

## Minutes

### **Winnipeg Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, Meeting No. 15**

Meeting held on 25 May 2005  
at St. Ignatius Parish Adult Education Centre

Present: Elaine Baete, Adolf Ens, Irma Fast Dueck, Harold Jantz, Helmut Harder, Richard Lebrun, Henry Loewen, John Long, Luis Melo, Elaine Pinto, Michael Radcliffe, Linda Trenholm, and guest Brian Butcher.

Regrets: Elaine Pinto

1. **Helmut Harder** began the meeting by thanking Michael Radcliffe for making the arrangements to have our meeting at St. Ignatius. Richard Lebrun introduced his grandson, Brian Butcher, who attended the meeting as a guest.
2. Sharing recent ecumenical experiences.
  - a) **Luis Melo** reported on:
    - i) The WDEDCE conference in Edmonton that (as president) he had planned in mid-February on "Catholic-Evangelical Relations." This meeting brought together about 25 directors of ecumenism.
    - ii) The document on "Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ," which brings to an end the mandate of ARCIC II (the official RC-Anglican international dialogue).
    - iii) Attendance at the national Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in Montreal just before the conclave.With respect to the transition of leadership in the Church, Luis commented on the significance of the presence of ecumenical and interfaith leaders at the funeral of John Paul II, and the fact that Brother Roger Schultz (founder of Taizé and a non-Catholic) was first in line to receive Holy Communion at the hands of Cardinal Ratzinger. Luis thought this was the fruit of the contact, friendship, and commitment to ecumenism of the late pope's pontificate and in the Church since Vatican II.
  - b) **Mike Radcliffe** reported attending a Catholic ecumenical meeting with Robert Polz of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, completing his work with two Mennonites who had been following the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises under his direction, and spending two weeks in Russia (with his son) where he was very impressed with the beauty of the Orthodox liturgy, and came to appreciate the way in which the Orthodox venerate icons.
  - c) **Elaine Pinto** thanked the group for the support she had received from everyone on the occasion of her mother's passing. She reported her continuing work at St. Benedict's Monastery, in which she recently had the opportunity to reflect on the Rule of St.

Benedict, and the way the rule relates to holy living. Reflecting on the way St. Benedict became a kind of pastor to Europe, she thought it significant the new pope has chosen the name Benedict.

- d) **Lynda Trenholm**, after following media coverage of the death and funeral of John Paul II, and of the conclave, was not totally surprised by the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as the new pope, reflecting that we must put faith in the Holy Spirit.
- e) **Harold Jantz** reported that in his continuing work with the paper *The Christian Week* he had published a eulogy of Pope John Paul II and that he continues to work with New Directions For Life Ministries of Winnipeg, which sponsors the House of Hesed (which provides care for persons with HIV/AIDS).

Harold reported being greatly impressed with the homily that Pope Benedict XVI gave at his installation, and with what he had to say about the patience of God—to the effect that the world, destroyed by the impatience of men, is saved and redeemed by the patience of God.
- f) **Elaine Baete** found that she was not surprised by the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as the new pope. She reflected on his initiatives for ecumenical dialogue. She said she believed in hope, so that results of the papal election does not shake her faith.
- g) **Helmut Harder** reported attending an ecumenical Ascension service at the McIver Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church in North Kildonan.

With respect to recent events in Rome, Helmut regretted the tone of many comments prejudging Cardinal Ratzinger as he takes on his new role as Pope Benedict XVI. He thought that Mennonites should pray for the success of his efforts, particularly with respect to ecumenical endeavors. Helmut reported writing a eulogy for Pope John Paul II for the Canadian Mennonite.
- h) **Irma Fast Dueck** reported just returning to Winnipeg after a five-week absence. She had completed her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and accompanied a chamber choir on a tour. She described an experience with the choir at a Reform church in Tillsonburg, ON, where the choir was asked to lead an improvised performance of Handel's Hallelujah chorus.

Irma described leading a workshop at the St. Benedict Retreat Centre while Pope John Paul II was dying and praying for the pope. She found herself moved to tears watching television coverage of the pope's funeral and subsequent events. She was touched by the diversity of those coming together in dignity despite their differences.
- i) **Adolf Ens** described attending a Catholic service in Alberta after the death of John Paul II and appreciating the priest's homily, which touched on the assassination attempt on the pope, and his subsequent forgiveness of the would-be assassin. Adolf reflect that this sort of forgiveness is what the Church stands for.

- j) **John Long's** ecumenical activities still include participation in the LARC (Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic) dialogue. He attended (with **Luis Melo**) a conference of coordinators of ecumenism from Western Canada, where he was impressed by a talk by a Christian Reform theologian. He also made a report to the national council of secular Franciscans on the status of efforts to create "associates" who would not need to become Catholic to participate.

With respect to the new pope, John thought it important that we not judge him too soon. He is confident the emphasis on ecumenism will continue and predicted that the new pope will attend to things like reform of the curia.

- k) **Richard Lebrun** said it did not have much to report in the way of ecumenical activities, though he had attended a Western Canadian Stewardship Conference, where the speakers included a Lutheran woman.

