Standing with Unfamiliar Company on Uncommon Ground: The Catholic Church and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

by

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Theory and Policy Studies in Education
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Abstract

This study explores the struggle of the Catholic Church to be true to itself and its mission in the midst of other religions, in the context of the non-Catholic American culture, and in relation to the modern world and its discontents. As milestones of the global interfaith movement, American religious freedom and pluralism, and the relation of religion to modernity, the Chicago Parliaments of Religions offer a unique window through which to view this Catholic struggle at work in the religious public square created by the Parliaments and the evolution of that struggle over the course of the century framed by the two Chicago events.

In relation to other religions, the Catholic Church stretched itself from an exclusivist position of being the only true and good religion to an inclusivist position of recognizing that truth and good can be present in other religions. Uniquely, Catholic involvement in the centennial Parliament made the Church stretch itself even further, beyond the exclusivist-inclusivist spectrum into a pluralist framework in which the Church acted humbly as one religion among many.

In relation to American culture, the Catholic Church stretched itself from a Eurocentric and monarchic worldview with claims of Catholic supremacy to the American alternative of
democracy, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state.

In relation to modernity, the Church stretched itself from viewing the modern world as an enemy to be fought and conquered to befriending modernity and designing some specific accommodations to it.

In these three relationships, there was indeed a shift, but not at all a clean break. Instead a stretch occurred, acknowledging a lived intra-Catholic tension between religious exclusivism and inclusivism, between a universal Catholic identity and Catholic inculturation in America (and in other cultures), and between the immutability of Catholic eternal truths and their translatability into the new languages offered by the modern world. In all this the Second Vatican Council was the major catalyst. For all three cases the Chicago Parliaments of Religions serve as environments conducive to the raising of important questions about Catholic identity, the Catholic understanding of non-Catholics, and Catholic interfaith relations.
To my beloved parents, Juan and Nelsa,

my first and ongoing teachers,

and

to those in the Roman Catholic Church

who have the freedom to be themselves,

the courage to hold different opinions,

the humility to accept their fallibility,

and the love to embrace the Church

in the totality of its complexity.
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Table of Contents

Point of departure: a frame of reference and a personal note

“Can the Church afford not to be there?”

Towards the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago

First steps towards Catholic involvement

The decision of the Catholic Church to participate

A Pilgrimage to Chicago

Catholic Educational Exhibit and Columbian Catholic Congress

“It would seem more advisable to hold assemblies apart”

The World’s Parliament of Religions

Catholic delegates and Catholic Day

A Catholic dissenter who was not invited

Adjournment of the Parliament

Mixed reactions

A Methodist minister’s call to the Pope

Toronto’s little Congress on Religion and Education

European responses and Vatican discouragement

The Parliament idea “on hold”
“Let the fresh air come in”: From Anti-Modernism to Aggiornamento

A new *contemptus mundi*: modernity as an enemy

The enemy inside de house: the heresy of the twentieth century

The Second Vatican Council: the Catholic Church embracing modernity

The good Pope and Vatican II

The Catholic Church and other religions

John Paul II and the Assisi Event of 1986

“Your efforts deserve our most careful consideration”

Towards a Centennial Celebration of the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions

The 1933 Parliament of Religions in Chicago

“We are both beneficiaries”

Attempts of other potential stakeholders

The decision of the Catholic Church to participate

“Inexperienced, underfunded, understaffed and running out of time”

“The most diverse celebration in history”

The Parliament of the World’s Religions

An almost totally inclusive program

Conflict at the Centennial Parliament

India-related issues

Jewish withdrawal
Greek Orthodox withdrawal

Other issues

“In omnia, Caritas”

The Complexity of the Catholic presence

Vatican II and parallel ecumenical developments

Common ethical concerns

Aboriginal-Catholic identity

Buddhist-Catholic dialogue

Hindu-Catholic interaction

Catholic Women at the Parliament

Catholic critics, dissenters, “apostates” and absentees

The Declaration towards a Global Ethic

The Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

Closing Plenary and Aftermath

Point of arrival, not a final destination: The Catholic Church and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

The meaning(s) of Catholic identity and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

The non-Catholic Other and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

Catholic interfaith relations at the Chicago Parliaments of Religions
“What remains of the world of deeds is the world of words” (Historiography survey)

The 1893 Parliament of Religions

The 1993 Parliament of Religions

Sources, Archives, and Bibliography
List of Appendices

Appendix A:  Timeline

Appendix B:  Catholics in Chicago’s 1893 Parliament of Religions program

Appendix C:  Catholics in Chicago’s 1993 Parliament of Religions program

Appendix D:  Alphabetic Gender Breakdown of 1993 Catholic Participants
Point of Departure: A frame of reference and a personal note

This is the story of a community that for centuries understood itself as the exclusive recipient of what it considers the greatest of all gifts: the knowledge of truth and the path to salvation through the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God. Entrusted by its Master and Savior with the task of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the whole world, this community has always considered engagement in missionary activity around the world to be one of its primary duties and rights, so that people of every race, language, and nation may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. With a millenary tradition rooted in the soil seeded by the blood of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and in the face of diverse and sometimes competing centers of Christian faith, this community—vastly spread throughout the world—came to understand itself as the primary heir and dispenser of the inscrutable riches of the grace of God. This claim of primacy and authority took a more definite shape in the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, conceived as the successor of Peter and understood to be entrusted with the office of being the Vicar of Christ on earth. The primacy of the Bishop of Rome became a visible sign of universal unity, and a distinct feature of the community. This community has come to see itself as above any other form of Christianity, and certainly above any other form of religion at large, and it hopes and prays that those who believe in the good news of salvation throughout the world may eventually be united as one flock under one shepherd, that is the Pope.

