Loewen** was away in B.C., he introduced **Victor Kliewer**, Executive Director of the Mennonite Church Manitoba, and **Titus Guenther**, Professor of Theology and Mission at the Canadian Mennonite University, who would be participating in this meeting in their place.

Opening prayers were led by **Elaine Pinto**.

Sharing insights and questions arising out of our first four dialogues.

Helmut Harder began by saying that although he felt closer to Catholics than to many other Christian groups, from past discussions with other groups (e.g., Methodists), he found it tougher to dialogue with Catholics. His questions are: How will we draw the circle of our theology where we can agree? and How can we draw the circle of our lives where we can act in common?

John Long reported chatting at a recent wedding reception with a Mennonite doctor, who in responding to John's report about our dialogue, talked about how he gives expression to his faith – working in other parts of the world, adopting three third-world children, etc.. John has the impression that in discussions with Mennonite friends, the emphasis usually seems to be on how they give expression to their faith rather than on teachings. His question is that given our significant differences on teachings, for example, with respect to the Eucharist on frequency of celebration and its centrality in our lives, how can we bridge the gaps in moving towards common action?

Harold Jantz reported golfing with a retired priest and being asked why, if he took the Scriptures literally, he didn't believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Harold reflected that he did believe that Christ was really present when the community comes together to celebrate the Lord's Supper – in effect, though we differ on how Christ is present, at a more fundamental level we agree that Christ is really present in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Reflecting on our historical review of the history of baptism, his question is: How can some kind of authority be maintained within the Church? The answer appears very clear in the Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchical structure, but in the Protestant and Anabaptist tradition the answer is far from clear. He confessed to longing for a clear teaching authority.

Elaine Pinto reflected on her feelings about God's desire to see the people of God united as she moves back and forth from her Mennonite community to her experiences at St. Benedict's Monastery. Her question is How does one be faithful to one's call and to God's call for unity?

Victor Kliewer reflected on his pastoral experience in Ontario, where among the younger generation there are many marriages between Mennonites and Catholics (especially of Italian and Portuguese backgrounds). This has involved him with priests in discussions about how and where the wedding services are held, etc. He also reported that in his course experiences at the University of Winnipeg and the University of Windsor (which has close ties to the older Catholic Assumption University) he observed how Catholics tended to approach issues theologically and philosophically, while Protestants tended to take a more historical perspective.

Theological and Historical Perspectives on Sin and Salvation

Helmut Harder made a presentation on the Biblical basis for an understanding of sin and salvation in Mennonite perspective via Genesis 1-3. He distributed notes on his presentation to participants that covered most of his points. He concluded with lessons drawn from the Genesis references to the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. 1. With respect to the Tree of Life, we are warned against taking "life" into our own hands, and with respect to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that we are reminded that we can't take it into our own hands to define good and evil. With respect to salvation, we are reminded that we all need grace and forgiveness (we need to be accepted as we are) and we are reminded that we need guidance and direction in our way of life.

There followed a brief discussion on Mennonite understanding of the traditional doctrine of original sin. **Adolf Ens** suggested that early Mennonite thinkers "loosened up" notions coming from Augustine and Luther and moved to a position that sought a balance between original sin and original grace.

Luis Melo spoke on Classical Categories in Catholicism used in considering the issues of sin and salvation. (Luis distributed his notes to participants). He provided the most detail on the classical perspectives that stressed Order and Law, only noting more recent and more relational "personalistic" and praxis ("liberation") perspectives in Catholic morality. Much that is contained in the earlier perspectives had as its background Greek philosophy and Semitic (Jewish) understandings of the Law.

Adolf Ens spoke on Anabaptist perspectives on Sin and Salvation. He began by noting the fact that the early Anabaptist thinkers came after Luther and the other reformers (such as Zwingli and Calvin) and consciously separated themselves from these predecessors, rejecting Luther's "bondage of the will" and Calvin's version (with his teaching on predestination). Original sin nevertheless remains an important reality. Since "we are all conceived and born in sin," argued Hubmaier, Zwingli is wrong in claiming that "the children of Christians are certainly and undoubtedly children of God." (Hubmaier, "Discussion of Zwingli's Baptism Book," 1525; 3:45) Zwingli used this as one of his arguments for infant baptism. Anabaptists used "justice of God" reasoning to argue that children were "innocent" until they came to an understanding of good and evil, but were not automatically in the church without making a personal decision. (Pilgram Marpeck, "Confession," 1532, 2:117) That led them to postpone baptism until repentance and confession of faith were made with a proper understanding of what this meant. The