With respect to the new pope, he admitted that Cardinal Ratzinger had not been his favorite candidate, and while he hoped the Holy Spirit had been involved, it struck him that the conservatives were much better organized than the liberals. He recounted two anecdotes he had picked up on the Internet that he thought revealed very positive characteristics of the new pope.

- l) **Brian Butcher**, as an Eastern-rite Catholic, was very impressed by the inclusion of Eastern-rite elements in the liturgies associated with the recent events in Rome, which he thinks a signal that new pope will be a bridge-builder to the Eastern churches. He feels that Pope Benedict XVI will preserve tradition and be faithful to the reforms of Vatican II, all of which will help reconciliation with the Eastern churches. As a close collaborator of John Paul II, Pope Benedict will give the Church time to settle and assimilate the changes brought about by the late pope.

- m) **Henry Loewen** commented that he was very struck with his own interest in the events associated with the transition in Rome, suggesting that this would not have been the case before his involvement in our dialogue group. He hopes for the continuation of ecumenical dialogues begun under John Paul II.

Henry then described a "discernment" process that is now used instead of "election" to fill various roles in his own congregation. When a role or office needs to be filled, after a suitable name comes up, two persons are sent to meet with the person named to ask that person to take on the office and to converse with the person what it is that is being asked and what the hopes are with respect to this person's possible contribution to the congregation. Henry thinks that this is an important way to be church.

3. **Discussion of assigned paragraphs of "Called to be Peacemakers."** Participants were all asked to read paragraphs 145–189 of the document, and to take the following directions into account: "Highlight a few significant points in your assigned paragraphs. Offer your reflections on the points. What is significant for *your* tradition? What should have been said, but wasn't? Any new learnings? What questions remain for you?"

A) Paragraphs 147–152. **Helmut Harder** prefaced his comments on these paragraphs by reporting:

- 1) an email describing a development in Columbia where one consequence of the publication of *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, there was a gathering involving the Catholic Episcopal Conference and three different Mennonite groups (the Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren Church, and the Hermandad en Cristo in Columbia, members of the Mennonite World Conference). This is remarkable given the past history of Catholic hostility towards Mennonite activity in that country.
- 2) that because of circumstances, it was Drew Christianson, the Catholic representative, who was largely responsible for drafting this whole section of *Called Together to be Peacemakers*.

With respect to the paragraphs in question, Helmut offered the following commentary:

On para. 147. I appreciate the Catholic Church's foundation for peace, namely the Church herself as "a sacrament of intimate union with God and the unity of mankind (*Lumen gentium*, 1, 4, 9, and 13.) This leads to the claim (view) that the Church's own universality contributes to the reconciliation of the human family (*Lumen gentium*, 1, 9, 13)

But this definition and claim also evokes a paradox. The claim to unity of the Catholic Church is an exclusive claim, not inclusive. It excludes other churches from full fellowship, from unconditional recognition as churches. And in this way it contributes to irreconciliation rather than reconciliation.

On Para. 148. It is to the credit of the Catholic Church, that it is reflecting critically on this situation and looking at it. This paragraph says that unity and love apply universally to all human relations—to be "found at all levels of human society."

On Para. 149. The growth of interdependence across the world in the human family is "a force that can contribute to peace." But the question arises: What is the essential relationship between the goal of peace for all humanity and the goal of peace for the church? On the first level, we can imagine *inclusion*, but on the second level, *exclusion*. "The goal of peace, so desired by everyone, will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unit."

On Para. 150. A question for information: Do Catholic Christians see it as their task to nurture the way of peace among Christians other than Catholics?

On Para. 153. As I read 152, there is no room for the so-called JUST WAR!

In the discussion that followed **Mike Radcliffe**, with respect to table exclusivity, reported that at the “wrap up” liturgy at St. Ignatius at the conclusion of the year’s activities in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises program, all present (including non-Catholics), were invited to receive Communion.

B) Paragraphs 153–159. **Richard Lebrun** offered the following comments:

1. These paragraphs provide a good summary of contemporary Catholic teaching on the issue of Peacemaking.
2. I found it interesting that it is only in the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph of this section (paragraph 157) that one finds Scriptural references (to Rom 12:14–21 and 1 Thess 5:14). The other references are all to papal encyclicals and other papal documents from the time of Pope John XXIII (*Pacem in Terris*) and later, and to documents of the Second Vatican Council. This is in contrast to paragraphs 162–171 on “Mennonite Perspectives on Peace” which contain an abundance of Scriptural references. This contrast in style of documentation between our two communities is something that we have noted before. [**Luis** pointed out later that relevant Scriptural references had been provided in paragraph 145, on common commitment to peacemaking.]
3. Despite this difference in approach, the fundamental stance of the Catholic theology of peace, with its focus on resolving the causes of conflict and building the conditions for lasting peace, seem to me to quite consonant with what I know of the Mennonite stance. The four components of contemporary Catholic emphasis that are mentioned: 1) “promotion and protection of human rights,” 2) “advancing integral human development,” 3) “supporting international law and international organizations,” and 4) “building solidarity between peoples and nations,” do not appear to contradict contemporary Mennonite perspectives on peace in any significant way. As the references to recent papal statements and to the documents of Vatican II demonstrate, a solid official Catholic commitment to peace and peacemaking can no longer be in doubt.
4. If there is a problem, it is one of credibility, given the long history (since the “Constantinian revolution”) of collaboration between the Catholic hierarchy and secular rulers, the Church’s role in instigating and supporting religious wars (I am thinking of the Crusades), the Church’s use of coercion in religious matters (here I have the Inquisition in mind), and a tradition dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century of invoking political authority to try to ensure religious unity. It is significant that the document observes that “Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has sought to view war ‘with a whole new attitude.’” (Paragraph 156, citing *Gaudium et spes*, from which the phrase “whole new attitude” is taken.) However, papal and conciliar documents are one thing, and popular Catholic attitudes are another. I can’t help but be struck by the contrast between Pope John Paul II’s condemnation of the American invasion of Iraq,