However, the claims of this community, a community within which this author is at home, are challenged by the fact that there are other forms of Christianity that claim to be no less or even more authentic and genuine expressions of the Christian message. And there are non-Christian religions with either equally exclusivist claims, or with ancient and venerable traditions much older than Christianity, and upheld with equal fervor by their adherents.
The exposure of this community to other forms of Christianity and to multiple non-Christian religions as one among many found a unique expression in the two Parliaments of Religions that convened in the city of Chicago one hundred years apart.

This study explores the struggle of the Catholic Church to be true to itself and its mission in the midst of other religions, in the context of the non-Catholic American culture, and in relation to the modern world and its discontents. As milestones of the global interfaith movement, American religious freedom and pluralism, and the relation of religion to modernity, the Chicago Parliaments of Religions offer a unique window through which to view this Catholic struggle at work in the religious public square created by the Parliaments and the evolution of that struggle over the course of the century between the two Chicago events.

The century framed by the Chicago Parliaments of Religions witnessed the millenary ability of the Catholic Church to cope with change outside and inside itself. In relation to other religions, the Catholic Church stretched itself from an exclusivist position of being the only true and good religion to an inclusivist position of recognizing that truth and good can be present in other religions while continuing to understand itself as the divinely chosen recipient and guardian of the revealed truths that light the way to salvation, and as the dispenser of God-given gifts that nourish goodness in those who receive them. Uniquely, Catholic involvement in the centennial Parliament made the Church stretch itself even further, beyond the exclusivist-inclusivist spectrum into a pluralist framework in which the Church acted humbly as one religion among many.

In relation to American culture, the Catholic Church stretched itself from a Eurocentric and monarchic worldview with claims of Catholic supremacy to the American alternative of democracy, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. By doing this, the Church experienced the tension of being Catholic and universal while American and

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1 Sigmund Freud’s choice of a title for his *Civilization and its Discontents* has been alluring to many. A variety of writers have borrowed the last part of Freud’s title and have added it to a number of subjects, such as *Globalization and its discontents* and so forth.
national at the same time.

In relation to modernity, the Church stretched itself from viewing the modern world as an enemy to be fought and conquered to befriending modernity and designing some specific accommodations to it. Particularly challenging in this milieu was the phenomenon of secularization in its multiple manifestations.

In these three relationships, there was indeed a shift, but not at all a clean break. Instead a stretch occurred, acknowledging a lived intra-Catholic tension between religious exclusivism and inclusivism, between a universal Catholic identity and Catholic inculturation in America (and in other cultures), and between the immutability of Catholic eternal truths and their translatability into the new languages offered by the modern world. In all this the Second Vatican Council was the major catalyst. For all three cases the Chicago Parliaments of Religions serve as environments conducive to the raising of important questions about Catholic identity, the Catholic understanding of non-Catholics, and Catholic interfaith relations.

The story of the Roman Catholic community and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions has many centers in space and time: the new and the old worlds, Chicago and Rome, the years 1893 and 1993, and key milestones of the century in between, primarily the Anti-Modernist controversy within Catholicism, and the Second Vatican Council.

Planted as one among many in the soil of the United States of America, the New Promised Land, the Catholic community received an invitation to come together with American faith communities and others from around the world for the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions, the first event of its kind in the history of humanity. The leaders of our community had reasons to say “yes” to this invitation. They also had good and many reasons to say “no.” But—despite its internal diversity of opinions on the matter of participating—they chose to say “yes”. Thus our community came to stand with unfamiliar company, on uncommon ground, and it took part in the dawning of the global conversation among the religions of the world. This global interfaith movement had the potential to inaugurate an era of humility, justice and peace in a world tired of arrogance,
injustice, and violence. There were those in the community who marveled at the launching of the interfaith conversation, and others who resented it greatly as mingling with heretics and idolaters.

When news about this affair reached the members of the community in the Old World, it met with contrasting reactions. There were those who marveled at what had happened by the shore of Lake Michigan and wanted to bring it to the banks of the Seine. There were also those who were irritated by the behavior of our community in the New World and despised what had taken place. When the idea of having a similar interfaith gathering in the Old World began to take shape, they disagreed on what was best, so the matter was brought to the attention of the Vatican.

News and concerns about the gathering of religions in the New World had already reached the Vatican through a cautionary appraisal of the Papal Apostolic Delegate in the United States. The matter was temporarily settled when Pope Leo XIII signed an admonition advising that, while those meetings had been tolerated so far, it was advisable not to take part in such gatherings of religions anymore unless they were convened and hosted by officially appointed representatives of the Church. Exposure to the variety of trees and fruits offered in the public garden provided by inter-religious gatherings was seen as dangerous for the health of the community. After all, there was only One Vine from which the community could be fed. Thus the community abstained from taking part with other communities in many such gatherings for the next seventy years.

Pope Leo XIII saw the prospect of a Parliament of Religions in Paris as a symptom of a much larger threat—modernity, which favored reason over faith, science over religion, individual freedom over obedience, and innovation over tradition. To protect itself, the Vatican issued documents and armored the community with a strategic plan to safeguard its invaluable and timeless treasures from the surrounding dangers. This was a time of great vigilance and fear in the life of the community. A holy war against the enemy

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outside was made of holy battles against the likely infiltration of the enemy inside the community’s fortress, because, it was feared, not all the members of the community shared negative views about modernity. As a result, the Vatican thought it necessary to monitor closely the community and examine its own officers, testing their loyalty and disciplining or expelling them if necessary. According to the Vatican, some important casualties were inevitable (although very painful) for the sake of doctrinal orthodoxy, which was also the guarantee for the unity of the community.