Anabaptists rejected predestination (Calvin) and Luther's tendency to separate faith and works, and tried to follow a middle path on faith and works. Michael Sattler, for example, consciously rejected "work righteousness" (associated with Catholic practice) and "faith without works" (associated with Luther), and insisted that faith must be expressed in love of God and neighbour. Anabaptist thinkers also thought that Christians would sin after baptism and stressed the need for an "admonition court" where sins were examined and forgiveness sought prior to participation in the Lord's Supper. They also rejected Luther's view that men could be saved and still be sinners at the same time. Anabaptists stressed that baptism brought a continuing empowerment by the Holy Spirit to change us and graft us into Christ.

For **Richard Lebrun's** presentation on Contemporary Catholic thinking on Sin and Salvation, see the attached notes [Appendix 1].

Richard's presentation let to discussion about the relationship of Mennonites to the Protestant tradition. **Mike Radcliffe**, noting that Mennonites often seemed to hold theological positions closer to Catholicism, wondered if Mennonites generally identify themselves as Protestants. **Adolf Ens** noted the extent to which the early Anabaptist leaders often had roots in various monastic traditions, and suggested common roots in the ascetic tradition of Catholicism, and mentioned historians who have traced these roots. **Luis Melo** observed how groups identify themselves, noting that Anglicans, Quakers, and the Salvation Army often see themselves as following a "third way" between Catholicism and Protestantism. **Harold Jantz** noted the distinction early Mennonites made between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of this World, and **Adolf Ens** pointed out that while Luther envisioned two moralities, one for action within the Church (the Kingdom of God) and one within the world (as subject of the emperor or king, for example), earl), Anabaptists insisted that Christians had to turn away from the kingdom of this world and live only in the Kingdom of Christ. The question of the extent of one's participation in the secular world remains an open question for Mennonites.

Luis Melo brought the discussion back to Classical Categories in Catholicism by observing that the model behind the classical view was crumbling. In that model strict laws were made, but exceptions were acknowledged and handled privately (pastorally in the confessional, etc.), but with the shortage of priests and a better-educated laity, people are forming their own consciences on many thing, and many people are rejecting everything. At present we are living through a difficult time of a shift of metaphors. People are more likely to seek solace and comfort from psychologists than confessors. Karl Rahner insisted that the first law in the church must be the care of the people of the Church – and there are those who suggest that to meet the needs of the people such things as a married clergy and female clergy must be reconsidered. The Church is wrestling with questions concerning how we might change – what is essential? – what can be discarded?

Helmut Harder wrapped up this part of the session by suggesting that we seem to agree that salvation is in the church, something that occurs in the church community; and that good works are an expression of faith in our salvation.

Implications of Sin and Salvation for Christian Nurture and Education

John Long offered the reflection of one Catholic on these issues. He distributed his notes (with relevant attachments) to participants and then took us through the notes. With respect to his belief that "Christian parents should initiate their children into the Christian faith – boldly, without hesitation or fear," he stressed nurture is not "propositional," but involved loving initiation into the Christian community. He acknowledged the risk that Christian nurture might involve indoctrination, especially where initiation "occurs in the distinctive environment of religious schooling" and that this risk remains an issue of ongoing debate (especially in religiously divided communities like Northern Ireland).

In the discussion that followed, **Harold Jantz** observed how our ability to love God was closely connected to the kind of nurture we had received in our home. Someone with a father who acted as tyrant in the home would be likely to see God as a tyrant. This led to reflections on the importance of role models (known classically as moral exemplars). The unconditional love of parents is obviously of great importance. **Helmut Harder** observed that despite the emphasis on personal freedom and commitment in the "free church" (Anabaptist) movement, there were real dangers of individuals being "swallowed up" in community (e.g., in Hutterite communities).

With respect to the "liberal" education ideal of developing the "rational-critical principle," **John Long** observed that in a strict sense there is no such thing as "rational autonomy," and that public schools tend to be characterized by an explicit secular environment.

