

Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-religious World: Outcomes and Learning From the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions

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The second and perhaps deeper fear that keeps me from interfaith dialogue is related to my own Christian identity. Before leaving for the Parliament I asked myself: Will my understanding of God, community and self necessarily be affected by my sincere engagement with persons from other religious traditions or no tradition at all? Does honest engagement require me to be open to being changed by those I encounter? These questions pointed to my deeper fear that sincere interfaith endeavors threatened to challenge and change those who engage in them. While the Parliament neither denied the validity of these questions nor offered easy answers to them, the conference pointed me toward a different and more accessible entrance through which to begin my interfaith journey – namely, the articulation of my own religious understanding. The starting point of interfaith dialogue and relationship was not the risk of change, but rather the deep understanding and communication of my own tradition. Throughout the conference I was asked by Buddhists, Humanists and other Christians alike to communicate what I believed. In this way, interfaith engagement did cause me to change, but in a way that I had not anticipated. I necessarily moved deeper into my own tradition in order that I might sincerely articulate my beliefs to those I encountered.

Participating Seminary Student



I. Introduction

The Challenge: What if a new pedagogy appeared that excelled at enhancing the passion, conviction, clarity, critical reflective capacity and fluency that theological students have about their faith? Too good to be true? What if, further, this pedagogy held promise as an antidote to religiously infused violence and inculturated most of the principles and practices commonly associated with “diversity,” “cross-cultural,” and apologetical” work in the preparation of religious leaders? Still further, what if it came in both justice oriented and evangelical oriented versions? And what if, as the coup de grace, the pedagogical practice could largely be integrated into the current curriculum, rather than require significant additions to the curriculum? Too good to be true? Not in the experience of the student encountered at the beginning of this report. More importantly, not in the broader experience of the *Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-religious World Project*. And what’s more, the experience conveyed in the opening story and the broader experience of the project is consistent with the experience of the pioneers in multi-faith education over the past half century. There are lots of reasons for theological education to heed the need for equipping the religious leaders for engaging the religious other. Ironically, the most compelling reason may well be the deepening of one’s own faith.

It is commonplace for those advocating multi-faith perspectives within theological education to start with the simple fact that today’s world is unavoidably multi-religious. Therefore, the argument continues, one can not possibly understand one’s own faith, much less relate one’s faith to the world, without some capacity to deal with this reality. Regardless of whether one’s primary interest is locating and promoting one’s own faith within the totality of God’s creation, or trying to reach out in solidarities that foster peace, if not justice, the very multi-religious nature of our globalizing reality seems, in itself, a weighty warrant for providing religious leaders the tools to deal with it. Unfortunately such arguments haven’t created much buzz or momentum over the last quarter century.

In light of this history, ATS’ current exploration of the possibility and possible necessity of multi-faith education is a positive sign of growing momentum. Yet the preponderance of sociological evidence is that congregations and denominations continue to be happy not to, and in a majority of cases even discouraging of, any kind of engagement with other faith traditions. As Robert Wuthnow concludes after the most extensive study yet of American congregations’ response to the challenges of religious diversity, the increasing awareness of religious diversity is reinforcing our society’s historic tendency toward a privatized religious pluralism, rather than the engaged, reflective pluralism that many of us might hope for (*America and the Challenge of Religious Diversity*, 2005). In practice,

according to Wuthnow, this privatized approach to religious diversity results in Christian congregations:

... dismissing other religions by seldom thinking about them, viewing them as curious ethnic subcultures or proclaiming that those other religions are irrelevant to their own efforts at evangelization (p. 257).

And:

... [maximizing] their small niche within the larger pluralistic environment by putting aside difficult questions of biblical interpretation and focusing nearly all their attention on their own members; by adapting a don't ask, don't tell policy in dealing with their neighbors; and by marketing their programs more like consumer products than matters of ultimate concern. Easy tolerance and limited interaction prevent hackles from being raised when people of one religion meet those of another (loc cit).

The potential and practical social and theological benefits of multi-faith engagement, as theologically important as one or another of these may be to most of the readers of this report, seem a hard sell for economically stressed institutions trying to prepare leaders for congregations that prefer the privatized pluralism of America's past. So it is, perhaps, not surprising that the strong inertias built into the American theological curriculum have thus far prevailed against the increasingly stark consciousness of the multi-religious make-up of our world and our American communities. But how many of us theological educators, at least occasionally, worry about the depth of commitment, knowledge and critical capacity of our students? How can we ignore a tool for dealing with this?

The overall result of the *Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-religious World Project* was stronger Christians and better leaders. What this looked like, what else happened and the details of what was tried and learned along the way is the subject of following report. The report begins with a quick overview of the structure of the project and the focal questions it addressed. The report then turns in Section II to the key action components of the project and the outcomes and learning related to each. Section III presents the project's "answers" to its focal questions. And finally Section IV lists eight issues that the project points to as in need of continuing attention, before the concluding reflection of Section V.

The Project: The orienting question for the *Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World Project* was: "*How might seminaries foster significant teaching/learning*

opportunities for the development of a new generation of leaders equipped to serve in the challenging milieu of today's multi-cultural, multi-religious world?" The project's sponsor was the Task Force on Theological Education and Interfaith Initiatives of The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR). The Henry Luce Foundation provided major funding for the project. The project's action frame used the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions (Parliament), held in December in Melbourne, Australia, as both a culminating and a catalytic setting. The focal experience, within this frame, was bringing groups of students from fifteen theological schools in the U.S. together for a five-day seminar at the Parliament. Supporting this focal seminar were a series of courses taught at each participating institution in preparation for the Parliament seminar (professors for these courses accompanied students to the Parliament and shared in the seminar); the students' participation in the broader set of activities at the Parliament outside of the focal seminar; and student sharing of their experience "back-home" after the Parliament. Supplementing the student seminar-related activities was a panel discussion, at the Parliament, among the leaders of various religious and spiritual communities from around the globe on the theme Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World. A list of participating schools and the professor serving as a school's coordinator is appended.

The orienting question for the project was further specified in terms of five questions that were initially used to provoke and collect each participating school's reflection on their experience with multi-religious education prior to attending the 2009 Parliament. Prior experience with multi-religious education was one criterion used in selecting schools for the project. The same questions were then used to structure the seminar at the Parliament, one question addressed at each session. The questions were also used as the core of an online survey conducted with students after their Parliament experience, and in interviews with the professors who coordinated the preparatory courses and joined their students at the Parliament seminar. The questions included:

1. *Why* is multi-religious education *needed* in seminaries and divinity schools?
2. What are some of the *resources* for multi-faith education in your tradition and school? What are some of the *obstacles* to multi-faith education in your tradition and school?
3. What are the *virtues and skills* one needs to be an effective multi-faith leader? What are the practices by which these virtues and skills can be developed (inside and outside the classroom)?
4. What kinds of multi-religious initiatives do you (seminary students) hope to engage in together with the communities you will serve (with children, youth, and adults)? Why?

5. What are some key insights you have learned from these sessions and from your participation in the Parliament? How might we carry this work forward together as a group and in each of our schools? (While the first part of this question could not be answered until after the experience in Melbourne, it was proposed early in the project to help inform preparation for the Parliament.)

The participating school, student and coordinating professors' answers to these questions, refracted through their experience at the Parliament, constitute the major components of the following summative distillation of project learning (Section III). It is preceded by an assessment of the key activities or action components of the project and, particularly, the students' overall assessment of the personal and professional impact of their experience (Section II). A concluding section sets forth eight themes that the project suggests need continuing attention toward educating religious leaders for a multi-religious world (Section IV).

