

Minutes

Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 12

Held on 23 June 2004, 2 to 6 pm
At the home of Henry and Cora Loewen, Winnipeg

All present except **Ardith Frey** and **Michelle Sala Pastora**

Henry Loewen welcomed us to his home, and **Helmut Harder** welcomed us to this session of our on-going dialogue.

Luis Melo explained that as a result of changes occurring at the Chancellory of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, **Michelle** has decided to withdraw from our group, and that she would not be attending the meeting.

Helmut, reflecting on the possible future of group, suggested that there might be a kind of “chapter ending” for us, perhaps after three or four sessions on “Called Together to be Peacemakers,” after which there should be a reassessment of our possible future, and at which point some members of the group may wish to withdraw. In the meantime, **Helmut** and **Luis** will consult about finding replacements for Ardith and Michelle.

Worship, led by **Richard Lebrun**

Personal Updates

Richard Lebrun reported briefly on attending English-language masses at a Catholic Church in Shanghai and on observing people worshipping at Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian temples. He also reported that he and his wife had attended a number of sessions of the Bat Kol movement at St. Paul’s College, and that he hoped to be involved in a Bat Kol group here in Winnipeg (starting in September). This group, centred in Jerusalem, studies the Bible (the Torah) in the same way that Jesus would have studied the Torah, a way that is used by Jews to this day.

Harold Jantz added a brief note on an ecumenical trip to China a few years ago (6 Catholics and 6 Protestants) and how the Christian Churches, (now thoroughly Chinese) were growing rapidly. He then reported that the House of Hesed (a shelter for men suffering from AIDS) has now moved into newly acquired and renovated premises (the Kelly House on Edmonton Street), and noted that support of the House has now been taken up by a Catholic group.

Elaine Pinto reported attendance at a Spiritual Directors conference in Miami Beach, where Fr. Richard Rohr was a featured speaker. She reported as well that 50 Jewish Spiritual Directors were also in attendance; there was workshop for Jewish participants given by a female rabbi.

Luis Melo reported on a number of his recent activities:

a) Attendance of the Summer Ecumenical Institute at CMU. The schedule included a

“denominational day” during which a Catholic network of directors of ecumenical activities was re-established. Luis was elected president of the group.

b) In the U.K., Luis gave a workshop on ecumenism to a group of English bishops and clergy.

c) In France Luis met with director of ecumenical relations of the French bishops conference; at Taize he arranged (on behalf of the Western Conference of Catholic Bishops) for some Taize representatives to come to Western Canada sometime in the future, and he also made his retreat. Luis noted that Taize has taken at its mission “spiritual ecumenism” (as opposed to ecumenical discussion), and that their “outside” ministry is to youth. Some 4,000 attended the service on Pentecost Sunday. In Paris Luis also visited a new experiment in “urban monasticism” involving professional men and women.

d) In Rome, Luis “reported” to the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity on our dialogue group in Winnipeg.

e) In the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, Luis attended a “deanery” meeting, and is trying to respond to requests voiced there for resources of interchurch families, resources that would go beyond designing appropriate marriage ceremonies to ordinary problems arising in family life.

f) Under the heading of “on the horizon,” Luis noted that on “Reformation Sunday” (October 31) there will be a fifth anniversary service in Winnipeg to mark the signing of the Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith, a visit by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and a fall meeting of the Canadian Council of Churches in Ottawa (which both he and Helmut will be attending).

Michael Radcliffe noted his regret at not being able to attend the Summer Ecumenical Institute at CMU, reporting that he had been busy that day explaining the role of deacons in the Mennonite Churches to U.S. immigration authorities. He also reported on his continuing involvement, now as a spiritual director, in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Adolf Ens also attended the Summer Ecumenical Institute, and has attended two meetings with United Church groups. The United Church people have been rather marginalized with respect to ecumenical dialogue activities. He also reported happenings at family gatherings, where a retired Mennonite Brethren minister spoke of his daughter’s baptism as a Catholic, a niece spoke of her marriage to an Anglican from England, and where there was discussion of the difficulty of designing a suitable marriage service for an Anglican-Mennonite marriage.