With the passing of time, Pope John XXIII assumed the papal office. He did not perceive modernity to be as dangerous and pernicious as his predecessors had thought. Modernity was slowly taking over the world and the community had to reassess its position in relation to this new situation. The fierce battle against innovation did not prevent some workers of the vineyard from savoring new wine and trusting that the refreshing new vintage flowed from the same Eternal Vine. So Pope John XXIII convened the second Vatican Council, calling on leaders of the community from all the ends of the earth to sample the new wine, make more, and sew fresh wineskins to pour it into, as the Synoptic Gospels suggest,\(^3\) so that everybody in the community, from East and West and from North and South, could drink it. And in the community there were those who marveled at the great deeds of Vatican II and those who resented them greatly.

A cause and a consequence of Vatican II was the global interfaith movement, which had continued despite the official absence of the community during the previous seventy years. In Vatican II the community not only acknowledged other legitimate branches of the Great Vine but recognized that other ancient trees bore true and good fruits in the public garden of religious diversity. So, with Vatican II, the community became an official interlocutor in the global process of interfaith dialogue.

In more recent times Pope John Paul II came from the eastern confines of the Old World to occupy the throne of St. Peter in the Eternal City and, as the pastor of the universal

\(^3\) Mark 2: 22; Matthew 9: 17; Luke 5: 37-38.
Church, he set out on a journey to the very edges of the world. There he met with members of the religions of the world, a world confronted as much as ever by injustice and violence. In the hope of launching a truce in the face of the new millennium, he extended an invitation to the leaders of the religions of the world to gather not far from the Eternal City, in the little town of the beloved Poverello, Saint Francis of Assisi, the one who called the sun his brother, the moon his sister, and who wanted to become himself an instrument of peace. The leaders were invited there to pray together, but separately in their respective traditions, for peace in the world. And there were those in the community who marveled at the great interfaith deeds of John Paul II, and others who resented them greatly.

In the meantime, Chicago—like many other cities in the United States—had been transformed by waves of immigrants into a reservoir of the most diverse religions of the world. When the centennial of the first Parliament of Religions approached, conversations began in Chicago and elsewhere on planning a centennial commemoration. The community once again received an invitation to take part. The leaders of the community again had reasons to say “yes.” They also had good reasons to say “no.” The community was now the largest religion in both the United States of America and in the world and had no need of any springboard from which to assert its position. Furthermore, the commemoration was largely an affair organized by the smaller religious minorities of Chicago, with which the community had very little to do. There were also other pressing issues for the community at the time, as it tried to distill the new wine of Vatican II on American soil. But—despite all this—the community chose to say “yes” and again stand with unfamiliar company on uncommon ground. Thus the community became part of the centennial celebration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions. In taking the form of one among many, the community could be understood to be humbling itself in an inspiring emulation of its Master who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.”

But it did so not without internal tension about contrasting views regarding Catholic

4 Philippians 2: 6-11.
identity and the role of the Church in the religious public square offered by the 1993 Parliament.

The 1993 Chicago centennial provided an opportunity for the community to test its capacity to retain its unity in the teeth of its own internal diversity while taking part in the most diverse religious public square the world had ever seen. It was also an opportunity for the community to test its skills and wisdom vis-à-vis religious diversity at large. After all, diversity was vividly characteristic of the community and it had always been thus. In fact, the community was made of diversity. Diversity was so essential to it that in its early years the community managed to bridge the ancient pre-Socratic abyss between oneness and multiplicity in regards to the origin of the universe by embracing the One God Creator as a Trinity of Divine Persons. The community also had a millenary history of diversifying the object of its devotion through the veneration of God’s friends, whom the community associated with the most diverse themes and causes, as the polytheistic communities used to do from time immemorial. But all this the community managed to do within a monotheistic framework, a symbol of its own unity in the midst of its own internal diversity. Hence the community had enough resources to be reminded of the goodness of its own internal diversity and to process the extraordinary religious diversity displayed at the 1993 Centennial commemoration of the many religions.

Together with its own internal diversity in the midst of the larger religious diversity, other important issues were at stake in Catholic participation in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions. These included: the meaning and extension of Catholic identity; the relation between faith and culture, specifically between the Catholic Church and American culture; the relation between tradition and modernity, continuities and discontinuities in the face of change; the implications of the Church’s exposure to the religious public square; the need for a contextual Catholic theology of religions; and alternative forms of Catholic interfaith engagement. Catholics needed to agree on skills for living with the “golden rule” of religious freedom: the willingness to grant other religions the rights demanded for one’s own. Of primary concern was the Catholic factor in American religious history and in the global interfaith movement. As exemplified in the relation
between the Catholic Church and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions, American religious pluralism cannot overlook the active and growing presence of the Catholic Church as a major player in the shaping of American religious identity. On the other hand, the Catholic Church cannot be fully rooted in modern America without acknowledging and embracing the reality of religious diversity. Similarly at the global level, the global interfaith movement cannot authentically be interfaith and global without the committed and active participation of the Roman Catholic Church. Nor can the Church’s mission in the modern world be actualized without respectful and genuine dialogue with people of other religions.

Many have written about the 1893 and 1993 Chicago Parliaments of Religions, the global interfaith movement they fostered, and the most important aims they envisioned in an age of globalized religion. Many have written about Catholic modern history, the modern Papacy, the anti-Modernist controversy, and the second Vatican Council. Much has also been written about the impact Vatican II had on the Catholic Church in the United States of America. However, very few have paid attention to the intercourse between the Catholic Church and the two great gatherings of religions by the shore of Lake Michigan.  