II. Key Action Components

Student Participation: As originally proposed, each of the fifteen participating schools would receive financial support for 3 to 4 students (up to a total of 50) to attend the 2009 Parliament. In actuality, most of the schools found ways to support the attendance of five or more students, such that just over 80 students were present in Melbourne for the PWR seminar. The two primary means of extending the grant's dollar allocation for student travel were using a school's own scholarship dollars and asking students who could afford it to make an individual contribution to the travel expense. In all cases students had to make special application to their respective school to participate. One implication of this was that all students accepted had a strong and articulate interest in multi-faith issues. Project students, as would be expected, reflected the faith backgrounds represented in their respective schools, which was overwhelmingly, but not exclusively Oldline Protestant and Roman Catholic. The one Jewish seminary, one Muslim theological school, and two or three seminaries with multi-religious student bodies, resulted in some inter-faith mix among the project students.

In the post-Parliament assessment questionnaire students were asked, first, how they would describe the overall impact of their project experience; then second, what unique impact their participation at the Parliament had. The overall response was unanimously positive. Arguably the most negative response from a student was that while the preparatory course was life changing, the Parliament itself was a bit disappointing in comparison. In this

student's estimation the latter was more about networking in comparison to the student's liminal experience in the course.

The vast majority of student assessments of overall impact ranged from "broadened, deepened and intensified pre-existing ideas and commitments" on the one hand, to "life-changing" on the other hand. Several spoke of making life changing career decisions either during or as a result of the project experience. One such change, for example, was from seeking ordination to teaching interfaith in a secular university. Others spoke of their experience in terms of spiritual transformation. Typical student responses included:

More than anything the Parliament cemented most of the pre-existing ideas I had developed about interfaith. I had already taught myself to think globally, but now my default theological mode is interfaith.

My time in Australia opened my eyes up to the many diverse projects happening around the world. I valued meeting people from different countries that shared my values and hearing about their experiences and focuses. It was a powerful experience being one of thousands who believed that religion can be a force for good and understanding in the world.

It was a most informative and transformative experience. It just opened me to the homogeneity of spirit amid the heterogeneity of traditions in a way and depth I had never experienced before.

Attending the Parliament has made me more passionate about interreligious dialogue in general and I find myself bringing it up in conversation whenever possible. While there are many basic core beliefs across religions, I've also come to appreciate that it is not crucial or sometimes helpful, to boil down our beliefs to the similarities. It is just as important to struggle with the differences and learn from one another.

The overwhelmingly positive experience of students notwithstanding, most students retained some sense of critical distance. As one student put it:

I witnessed that it is possible to be religious in a multi-religious setting. With open and honest discussion with fellow seminarians, we were able to deepen our understanding about not only the possibilities but also the limits of Christianity for inter-religious dialogue.

There was also clear recognition that the Parliament attracted a decidedly like-minded segment of religious people and left largely unaddressed the challenge of how to be engaged with the "religious other" not represented. As one student sardonically put it: "My Parliament experience further crystallized how this *love fest* involves a subset of each

tradition and that reaching beyond the choir continues to be the main challenge of pluralists.” And, as another student put it more in terms of a practical ministry question:

How can we go back to our own particular communities and spread the word about the importance of multi-faith education and interfaith work. This is a bigger challenge than I think the Parliament seemed to address. Practically everyone at the Parliament was pro-interfaith engagement. But we don't necessarily represent a majority of adherents within our traditions and don't know for sure how to speak with them.

Not all of the students participating in the project were “pluralists,” at least in a universalistic sense. Rather, it appears that the majority were committed to some sense of unique particularity for their Christianity, Judaism or Islam, and struggled to varying degrees with the tension between openness and exclusivity that such commitments implied. As one student put it:

The Parliament challenged me to find ways to articulate what I believe about eternal salvation and how that may not be in tension with other faiths. I continue to explore how I can be grounded in my own tradition and open to others as well.

Even more simply, in almost “lay” language, another student said: “My Bible tells me that Jesus is the way to salvation. At the Parliament I was exposed to the possibility that there may be other ways. I am struggling with this.” This tension is a critical dynamic in the formative potential that multi-faith pedagogies have for faith development as we shall develop further below.

Whatever else it might be, multi-faith encounter is complicated, and this was not lost on the students. As one put it succinctly: “More than anything else I became aware of the extreme complexity of engaging different cultures and religions.”

It is complicated and it is especially challenging the greater the distance to be bridged in the encounter. Within a vocational and justice frame, one student put it this way:

I've learned that faith can be explained in multiple ways and it is my job as a pastor to be aware of these different expressions – whether within my own church, community, or family. I've also learned that it is often easier to get along with someone of a different faith group who has a similar disposition towards social issues than it is to find common ground with someone in my own denomination who is on the other end of the social justice spectrum.

Indeed, the engagement of difference was such an overwhelming part of the Parliament experience that several students wished there had been more opportunities to learn and practice, as one student put it, “the ways in which gaps can be breached between people/communities when people are divided by radically opposing views.” In response to the project’s ‘dialogical’ preference for such bridging work, another student expressed surprise that,

There was far less dialogue than I originally thought there would be. I think the conference had a lot of surface conversations, and it lacked a willingness to get to some of the difficult conversations. I would have liked to have seen (and participated in) deeper, less comfortable conversations. I was also aware of the privilege at the conference and the missing voices due to socio-economic and other limited resources.

Add in the not infrequent student comments about the patriarchal nature of the multi-faith movement as witnessed through the Parliament, and the complexity of the effort and history becomes even more stark.

The *Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World Project’s* combination of a more or less regular back-home course setting with participation at the Parliament, begs for an exploration of the students’ assessments of the unique impact of being at the Parliament. Three stand out. First, the Parliament provided the opportunity to go beyond the classroom in at least two different senses. Using the old adage that “the map is not the territory,” one student representing the sentiments of many of the students went on to say “in being at the PWR we entered the territory.” Clearly there was power in the “experience,” and a significant part of this was because the experience included the practice. And among the many major themes and learning from the project is that, as one student put it, “while theory and discussing such issues as salvation are important, learning how to dialogue, to work through community tragedies and celebrations are absolutely essential to multi-faith education.” And as another student put it, “learning about pluralism and experiencing pluralism are two totally different things. So, while I think it is crucial for seminaries to require multi-faith education, I think that requirement also must include a practical application.” Another sense of being beyond the classroom expressed by many students, and as alluded to above, was the affirmation of being with thousands of people from around the world that believed that, despite its diversity, religion was a good thing and that religions could work cooperatively.

Second, the extreme range of religious diversity present at the Parliament led many students to a much deeper and critical perspective on the potential of, and the limitations to,

multi-religious engagement and cooperation. Indeed, the presence of such a broad range of different “religions” at the Parliament, and especially the encounter with a few that seemed extreme, prompted at least a few students to wonder what constituted a religion. As one student put it:

I was pretty open-minded about God/faith before attending the Parliament, and this trip affirmed those open-minded evaluations of religion. However, it also raised questions for me about how do we create criteria for evaluating what is valid and what is not? It seems there must be some line, but I am not sure how to define it without restricting others' beliefs.

Another student, clearly looking for help in response to an experience of one faith group that for him clearly crossed the line, added: “I’m not even sure why it activated my prejudices. I have never seen even the suggestion of how to approach this type of thing theologically, nor seen a useful categorization of what is worthy of being a religion.”