John Long also regretted missing the Summer Ecumenical Institute. He then described his involvement in professional meetings at Congress 2004 of the Federation of Social Sciences and the Humanities. He participated in a panel entitled “Against the Grain,” which involved the issue of promoting spirituality in the context of the secularism of the contemporary public school system. He also gave a paper (which will be published as

chapter of a forthcoming book on the issue of how to teach about spirituality in the context of the public school); John took the role of the “sympathetic skeptic”—arguing that growing Canadian acceptance of the American concept and practice of a strict separation of church and state makes this a difficult task.

Henry Loewen reported finding the Summer Ecumenical Institute a most encouraging experience. He was pleased to find no apparent opposition to the ecumenical endeavour. He described his experiences this spring of assisting his son in building a suitable backyard oven for the production of “artisan bread.” Among other things, this had involved a three-day workshop in the backyard of a Catholic family!

Elaine Baete regretted that a planned Passover Seder for St. Paul’s students had to be cancelled for lack of sufficient registrations. She reported that the chaplaincy service at St. Paul’s College has arranged for two Byzantine-rite liturgies at the College each year; she noted the great need to educate students about the variety of rites within Catholicism.

Helmut Harder reported on quite a number of activities:

- a) Singing the *Stabat Mater* in the Centennial Concert Hall with the Mennonite Festival Chorus. The program will be broadcast on CBC Radio 2 at 8 am, Sunday, June 27th.
- b) Our group’s presentation at Christ the King parish in February, which he felt had been very well received.
- c) A conference at Bose monastery in Northern Italy, attended by representatives of a number of denominations, at which there was discussion of moving churches to confess and honour martyrs of all denominations (a “cloud of witnesses”). Bose is interested in producing resource materials for this endeavour. He found the Bose community very interested in Anabaptist thought and spirituality.
- d) Attendance at the Summer Ecumenical Institute.
- e) Reading *The Da Vinci Code*.
- d) Participation in the funeral of his 90-year old mother in Ontario.
- f) Upcoming attendance a Mennonite Church Assembly in Winkler where Mennonite Church Canada will consider membership in the Canadian Council of Churches and in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.
- g) Planned participation in a “Martyr’s conference” and a Bridgefok conference at St. John’s Abbey in July.

Discussion of “Called Together to be Peacemakers”

1. Helmut Harder on Paragraphs 1–22

PREFACE

Para 1. The Report speaks of 5 sessions. Actually, for some of us, this amounted to 8 sessions, since a group from within the group continued to meet in 2003–2004 to finalize the Report.

Para 2. The first two paragraphs speak of this as a process of friendship and reconciliation. I can bear witness to the truth of this intention as well as the truth of this claim. A spirit of reconciliation was sustained throughout the week of meeting and throughout the 5 years of dialogue. I think it was not a romantic experience. There was confrontation, there was tension, there were moments of discouragement, there was impatience. But we never lost sight of the vision that inspired the dialogue. Nor did we ever entertain the thought of walking away from the table.

Para 7. There is an important reference in paragraph 7: The hope of the dialogue group is that the Report will be useful not only for dialogue of Mennonites with Mennonites and Catholics with Catholics, but also for conversation between Mennonites and Catholics who meet together for the purpose of promoting reconciliation between them for the sake of the Gospel.

INTRODUCTION

The Origin of These Conversations

Para 8–14 These paragraphs document the ways in which Mennonites and Catholics have begun to relate to one another at the global level. What needs also to be said is that at the regional and local levels there have been countless interchanges. For example, we have met each other for many years in the work of chaplaincy, development of educational institutions, in Biblical research, in academic theological dialogue, in graduate study classrooms, in relief work, in development work, etc., etc. The dialogue would not be possible if there were not some ownership of its importance on the local level. At the same time, we must also confess that some of the opposition to the dialogue has come from regional and local settings where relations between Mennonites and Catholics has not been good and where historic biases have been carried forward into the present.