and the general support that American Catholics, from their bishops on down, have given the rationale and actions of the Bush administration in its “war on terrorism.”

5. At the same time, in paragraph 154, the document emphasizes that the peace activities of Catholics have been and continue to be characterized by both top down actions (papal and conciliar teaching) and the work of many different Catholic groups at many levels (often predominately lay), such as *Caritas* on the international scene and *Development and Peace* here in Canada. One can hope for widening, deepening, and extension of these activities, and the involvement of more Catholics in these initiatives. The creation of the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at St. Paul’s College provides a wonderful example of what can be done. It is, of course, significant, that the Mauro Centre is working closely with Mennonite colleagues at Menno Simons College of the University of Winnipeg and Canadian Mennonite University.
6. I am also greatly heartened by the developments in Catholic theology highlighted in these paragraphs, especially by recent evolution in Catholic teaching with respect to the criteria for a “Just War.” Yet it also seems apparent to me that Catholics still have a lot to learn from our Mennonite sisters and brothers about what it means to be members of a “peace church.”

In the **discussion** that followed, **Irma Fast Dueck** wondered about what had caused this shift in Catholic thinking about war and peace. **Richard** suggested that part of it was probably the experience of WWII. **Luis Melo** related the change to the Second Vatican Council and the pastoral thrust of its documents and its stimulation of thinking about what it means to be church. **Harold Jantz** gave a lot of credit to John Paul II, in particular to this wonderful response to the situation in Poland, where he was so instrumental in achieving a peaceful solution of the problem of the Communist regime, and to the fact that in the contemporary world the conditions for “just war” have become impossible. **Adolf Ens** reflected on role of believers in working for law and order in society (which at times may require Christians to use violence, as in police work).

C) Paragraphs 160–161. **Lynda Trenholm** offered the following comments:

Before entering into the assignment, I reflected on the theme of the evening, “Our Commitment to Peace.” Firstly, I substituted the word “our” with the word “my.” I firmly believe that in order for us (Catholics, Mennonites) to make a commitment to peace, it requires a personal commitment. Since my spirituality and prayer life are rooted in song, the words of Sy Miller and Jill Jackson’s song “Let There Be Peace on Earth” and “The Prayer of St. Francis” kept surfacing. In both of these songs the emphasis is on the individual; “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me” and “Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.” The question that I kept pondering is how can I make that commitment? What can I do? How can one person bring about peace in our world? The task seems monumental! However if one

reflects upon the lives of the many individuals, maybe the task is not so gargantuan, not so impossible, even for one person. Some people that came to mind were Gandhi, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, Maximilian Kolbe, and Pope John Paul II, to name only a few. The words from Matthew's gospel resonated in my mind "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt.5:9) Certainly, these individuals were children of God. They were peacemakers who strived to make their world a better place—a more peaceful place. They witnessed many atrocities in their lives, which made their quest for peace and justice even more crucial. Their lives were fraught with sacrifice and suffering, yet they never gave up. Why? They looked to God for strength and courage. They reflected on the life and death of Christ. "Meek and humble of heart," Jesus did not wish to be a political Messiah who would dominate by force but preferred to be call himself the Son of Man who came to serve, and to give his life as "a ransom for many." These individuals emulated the nonviolent life of Christ. Certainly, for most of them, their religious freedom was threatened at one time or another. However, this did not deter them from their call to be peacemakers. They continued to evangelize, to preach the Gospel with conviction, but without the use of force. They were bearers of peace, not arms, just as Jesus was. Often, I try to imagine what Jesus would say if he suddenly appeared before me at this very moment. So I invite you, at this very moment, to contemplate what the first words out of the mouth of Jesus would be, if he came among us, here and now. I have a strong feeling that they would be "Peace, be with you", "Shalom." Perhaps, if we greeted every person we meet with these words, the world would be more peace-filled, more Christ-like.

Now some of my thoughts on paragraphs 160 and 161: *Religious Freedom and History, Eschatology, and Human Achievement.*

#### Paragraphs 160 – *Religious Freedom*

The following three statements touched me profoundly as I read them.

"Today the Catholic Church repudiates the use of force in the name of the Gospel and upholds freedom of conscience in matters of religion."

"Catholics affirm freedom of religion for all and repudiate the use of coercion in the spread of the Gospel."

Certainly, these two statements are extremely powerful and worthy of praise and gratitude in my mind. However, the next statement indicates that this has not always been the case.