Third, the Parliament incorporated a strong emphasis on justice issues, using the historical experience of Australia’s aborigines as a special and ongoing presence and theme at the Parliament. Many of the students expressed deep appreciation for the variety of connections made at the Parliament between multi-faith and justice and reconciliation. One such critical observation, noted by many, was that the multi-faith establishment remains a largely male bastion. But perhaps most notable was the number of students who left the Parliament with new commitments to connect the Parliament’s serious struggle with the Australian aborigine’s plight to the plight of Native Americans back home.

Several of the schools’ preparatory courses were open to both project and non-project students and such situations provided an especially insightful opportunity for assessing what the Parliament experience might have added over and above a good, back home course on inter-religious engagement. We only have the professors’ read on this, but the consensus of those professors who were asked about it was that: 1) the intellectual accomplishment of the two groups (Parliament and non-Parliament students who took the same course) was basically the same, but 2) the personal, formative, spiritual and career impact was much greater for those who went to the Parliament. Note once again the emphasis on the “formative” nature of the experience.

The primary thrust of this report is on the project’s and Parliament’s impact on the participating schools and students. But it is important to note that particularly the project’s students also had an impact on the Parliament. Most notably, there was the gift of youth. As one veteran parliamentarian observed, “One of the distinctive characteristics of the 2009

Parliament was the young generation's active and committed participation." As another put it, "One of the most animating insights that our students gained was the recognition and the deeper appropriation of the role that young people can play, and must play, in the future of interreligious collaboration." And on a more personal note, another responded, "It was wonderful for me as an old timer to see and offer my passion to a new generation."

The overwhelmingly positive experience of the students notwithstanding, two distracting aspects of the Parliament experience were noted by several students, as were three broader topics that students wished had received more attention in the overall project. The two Parliament specific distractions were:

- The scale of the Parliament was, for some students, overwhelming. Without much program structure beyond the afternoon project seminar, it took a great deal of self-initiative and energy to meaningfully engage the vast and diverse experiences available. And even at that, any one person could at most sample from among the possibilities. Especially valued by those students who seemed to be able to do this well were the Parliament's morning sessions at which one could experience the practices of other religions.
- Perhaps relatedly, several students expressed the desire for fewer panels and more actual dialogue or group discussion (note: each project seminar session began with a panel), which might have helped the groups move beyond what several students thought were relatively superficial levels of engagement – this being true, in these students' experience for the Parliament in general, not just the project seminar. And again speaking of the Parliament in general, another student provided a bit of critique for us professor types to consider:

It was an overwhelmingly positive experience, but there are three things I would like to see changed. First, some really boring academics used this as an opportunity to deliver papers in a monotone. I don't know what the screening process was, or if this is just an accepted part of conferences, but there were some sessions I simply did not enjoy.

Unfortunately this student was not alone. More succinctly, another student conveyed the same sentiment with the mere: "Fewer sessions, better speakers."

The three broader topics that students wished had received more attention in the overall project included the following, the first two dealt with more extensively above:

- How to connect with “more conservative” religious traditions and across deeper levels of difference;
- How to “sell” the importance of inter-religious issues and skills to the majority of leaders of their denominations and local congregations.
- The what and how of interfaith practices in local congregations and communities.

A condition of participation in the project for the students was finding ways to share their experience once they returned to the United States. Indeed, even within the rather limited span of roughly two months between the end of the Parliament and the student assessment questionnaire, virtually every student who responded indicated some level of sharing. Perhaps the most creative was the student who began an electronic dialogue between Ethiopian Orthodox in New York City and Melbourne. More typical was one or more of the following four vehicles:

- Presentations in congregations or with groups with which one worked;
- Using Parliament experiences as examples or themes in class discussions and course papers;
- Presentations at seminary events, including those specially organized to share a school’s experience with the project; and
- Writing articles for church, seminary, denominational and community newsletters and magazines.

Pre-Parliament Courses: An informing assumption of the project was that curriculum development was a strategic priority toward the goal of helping seminaries foster significant teaching/learning opportunities for the development of a new generation of leaders equipped to serve in the challenging milieu of today’s multi-cultural, multi-religious world. Operationalizing this priority in the project flowed along two paths. The first was to create an electronic archive available to the public of existing seminary courses geared toward equipping students for leadership within a pluralistic religious situation. Such an archive would provide a database for studying the content of courses that emphasize interfaith understanding and relationships, and for studying the teaching resources that inform such courses. It also would provide ready access to course models and bibliography for professors and institutions seeking to offer such courses. Toward this end 39 course syllabi were archived on the CPWR website prior to the Parliament and remain accessible at <http://www.Parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=4&sn=7>. The archived syllabi are categorized under the following headings, with an example provided under each:

- 1) World Religions
 - a) General: Robert Hunt: World Religions And Christianity: A Global Perspective (a hybrid course also including, interfaith relations, and interfaith dialogue).
 - b) Particular Traditions: Sr. Marianne Farina Csc: Understanding Islam.
- 2) Interfaith Relations: Judith Berling and Jeff Richey: Christians And Religious Neighbors.
- 3) Interfaith Dialogue
 - a) About Dialogue: Jeffrey Carlson: Buddhist-Christian Dialogue.
 - b) Engaging In Dialogue: Yehezkel Landau: Building Abrahamic Partnerships.
- 4) Theology Of Religions: James D. Redington, Sj: Theology Of Religions.
- 5) Other: S. Wesley Ariarajah: Cross-Cultural Immersion Course To India; Kirk Jones and Or Rose: Spirituality and Social Justice; Paul Knitter: Religions And Poverty.

The second strategic path toward the furtherance of this priority was to have a professor (or team of professors) at each of the fifteen participating project schools create a course for project students that would provide both a general introduction to multi-faith understanding and leadership and an orientation to the students' trip to the Parliament, including reflection on the five questions that would structure the seminar sessions at the Parliament. Within the general topic of preparing religious leaders in a multi-religious world and with the one stipulation that they engage students in contextual experiences beyond the classroom, professors were free to do what was most appropriate for their school. From the perspective of broadening the range of course models available to theological educators for engaging multi-faith understanding and leadership, giving the project professors considerable latitude in course design proved to be an exceptionally good idea. The diversity of courses that resulted is impressive. The creativity of experienced professors accepting the challenge to stretch themselves by melding new approaches with their practiced expertise, is even more impressive. Just four examples:

- One team of professors used the history of the Parliament to map the history of interfaith initiatives and theology.
- A professor who always wanted to experiment with the case study approach designed his school's entire course around case studies of multi-faith practices.
- Recognizing the tendency for persons to perceive inter-faith engagement as a threat to one's personal, traditioned, religious identity, a professor geared her course to what it

- means to remain confessionally Christian while dialogically engaging other religious traditions
- A distinguished professor in the theology of religions changed his traditional theory to practice starting point to pursue how theology came out of relationships, and changed the traditional course essay to a preached sermon.

Consistent with the project's commitment to making its efforts broadly available to theological education and the public, project source syllabi have been added to the CPWR website syllabi archive noted above.

Professors were generally pleased with their course outcomes, as were students. Professors whose course included both Parliament-attending and non-attending students felt the mix was, overall, a plus. Indeed, in several instances students in such courses used various sorts of electronic communication to allow non-Parliament students to vicariously participate in the Parliament through the experience of the attending students.

Interviews and conversations with professors consistently flagged two curricular themes, one a question to ponder and the other a helpful but critical reminder.