Speaking about Sin and Salvation from Personal Experience (panel discussion)

Harold Jantz began his reflections on sin and salvation by recalling that his earliest sense of sin come out of a teaching that identified sin with specific acts (hitting, being angry, etc.). As he grew older he began to appreciate that perhaps it was a pervasive condition, a part of himself. Salvation he came to understand as a need for forgiveness, and for release from guilt. He recalled, at about the age of seven, confessing his sin in another's presence, and being conscious of embracing salvation. His more mature understanding of salvation sees Christ as coming to do something for him that he cannot do for himself, as a source of his life. Reflecting on the terrible events of September 11, he recalled that his first response was an impulse towards vengeance, and then realizing that a Christian response should be different, that all are humans, Muslims as well as ourselves "feel" the same things, that we all have the same capacity for evil, and that we all need "new life" in Christ.

Elaine Baete recalled learning about sin in terms of right and wrong (the latter understood as disobedience to God), and taking some time to appreciate the significance of "sins of omission." In her faith journey, she thinks she has come to an ever greater realization of God's goodness to her. She recalled being rather neurotic about sin, and gradually coming to realize that God is much larger than sin. God is a mystery, and if we are in his image, our self is something of a mystery as well. She recalled the Holy Week liturgy with its phrase "Oh happy fault" (our sin that brought Christ to redeem us) and her

realization that perhaps God writes straight with jagged and crooked lines. **Elaine** explained that she had been trained in a Jesuit/Ignatian spirituality that stresses personal responsibility while admitting that we are human beings with limitations, who make mistakes. But we try to make right choices and realize that we are called to take personal and collective responsibility for our choices. She said she tried to live from the perspective of Christian anthropology. We are conscious of making choices, but we also have an unconscious part (that includes potential for good), with lots of grey areas. Against the contemporary tendency to *individualism,* we must balance the needs of the faith community.

Michele Sala Pastora structured her reflections on specific events in her life that have helped her understanding of sin and salvation. She recalled an occasion of disagreement with her husband,, where she began an angry letter to him that turned out in the end to be a love letter, and another occasion where lay people and priests were working together on a project and feeling hurt by a disagreement. In the end she discovered that we can go beyond the hurt, that there is a pool of love (God's love) that is the work of the Spirit, that can bring us closer to one another. She also told a story about preparing her daughter for her first experience with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and suggesting to her that she share with the priest something good that happened to her on her journey and/or a portion of the Word of God that was particularly meaningful at that point. When she herself returned from the confessional, it was a daughter that asked her "How was it'?'" Drawing on Henri Nouwen's book *The Return of the Prodigal Son,* Michele suggested that perhaps we are all at times called to be father, mother, brother, and sister, to bring pardon and peace to those around us, and that perhaps that is the meaning of salvation. Lastly, she spoke about a weekend at St. Benedict's and a half-awake dream from which she got up overwhelmed by the sense of God's love, which uses even sin to show itself to us. She wondered if the church could be more creative in finding ways to celebrate Reconciliation, suggesting that the "accompanying" that was essential need not necessarily be by a priest.

Elaine Pinto recalled that her early understanding of "salvation" in her tradition involved a "faith decision" that saved one from eternal hell without that face of God. Sins were things like smoking, dancing, and drinking, and that the feeling of shame (before the community,) was greater than any feeling of guilt. She recalled the shaming that she had to endure in the Mennonite community, as a divorced person, and wondering how many years before a divorce is forgiven. However the church has positive ways of dealing with sin, and she recalled that advocates had spoken for her. Salvation now means more to her than heaven, it means journeying now with and paying attention to, and knowing God.

Michael Radcliffe recalled being prepared for his first confession by the rather formidable "ladies" of the Sacred Heart, going into "the box," with a laundry list of inadequacies, and then afterwards feeling that it was not as bad as he thought it would be. The examination of conscience before confession could be very specific with respect to sins – all rather legalistic. He is thankful that this sort of thing is all gone to day, where instead the sacrament of Reconciliation more often means an open discussion with one's confessor about the obstacles remaining in one's relationship with God, and salvation understood as being able to experience the love of God. Now he worries more about the

"institutional sin" of being a "wealthy" Canadian and wondering about the extent he might be participating in sins against other peoples. Who is being violated by the perpetuation of our life style?

Helmut Harder thanked the panelists for their enriching testimonials, and then moved on the "wrap up" – questions about when and where we should meet again, and what should we do at our next meeting. He reported that before our next meeting he would be participating in a North American meeting at Notre Dame University exploring (especially with evangelicals and others who have tended to stand aloof from the main line churches in the ecumenical movement) ways of seeking a new definition of ecumenism, and that he and his wife would be going to Assisi for the fourth international Mennonite-Catholic dialogue.