"The Catholic Church repents of offenses committed "In the name of Truth" in past centuries by officials' use of the civil arm to suppress religious dissent, and she begs God's forgiveness for these violations."

In the case of the first two statements, I believe that they are true. However, in my experience as a lay ecclesial minister working in the Catholic Church, I know that there are still instances of force and coercion used in the name of the Gospel among lay people and the clergy. I am always amazed at the phone calls I receive asking me if it's true that someone has to become a Catholic in order to marry a Catholic in the church. Or another question might be, I'm married to a Catholic, do I have to become a Catholic in order to have our child baptized? Largely, these questions are asked out of ignorance, but at times they are being coerced by well meaning relatives because they have been taught that the Catholic faith is the only, one true religion. This tells me that there is still much work to be done in terms of evangelization. Certainly, I have found myself apologizing on behalf of the Church for past hurts and misunderstandings. In other words, I find myself trying to be that "channel of peace" that the Prayer of St. Francis calls all of us to be.

The third statement, while it saddened me, demonstrated that we are a very human church, capable of sin, and still much in need of forgiveness. I call to mind the great injustices done by the Church in "the name of truth" e.g. to the people of the First Nations of Canada, the Spanish Inquisition. In addition, on a more personal note, I was reminded of the great courage of my Polish grandfather, Karol Baran, who fought in four different armies during the First World War. He was a devout Roman Catholic who did not believe in war, yet he was forced to fight for his freedom to protect his family. At the end of the war, he really did not know to which country he belonged. He was offered a chance to come to Canada and he took it. He came on his own and sent for his family five years later. My grandfather never saw his parents or his homeland again. His father had been blinded in an accident and was not allowed to come to Canada. I can only imagine the hardships that the family endured when they arrived in Canada in 1929, just in time for the Great Depression. However, he was forever grateful to be a Canadian and to be able to practice his faith in freedom.

#### Paragraph 161 – *History, Eschatology and Human Achievement*

The two statements that struck me the most were the following:

"Catholics believe that human achievement of very sort, particularly the achievements of a political society that contributes to a greater measure of justice and peace in the world, prepares humanity "to share in the fullness which "dwells in the Lord."

"At the same time sin, which is always attempting to trap us and which jeopardizes our human achievements, is conquered and redeemed by the reconciliation accomplished by Christ."

The first statement reminds me of Canada's Prime Minister at the time, Jean Chretien's decision for Canada not to enter into war with Iraq. Certainly, Canadians were not popular with the United States, Britain and other nations after this decision was made. However, I believe that Chretien's decision was well-founded. We elected to be

peacemakers rather than to take up arms which I believe better serves to achieve justice and peace.

The second statement, once again for me, speaks of our human frailty and our occasion to sin in spite of our human achievements. Indeed we are in constant need of reconciliation which can only be accomplished through our relationship with Christ. It is in only in Christ that sin can be eradicated. He is our Lord, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. It is only in Christ that peace will be attained. We must be ever mindful of his words, so beautifully expressed in the words of the song by Gregory Norbert, a Benedictine monk of the Western Priory. “Peace I leave with you, my friends, peace the world cannot give. Peace I leave with you, my friends, so that your joy be ever full.” May such peace reign in our hearts as we go out into the world to love and serve the Lord.

**In the discussion** that followed, **Helmut** commented that we are all challenged at the grass roots—you with the people you touch are the discerning group. **Harold** reflected on John Paul II’s emphasis on evangelization, on “teaching” as the core truth of the church, and on his ability to build bridges and yet still hold strongly to his “truth.”

D) Paragraphs 162–164. **Luis Melo** offered the following commentary:

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This is an introductory section and builds on a common commitment to peace that is grounded in the Bible and outlined in #145.

#### II. COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS

The basis of the Mennonite commitment to peace is the person of Christ. This is expressed in a succinct opening statement that reveals Christ as the love of God to which all creation tends and from which all of life flows:

“The love of God as revealed in creation, in God’s story with his people, and in the life and message of Jesus Christ” (#162).

In other words, Christ is at the centre of all of history as the *alpha* and *omega*. In His person is the definitive expression of “God’s peaceable kingdom.”

“He is our peace, who has made both [Gentile and Jew] one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14). In Christ we see that God love is radical, loving even the enemy. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the sign and victory of the way of Jesus. Salvation and ethics are based and by the way of Jesus.” (#163)

Discipleship involves a radical response of to follow in the way of the Jesus. A strong emphasis is placed on the ecclesial nature of witnessing to peace.

“The peace church places this conviction at the centers of its faith and life, its teaching, worship, ministry, practice, calling Jesus Lord and following him in his nonresistance and nonviolent way.” (#164)

### *III. OTHER OBSERVATIONS*

#### *Individual-Corporate Dimension of Being a Peace Church*

A leap is made from the testimony of Scripture to that of the Church (cf. #164). This reveals the strong corporate dimension in the witness to peace among Mennonites. A presentation of the role of the individual in this witness, although never denied, by contrast, remains underdeveloped. Implicitly, it may be recognized in the statement linking justice with the work of peace:

“*Shalom* expresses well-being, wholeness, and the harmony and right relationships.” (#162)

The Catholic tradition seems ready to explore the pastoral reality of the individual and/or the issue of “exception” to the ecclesial stance. Perhaps this is where the divergences between both churches exist.