- First, many of the professors left wondering if multi-faith theology and education could be or might ellipse ecumenical theology, and what the implications of this would be.
- Second, since all the courses dealt with ministerial practice in some way, many professors noted that the experience reinforced their awareness of the multi-disciplinary nature of practices.

Indeed, between the back-home classroom and the Parliament experience both students and professors became increasingly convinced:

- That however else the multi-faith character of our world is addressed within theological education it is essentially about relationships and therefore, essentially, about ministry practice.
- Given its practical, relational nature, friendship and hospitality are, as one professor put it, among “the most promising foundations on which to carry on interreligious encounters and dialogue.” It even emboldened one of the project professors to suggest that the multi-faith reality of the world:

Underlines the necessity of approaching theology from the perspective of relationships; underlines the necessity of theology to come out of the practice of relationship; underlines a theological imperative to struggle with the nature of and extent of shared commitments and solidarities.

One of the anticipated project outcomes was that participating seminaries would strengthen their efforts to develop the interfaith emphases already present at the schools. Assessment of such an outcome requires a longer-term perspective than possible in this report. But a few more immediate observations are suggestive. First, it is absolutely clear that participation in the project provided a short-term “pop” in the visibility and presence of interfaith issues and emphases on each campus. On the front end, selection of students was a highly publicized competition for a financially subsidized opportunity to participate in a very special, global event. And, faculty beyond those teaching the pre-Parliament course were involved in the selection process. Additionally, the pre-Parliament course was open to and included students beyond project students at most of the participating schools, and in most cases the pre-Parliament course was substantially different than prior courses taught by the professor, thus enhancing the professor’s reservoir of pedagogical and substantive resources. On the back end, as already noted, students returning from the Parliament carried their experience into both the formal and informal curriculums of their schools.

Evidence of longer-term structural changes toward bringing interfaith more into the core of the participating seminaries’ curriculums is less apparent. Indeed, faculty coordinators interviewed for this assessment, while articulate and energetic in pointing to the personal and short-term effects just noted, were hard-pressed to identify emergent structural effects. Rather, the pervasiveness of institutional barriers such as those elaborated below dominated their response to such inquiries. There are few published studies of sustained, project driven efforts to change American seminaries. One of the few is Roozen, Evans and Evans, *Changing The Way Seminaries Teach: Globalization and Theological Education* (Hartford Seminary, 1996). Given that current attention to multi-faith education flows from and builds on the attention that globalization received within theological education beginning in the 1980s, the book is an especially instructive read for today’s change agents. Indeed, the parallels concerning the possibilities for, measures of and resistances to change are striking, but the analysis is much more developed and systematic than is possible here, in part because the focal project was considerably more extensive than the *Educating Religious Leaders for Multi-religious World Project*. In short, even in a five year project involving each of the participating seminaries in three international and one local immersion, in the majority of instances resistance and inertia dominated over sustained, transformative change. Nevertheless, incremental changes like the requirement of cross-cultural experiences and the

regular inclusion of multi-cultural perspectives in course bibliographies continue today in the vast majority of the immersion project seminaries, and many others.

The “globalization” momentum that the immersion project rode has not yet built up for multi-faith education. But incremental changes are evident in the *Multi-religious World Project* seminaries, as is a growing body of wisdom and experience. The latter was, in fact, another anticipated project outcome for the participating seminaries. Specifically, it was hoped that they would be able to carry their experience into efforts to strengthen interfaith emphases within theological education more broadly. Again, any adequate assessment of this requires a longer term perspective than available in this report. But the short term indications are encouraging. Perhaps the most notable is the fact that a full third of the seminaries present at ATS’s first consultation on best practices in Christian hospitality and pastoral practices (April, 2010) were PWR project schools.

Interreligious Panel on Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World:
The inspiration was right on the mark. The project was about educating religious leaders. The setting was the historically symbolic center of the interfaith movement and leading scholars from across a wide spectrum of the world’s religions were planning to attend. And there is, for all practical purposes, no comparative literature of the nature of leadership or leadership education across faith traditions, much less on the role or location of multi-faith considerations in such education. Why not start such a conversation?

A panel of speakers was convened. The panel addresses did occur (a description of the panel discussion and list of panelists is appended). Unfortunately, little conversation, engagement or convergence was evident. Why? The simple answer: the differences in perspective – both religiously and culturally -- were so great that there were few touch points around which to generate a conversation, nor even, at least in the moment, enough commonality among the presentations to readily discern a future path of conversation. A comparative study of the question remains a critical next step, but how best to do that remains unclear.

The panel was convened with the awareness that there were great differences in the education of religious leaders both across and within each faith tradition represented on the panel and perhaps appropriate to the preliminary nature of the effort, panelists were invited to speak out of their experience rather than necessarily even try to represent the many different ways religious leaders are educated in their respective traditions. What wasn’t anticipated is that compelling commonalities did not readily present themselves, nor was it

evident that anything was at stake in the differences other than theological or cultural differences.

To be sure, the magnitude of the challenge is immense. The question of “educating” necessitates a prior delineation of educating for what, which in turn requires a delineation of the virtues and purposes of leadership. This, in turn, requires a delineation of the relationship between “leader and sources of religious authority,” “leader” and “faith community,” and “leader” and “civic community” all of which differ across major traditions, differ across family differences within traditions, and differ across cultural settings. And the challenging question is not really one of whether or not there are commonalities. Comparative analysts will inevitably be able to articulate at least a few. But the real questions within this search for commonality are: 1) Will the level of abstraction required to find common ground totally disconnect the conversation from the lived reality of everyday leadership practice? and 2) To what extent will the commonality connect to the fundamental concerns of any given tradition’s concept of leadership?

The typical scholarly way of dealing with complexity is to bracket out or “control” as much variation or difference as possible so that one can more clearly see the interaction among a manageable range of factors or concepts. To the extent this is suggestive for future efforts to pursue the question of the role and location of multi-faith considerations in leadership education across religious traditions, it implies that some pre-set controls on the range of variation brought into the conversation need to be set. One way of doing this might be to control the cultural context, e.g., how do, how should multi-faith considerations factor into the preparation of religious leaders in Nigeria? In Thailand? In Germany? In the United States? Or, one might control on the task(s) of leadership, e.g., promoting civic harmony, or teaching the sources of religious authority within one’s own tradition. Etc.

III. Action Learnings

Although the project did not use the term, it presents a classical example of *action research*. Action research is a systematic form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry as they engage in an action project which is an exemplar of the subject of inquiry. Further, when used in educational settings it is typically used for deepening understanding of everyday, real problems experienced in schools, and for looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. In this particular project students and professors worked together across multiple seminaries to equip the students for religious leadership in a multi-

faith world. Simultaneously, they collectively asked, “How might seminaries foster significant teaching/learning opportunities for the development of a new generation of leaders equipped to serve in the challenging milieu of today’s multi-cultural, multi-religious world.” Two purposes are always at work in action research. One is the desired outcomes for the participants. The second is learning that can be shared with other practitioners. Section I addressed the outcomes for students and faculty. In this section we turn to what was learned, very briefly providing only bullet summaries of key insights for the project’s four orienting questions most directly related to the action.

Why is multi-religious education needed in seminaries and divinity schools? All participants (professors and students alike) took for granted the typical, abstract answer to this question, namely that we live in an increasingly diverse world, religion is a fundamental dimension of this increasing diversity, therefore as religious leaders one needs to be aware of and know how to deal with diversity, including religious diversity. As one student put it:

My short answer is that, today, the challenge of religious diversity and of religious pluralism is real due to global immigration and labor mobilization. It is just real. Therefore, future parish ministers should be equipped with skills and knowledge that help them to address interreligious issues in their communities and parishes.