I first became aware of the Chicago Parliaments of Religions when I was a graduate student in Washington, DC, precisely at the time of the 1993 centennial Parliament. But I did not need to be in Chicago to have a glimpse of what was taking place in the Windy City. Driving from the White House north on Washington’s 16th Street, NW, passing

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5 Among the 1893 Parliament scholars, Richard Seager and Eric Ziolkowski stand out. Marcus Braybrooke has also a major role in crafting a niche for the 1893 Parliament as the catalyst for the modern interfaith movement. Regarding modern Catholic history, the list is vast, but Hubert Jedin’s multi-volume History of the Church stands out as a balanced and comprehensive editorial project, with a historiographic methodological approach, a very helpful general reference resource. On the impact of Vatican II on America, the list is also large, but the works of Mark Massa, Michael Cuneo, and the editorial efforts of Margaret O’Brien Steifelds and Peter Steifelds have been particularly helpful to the present writer. In relation to Catholic involvement in the 1893 Parliament, James Cleary stands in solitude. For details, see general bibliography and the historiography essay that serves as its introduction.
many different houses of worship, was already an exposure to the religious diversity the Chicago Parliament was all about. For a Catholic young man, born and raised by the shore of Maracaibo’s lake in Venezuela, the religious diversity around the Potomac River was mind-boggling. A few years later I found myself immersed in a veritable parliament of religions while I studied for a Master of Divinity at Harvard University. Harvard Divinity School included participants from more than fifty different religious affiliations. This laboratory of religious diversity helped pave the way for my work as the director of the Canadian Churches’ Forum for Global Ministries and later as the first interfaith liaison officer of the Canadian Council of Churches, both located in Toronto. At the Forum I conducted interfaith educational visits to different religious venues in the Greater Toronto area. At the Council I was responsible for a feasibility study on the establishment of an interfaith reference group. The study included interviewing the interfaith liaison officers of all the member churches of the Council across Canada. Its results were published in book form as a bilingual report entitled *Who is My Neighbour?*\(^6\)

More recently, my doctoral studies on the interface of globalization, religion, and education set me on a journey around the world with a focus on Asia, the results of which I later presented at the V Parliament of the World’s Religions in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009. This provided me with first hand exposure to the Parliament of Religions experience. A semester as a visiting student at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome prepared the way for my research work in the Propaganda Fide Archives and the Secret Archives in the Vatican, which was followed by research in Chicago in the Archives of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. Both consultations were for me an immersion in the two primary foci of this study.

As the largest religious organization, and one of the oldest still standing in the contemporary religious demographics of the planet, the Catholic Church’s willingness or

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Reticence to engage other faiths in a spirit of good will continues to matter in terms of humanity’s prospects for religious freedom, respect for diversity and global peace. The Catholic Church’s involvement in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions offers a unique case study of Catholic involvement in the religious public square. It is on this intersection that this study intends to shed light with the hope of raising awareness not only of what has already been accomplished in the most important and critical field of Catholic interfaith relations, but also of what still remains to be achieved.
“Can the Church afford not to be there?”

The decision of the American Archbishops to allow the participation of the Catholic Church in the World’s Parliament of Religions of 1893 in Chicago was a bold initiative with groundbreaking and multifaceted implications for the Church. At stake were the most relevant issues of acknowledging other religions, tacitly endorsing religious freedom, exposing the Church to open scrutiny in the American religious public square, exercising autonomy in regards to the Vatican, managing internal tensions in the face of the greater tension between the Church and the American context, and working cooperatively with Protestants to stage the first global forum of the religions of the world. The bottom-line of the Archbishops’ decision was to demonstrate to Americans and perhaps to the Church itself the compatibility between the Catholic faith and American democracy. This did not go unopposed either within Church circles or among anti-Catholic nativists. For all this, the fourth Columbian centenary and the Chicago World’s Fair to celebrate it, within which the Parliament of Religions was organized, offered the Church an unparalleled opportunity to manifest its place in America. Under the umbrella of the World’s Fair, the Church organized a major Catholic Educational Exhibit, ran a conference (The Columbian Catholic Congress) under the auspices of the World’s Congress Auxiliary, and, in particular, participated in the Parliament of Religions, a key moment in the accommodation of the Catholic Church in America and one that ironically both made the Catholic Church a player at the dawning of the modern global interfaith movement and helped close the Catholic door to the same movement for nearly seventy years.

This chapter covers a span of four years, from the moment the idea of a Parliament of Religions was first posed in 1889 to the conclusion of the Columbian Catholic Congress, two days before the inauguration of the Parliament of Religions. It is divided into three main sections: the origin and development of the idea of a Parliament of Religions and the first steps towards Catholic involvement, the decision of the American Archbishops
to endorse Catholic participation, and a focus on Chicago, the host city of the Parliament and of the Catholic events organized at the Fair prior to the Parliament of Religions.

Towards the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago

The idea of a global gathering of religions and associated religious congresses was first conceived by Charles Carroll Bonney, a Chicago lawyer and a layman of the Church of the New Jerusalem, also known as the Swedenborgian Church. According to Bonney, the idea resulted from the great expectation surrounding the choice of Chicago as the site for a World’s Fair to commemorate the fourth centenary of Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the New World. “While thinking about the nature and proper characteristics of this great undertaking,” Bonney wrote, “there came into my mind the idea of a comprehensive and well-organized Intellectual and Moral Exposition of the Progress of Mankind, to be held in connection with the proposed display of material forms.” Bonney penned a proposal for such a gathering on September 20, 1889 and it was published in *The Statesman* the following month.