#### *Relationship between Peace and Justice*

Both are intrinsically linked, as reflected in the statement:

“Justice is the inseparable companion of peace, as the prophets testify: ‘and the effect of justice will be peace and the result of righteousness quietness and trust forever.’ (Is 32:17).”

Is possible to consider any kind of “ordering” or “prioritizing” when working for peace? Especially in the place of “human rights” in peace-making?

#### *Theological Reflection on the Value of Non-Ecclesial Realities to Promote Peace*

This is unexplored in this section and is developed later in the document (cf. #187).

Can the fact that Jesus himself is understood as the representing “God’s reign in person” has having social—or even—political terms (i.e. a liberationist *praxis* integral to counteracting a “quietist” interpretation of the cross)?

The Mennonite position clearly makes peace part of all of life, yet, could the discourse on peace be helped by placing it in a larger context implicitly recognized in the love of God in creation in #162.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In German *friede* (peace) is closely related to etymologically to *freiheit* (freedom) and *freude* (joy). In English, from the Latin root of the word peace, *pax*, comes also the word *pact*. Peace, signifies the interconnection of the conditions of life in which human existence and living with other can flourish in every respect. Theologically, peace, in this sense is a gift of God and is thus the quintessence of salvation. [cf. Georg Langemeyer, "Peace" *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. W. Beinert and F. Schussler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 2000), p. 521–523].

**In the discussion** that followed, **Helmut** referenced comments by Andrea Lange and referred to the fact that not one German Mennonite took a pacifist position during WWII. **Harold** found the document's description of the Mennonite perspective on peace problematic, and didn't think it reflected the way Mennonites articulate their peace position. They would start with emphasizing that Jesus taught us to love our enemies, and that Jesus as Christ did not bring reconciliation between God and ourselves, but an opportunity for us to reconcile to ourselves and then to be reconciled with others. We won't be Christs, who has once and for all done what had to be done.

E) Paragraphs 165–167. **Adolf Ens** offered the following commentary:

1. Christology is central to a Mennonite understanding of the peace imperative. Although the report seeks to describe the Christological basis in somewhat Trinitarian terminology (par. 162), these three paragraphs are centred in Sermon on the Mount teaching and an ethical understanding of discipleship.
2. Nonresistance (Mt. 5:39) is the preferred "theological" term in Mennonite peace teaching. "Conscientious objection" to war has more recently entered our vocabulary because it is the language of the state in dealing with those who cannot in good conscience participate in the state's violence when it goes to war. (par. 165)
3. The Christological basis of Mennonite peace theology understands Jesus to have taught the way of non-retaliation and forgiveness as the path of reconciliation. In his suffering and death on the cross and in his explicit praying for forgiveness for his "enemies," he practiced that teaching to the end. St. Paul interpreted this as: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." (1 Cor 5:19). Forgiving love was demonstrated and practiced as the alternative to retaliatory violence. (par. 167)
4. Jesus' call to "take up our cross and follow him" has a prominent place in Mennonite teaching of what is involved in being Christian (par. 166). Viewing Jesus' death as primarily a "substitutionary atonement" seemed a rejection of Jesus' call to discipleship (following). Like most of Jesus' teaching, this call to "take up one's cross" was also understood with a strongly practical, ethical dimension.
5. The Christological emphasis has been criticized by some (esp. Protestant theologians) as too one-sided, or not sufficiently Trinitarian. Mennonites have been

seen as placing too much emphasis on the NT at the expense of the OT. Some have seen this as leading to an insufficient emphasis on justice.

6. The use of the term “nonresistance” has been criticized as being negative (doing nothing, too passive), or as a withdrawal from the affairs of human society, of not being “responsible” citizens. The Catholic sociologist, E.K. Francis, chose *In Search of Utopia* (avoiding the “real” world?) as the title of his 1955 study of the Mennonites in Manitoba.

7. The strong ethical emphasis in Mennonite theology has been criticized (esp. by Protestant theologians) as leading to a “low” Christology. That is, taking the call to follow Christ literally was seen as presumptuous (bringing us “up” to the level of Christ) and possibly even as blasphemous (bringing Christ “down” to our human, sinful level). Christ saved sinful humanity by his “otherness” (not a follow-able similarity); Christ died *instead* of us, so that we could not be something like fellow cross-bearers. Anabaptists responded with Col. 1:24 and similar texts.

8. Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of peace (nonresistance) led to a separation of the church from the state (par. 165). That in turn led to an inclination toward a variation of Luther’s two-kingdom understanding. There was thus an ambivalence about how the *state* should be “the servant of God to execute wrath his on the wrongdoer.” (Rom 13:4 RSV) The temptation to a problematic dual ethic was (and is) therefore real. (cf. par. 152)

**In the discussion** that followed, **Mike** asked, do not Mennonite look to the state for protection? **Adolf** suggested that the early Anabaptists were quite ready to withdraw and live outside the protection of the state. **Irma** noted an ambivalence among Mennonites about things like service in the police, jury duty, and the paying of taxes. **Adolf** thought there might be a lack of imagination with respect to thinking of other ways of doing things. **Helmut** thought that there was nothing wrong with living with ambiguity.