Purpose, Scope, and Participants

Para 15. This paragraph speaks of the general purpose of the dialogue. It should be observed that while at the beginning and throughout the dialogue there was much reference to an overarching motivational theme of the dialogue, “Toward a Healing of Memories,” this receded into the background, and was upstaged by “Called Together to be Peacemakers.” Here we see a shift from an inner-centred concern to a missional

concern. At the same time, that does not mean that “healing of memories” disappeared from the table. As we will see, particularly Sections I highlights the exploration of ‘memories,’ and Section III focuses in large part on healing differences.

Para 16 – 17. Show and Tell—the papers

Para 18–21. The nature of the group was characterized by 1) international representation, 2) persons with a rich and varied background of experience, and by 3) stability, i.e. for the most part, the 14 people stayed with the dialogue for the duration. On the one hand, this may have limited the breadth of influence, on the other hand, the group of 14 was able in my view to incarnate a message about reconciliation that will hopefully provide a witness and an inspiration for the refreshing winds of the Holy Spirit to blow into our midst in a 1000 places.

Para 22 In each place where we met, we experienced wider community!

2. Luis Melo on paragraphs 23–26

This section is the introduction to Part I, “Considering History Together” and is entitled “A Shared Hermeneutic or Re-Reading of History Together.”

I. BACKGROUND: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Hermeneutics: historiography, theological key for analysis, method in self-understanding and presentation.

Implications and Assumptions: a “new situation” and “risk.”

Ecumenical Hermeneutics: Footnote 5; The Faith and Order Paper (182) of the World Council of Churches entitled *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* of 1998.

II. SUMMARY OF CONTENT: APPLICATION OF HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

Mennonites and Catholics can no longer be in discipleship in isolation (#23). Both Christian bodies are now in dialogue and the dynamics inherent in dialogue are at work.

Much hope is placed in the encounter of re-reading history together. It is hoped that this conversation will open up new vistas and horizons previously not seen or ignored. Two keys words are used to capture this reality: “incomplete” (#24) and “limited” (#25).

Ultimately, in this new horizon, what will be seen is twofold (#26): a common Christian heritage of tradition and the restoration/regaining of ecclesial experience that was lost/undervalued/ distorted during the period of non-contact.

This experience of common interpretation of the past has consequences for the life of discipleship in the future (#27). The ethical imperative is at work, calling individuals and communities to conversion. In effect, the mandate is in two directions: “liberation from

the past” and “freedom for common witness” in order to be “architects of love” where the eschaton is experienced in community for the life of the world (c. f. Jn. 13:34–35/Mt. 6:12).

Echoes of the Vatican’s *Memory and Reconciliation* of 1999: the call to take responsibility for the past in identifying hurts and limitations, the need for repentance and correction. Nothing less than a purification of memory is suggested (#28). The means or methods to arrive at this are rigorous historical and critical analysis (#29) so that the architects can build..., or rather ... reconstruct an environment, new way of thinking, conditions an establish a living dynamic.

111. CRITIQUE

It is important to remember that for the first 1,000 years of the Church’s existence, there were in fact many traditions (not just one).

The document does not discuss the instruments that will be needed to carry out its proposed program, e.g., for discussions at the local level. Who will do the corrections? How is “reception” to be organized? Questions relating to a “hermeneutic of confidence.”

3. Richard Lebrun on Paragraphs 30–37

Section B, paragraphs 30–37, on the religious situation of Western Europe on the eve of the Reformation.

30. Changes brought about by the growing power of the first modern states. Growing power and centralization brought inevitable conflicts with the Church over matters like ecclesiastical appointments, legal jurisdiction, and taxation.

31. Rise of early modern states also led to a decline in the consciousness of Christian unity—down from its “high point” at the time of the early Crusades. Also, changes in perceptions of papal authority as a consequence of the so-called “Babylonian captivity” of the Papacy in Avignon (1309–1377) and the so-called Great Western Schism (1378–1417).

32. Europe also experiencing massive social and economic changes: population growth (especially in urban centres) and economic expansion, but with a growing gap between the rich and the poor, contributing social unrest in both cities and rural areas.