The crowning glory of the World’s Fair of 1892 should not be the exhibit then to be made of the material triumphs, industrial achievements, and mechanical victories of man, however magnificent that display may be. Something higher and nobler is demanded by the enlightened and progressive spirit of the present age. In connection with that important event, the world of government, jurisprudence, finance, science, literature, education, and religion should be represented in a Congress of statesmen, jurists, financiers, scientists, literati, teachers, and theologians, greater in numbers and more widely representative of “peoples, nations, and tongues” than any other assemblage which has ever yet been convened.\(^1\)

In proposing a global congress on humanistic and social issues, Bonney intended a series of events that would transcend the merely material and industrial nature of the great Exposition. The idea was well received and on October 15, 1889 a general committee of

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organization was appointed with Bonney as chairman. One year later, on October 30, 1890, the World’s Congress Auxiliary of the World’s Columbian Exposition was formed with Bonney as president. While the Chicago World’s Exposition itself was envisioned as a major learning event with its own socio-anthropological displays of evolutionist theory and technological achievements, the task of the World’s Congress Auxiliary was to bring together experts from various fields of knowledge. The Auxiliary organized more than two hundred congresses from May 15 to October 28, 1893 on the most varied of subjects – the economy, society, politics, education, and the arts. These congresses, pioneers of the modern professional conferences, offered a platform for knowledge exchange. It is also clear that in Bonney’s original plan, religion was just one among many subjects he wished to see addressed. However, as the overall plan of the congresses unfolded, the Congress of religions began to stand out from the rest.

It was originally believed that a gathering of the religions of the world at the Chicago World Exposition would be the first ever of its kind. Nevertheless, as the word of the Congress began to spread, memories of previous ecumenical initiatives surfaced, including the Pan-Buddhist Congress convened by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in Palatiputra (today Patna), India in about 250 BCE. Also recalled was an inter-religious House of Worship established by Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great in Fatehpur Sikri, India, in the last quarter of the 16th century CE and immortalized in Alfred Tennyson’s poem “Akbar’s Dream.” More recently there were proposals for such a gathering from people and institutions as varied as John Comenius, W. F. Warren, the President of Boston University, the Free Religious Association of Boston, and Chinese writers and poets. Comparisons were also made with the Ecumenical Christian Council of Nicaea in

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4 John Henry Barrows, editor, *The World’s Parliament of Religions, an illustrated and popular story of the World’s First Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in connections with the*
325 CE and a Paris gathering of men representing various religions during the French Revolution, all suggested as forerunners of the proposed “council on the shore of Lake Michigan, a rehearsal of faiths.” However, Max Müller—the most famous absentee of the Parliament - refuted such comparisons, specifically the ones related to Ashoka, the Council of Nicaea, and Akbar, as taking great liberties with historical facts. To this Oxford scholar, “the Parliament of Religions at Chicago stands unique, unprecedented in the whole history of the world.” Parliament critic Clay Lancaster adds that “the Chicago Parliament differed from its predecessors in that it issued invitations to participants all over the earth, and its doors were open to the general public.”

The momentum that began to build up around the Parliament idea certainly engaged the imagination of Bonney, who saw himself as the original instrument to bring the Congress to fruition, tracing back his preparation for the task to his Sunday school years as a religious pupil, his association with the Church of the New Jerusalem and its inclusive tenets regarding other religions, and his acquaintance with members and ministers of many different faith groups in the religiously diverse, though mostly Christian, environment of late 19th century Chicago. As a first step, Bonney established a General Committee on Religious Congresses and appointed the Rev. John Henry Barrows, a gifted Presbyterian minister and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago, as its

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chair, a commitment that Barrows accepted on December 31, 1889. According to Bonney, Barrows “very soon proved his marvelous fitness for the great task entrusted to him, and devoted his energies to it with a tireless energy that assured success.”

Barrows was likely the one who came up with the term “parliament” to refer to the event entrusted to his planning, a word probably suggested to him by Tennyson’s line: “In the Parliament of man, the federation of the world.” The term ‘parliament’ clearly differentiated and singled out the event, originally designated as the Union Congress, from the other, smaller and separate denominational congresses scheduled by the General Committee on Religious Congresses to take place in the context of the World’s Fair before, during and after the interfaith event. Barrows embraced the Parliament as a once-in-a-life-time opportunity that he felt changed the course of his life. Others agreed. The Rev. Alfred Momerie praised Barrows at the Parliament’s close. “As chairman of this first Parliament of Religions he has won immortal glory, which I fancy nothing in the future can very much augment.”

But all Barrows’ efforts would not have been enough without the Chicago World Exhibition. The Parliament of Religions would likely never have crystallized outside of the framework provided by the World’s Fair. Despite the implications and complexities of “exhibiting religion,” the fact that the founding sponsor of the Parliament was a secular organization seemed to initially provide a neutral ground making it easier for the different religions to accept the invitation to gather, even though the event’s underlying

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9 Bonney, “The Genesis,” 74-78, 81, 84.
11 Houghton, Neely’s History of the Parliament of Religions, 847.
12 Burris, Exhibiting Religions, xiv-xviii.
agenda, at least in the minds of its American organizers, would advance what was for them a given, the supremacy of Christianity.\textsuperscript{13}

The spirit of religious freedom in America and the notion of America as a free market of ideas also contributed to the Parliament’s feasibility. The Parliament initiative was certainly original to the Chicago Exhibition as no previous world’s fair had ever included religion in their catalogues. A proposal for a congress of Protestants of all nations in the context of Britain’s Great Exhibition in 1851 never materialized. A proposed display of Bibles in 130 languages, planned for the Crystal Palace, also failed to take place. But that did not mean religion was absent from the 1851 Exhibition. The Bibles were eventually displayed near an exhibition of printing machines and it was reported that almost 400,000 Bibles were distributed or sold throughout the London event. Moreover, in addition to Christian worship services conducted in English, Church services in foreign languages were arranged for visiting Protestants, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of the Church of England, officially sanctioned the 1851 Great Exhibition by attending the opening ceremony. Of course, the idea that Catholics might be invited to participate alongside Protestants was totally out of the question.\textsuperscript{14}