Taking this for granted, the case for multi-religious education articulated by project participants focused on the details. Three clusters of “detail” dominated project participants’ reflection, one practical, one educational and one formative:

The practical case: Ministers are increasingly called upon to deal with multi-faith issues both in their pastoral responsibilities dealing with congregations and parishioners, and in their public, civic participation. The former range from teaching what one’s faith says about engaging a religious other to helping parents deal with the conversion of a son or daughter. Or, as one student elaborated:

Future clergy face congregations in which interreligious marriage has become more common and parishioners are challenging traditional religious boundaries by identifying with more than one tradition. Lay people raise questions about how to raise children in multi-religious homes and how to understand the religious practices of their neighbors and co-workers. If nothing else, multi-religious education should equip seminarians and divinity school students with the knowledge of what they do not know and where to direct their future parishioners for answers.

The multi-faith possibilities inherent in a clergy person's public role range from a ceremonial presence at civic events to working for justice, reconciliation and peace within a climate conflicted with misunderstanding, oppression and violence. Making the theological case for the latter, one student shared:

My [Parliament] experience did not change the way I think about God or faith. However, it did affirm my beliefs that God desires for God's people to be reconciled to one another, to live in peace and harmony with one another, to disband systems of poverty and oppression, to dialogue with one another in a spirit of mutuality and respect.

Making the collaborative case, another student quoted Diana Eck's, *Encountering God* (1993, 2003):

We share our communities and our world with men and women who worship in various ways, who base their judgments on differing authorities, who recognize differing revelations, who speak of God in strikingly different ways or do not speak of God at all. Our task is to learn to be collaborative with one another on issues that none of us can solve alone (p. 213).

And after noting that today, "religion seems to be more frequently at the heart of hostility," a student report goes on to say:

At the very practical level, the reality of increased communication, technology, and the rise of various forms of globalization mean that it would be both impossible and potentially dangerous for Christians to attempt to isolate themselves from the rest of the world. In the United States today, whether in rural areas or in urban world-class cities, most citizens live amid populations that are decidedly diverse: religiously, ethically and culturally. At the level of the local community, as well as at the level of worldwide crisis, it is imperative that religiously and culturally diverse human beings work together, while respecting the value and beauty of genuine difference.

More succinctly, another report concluded, "Multi-religious education is the medium which provides the resources needed for navigating religious fueled conflict, and religious leaders should be equipped to be leaders in addressing these issues." At much more mundane, yet foundational level, a project participant warily said, "At a time when many religious communities like my own are being tempted to turn defensively inward, multi-faith education necessarily turns one outward."

The educational case: Again two dimensions. First, to attend to the practical issues noted above, one must know something about other faith traditions, how to engage other faith

traditions, and how to help those in one's own faith tradition engage other faith traditions. Second, and perhaps the most under-emphasized argument typically made for multi-faith education, is what one learns about one's own tradition and one's own personal beliefs and practices by mutually engaging other religious traditions. Indeed, as argued at the outset of this report, a strong argument can be made that genuine inter-faith dialogue is one of the most effective pedagogies for deepening one's self-awareness of one's own religious identity.

The educational case has many aspects and for the students manifests itself in a variety of ways. But, its dual nature (knowledge about other; knowledge about self), as well as the necessity of preparation and willingness to risk, is perhaps most forcefully, encouragingly and graciously articulated by the student whose reflection on the Parliament's affect on her own Christian identity appears at the very beginning of this report. The reader will recall that the student concludes that extended quotation about her "second" fear with:

In this way, interfaith engagement did cause me to change, but in a way that I had not anticipated. I necessarily moved deeper into my own tradition in order that I might sincerely articulate my beliefs to those I encountered.

She articulates her first fear with the following:

For me, a candidate for ordained ministry, the Parliament helped dispel two of my fears surrounding interfaith endeavors. First, as I prepared for the Parliament, I was reminded of my own ignorance about the world's many religious traditions. In the past, this lack of knowledge has made me hesitant to engage with people from other faith traditions or from no faith tradition at all for fear of offending those with whom I interact. My time at the Parliament convinced me that this fear only serves to further separate me from the world's more than four billion people who do not share my Christian beliefs and practices. To be sure, careful preparation and mindful engagement are necessary for interfaith endeavors. However, the Parliament encouraged me to responsibly trust that on the path toward mutual understanding my conversational and relational missteps will be met with grace.

Making the faith development point more succinctly, if less eloquently, another student simply said:

As a seminarian I felt uniquely grounded in my own tradition, understanding its depth and layers of meaning in ways that would allow me to engage others without feeling overly threatened. The Parliament experience, nevertheless, provided new lenses through which to see my tradition and to develop an even

richer understanding of it through explaining it to someone else and seeing it through their eyes.

Moving beyond the personal, a school report even holds out the possibility of theological renewal:

Multi-religious education provides immense opportunity for theological growth. The presence of the religious other, physically present as fellow students or intellectually through study of another tradition, raised new theological questions and calls for deep contemplation of historically traditioned answers. Theologians of all religions are challenged to examine their tradition and not accept any historical position or doctrine unexplained. Multi-religious education creates a climate for theological renewal and creativity, brining vitality and relevance to a field many label static and removed from everyday life.

The risk of multi-faith engagement, however, and its potential for unanticipated consequences for one's faith is also clear in the experience of the Parliament students: Frequently this is best characterized as a "loosening" or a softening" of one's belief. As one student noted:

It definitely makes me feel less rigid or attached to particular traditions or beliefs in terms of their "rightness." But, it continues to be a challenge for me to think about how to really engage in interfaith work and dialogue while still being grounded in a particular tradition.

As another noted: "God is so much bigger than I ever thought God was before. God contains all those who were there, and they showed me a unique face of the Holy Spirit's grace-filled activity in the world."

Indeed, the vulnerability intrinsic to multi-faith engagement led more than a few students to caution against entering the territory unprepared. The most blunt said:

The introspection and openness required of interfaith work is, even as a believer, a difficult road to tread. Those quick to take offense and that aren't able to think from someone else's perspective don't have a chance.

Still another lauded the potential for those mature in their faith, but doubted if it was something for those new to their faith:

Multi-faith education pushes you to a fuller understanding of the nature of religion. When your brain is forced into a new avenue, it grows in ways you never thought possible. While I know this is problematic at the

congregational level, particularly with new Christians, those whose faith is already deep can make it even deeper through interfaith. As a Christian, for me, it only re-enforces the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

The formative case: The formative case is closely intertwined with the educational case, as seen above, especially at those points involving deepening one's self-awareness of one's religious identity. For the vast majority of project students the interfaith encounter with the intensity of the Parliament was a spiritual experience. For several, as previously noted, this was life changing. More typical is the rendering by the following student. "I think the most impact of being at the Parliament was spiritual. The opportunities to pray together in the morning and throughout the day were moving and formative."