33. Also a period of intellectual and cultural renewal—changes we associate with the “Renaissance” and “Humanism”). Involved the recovery and study of ancient classical literature—putting an emphasis on the human—the value and character of each individual human person. A “going back to the sources” not only of classical civilization, but also of Christianity—with the in-depth stuff of the Scriptures in Hebrew & Greek, and of the Church Fathers. Notes the somewhat different character of northern Humanism—with people like Erasmus & Thomas More using humanist techniques to promote piety & biblical studies vs. the more “secular” interests of the Italian humanists.

34. Religious life at the end of the Middle Ages in fact flourishing (vs. old picture of crisis & decline). Both the Protestant Reform and the Catholic Reform stem from this late medieval religious vitality—which co-existed with abuses in popular religion, the ecclesiastical tax system, clerical absenteeism, etc.

345. Period saw a renewed emphasis on good preaching and religious education—especially among the urban middle classes. With the printing press—new translations of the Scriptures and lots of religious books and pamphlets. Lay movements such as the *Devotio Moderna*. Reform of many religious orders (e.g., branch of the Augustinians to which Martin Luther belonged).

36. Reform movements in the Church pre-dated Luther. Goals—to free the Christian community from worldliness—to return to the simplicity of N.T. Christianity. Ideals put forth that would eventually become common to the Protestant Reformation, the Radical Reformation, and the Catholic Reform.

37. Even the externalism, materialism, and superstition present in popular late medieval popular piety reflects strong desires for religious experience and a zeal for the sacred.

Reflections:

In reviewing the points made in these paragraphs of the document, I was reminded of the situation in France prior to the French Revolution, and the way the Old Regime has been pictured in popular French Republican historiography.

A kind of “myth” about the Old Regime—featuring poor down-trodden peasants and urban working people, backward-looking nobles, a Church in decline, etc. (similar to myths about a Church in crisis, desperately needing reform).

In fact, France was growing richer, its population growing, more people becoming literate and participating in the new literary culture of the Enlightenment. Many nobles in fact leaders in agricultural reform and the financing of new commercial and industrial enterprises. With respect to the Church, the Catholic Reformation in France had been largely successful. French Church in 1789 had the best educated clergy it had ever had, and lay people were better instructed in their religion than they had ever been. One of the reasons the clash over religion that occurred in the Revolution, over the ill-advised Civil Constitution of the Clergy, was so bitter.

In both cases (the religious revolution of the 16th century, and the political revolution of the late 18th century), it is very important for us to go beyond the “myths” about the old regime if we are to understand what happened, and its consequences for us today.

3. Henry Loewen on Paragraphs 38–40

While very impressed with the quality of the document as a whole, and with the quality of paragraphs 38–40, Henry wondered about the accuracy of the remark in footnote #1 of

the document to the effect that “Mennonites and Catholic do not share a common understanding of church.” He thought that perhaps this might be true officially, but that this has not been his experience, and it seemed to him that the Document was seeking a common understanding of “church.”

With respect to para. 38, Henry was particularly struck by the characterization of the sixteenth-century situation as having been “very confusing,” especially for leaders in church and state. It must have been a situation that created a great deal of anxiety, with many wondering how to share their convictions (bear witness) both within the church and outside. What did a “rediscovery” of the gospel mean at that time? With respect to para. 39, it appears that too many people on all sides resorted to condemnations of those who disagreed with them. Even today, condemnation is too often our response to situations of anxiety. Henry then cited Christ’s words in John 11:17: “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

5. Elaine Pinto on paragraphs 41–44

Sections 41–44: At first glance, the disparate ecclesial images in this section are obvious. From the Mennonite point of view, what could seemingly be more ruthless, than being killed because your way of understanding Scripture or the Church was other than the Persecutor’s way? For the Catholics, what could more intentionally show disregard for the things of God than to blatantly dispose of apostolic tradition, especially by people who were also politically outside the pale? And for both, what could be more conflicting theologically than infant baptism set firmly in the tradition of the church, rather than adult baptism recognized by a new people not subscribing to the ancient liturgy of the church?