F) Paragraphs 168–171. **Irma Fast Dueck** offered the following commentary:

Paragraph 168: “reconciliation reflected in all aspects of the church’s life”

– Yes, I think this is true but how that reconciliation has been lived has been rocky in our history. We’ve come from a “pure church, without spot or wrinkle tradition” where in an attempt to maintain the purity of the church it was to shut out all that was “impure”. I have just come from Ontario where I was asked to give a background to the Amish and Old Order Mennonite traditions found there. Thirty different versions of Amish in PA all separating around some technological issue (e.g. zippers, black bumpers, etc.). E.g. same from Mountain Lake, MN. Two Mennonite churches, same denominational group just a few blocks apart and both churches empty but they refuse to worship together because of some past memory of a church conflict which forced the churches to split. Not quite the same in Manitoba but still have a number of different Mennonite groups here. I think the Mennonite peace witness to the world has been strong and good (paragraph 169) but they haven’t done as well at working at

the issues from within the congregations. Too often, going our own way as seen as “conflict resolution.” I have been impressed that the Catholic tradition has been able to tolerate such a diversity within the church. What can we learn from you?

– The “binding and loosing” (church discipline) practice has resulted in some legalism and harsh judgmentalism, so much so that now churches have all but abandoned it. What does accountability mean for our time? Just because we came from some poor practices of “binding and loosing” (Mt. 18) does that mean we should abandon it altogether (just because some marriages end in divorce, should we do away with marriage?).

– How do we create a culture of peace in the church? We have often defined ourselves as primarily “NON – something” (“non-violent” or “non-resistance” or “non-conformity” – “non-Mennonite”?) and in so doing privilege that which we’re against (i.e. violence, etc.). How do we develop a more positive and hopeful vision based not on what we’re against but on a vision for peace, the coming kingdom and the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Paragraph 170. The struggle between “non-resistance” and “non-violence direct action”

– While few would argue against the centrality of “discipleship” and following Jesus in an Anabaptist Mennonite understanding of ethics and the church, the nature and meaning of discipleship has been a source of debate, particularly around the nature of discipleship/peacemaking and responsibility.

– At least two strands emerge: for some the emphasis is primarily on the church as a body of believers who commit themselves to following Christ (*Nachfolge Christi*). This understanding of the church follows the early Anabaptists who emphasized the separation of Christians from the “world of sin” in order to live a life of love and nonresistance consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Mennonite theologians such as Harold Bender, Guy Hershberger, and John Howard Yoder, have focused on the moral agency of the church with particular emphasis not on how to change the world and make it a better place but rather on how to follow Jesus. For these the question for the disciple peacemaker is not how to change the world but how to be like Jesus; it is not how to be ‘responsible’ but how to follow.” Just as Jesus gave up control over the world by his death on the cross, so Christians must renounce responsibility for and control over the world. It is God who changes history and has ultimate responsibility for the world. Like Jesus, disciples are also willing to die rather than resist evil violently.

– The other strand focuses more on Christian responsibility for the world. Theologians such as Ron Sider, Gordon Kaufman, and J. Lawrence Burkholder have emphasized discipleship as implying responsibility to the world through demonstrating the transforming love of God. Some coming from this perspective have emphasized non-violent direct action as a way of actively responding to the violence of the world and bringing about change.

Paragraph 171. *More with Less Cookbook*, characterizes this call to simplicity, and is

another kind of embodied Mennonite “Confession of Faith.” As long as Mennonites have had to live in relative poverty the claims of simple living have not been difficult to live or promote. However a new economic reality has emerged for many Mennonites and these practices are challenged to the very core.

**In the discussion** that followed, **John Long** suggested that the negative connotations of the term “non-violence” might be countered by something like “active, peaceful resistance to evil.” **Helmut** noted that in German, the term *Wehrlosigkeit*, which means something like being without military arms, can be used. There was also mention of the issue of “perfectionism” vs. human frailty.

At this point there was a **meal break**, and **Luis Melo** excused himself because of a prior commitment.

G) Paragraphs 172–182. **Henry Loewen** offered the following reflections on these paragraphs:

Reflecting on these paragraphs on “convergence” led Henry to wonder why we find it so easy to separate, to go our own ways? He cited Judges 17:6 “in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” There is such a long history of disunity and separation. Many separations seem superficial. Convergence speaks to our need for unity, to be one.

Unity should be centered in Christology, and we should never lose our commitment to unity.

Henry told a couple of anecdotes to make this point. He observed that Mennonites have often been divided over the proper form for baptism, as to whether it should be by immersion, pouring, etc. If we are committed to unity, the Holy Spirit will find ways for us. Our moral imaginations seek alternatives to war, should our imaginations not strive to find alternatives to splitting? If our unity is in Jesus Christ, how can we help each other to find ways to allow truth to come into the Body of Christ without leading to separation?

**In the discussion** that followed, reflecting on why it is so easy to separate, **Henry** suggested that those who separate often think that their separation is of God. **Brian** commented that the Word is the Person (of Christ) and the Church is the Body (of Christ). **Mike** wondered if we too often confuse unity with conformity and uniformity.