First steps towards Catholic involvement

The situation in the United States was different. Not only was a Parliament of Religions possible, but the event became one of the highlights of the Chicago Exhibition. As Alfred Momerie stated at the closing of the Parliament, “I have seen all the great exhibitions of Europe during the last fifteen years, and I can safely say that the World’s Columbian Exposition is greater than all of them put together, and the Parliament of


\textsuperscript{14} Burris, \textit{Exhibiting Religion}, 49-53.
Religions is, in my opinion, greater than the exposition.”¹⁵ The situation was also different regarding the involvement of Catholics who—despite historic tensions with Protestants—were not only welcomed, but deliberately courted to attend by the Parliament’s Protestant organizers. Bonney’s ecumenical spirit and his idea of a Parliament of Religions definitely included the Catholic Church. His favorable attitude towards Catholics was portrayed in a story he told about a fire that destroyed a little Catholic Church in south Chicago and how the Protestants of the neighborhood got together to support the rebuilding of the Catholic Church. This he used “as an illustration of the essential principle on which was organized the World’s Parliament of Religions,”¹⁶ which was one of cooperation and mutual support beyond individual differences.

For his part, Barrows knew from the earliest stages of planning that the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church was critical if Christianity was to be fully represented and the Parliament was to live up to its universal claims. As his daughter recalled, “the participation of the Roman Catholic Church was also of supreme moment, since an invitation to the Pagan world issued merely by Protestant Christianity would have comparatively little weight.” Barrows’ personal attitude towards the Church of Rome was mixed. As a young traveler in Rome he dismissed the Catholic veneration of images as superstition and quoted Luther referring to the Eternal City as the second Babylon. Furthermore, the living conditions and lack of democratic traditions in Catholic countries he visited did not make a positive impression on him. But, his decade as a pastor in Chicago made him recognize that “the lower elements of the population can be restrained from anarchy only by the priests” and he was certainly impressed by Catholic leaders like Henry Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster, “who was mourned by millions of England’s poor, and whose Christianity was greater than his cardinal’s hat.

¹⁵ Houghton, Neely’s History of the Parliament of Religions, 22.
and more divine than his princely office.” Eventually, Barrows would exalt the quality and openness of Catholics in America as opposed to Europe.¹⁷

In addition to extending an invitation to Catholics so as to sustain the historic character of Christianity at the Parliament and the global claims of the event, in the American context the absence of the Catholic Church from the Parliament would have signaled a myopic divorce between the Parliament initiative and American demographics. The 1890 US Census revealed that the Catholic population had dramatically multiplied from just 25,000 in 1790 and 1,200,000 in 1840 to become the largest religious denomination in the United States in 1890: 6,231,000, followed by Methodists Episcopal (2,240,000), Regular Baptists –colored (1,362,000), Regular Baptists-South (1,308,000), and Methodists Episcopal -South (1,210,000). Catholics, at approximately ten percent of the total American population, represented a major American faith community. Furthermore, when it came to the value of property, the census revealed that the Catholic Church also stood first with $118,000,000, followed by Methodists Episcopal ($97,000,000), Protestants Episcopal ($81,000,000), Northern Presbyterians (74,000,000) and Southern Baptists (49,000,000).¹⁸

Since Chicago was the cradle of the Parliament idea, it was the Catholic leadership in Chicago that the organizers of the Parliament approached. His Grace the Most Rev. Patrick Augustine Feehan, the first Archbishop of Chicago, was appointed member of the Committee of Organization on Religious Congresses chaired by Barrows and which also

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¹⁷ Barrows, John Henry Barrows, 256, 103, 232, 257.

included local religious leaders from various Protestant denominations. It also included Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of the Jewish “Church” in Chicago, as it was called by Bonney.  

Feehan was a zealous bishop. He first arrived in Chicago in 1880 to confront the ruins of the great Chicago fire and an increasingly diversified demographic landscape with Catholic immigrants arriving from central and southern Europe. He was instrumental not only in rebuilding but also in expanding the Catholic Church in Chicago. By the time he was invited to join in the planning of the Parliament, Feehan, admired for his warmth and openness, was celebrating the Silver Jubilee of his priestly ordination, an occasion where he was honored for his accomplishments. “Archbishop Feehan has been unceasing in his good work since his arrival in Chicago. In nine years, he has regularly visited his diocese, traveling by railroads and wagon roads wherever his services were needed, and thus it was that he had confirmed over one hundred thousand persons; ordained one hundred and seventy-five priests, and had laid the cornerstone of sixty churches; dedicated seventy-two, and invariably seconded the labors of his priests in all their undertakings.” While his pastoral priorities would prevent Bishop Feehan from being personally involved in the specific work and demands of the Parliament planning, his presence together with other Catholic prelates on the presiding platform during the opening ceremony of the Parliament of Religions underscored his personal support of the event.

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20 Barrows, John Henry Barrows, 309.
21 100 years: The History of the Church of the Holy Name, the chapel that became a Cathedral and the Story of Catholicism in Chicago (Chicago: Published by the Cathedral of the Holy Name, 1949), 167 leaves, n.p.
22 James Cleary reports from the correspondence at the University of Notre Dame Manuscript Collections that “Barrows complained to William Onahan that Feehan was too busy to meet with the committee.” James Cleary, “Catholic Participation in the World’s Parliament of Religions,” The Catholic Historical Review, 55, 4 (1970): 589.
Feehan’s support was a clear example of endorsement at the local level. In the minds of its local organizers, however, the Parliament was meant to be an event of global proportions. In June 1891 Barrows issued a preliminary invitation to the world. More than 3,000 letters of invitation were sent to 30 different countries. Eight months later, on February 25, 1892, he wrote the first report on the interest his invitation generated. Barrows eventually reported that “for thirty months nearly all the railroads and steamship lines of the world were unconsciously working for the Parliament of Religions.” He got replies in Chinese, Japanese, Hindustani, Greek, Armenian, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Norwegian, Bohemian, Polish and English.  