Yet, as I tried to place myself within the struggle, I wondered if, in the way we experience church and society today, we might come closer than we think. The images pointing to a “blaming” are not in such sharp relief. Did not the Catholics and Protestants persecute the Anabaptists because they really were zealous to guard the *purity* of the Church of Christ against those who would so easily rewrite ancient dogma? If so, did the Catholics then view themselves as persecutors and killers of pious innocent people, or did they see themselves in the role as faithful gatekeepers of the Church of Christ? Moving from this, it is not a great leap to find Anabaptists having the same experience thinking in their own history. Even if we permit ourselves to sweep over the horrors and embarrassment of Munster, we can still identify the same zeal for *purity*, of God’s church in the Anabaptist tradition of shunning. Shunning, over the years inflicted another kind of death where the “sinners” had to continue existing within the church as though they were not alive, living and working in an atmosphere of rejection and being despised.

While the effects of physical death inflicted by the Catholics upon the Anabaptists may not be the same as psychological death the Anabaptists inflicted upon themselves, the reasoning behind them both was from a desire *for purity* in the church, and this could bring us closer together, albeit within a negative framework.

We might find a more life-giving inspiration in the issue of baptism. While we differ on the strict ontological meaning of baptism as an infant (that is that there is an imprint on the soul, and baptism makes an infant a child of God), we are very much one in the theology of the Catholic church that it is the parents who are bringing this child, and the parents who are committing themselves to teach the child the things of God. The expectation is that the child will confess their faith at the time of confirmation, as a result of being raised faithfully. Though not framed in dogma, Mennonites do something of the same nature in the dedication service of our newborns. The parents bring the little one up for the laying on of hands, for prayer, and blessing. They repeat a covenant, and the church stands and speaks their covenant also. The fervent hope is that each child then will confess Christ at baptism as a young adult. There is a desire of the heart, on the part of the parents for the children, and within that context, we pray, we teach, we baptize, and we yearn for God in the life of our child.

To illustrate this yearning, let me close with this example. I work as a chaplain in the Woman and Child program, and occasionally I get calls from people who experienced stillbirths or infant deaths years ago. A while ago, a Mennonite woman called me saying she had been in Winnipeg for holidays in 1978, and had given birth to a 24-week gestation baby. The baby had lived only hours, and died in the hospital, and the woman returned to her home in Calgary. Now she had moved back to Winnipeg and wanted to know where that baby was buried, and what had happened at the time of birth. Was there any way I could find out if there were any prayers, if anything was done around that birth? (Those were the days when grief work around infant loss was just being introduced, and usually the nurse wouldn't even let the mother see the baby, but just sweep it away, saying, "You've suffered enough").

I called up her old chart, and found that a Catholic nurse had baptized the baby, and recorded it in the chart. When I called the Mennonite patient back, I hedged a bit, trying to find out whether she would welcome the fact her baby had been baptized by a well-meaning Catholic nurse. When I thought the ground under me was secure, I told her her baby had been baptized. The news was met with deep gratitude. Someone here on earth had brought her little one before God while this mother was deep in pain, and likely sedated. Someone had not forgotten the most vulnerable little one. And it was important enough for her to search this out 25 years later. There was a yearning on her part for her child, that was met in the ritual of infant baptism.

That 24-week infant speaks to us today. Mennonites and Catholics can come together at a point of *yearning for God*. If also, we are helped by *the ideal of civil liberties and human rights* fostered today, and we listen and listen and listen to each other, perhaps we can reread the images of the religious/social/political climate of the time of the Reformation. Perhaps we can admit the true desire for God that lies behind our actions, and be united as Christians in this time of the history of the world.

6. Harold's reflections on paragraphs 45–48 (persecution and martyrdom)

Harold was taken with the way these paragraphs provide new perspectives and sense of proportion in dealing with old stories of martyrdom. Today, the stories are not to be

retold as in the past (when they were exaggerated). Catholics also had martyrs in this period. He also observed that there may be more martyrs in our own time than there were at the time of the Reformation, for example in the USSR, in the Congo, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. Martyrdom is a continuing story. He noted recent books on persecutions that Mennonites faced in Russia in the 19th century.