After some discussion, it was agreed that we should meet again on Tuesday, the 22nd of January, 4 to 8 pm. **Elaine Baete** offered to host the meeting at the Grey Nuns Provincial House (151 Despins, St. Boniface). [This was subsequently confirmed by Elaine, who has provided a map showing how to find parking.] **Helmut** will work with **Richard Lebrun** on an agenda, taking account of suggestions contained in the minutes of previous meetings and suggestions to consider mission, more on salvation, and perhaps something on women in ministry.

The closing prayer was led by **Elaine Baete**.

Attachment: Contemporary Catholic Thinking on Sin and Salvation

Appendix to the meeting of 25 September 2001

Contemporary Catholic Thinking on Sin and Salvation

Notes on a presentation by Richard Lebrun (not all presented for lack of time)

Primary source: Thomas Bokenkotter, *Essential Catholicism: Dynamics of Faith & Belief (1986)*

I. Development and challenges to the traditional doctrine of original sin

In the New Testament Jesus put the emphasis on forgiveness and conversion, revealing the true nature of sin as a rejection of God's invitation to share with him a history of salvation. His emphasis was on the wonderful goodness of God. It is Paul who has the most comprehensive theology of sin – for him sin not only a transgression of the divine law, but a state, an all- embracing reality. He speaks of the reign of sin, our enslavement to the power of sin. These ideas were developed by Augustine into the classical doctrine of original sin. Further developed in the Middle Ages, the doctrine was seemingly cast in stone by the pronouncements of Council of Trent. However, since the 1950s, a number of factors and developments have led Catholic theologians to attempt reinterpretations of doctrine of original sin.

Modern science provides overwhelming evidence for a dynamic and evolutionary universe, and suggests that evil in the world is a necessary part of an unfinished universe and not to be traced back to some primordial catastrophe (like the fall of Adam).

The study of biblical literary forms has shown the great part myth played in the composition of the Bible. The Genesis account of the Fall can be understood not as history but as a way of accounting for a basic flaw in human nature.

The challenge is that for centuries the Church had made its doctrine of original sin the keystone of dogmatic teaching about man, sin, and redemption. In decades since Vatican II, quite a number of attempts to reinterpret Trent's dogma of OS in a ways that do not compromise the essential meaning of the doctrine, yet strip it of its mythic and archaic features.

Two main schools can be noted here: Situationists – who focus on man's historical situation and see Original Sin as a way of speaking about a kind of moral ecology – the human moral environment is so permeated with sin that everyone is spiritually conditioned and drawn to make sinful decisions. The Situationalist school stems from the work of Piet Schoonenberg (Dutch theologian). He makes great use of Scripture, where he finds two basic insights: human solidarity in sin, and personal responsibility

Personalists – who hold that Original Sin means simply the factual universality of personal sin: everyone is a sinner. This school led by A. Vanneste.

There are problems with both approaches – and ongoing debate.

The great debate in moral theology (what constitutes sin?): Revisionists vs. Traditionalists

Since Vatican II, there has been a quantum leap in Catholic moral theology. Perhaps the most basic change, a shift from classical to historical consciousness. Before the council, Catholic moral theologians seemed to dwell in a word apart, a world safe from the corrosive forces of historical change. The old world was one of a natural law, regarded as impervious to change. Now revisionists, in particular, more likely to see moral concepts as products of history. Another change, much more attention to Scripture. Still another, abandonment of legalism, which was so characteristic of Catholic morality in the past. New emphasis on the Bible made theologians aware of how opposed Jesus was to all legalism and how he excoriated religious leaders for making observance of the law the very touchstone of religion. As a result of these changes, pluralism is now characteristic of Catholic moral theology – with great diversity of opinion. However, two main schools stand out today: revisionists and traditionalists

Main difference between these two schools is their approach to the role *of norms,* or *rules.* Revisionists are willing to admit some truth in situation ethics (identified with John Fletcher) and espouse an approach often called "proportionalism" In this view, the function of norms and moral commandments is to inform us about the values at stake in certain actions. Values at stake are things like the value of life, human integrity, dignity, etc. These norms or rules are not infallible, but serve to warn us that if we do the action prohibited without a proportionate reason, we may be guilty of sin. Rules point to behaviour that should be avoided if at all possible.