H) Paragraphs 175–170. [My notes on **John Long**’s comments made no sense. RAL]

**In the discussion** that followed, **Harold** thought that the statement’s link between justice and peace might be too strong. The New Testament church included slaves as

well as people in Caesar's household. John suggested it was difficult to talk about peace without addressing issues of social justice. **Irma** wondered about the best way for Mennonites to talk about social justice, and observed that they would be more comfortable talking about peace-keepers than peace-makers. She questioned what we mean by "peace" and "justice." **Adolf** observed that economic factors are often so important for the state and for war, and wondered where we put economic justice. **Helmut** noted that Mennonite would rather talk to the peace disturbers than to government.

I) Paragraphs 180–182. **Elaine Baete** commented as follows:

### 1. Reflections on the points presented:

- First reading/impressions: totally agree with all; nothing to add.
- On a deeper level: as followers of Christ there is an inherent obligation to live and work for peace on all levels of life. Discipleship is based on our baptism and which is a foundation for that quality of peace in our lives and on earth ("peace on earth").
- Taking a stand for Christ as a Christian and therefore for the "peace of Christ" is opening up of oneself to a quality of life that is different from not having war or disagreements. It involves seeing reality from a different perspective and on different levels (according to different values) which can inherently create disharmony, and lack of peace. On the other hand as Jesus states in the Gospels, if we take a stand for and with him, we may be inherently setting ourselves apart from one another in society for Jesus said that children will turn against parents because of Him (Mt 10: 22, 35–36 ff.).

### 2. What is significant for my tradition?

- On a personal level: Just from how I grew up, it seemed that the means to having and creating peace was understood by "not stirring up" anything or simply "do not disturb"; that meant that nothing was done positively to establish peace. It was very passive. Peace was at all costs. But then the quality of peace was something to be desired. My parents protected me from learning much of the harsh realities of the World Wars because they had nothing to do with peace and so it was better that hearing stories of the wars was not a part of our environment.
- Was our Church tradition (in some places or parishes) much the same? Contributing to establishing genuine peace may have been left to certain organizations or committees, while the rest did their best in their own private lives.
- The teachings of Vatican II has challenged that reality of how we as Catholic Christians work to the establishment of peace on a personal, interpersonal, and international level. Through the Vatican II teachings, personal responsibility is challenged with regards contributing towards the establishment of peace (and reconciliation).
- Much like the MCC, the CCCB Development and Peace initiatives is one of the

many different efforts that the Church is using as a means to raise consciousness and solicit assistance towards promoting local, national and international peace. There is a lot of work to do at the grass roots level in-or-with the D&P organization order to have an impact on this reality around the world.

### 3. What should have been said but what was not said?

– We tend to be very territorial or parochial about working for peace (example from our religious communities or even parishes). If we looked beyond our boundaries, and focused on the “kingdom of God” or “reign of God” would that change our perspectives—especially in this world characterized with a “globalization mentality???” Look beyond the Church (our church boundaries) to the Kingdom of God....

### 4. What is new? What questions might remain?

– Forgive me for daring to share this thought, without knowing how “rational” it might be: perhaps the alternatives and options for solutions to peace and reconciliation is as great as our inner freedom is (sliding scale...with God’s grace). Given that sin is an obstacle, we will be limited and frustrated with the lack of options available, yet if we look at people of peace, such as Jean Vanier, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Gandhi, D. Bonhoeffer, and many others we have a lot to learn.

**In the discussion** that followed **Irma** insisted that peace was more than the absence of violence. **Elaine Baete** recalled that in the Old Testament, it was only when the Israelites were set free from Egyptian captivity, as the God’s treasured possession, that they were free to follow the ten commandments. **Mike** observed that in the Spiritual Exercises the person is encouraged to look at his/her entire life with a degree of objectivity, the objective being real freedom. **Helmut** commented that fear of real physical death prevents us from being free, and cited Oscar Romero’s journey to the other side, and Gandhi’s vow to be a man of fearlessness, a vow not to act of out of fear. Someone cited the saying that “perfect love casts out fear.” **Helmut** also referred to the life of David Toews (1880–1947), and his insistence (re. refusal to serve in the military) that Mennonites were not asking others to die for them, and that they were ready to accept conquest. **Henry** told an anecdote about the presence of a little girl on the battlefield bringing about a momentary cease-fire. **Brian** remarked that you can’t institutionalize martyrdom, but **Helmut** asked if you could confessionalize it? **Elaine Baete** recalled that the desert fathers spoke of a “martyrdom of conscience.”

J) Paragraphs 183–185. **Michael Radcliffe** reflected on suffering, referring particularly to Pope John Paul II’s death, in which he had demonstrated that it was OK to suffer with dignity. He also reflected on the tension between “already

now” and the “not yet.”

**In the discussion** that followed, **Brian** wondered if Mennonites made the classic distinction between precepts of the law and councils of perfection (with reference to Jesus and rich young man who wanted to be perfect), to which **Helmut** replied that they didn’t want to go there. **Adolf** pointed out that Mennonites have traditionally gone into certain professions and avoided others. The early Anabaptists, in effect, took the monastic orders as a guide for everyone (but included marriage), but not as a hierarchical thing. Luther had spoken about “interiorized virtue,” but this notion was resisted by the Anabaptists.