7. Elaine Baete's reflections on paragraphs 49–52: 1. Significant points from the paragraphs:

#49: Since each of our current *self-understandings* are the result of an evolutionary process of development(s) through different contexts and situations of history, a rearticulation of what has been lived, as far as is possible is necessary in order to come to a greater mutual and more collaborative or complimentary understanding of one another. Our respective self-understandings have historically been developed in a defensive manner, which is not the healthiest way to develop a self-understanding and identity.

#50: There is an awareness of the *complexity* of the challenge before us in meeting the previous point because of the “*polemics*” involved over the stretch of history from each of the faith perspectives, e.g. the different kinds of Anabaptists and Spiritualists, Rationalists, etc., but also from the Catholic perspective where, though not mentioned, there has been still varied understandings with tensions existing e.g. between “theory and praxis” especially in pastoral situations (no reference to this in the article).

#51: This content of this paragraph reminds us that we tend to select and make evident that part of respective faith histories which will be to our advantage, but to the detriment of the other. We are thus looking only at the “part” or “parts” and not the whole. Now we are being challenged to look at those parts of our histories that have been suppressed or repressed so as to promote our own agendas as far as the church is concerned. By doing so each faith perspective has removed from itself some of the “justified common elements of faith and its practice.”

#52: It would seem that RCs might have thought that they were the only Christians to have suffered martyrdom. Coming to the knowledge and understanding that other Christians have done so too, can prove how much our Christian faith really means life to us. There is more mutual experience in this area than is actually believed. All of us give honourable places to those who have given themselves for the faith as disciples of Jesus. We look to them for the human courage that we desire and implore the grace of God, which has its source in Jesus as they did.

Looking at these points (and the document as a whole) from an overall perspective, and because I have some training in “developmental psychology,” I was struck by the “developmental dynamics” of the thought and understanding of each regarding the “self-understanding” and the “mutual self-understanding of one another,” and how, after several centuries, there has finally been a point of coming to a maturation in relationship between Catholics and Mennonites just as a human person moves from infancy to greater maturity through turbulent adolescent periods. During these periods, the values may be actually be the same but they are not necessarily expressed in the same way. As greater

maturity sets in, there is greater openness to “dialogue” or converse about the differences. A reconstruction via narration of our histories, what has been included and excluded can be very therapeutic especially if done in a patient, reflective, and prayerful manner!

2. Does the content of these paragraphs move me to: joy ... repentance, to

It is with a sense of relief that I read of this need to work towards greater mutual understanding in faith as well as a consolation that it is being put into practice on local levels and international levels. There is still much work to be done however.

3. What is significant of these paragraphs for us as RCs and Mennonites regarding how we might initiate discussion between our churches?

What immediately comes to mind was something we had mentioned in the past about going to the local parishes and churches to initiate this discussion at the grassroots level. While we can “serve” them by providing a model the way we are doing this here and now, this will involve a lot of time and commitment on the local levels.

8. Adolf Ens’ reflections on paragraphs 53–57:

1. Significant items for Catholic-Mennonite dialogue:

Paragraphs 54 to 57 document that in the decades after the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church has “renounced any desire to have a predominant position in society and to be recognized as a state church.” And has “strenuously defended the principle of religious freedom and of the separation of church and state.” (56) Anabaptists in the 10th century, and some Mennonites until the present, have maintained the same position.

This raises at least two important issues in which our two groups and help each other to clearer understanding and more faithful action.

First, how do Christians, and how does the church, witness to and influence the state in helping it fulfill its mandate to be “God’s servant for your good” and “not bear the sword in vain” with respect to the wrongdoer. (Romans 13: 4) That is, what are appropriate *ways of communicating* with the state? Reasoned arguments? The power of the ballot box? Seeking to have Christians in the civil service and elected chambers in order to have an “outside” voice “within”?

Secondly, given our commitment to religious freedom and the state’s role in upholding it, what is the *content* of our witness? Can we expect the state to impose “Christian” conduct on people who are of other religious affiliation or on those who claim that freedom of religion also upholds freedom from religion? For example, we can urge the state to refrain from legislating a definition of marriage for religious bodies. That is, it should not force Christian churches to perform same sex marriages. But can we limit the definition that the state sets for legal marriage? That is, can faithful Christians (Catholic or Mennonite) support the state in legalizing same-sex marriage?