"Proportionate reason" is a key term in this system. Another is conflict, since they see human beings as often involved in situations in which they are caught between the demands of conflicting moral norms. Classical moral theology (still used by traditionalists) envisaged a notion of double effect, but required certain conditions to be fulfilled – for example, that the evil effect could not be directly intended, but only permitted, nor could the good effect be obtained by the evil effect. The revisionists have introduced several modifications to the old theory of double effect. They reject the characterization of certain actions as intrinsically evil regardless of consequences and circumstances. They also reject the distinction between *directly* and *indirectly* intending the evil effect. Revisionists prefers the phrase "Is there a proportionate reason?"

Revisionists make a distinction between premoral (or ontic) evil and moral evil. Killing, wounding, sterilizing, deceiving, etc., are premoral evils, but not necessarily moral evils. Premoral evil embraces all those disvalues involved in the human situation – physical injury, violence, ignorance, fatigue, poverty, etc. Causing premoral (or *ontic)* evil is not in itself an immoral action. It becomes immoral only when we cause the evil without proportionate reason. We must realize that we cannot realize all possible values but have to sacrifice some in order to secure others. Revisionists stress that this is a world of ambiguity, and that since we often face situations of conflict, we must often choose to permit a disvalue in order to secure a more important value.

For revisionists practically all *material norms* admit of exceptions. By material norms

they mean norms that prohibit certain actions, as distinct *from formal norms,* which rather serve to motivate and inspire us, e.g. to be honest, be chaste~ etc. They argue that it is hard to appeal to the Bible as evidence of absolute moral norms. In Old Testament one finds a dynamic and evolving morality. A number of Catholic authors hold that on the level of concrete behaviour, the New Testament inculcates nothing that could not be derived from human experience, and insist on the historical and cultural limitations on the morality taught in the New Testament. [The treatment of homosexuality would be an example.]

The Meaning of salvation

Church has never given a dogmatic definition of the atonement (relation of Christ to our salvation) with the same precision as on the question of Christ's person (Christology) – though there is very close connection between Christology and soteriology. Today there are a number of approaches (not all Catholic) to the issue, including an existentialist approach, liberation theology, process theology, and neo-Catholic theology.

The Existentialists rely heavily on Bultmann, who discarded the traditional substitutionary theory whereby Christ is supposed to have suffered for us vicariously, in favour of seeing the cross as revelation that brings us the possibility of freedom of bondage to the Law and sin. In this view, the cross and Resurrection are symbols rather than causes of salvation. For Paul Tillich, another existentialist, salvation means overcoming the estrangement between God and man in a process of man becoming whole. Weak points: substitution of religious experience for the authority of the Bible, neglect of the doctrine of the church, and its excessive skepticism about the historical Jesus.

Liberation theology, which confines its image of salvation to the possibilities within the world. Looks not to the *eschaton,* but the here and now insofar as it aims to transform the social structures of oppression. Couples a Marxist social analysis with as reading of the Bible that finds revelation in the acts of God liberating the poor and the oppressed. Sees Jesus as the herald of the Kingdom of God to inaugurate a new social order of justice and freedom. Saving faith is actualized only insofar as one shares in the struggle for greater freedom and justice. Weaknesses: tendency to reduce the Gospel to ethics – in effect in a new form of Pelagian justification by works or social involvement. Also, leaves little room for prayer and worship.

Process theology – also tends to view salvation a something that occurs in the here and now insofar as human beings achieve the maximum degree of self-fulfillment. Sees God and the world as mutually dependent. God too is enriched when human beings realize their full potential of happiness, self-realization, and creativity. Tends to see man's ultimate goal as attaining mastery over nature. Weakness: discontinuity with the tradition.

Neo-Catholic – identified with Hans Kung (and Walter Kasper). Kung's offers an account of the Church's efforts to answer the question of how Jesus' death could be a salvific event: What does it mean to say Jesus died for us? Sees Paul as using five metaphors: redemption, justification, reconciliation, victory, and sacrifice, and argues that

since Paul, each age has tended to favour one or other of these metaphors to convey its meaning in terms of its own peculiar cultural situation.