What are some of the resources for and obstacles to multi-faith education in your tradition and school? One finds a surge in books about innovation these days. Most, like Steven Johnson's, *Where Good Ideas Come From: the Natural History of Innovation* (2010) focus on the inspiration for transformational ideas. But there is also increasing and long overdue attention to the experience of most organizational practitioners, namely, the more dominant reality which Kegan and Lahey co-opt for the title and focus of their most recent book from the Harvard Business Press and John F. Kennedy School of Government's Center for Public Leadership, *Immunity to Change* (2009). Indeed, in their guide to what they call *The Other Side of Innovation* (2010), Govindarajan and Trimble headline Thomas Edison's reminder from over a century ago that, "Genius is 1 percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration." Their point: there is too much emphasis on ideas and not nearly enough emphasis on execution. Consequently,

*Most corporations have more ideas than they can possibly move forward.
Far too many promising ideas on paper never become anything more than . . .
promising ideas on paper (p 3).*

Why? Because the obstacles to change typically are so deeply ingrained that few organizations have the skills or the will to take them on. But Govindarajan and Trimble are quick to remind us that most organizations also contain resources to build on and leverage for innovative change. An explicit piece of the *Educating Religious Leaders for Multi-religious World Project*, therefore, as an action research project, was to invite participating schools, professors and students to pay careful attention to the resources for and obstacles to multi-faith education in their traditions and schools.

Appropriate to schools representing religions of the Word, consideration of resources and obstacles typically began with a scriptural turn. Not surprisingly, particularly given the

strongly interpretative approach that most Christian project seminaries take toward the Bible, the Bible was seen as including both resources for and obstacles to an appreciative engagement of the religious other. Numerous passages pro and con were cited – love your neighbor; do not bear false witness; be not yoked with unbelievers; maker of heaven and earth . . . But, the following extended response from a student well captures the general point for the majority of project students and schools:

The basic sense of my group’s presentation on the resources and challenges within our tradition for engaging interfaith dialogue was that for Christians, scripture as well as a commitment to Jesus, can be both the biggest challenges as well as the biggest resources for this kind of work. They are obstacles when we interpret them exclusively and when we think they are truth claims that we “own” rather than truth we live and embody, or when we mask our fears of difference behind “loyalty” to Jesus. They can be resources when we understand our faith as patterning our daily lives on the example of Jesus, who in fact was open to any and all kinds of people no matter their culture or religious beliefs.

For religious practitioners scriptural interpretation is, of course, essentially theological work, and project participants were equally quick to point out the same kind of cross-cutting warrants within theological traditions as is true for scripture, with much of this being cast in terms of openness versus exclusivity. As one student put it from his position as an advocate of engagement: “The fundamental obstacle within my tradition consists in its theology of religion which is characterized by a sort of theological zero-sum game, namely the saved and the unsaved.” But several framed the major divide a bit differently. In the words of one, echoing the sentiments of others:

The major obstacle to multi-religious education is mainly embodied in a silent and undergirding assumption that the religious ‘other’ is somehow of less value because of theological orientation.

Among the many specific structural resources for multi-faith education the following three were most frequently cited by participants:

- Proximity to large numbers of multi-faith programs, or to students, faculty, or faith communities from traditions other than one’s own. In short: it is hard to encounter or engage other faith communities if one has few options in one’s immediate location. Consequently, being located in a large metropolitan area or near major universities provides a distinct advantage. Conversely, not being so fortunate requires added creativity, special effort and typically added cost.
- Within most Christian traditions a variety of documents hold special status as being religiously authoritative, e.g., the Bible, confessions, creed, statements of faith.

Having such documents contain warrants for multi-faith cooperation and engagement, therefore, is a ready resource.

- Having degree requirements for multi-faith education or experiences. There is an old saying to the effect that an organization's real priorities are most evident in reading the organization's budget. Within higher education, the parallel saying is that a school's real educational priorities are most evident in its required courses.

Required courses can be a mixed blessing, however, as experienced educators know. The major potential negative: a tendency to leave, in this case, multi-faith to the required course rather than have it broadly spread across the curriculum. From this perspective, it was especially encouraging to find in the schools' pre-Parliament reports an impressive, beginning list of courses that incorporate multi-faith perspectives into more traditional, disciplinary specific courses including theology, scripture, church history, ethics, pastoral care, and spiritual practices. One also found several schools that offered optional cross-cultural experiences that highlighted multi-faith issues.

The longest list of specific answers to an item on the post-Parliament student questionnaire, and the list least easily clustered, was for the question about obstacles to multi-faith education in one's tradition or seminary. Nevertheless, the four leading clusters certainly are provocative and provide more than sufficient initial grist for reflection. They include:

- The general recognition that multi-religious issues are just not a very high priority in seminaries, denominations or parishes, all of which face a host of other pressing and legitimate concerns.
- As noted above, having a multi-faith requirement in a school's curriculum is a major advantage. Not having such a requirement is, conversely, a major obstacle amplified by the reality of limited space in any core curriculum.
- Few seminaries have students from non-Christian traditions, and many schools do not have easy access to situations in which multi-faith student classes can learn together.
- Many, if not most, seminaries are not equipped to blend multi-faith considerations into their courses.

Virtually the same general clustering of obstacles could be found within each of the schools' pre-Parliament reports: The following succinct list from one school is typical and strongly suggests that the types and sources of resistance to change within theological education are well enough known to qualify as litany:

- Many obligatory courses hard to fit in.
- Lack of advanced courses.
- Lack of coordination among departments, partner schools and other constituencies.
- Insufficient representation from faith traditions in classes.
- Lack of consensus about the value of learning from other faiths.
- Lack of practical and substantive skills within the faculty

A less noted obstacle victimizing all major faith traditions, but especially salient within minority contexts, is the memory, if not present reality, of oppression and marginalization by, or closely associated with, faith differences. As one student put it specifically from her Jewish identity:

One of the main obstacles in Judaism is a long history of anti-Semitism that has led to the creation of strong boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. This has occurred to ensure a pride amongst the Jewish people, as well as a natural reaction to reject those who reject you. In more open societies there are still cultural norms of insularity that linger and which are strengthened by any news of anti-Semitism from anywhere in the world.

The longer and apparently relatively well known points of resistance to greater investment in multi-faith theological education is perhaps indicative of the fact that thus far change has been at best incremental. Based on her observation of the project schools one of the participating professors captured the tension between urgency and implementation, or to use Govindarajan and Trimble’s terms quoted earlier, the gap between innovative idea and execution, this way, “Even in these institutions where there is a great willingness, there are still structural obstacles.” Or as a school report put it: “Even in our institution in which multi-religious education is a value, it has not yet become a priority.”

What are the virtues and skills one needs to be an effective multi-faith leader (broadly conceived)? Especially in comparison to answers to the above question regarding obstacles, answers to the project inquiry about virtues and skills needed for effective multi-faith leadership comfortably coalesced in six clusters. These include:

- At the top of the list, but only by a slight margin, was attentive and non-judgmental listening; to “purposefully, intently and genuinely listen to another with patience and respect.”
- A close second was commitment to and understanding of one’s own tradition – both as a ground for “non-anxious” listening, and because dialogue requires mutual sharing.

- Third: Openness to and empathy toward the others, curiosity, and a desire to stretch into the unfamiliar, humility and respect in engaging the stranger.
- Fourth: Contextual awareness, including of one's self; and some facility for untangling the commingling of religious and cultural differences.
- Fifth: Knowledge of the other's religious tradition, beliefs and practices; as one student put it, "one needs to become religiously bilingual or multilingual."
- Sixth: Skills in conflict resolution and reconciliation because "one if one is to genuinely engage different one needs to be able to deal with the disputes and suspicion that inevitably will arise."