Barrows’ worldwide outreach included the Vatican. Barrows took the liberty of writing directly to Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, the Vatican Secretary of State, on March 17, 1892, on the occasion of a public pronouncement from Pope Leo XIII referring very favorably to the upcoming “festival of nations” in Chicago. In his letter, Barrows addressed Rampolla as “my dear Brother in Christ,” and presented to the Secretary of State a copy of his report on the Parliament project containing supportive references from several Catholic prelates. Barrows also indicated to Rampolla his own desire that the ultimate outcome of the Parliament would be the reunion of Christendom. Finally, Barrows requested that his report be brought to the attention of the Pope in the hope that the Pontiff might issue a letter “commending this fraternal effort to bring mankind together, as he in his kindness and wisdom may be disposed to offer us.”

While the Pope did not issue the letter requested by Barrows, it remains to be explored if and to what degree Barrows’ petition helped spark the Pontiff’s subsequent encyclical letter Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae, issued on the occasion of the Pope’s Episcopal Jubilee, offering its own vision of the reunion of Christendom. There was, however, a notable difference between what Barrows requested and the papal letter. Barrows’


\[24\] Barrows to Rampolla, March 17, 1892. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segretaria di Stato (SS), 1896, Rubric 262, Fasc. 4, p. 92, n. 9593.
underlying agenda for the Parliament was to show the triumph of Christianity over all other forms of religious expressions, an ecumenical Christianity infused by Protestantism. The Papal encyclical also presented a triumphal Christianity but as articulated by Rome. The Pope’s letter sought “to bind every nation and people more closely to Himself, and make manifest everywhere the salutary influence of the See of Rome,” where the Successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ holds “upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”

Despite Barrows’ attempts to cast his net widely in the vast Catholic sea, the most strategic endorsement from the Catholic ranks Barrows needed for the Chicago Parliament was not from the Vatican. It was from Baltimore, the see of James Cardinal Gibbons. Gibbons was the most prominent and among the most influential Catholic leaders in the United States. He was elevated to the rank of cardinal one year after the death of his only predecessor holding that ecclesiastical dignity in the United States, John Cardinal McCloskey from New York. Gibbons exercised his leadership of the Catholic Church during very controversial times inside the Church concerning the relation between Catholic identity and American citizenship. The Cardinal was regarded as favoring Catholic engagement with social issues. He was, for example, seen as sympathetic to the struggles of labor and social reform. Given the Cardinal’s willingness to embrace the challenges posed by the American reality to the Catholic Church, Barrows hoped he could count on Gibbons’ support for the Parliament. However, Barrows did not take it for granted. His daughter’s recollections from the fall of 1892 noted:

> During the months of silence that succeeded his dispatching a letter to Cardinal Gibbons, so frequently did my father impress upon his children the importance of his receiving the desired answer, that whenever he sat lost I thought, we used to exclaim, “He must be willing the Cardinal!” And we were not far wrong. The letter that finally came ran thus:

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'Judged by the tenor of the Preliminary address of the General Committee on Religious Congresses in connection with the Exposition of 1893, I deem the movement you are engaged in promoting worthy of all encouragement and praise. Assuredly a congress of eminent men gathered together to declare, as your address sets forth, what they have to offer or suggest for the world’s betterment, what light religion has to throw on the labor problems, the educational questions, and the perplexing social conditions of our times cannot but result in good to our common country. I rejoice accordingly to learn that the project for a Religious Congress in Chicago in 1893 has already won the sympathies and enlisted the active cooperation of those in the front rank of human thought and progress even in other lands than ours. If conducted with moderation and good will such a congress may result, by the blessing of divine providence, in benefits far more reaching than the most sanguine would dare to hope for.'

Another high profile Catholic leader who supported the Parliament idea was Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota. Like Gibbons, Ireland was an influential advocate for the compatibility of the Catholic faith and the American spirit of freedom, democracy and social change. In a letter to Barrows, Ireland stated: “I promise my active cooperation in the work [of the Parliament]. The conception of such a religious assembly seems almost like an inspiration.” Furthermore, on the occasion of the inauguration of the World’s Congress Auxiliary, on October 21, 1892, Ireland delivered a public speech titled the “Address on Human Progress,” in which he spoke positively of the Parliament of Religions.

The primordial truths regarding the Supreme God will be confessed by all who take part in the Congress; and is it not much that those truths be today proclaimed in solemn conclave by representatives of the nations of the earth during the greatest exposition the world has ever known? As to those principles of religion upon which the members of the Congress may not be of one mind, they who hold the truth need not fear. Truth is not timid, and, upon an occasion so great and important, should not truth court publicity in order to be known and better loved? No discussion, no controversy will be allowed during the sessions of the Congress; the one purpose of the Congress will be to set forth calmly and dispassionately the confessions of faith and labors of religion at the present time.27

26 Barrows, John Henry Barrows, 257.

But the encouragement of the Cardinal of Baltimore and the Archbishop of St. Paul did not automatically mean active involvement in the Parliament by the larger American Catholic hierarchy. The matter had to be brought before the Board of the Catholic Archbishops for deliberations and approval. In the event, the intervention of Bishop John Keane, the Rector of the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, would be decisive. Sharing convictions similar to those of Gibbons and Ireland and persuaded by the latter to get involved in the Parliament, Keane made himself available to look into the matter although he had previously declined an invitation from the World’s Congress Auxiliary to become a member of the Advisory Committee on Religious Missions.28 He wrote a letter that would be crucial in the discernment of the Archbishops regarding Catholic participation in the Parliament.