2. As part of a relatively small body of “free” churches (non-state churches *on principle*)

Mennonites have often felt the lack of a broader body of Christians with whom to think through issues and discover appropriate responses. Gaining the Catholic Church as partner in this is tremendously exciting.

3. The three short paragraphs that summarize the fruits of a quite thorough study of the Constantinian shift by the international dialogue group do not substitute for our group doing the study itself. I suspect that members of both of our groups would learn much about their own tradition and history as well as about an alternative way of reading the events of the past which would give us an understanding of the *other's* tradition.

9. Michael Radcliffe's reflections on paragraphs 58–62 (areas of future study)

Michael noted particularly the tension between the idea of religious freedom and the past practice of some Catholic missionary activities, and how missionaries had often taken away something of the traditions of peoples being evangelized. He referred in particular to relations with aboriginal peoples in Canada. He feels that this is an issue that still needs to be revisited.

10. John Long's reflections on paragraphs 63–64

John was very impressed with how these paragraphs called upon both Catholic and Mennonites to revisit their images of the Middle Ages, and urged both sides to see other aspects of this period than has been common in their traditional stories. With respect to paragraph 64, there is much to reflect upon with respect to the issue of force and violence,

11. Michele Sala Pastora's reflections on paragraphs 65–68 (Read for her in her absence.)

What speaks the loudest to me in this section:

1. “medieval Christians were in search of what the challenge of the gospel might mean for their way of living” / “one common objective: holy living in word and deed”

2. the medieval tradition of *discipleship*

3. a same catechetical basis : Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed & Ten Commandments Viewed as the essential elements of Christian knowledge.

#1 & 2 – In the present context, a call to an uncluttering of everything that is not essential. We need to go back there (the insights of the 16th century!). Too much energy and time is wasted on *peripheral* issues. It is perhaps also these peripheral issues that become stumbling blocks (where we get stuck) in ecumenical dialogue, but also within our respective churches. For me, there is HOPE because through discipleship—a living out as sons and daughters of the same Abba—our focus is where it should be and everything else becomes secondary. I believe that this is our common call—the holy living in word and deed—NOT preaching (word only). It is through discipleship that we will be His witnesses.

#3 – If these 3 elements were deemed essential way back then, I would like us to add a 4th for our times: the Beatitudes. Somehow the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments strike me as being “out there”. The Beatitudes on the other hand comes from within—a type of code for those who are *living out* the discipleship.

Suggestions for the Catholic Mennonite dialogue or other ecumenical encounters:

- A retreat on the Beatitudes
- The Beatitudes as the theme for one of the dialogues. (With same format as has been used all along)
- Putting flesh on “discipleship.” What concretely does it mean to each one of us?

In the discussion following the reading of Michele’s reflections, **John** suggested that studying of the Beatitudes together might be a worthwhile activity for our Catholic-Mennonite dialogue, as well as studying together medieval traditions of spirituality. As an example, he cited a text he had prepared on Franciscan spirituality and observed how closely Francis tried to follow the gospel. In effect, the living the Beatitudes means living the life of Christ. Francis was a human exemplar of Christ. **Helmut** reminded us that terms like the “middle ages” are a modern (Enlightenment) invention.

Harold wondered if the group that produced the text under discussion had explored the role of “biblicism” at the time of the 16th-century reformers. **Luis** observed that the late middle ages had seen a great revival of preaching, and that this was a communal experience of Bible study. This raised the question of who becomes the interpreter of Scripture. Church authorities at the time feared individualism with respect to this issue. **Adolf** pointed out that at first there was no tradition from which to interpret Scripture, and described the difficulties that Luther encountered in this area.

Planning for future sessions

After some discussion, it was agreed that the next session (of 2 or 3 more sessions to cover the remainder of “Called Together to be Peacemakers”) should be on paragraphs 69 through 144. The next session was scheduled for 4 to 9 on Thursday, 19 October, most likely at St. John Brebeuf Parish, with the Catholic participants to be responsible for the meal. **Helmut** and **Luis** will coordinate the details for the session.

The session closed with a wonderful meal prepared by **Cora Loewen**.