Once a respondent identified his or her list of virtues and skills, the question then went on to ask about the practices by which these virtues and skills could be developed (inside and outside the classroom). The responses given for this second question were straightforwardly related to the virtues and skills articulated, and therefore will not be elaborated here except for two, one that may be somewhat counter-intuitive to many and the second that was recognized as so foundational by so many participants that it bears repeating.

The first is that of spiritual practices. Spiritual practices were present in just about every project course and prominent in many, including those heavily geared toward a theology of religions or a world religions approach. This appears to be a recognition and affirmation of the formative power of interfaith engagement noted above.

The second is the entire nexus of relational skills. As one put it,

The foremost virtue required of the multi-faith leader is the recognition that the process of interfaith engagement is an oscillation in which the generative ground is located in-between rather than in any one of the players. That is, the generative ground is relational and the awareness of relatedness and all the skills of working with relatedness are, therefore, crucial.

What kinds of multi-religious "work" do project students anticipate engaging in?

This question tended to be addressed in one or two ways, either vocationally or in terms of specific activities including those that could be engaged in even as one finished her or his studies. The listing of specific activities certainly entailed the broad categories of such scholarly treatments as Jane Smith's "Models of Christian-Muslim Dialogue" in her,

Dialogue Muslims, Christians and the challenge of Interfaith (2007). But the particularity of many of the student responses was much more colorful. Smith, for example, missed the consideration of, as one student put it, “the ways in which gardening could create a space for multi-faith dialogue.” This was part of a larger space set forth by that student’s colleagues for exploring, “the ways in which art, faith, music, poetry and mystery can play a role in fostering dialogue and understanding among religious groups” and “the ways in which women can empower one another within their religious traditions and between traditions.” More commonly articulated activities ranged from:

- The congregationally centered, such as “working with our children in being more knowledgeable and respectful of the various traditions of their school mates and neighbors,”
- To the building of organizational linkages through shared meals across a variety of faith based celebrations and holidays, interfaith councils and faith based organizing projects,
- To cooperative structuring of social action projects like Habitat for Humanity Houses and Interfaith Food Pantries.

But even with such readily identifiable ventures, the nuance of the detail added a rich texture. As one student wrote:

I am already engaged in a wonderful multi-faith state council and am a member of its most active part, The Interfaith Dialogue Study Group. We provide a variety of interfaith experiences (visits to congregations for learning, annual forum, community interfaith dialogues) and also comprehensive statements concerning issues such as poverty, education, just governance, environment, violence, etc. As a direct result of the Parliament project I hope to co-lead a multi-faith clergy women’s group in a two-day seminar addressing violence against women.

In the words of another:

My experience at the Parliament confirmed my decision to pursue teaching interfaith issues in a university context to secular people as it struck me repeatedly that the biggest obstacle to harmonious interfaith relations is a lack of education about world religions and about the other. So in ten years I’ll probably be teaching religion to secular people who are allergic to it...and say, hey, you know that yoga and self-help you’re always doing? Here’s how that practice is packaged in seventeen other traditions over three millennia.

Still others were more direct, but still with enough detail to ground a more particular point, such as the following response.

It all starts with education for me. In my parish setting I'd like to implement interfaith at the congregational level along with true theological education – not just Bible studies. After all, how can one understand the real nature of the Bible while still treating it as the Quran – and all the while not knowing they're doing it!

What is notable about the vocational possibilities mentioned by students and in school reports is that an interfaith opportunity could be imagined for just about every career choice typically pursued by seminary students. Most frequently mentioned were parish situations, with a seemingly disproportionate number of students mentioning a focus on working with children and youth, and also a large number making explicit note of hoping to use their parish positions to build partnerships with leaders and congregations from other faith traditions.

Chaplaincy work was another frequently noted vocational call that seemed to readily available itself of interfaith opportunities, if not necessities – whether hospital, university, counseling center or prison. The same was true of community or global agency work, whether local anti-poverty programs or global relief missions. The interfaith possibility, if not necessity, in such situations was captured in one school report with the following:

Work to alleviate the suffering that our communities endure serves as an ethical bridge between us. This work nurtures communication, helps establish common ground and shared values, and encourages mutual transformation.

And, the frequent mention of university teaching and academic scholarship give evidence of the presence of Ph.D. granting schools among the Parliament project seminaries. As one student expressed his aspirations:

I want to explore the ways in which inter-religious cooperation can advance religious scholarship. For example, the reading of texts. Scholars of particular religious traditions train to become better readers or interpreters of religious materials often from perspectives of their own religious traditions. While this training certainly enhances encounters with religious materials, it also limits what can be seen. By learning to read with those of other religious traditions, a scholar can expand strategies and practices of reading, thus offering fresh insights into texts from your own tradition.

IV. Issues in Need of Continuing Attention toward Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World

Multi-faith education is a relatively new development as a contender for attention within American theological education. Indeed, it wasn't until last year (2010) that the Association of Theological Schools convened a major initiative to explore the topic. One implication of this nascent status is that the Parliament related project was more like an initial reconnaissance than the advance of a well-established discipline. In any such effort, identifying key questions for further exploration is a critical outcome. The following eight themes strike this author as the project's primary contribution in this regard.

1. The strong **formative** impact of multi-faith dialogue on one's theological understanding and depth of commitment to one's own faith tradition. Indeed, as argued at the outset, this may be the strongest reason why multi-faith education and experiences should be at the core of theological education. Why is the formative influence so strong, how is it best done and as a pedagogy of formation, how does it compare to other formative pedagogy?
2. What are the overlaps and distinctives among multi-faith, multi-cultural and ecumenical? With "space" in curriculum at a competitive premium, how does one most efficiently, but still effectively, deal with these three critical, but intertwined aspects of a multi-faith world?
3. A course requirement or two is nice, but that can become the excuse for ignoring multi-faith issues and practices in the rest of the curriculum. Wouldn't it be better to incorporate a multi-faith perspective in all or most of, especially, a seminary's foundational courses? Assuming so, then what are different ways that faculty can incorporate a multi-faith perspective in their foundation theology courses? Foundational Biblical courses? Foundational church history courses? A few examples of what these might look like can be found in project seminaries.
4. What are the similarities and differences encountered when dialoging with different faith traditions? Or perhaps for a more specific point of departure -- How is intra-Abrahamic dialogue different and similar to dialogue between Christianity and Asian faiths such Buddhism and Hinduism?
5. How is "leadership" similar and different in different faith traditions? Addressing this question inevitably necessitates a prior delineation of how the relationship

between “leader” and “faithful community” and “leaders” and “civic community” differs in different traditions (further complicated, no doubt, by how this all differs across cultures)?

6. A cataloguing and summary of the state of the art for multi-faith, pastoral practices - - both those more internal to a faith community and those more public/civic.
7. Critical and systematic treatment that debates and prioritizes the virtues and skills required for leadership in a multi-faith world. But just as importantly, there is also pressing need for the same kind of treatment of the virtues and capacities required of faculty educating religious leaders for a multi-faith world.
8. A cataloguing and summary of the state of the art regarding pedagogies, methods, exercises and other best practices for multi-faith education (and eventually, a critical and systematic treatment of such practices).