The metaphor of redemption says that man, by sin, had offended the infinite honour of God and incurred a guilt that was infinite. Appropriate satisfaction could be rendered only by the infinitely valuable death of the God-man, Jesus. This theory, which was taken as a literal truth by Anselm, the 12t~ century bishop of Canterbury, represented the culmination of juridical tendencies in Western theology. Incorporated into the synthesis of Aquinas, it became the standard Catholic as well as Protestant doctrine of redemption. Kung notes the defects: it presupposes a literal reading of the Genesis story of Adam & Eve and the first sin; it is a legalistic interpretation of man's restoration & friendship with God, which minimizes the importance of grace, mercy, and love; and it isolates Jesus' death on the cross from his message and life and resurrection.. Kung also suggests that the concept of expiatory sacrifice does not have all that importance in the New Testament itself and was intended only as a metaphor until taken up by the comparatively late Epistle to the Romans, and turned into an absolute theory. Its use is problematic today, when people have no experience of cultic sacrifice.

"What is the true religion?" – as related to the notion of "No salvation outside the Church."

Kung, for one, sees four basic positions:

1) No religion is true, or *all religions are equally untrue.* For historical and philosophical reasons, Kung finds this position untenable.

2) *Only one single religion is true* – or, *all other religions are untrue.* Acknowledges that this had been the traditional Catholic tradition. Fourth Lateran Council (1215): "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*!" (Outside the Church there is no salvation). Reiterated by the Council of Florence in 1442. Though later theologians like Bellarmine and Suarez recognized an unconscious "longing" for baptism and the Church as sufficient for salvation, it was only with Vatican II, that the traditional position was abandoned. Sees even non-Christian religions as ways to salvation. Perhaps not normal "orderly" ways, but perhaps "extraordinary" ways to salvation. The Catholic Church has formally expressed itself against a narrow-minded arrogant absolutism.

3) *Every religion is true* – or – *all religions are equally true.* ("Pluralism") Kung rejects this position. Distinguishes between objective religion (myths, symbols, doctrines, rites, & institutions) and subjective religion (religious experience), and argues that recourse to a fundamental religious (mystical) experience, supposedly the same everywhere, does not solve the problem of truth This is because religious experience never comes in isolation – it is always stamped by the religious tradition in questions and by its different expressive forms.

4) *Only one religion is true,* or *all religions have a share in the truth of the one religion.* This approach appears to characterize religions of Indian origin. A variety of this inclusivism can be found in Christianity – e.g., in Karl Rahner's theory of the

"anonymous Christian." Kung dislikes the theory because it is, in the final analysis, dependent on a Christian standpoint of superiority that sets up one's religion as the a priori true one. He asks, what serious Jew, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist would not feel the arrogance of the claim that he or she is an "anonymous Christian"?

Kung concludes that we cannot stop demanding tolerance and religious freedom, but at the same time there must be no betrayal of freedom for the sake of the truth. As Christians we are challenged to rethink the question of truth in the spirit of a freedom rooted in Christianity.

Perhaps the most influential pioneer to "pluralism" has been John Hick, the English Presbyterian, who taught at University of Birmingham for some 45 years, where he had regular contact with non-Christians, including Muslims and Sikhs. His position expressed in this quotation:

> If we define salvation as being accepted and forgiven by God because of Jesus' death, then it's obvious Christianity alone knows and offers the source of salvation. But if we define salvation as an actual human change, a gradual transformation from natural self-centeredness – then it seems that salvation is taking place within all the world's religions."

He calls a shift in thinking in this direction a kind of Copernican revolution in religious thought – from a Christ-centered universe to a God-centered perspective.

Robert McClory (a journalist), in an article in U.S. Catholic (September 2001), suggests that the common denominators of religious pluralism can be summed in a series of propositions:

Truth may be absolute in some transcendent sphere, but is partial, provisional, and elusive to the limited, mortal man. The divine reality is manifested in many religions because God's inexhaustible truth comes in many forms.

The Catholic Church does not mediate all salvation, either exclusively or inclusively. There are many saviours and many ways to ultimate union with God.

This sort of pluralism, of course, was pretty strongly condemned by *Dominus Jesus.* Needs no discussion here. McClory, suggests that DJ may ultimately be ignored. Cites a 1998 *Newsweek* poll, that showed only 17 percent of Catholics considered the conversion of non-Christians a "very important" matter, while 52 percent rated such conversion "not too important" or "not at all important." By contrast, 72 percent of evangelical Christians called the conversion of non-Christians "very important." He also notes the contrast between Ratzinger's DJ, and Pope John Paul II's constant journeying and calls for interreligious dialogue.