K) Paragraphs 186–188. **Harold Jantz** offered the following reflections on these paragraphs:

My comments earlier in this afternoon’s conversation will have made clear many of my tensions with the way we articulate our convictions as Mennonites and where I think some of our experiences and history are taking us. In a number of ways I find myself more in harmony with the way contemporary Catholic leadership is expressing its convictions about peace than how a good many Mennonites are doing it. The problems for Mennonites are numerous.

**For one we don’t know what to do with our history.** We don’t know how to use it so we can learn from it how we might respond to the issues that the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is facing us with. I might refer to an essay by Mennonite historian Steven Nolt and his examination of the work of two groups, both from within the Swiss Mennonite tradition, one called the Mennonite Community Association, which had its beginnings in the 1940s, and the other the Concern group, which included theologian John Howard Yoder, which began issuing a series of publications in the early 1950s. The former explicitly expressed their hesitation about using the stories of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to find direction for the 20<sup>th</sup>. The latter had such a high view of the church that it effectively removed the church from the world that surrounded it.

**We also struggle with a search for an adequate Christology.** This document is a perfect example of that. If one takes the statement of the Mennonite position we will essentially take Jesus as the teacher, model, and standard, but we won’t find him as the Redeemer and Reconciler, to which a large part of the Mennonite family subscribes. This is the one, which in the words of my conference’s *Confession of Faith Commentary and Pastoral Application* “came to address the broken relationship between God and humanity. In his sacrificial death our Lord not only redeemed us but reconciled all humanity into one. He broke down the walls of hostility between opposing cultures, societal factions and between male and female.”

**We don’t know how to deal with the perfectionism to which many feel driven by their sense of what Anabaptism means.** I might refer to the work of J. Lawrence Burkholder, whose work was for a long time virtually suppressed

because he lamented and argued with precisely this tendency. The book written in his honor in more recent times, *The Limits of Perfection*, addresses this subject. I might take the conflicted position Mennonites take on the Old Colony Mennonites, a Russian Mennonite group, large numbers of whom have moved toward greater and greater isolation because of their view of the relationship of the church toward the world. Or I might take the way MCC has dealt with an issue like abortion (as a peace church agency it has not been able to speak to government on it) or how three Anabaptist groups spoke to the same-sex marriage question (Hutterites, Mennonite Church Canada, and Mennonite Brethren).

With that off my chest, I'll pick up a few items—as I would understand them—in terms of the divergences between Mennonites and Catholics on how we understand and practice what the Scriptures and Jesus Christ teach us about peace and our relationship to the world and its issues around us.

Re. #186. We do hesitate to be involved in many aspects of the world around us. In terms of government, it would be less so because we mistrust the state based on our experience of persecution and discrimination, and more so because we might be drawn into decisions that we can't justify to our consciences. The truth is that our experiences of persecution have probably more often originated with the church—Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Orthodox—than with the government. There have been many instances when government leaders have protected us against churches who saw us as a threat. No one can read Mennonite history in the Russian or Polish settings without recognizing this.

Re. #187. The inclusion of “Mennonites... *in principle ... refuse* to use violence in all situations” explains what is so difficult for many Mennonites who live fully within our world and recognize the tensions that exist there. A good illustration would be the latest issue of the *Canadian Mennonite* (May 16, 2005) and the story of a Mennonite police officer with the Vancouver police force and an accompanying article on lectures by A. James Reimer given to a group of lawyers and police officers (Trinitarian Foundations of Law and Public Order). They can't reconcile to themselves that in those situations where some level of force is needed, they would simply withdraw and say, well, we'll leave for others to do. Furthermore, we know enough about the psychology of human interaction to recognize that passivity can be used as a weapon against others too, even if it may not cause the wounds that some other instrument might.

Re. #188. While I agree that Mennonites have generally taught that nonresistance should be practiced in all situations, large numbers don't believe it can be practiced thus, though they would be more inclined to argue for it in all cases of war, far less in cases that would support maintaining order within society and restraining criminal behaviour. Two examples, William Janzen, who has represented Canadian Mennonites in Ottawa for a quarter century, and Ernie Regehr, who heads Operation Ploughshares, both argue for the need for restraints and would support, albeit reluctantly, certain kinds of force. While they are generally silent about it, I don't think you will find them saying that a follower of Christ can't in good conscience participate in the exercise of such restraint

(probably in the spirit voiced by the Vancouver police officer).

In the **discussion** that followed **Elaine Pinto** expressed surprise at the notion that all Mennonites were not pro-life.

- L) Paragraph 189. Everyone was supposed to reflect and comment on this paragraph, but probably because of lack of time, there was no explicit discussion of the questions raised in this paragraph of the document.
- 4. **Elaine Baete** led the closing prayers.
- 5. The next meeting. **Helmut** noted that there is one section of the document (paragraphs 190–215) that remains to be discussed. It was agreed that he and **Luis** would meet and assign paragraphs for the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for October 12<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> (**Luis** to be consulted as to availability) at a Mennonite facility (to be decided). The next meeting will also have to address the question of where the group is to go from here.