V. Concluding Word

The autumn 1993 supplement to *Theological Education* was titled “Globalization: Tracing the Journey, Charting the Course.” Certainly the introductory essay to that volume, “Globalizing Theological Education: Beginning the Journey” by David S. Schuller, should be required reading for anyone invested in starting theological education on a new journey, such as equipping religious leaders for a multi-religious world. For one thing, one is reminded that multi-faith is not a “new” reality or a new journey for theological education, but was central to at least the early globalization discussions of the 1980s. The good news in the globalization of theological education story is that by the turn of the new millennium many, if not most, ATS seminaries had built explicit concerns with globalization into their curriculum, and this was in large part thanks to a variety of often short-lived initiatives to help faculty and schools along the way. The more sobering news is that multi-faith somehow got lost or overshadowed in much of this (generally losing out to multi-culturalism), and that most of the fundamental resistances identified in regard to the globalization of theological education, as alluded to in this report’s section on obstacles to multi-faith education, sound hauntingly similar to the obstacles to strengthening multi-religious perspectives within theological education named by the Parliament project students and faculty coordinators.

Perhaps most importantly, reading the Schuller essay will remind one that the globalization journey started with a small exploratory committee in 1980, and the effort continues as a work in progress 30 years later! Indeed, it was not until the early 1990s that a concrete literature began to emerge detailing the praxis of globalized theological education, that is, detailing what it would look like when conversation, reflection and commitment were actually embodied in program. From this perspective, the journey to better equip religious leaders for a multi-religious world is about a decade ahead of the globalization pace, and the “action research” represented by the Parliament project and the initiatives of the participating schools that the Parliament project sought to tap and strengthen is a contributing reason why. The theological and pedagogical case for educating religious leaders for our multi-faith world is strong; for many theological educators even compelling. An initial set of necessary skills and virtues required for leadership, and an initial set of pedagogical models and perspectives have been staked out as a solid point of departure – not only multi-faith oriented course but also multi-faith informed approaches to more disciplinary oriented courses. Networks of students, faculty and institutions with strong investments in continuing the journey have been forged. The fundamental structural challenges to furthering the journey are relatively clear. And, for both social/cultural and economic reasons the time is ripe for theological education to engage the need for fundamental change. Although theological education’s experience with globalization counsels patience, it also serves as warrant for the cumulative affect of persistent initiatives. The next legs of the endeavor to bring the world’s multi-faith reality into theological education’s core curriculum, at least in the United States, will likely be more challenging than the first. But I think it can be said with confidence that initiatives like the Parliament project summarized in this report have provided a first leg with the momentum and the conceptual and experiential base to guide and sustain the journey.

¹ Informational sources used in this report include: 1) participating school’s pre-Parliament reflection on their institution’s past experience with multi-religious education in response to the project’s five core questions; 2) digital video recordings of the five seminar sessions at the PWR; 3) an online survey conducted with students after their Parliament experience (45% return rate); 4) personal interviews with the majority of professors who coordinated the pre-Parliament courses, and informal conversations with most of the rest;. 5) post-Parliament interviews of the project’s co-directors and several informal conversations along the way; 6) review of pre-Parliament course syllabi; and 7) review of reports on the Parliament prepared by several coordinators.

Appendix 1

Faculty Coordinators by Institution

Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World

Andover-Newton Theological School and Rabbinical School of Hebrew College

Rabbi Or N. Rose
Associate Dean: Director of Informal Education
Rabbinical School of Hebrew College

Auburn Theological Seminary

Rabbi Justus N. Baird
Director, Center for Multifaith Education
Auburn Theological Seminary

Boston Theological Institute

Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, PhD
Executive Director
Boston Theological Institute

Candler School of Theology

Dr. Ellen Ott Marshall
Associate Professor of Christian Ethics and Conflict Transformation

Catholic Theological Union

Dr. Edmund Chia
Assistant Professor of Doctrinal Theology
Dr. Scott Alexander
Associate Professor of Islam

Graduate Theological Union

Professor Marianne Farina
Professor of Philosophy and Theology

Hartford Seminary

Dr. Heidi Hadsell
President

Harvard University Divinity School

Dr. Donald K. Swearer
Distinguished Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies and Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions

Luther Seminary

Dr. Steven A. Haggmark
Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and Global Missions and World Religions

Pacific School of Religion

Tat-siong Benny Liew
Professor of New Testament

Perkins School of Theology

Dr. Ruben L.F. Habito
Professor of World Religions and Spirituality

Union Theological Seminary

Dr. Paul F. Knitter
Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture

Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Dr. John J. Thatamanil
Assistant Professor of Theology

Yale University Divinity School

Dr. Kristin J. Leslie
Associate Professor in Pastoral Care and Counseling

Muslim Representation

Imam A. Malik Mujahid
Council of Islamic Organization of Greater Chicag

Appendix 2

Interreligious Panel

Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World

How is the next generation of religious leaders being educated? Does their preparation include knowledge of other religious traditions, insights into the modern interfaith movement and training in working together with leaders from other religions? This panel, will open some of these questions and begin an exploration that, it is hoped, will be carried on in places around the world where religious leaders are being educated. Emphasis is placed on the ‘initial’ nature of this discussion.

Six religious educators plus the moderator, each from a different religion, will comprise the panel. Since no one person can represent the many different ways religious leaders are educated in each tradition, the panelists will give examples from their own experience. They may also place these experiences in the larger framework of typical educations in their tradition. Interaction among the panel members and with the audience will undoubtedly lend further insights into the topic.

Donald K Swearer (Panel Moderator) is the Director for the Center for the Study of World Religions and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at Harvard Divinity School. He was previously the Charles and Harriet Cox McDowell Professor of Religion at Swarthmore College. His publications on Buddhism, comparative religions and interreligious dialogue include ‘Dialogue: The Key to Understanding Other Religions’ and ‘For the Sake of the World: The Spirit of Buddhist and Christian Monasticism’.

Hajjah Maria Ulfah is a lecturer and Vice Rector of the Institute for Qur’anic Studies in Jakarta, Indonesia. In 1980, she won both the national Qur’an recitation competition in Jakarta and the international Qur’an recitation competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. As a professional Qur’an reciter, she has appeared all over Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia and Japan.

Rabbi Michael Melchior hails from Denmark, where his family members have served as Chief Rabbis for seven generations. In 1999, he was elected to the Knesset, where he became one of Israel’s leading legislators. He helped to enact legislative reforms in the areas of education, children’s rights, the environment and social justice. Today, Rabbi Melchior leads a variety of civil society movements, including a forum that promotes dialogue and understanding among different strands of Israeli society.

Rev Dr Antje Jackelén is Bishop of Lund in the Lutheran Church of Sweden, the first woman bishop to be popularly elected the Church of Sweden. She was previously a professor of systematic theology/religion and science at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and director of the Zygon Center for Religion and Science. She is the author of ‘Time and Eternity’ (2005) and numerous articles in a variety of languages. Currently, she serves as president of the European Society for the Study of Science and

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Professor Pal Ahluwalia is Pro Vice Chancellor of Education, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of South Australia. He has published many books and articles and was appointed a UNESCO Chair in Transnational Diasporas and Reconciliation Studies in 2008. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

Swami Atmapriyananda was inspired by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideal of renunciation and service and was drawn to monastic life through his close contact with monks of the Ramakrishna Order. He taught physics at Vidyamandira College for nearly 27 years. When the Ramakrishna Mission established Vivekananda University in 2005, Swami Atapriyananda became its first Vice Chancellor, a position he currently holds.

Eshin Nishimura has been a Rinzai Zen Buddhist priest since 1936. He is former president of Hanazono University in Kyoto, Japan and is also a major modern scholar in the Kyoto School of thought. A current professor in the Department of Buddhism at Hanazono University, he has lectured at universities throughout the world on the subject of Zen Buddhism. He has been a participant in many dialogues on the relationship of Zen to Christianity and Western philosophy.