The decision of the Catholic Church to participate

On November 16, 1892, the Third Annual Conference of the Archbishops of the United States was held at the residence of the Archbishop of New York, with all the Metropolitans present with the exception of Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota, who was represented by his Vicar General, and Archbishop Salpointe of Santa Fe, New Mexico, represented by his Coadjutor. The Parliament of Religions was on the agenda, which—according to the minutes—was raised for discussion toward the end of the morning session:

A letter from [Keane,] the Rt. Rev. Rector of the Catholic University of America to the Board of Archbishops was read. He informed them that the President of a committee empowered by the directors of the Columbian Exposition to organize a Congress or parliament of Religions, with the view of bringing together representatives of the principal forms of religion, who would fairly and freely expose without discussion or controversy their various tenets, had requested that the Board of Archbishops make provision for the representing of the Catholic Church at this important gathering. The Bishop was assured that those engaged in

forming this Congress, desire to shape matters in every way so as to meet the wishes of the Archbishops in regard to it. An adjournment was here taken.²⁹

In his letter Keane encouraged the Archbishops to ponder carefully the importance and likely implications of Catholic participation in the Parliament project: “I beg leave to venture the opinion that, while the objections against the proposal are obvious, the reasons in favor of it seem paramount.” Further, he added that it was not in the power of the Church to hinder the Parliament from taking place, and then he articulated a poignant question: “Can the Catholic Church afford not to be there?³⁰ In other words, it might be better for the Church if there was no Parliament. But since the Parliament was going to take place and the Archdiocese of Chicago was already involved, the Church had best engage fully so as to ensure the outcome was to the Church’s liking.

In order to understand what was at stake in Keane’s proposal to the Archbishops and what considerations might have gone through their minds as they heard his question, it is necessary to frame the invitation to participate in the Parliament of Religions within the larger context of the World’s Fair and the World’s Congress Auxiliary. The previous items on the agenda of that morning’s session were the Catholic Educational Exhibit and the Columbian Catholic Congress, both to be held the following year in conjunction with the Chicago Exhibition. In fact, until that moment, the Parliament of Religions was of minimal interest for the Catholic prelates, who were already committed to other official Catholic involvements in the Chicago affair.

The Catholic Church in the United States was positively predisposed to the Columbian commemoration. Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical letter for the occasion, unapologetically claiming ownership of the Exposition’s namesake, Columbus, and his

²⁹ Minutes of the Third Annual Conference of the Most Reverend Archbishops of the United States, November 16, 1892, Archivio Storico Propaganda Fide (ASPF), Nuova Serie (NS), 1893, vol 27, p. 352.
exploratory enterprise: “Columbus is ours; since if a little consideration be given to the particular reason of his design in exploring the mare tenebrosum, and also the manner in which he endeavored to execute the design, it is undubitable that the Catholic faith was the strongest motive for the inception and execution of the design; so that for this reason also the whole human race owes not a little to the Church.”31 For American Catholics, this ownership claim was particularly relevant at a time in which the Catholic Church was also claiming its own place in American society. The Church’s ability to adapt to and participate fully in American culture was seriously questioned by anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant nativists. Many doubted it was possible for a faithful Catholic in full allegiance to the Pope, monarch of a now landless but virtually global state, to be also a loyal American citizen. Being Catholic and being American were perceived by many as conflicting loyalties.

The Columbian anniversary offered an opportunity for American Catholics to reflect upon the role of Catholicism in the history in the New World at large, the involvement of Catholics in the history of the United States, and to show their simultaneous loyalty to Church and state. To Catholic advocates of participation in the Chicago Exposition, the event promised a perfect antidote to counteract the “hostilities of American nationalists towards European immigrants,” many of whom happened to be Catholic.32

American Catholics had had a similar opportunity to assert their Catholicity on American soil a few years before the Parliament, on the occasion of the Centennial of the establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States with John Carroll as the first Bishop in Baltimore. Included among the solemn celebrations were a General Congress of the Catholic Laity in the United States, held in Baltimore on November 11 and 12,


The dedication and opening of the Catholic University in Washington, DC.\textsuperscript{33} The Baltimore Congress decided to convene another congress that would take place in 1892.\textsuperscript{34} It eventually became the Columbian Catholic Congress, one of many denominational congresses held under the aegis of the World’s Congress Auxiliary coordinated by Bonney in the context of the Chicago Exhibition. The Columbian Catholic Congress was scheduled for Chicago immediately before but separate from the Parliament of Religions.

The Columbian commemoration was an occasion for Catholics to assert their “Americanity” in tandem with their Catholicity. The Columbian Centennial was seen by some Catholic scholars as an appropriate moment for a historical inventory of Catholic assets in American history as conveyed in a comprehensive study published by the University of Notre Dame.\textsuperscript{35} This work was described in its preface by Maurice Francis Egan, prominent Catholic journalist and later American Ambassador to Denmark, as a document to hold “your title-deeds to your land.” Egan highlighted Catholic foundational New World and American figures, such as Columbus, Bishop Las Casas, Father Marquette, Father Jogues, and Roger Taney, the first Roman Catholic to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States and to hold the offices of Chief Justice and Attorney General. Egan also referred to the role of the Catholic barons of England in the production of the \textit{Magna Carta} and to a Catholic he described as “the bravest of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Charles Carroll” who “helped, too, to lay the foundation of our present freedom.” Furthermore, the Columbian commemoration gave Egan strong arguments to claim a Catholic presence in America that preceded the arrival of the Pilgrims. “Compared with our part in the history of America,” Egan declared, “the

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Souvenir Volume of the Centennial Celebration and Catholic Congress, 1789-1889} (Detroit: William H. Hughes Publisher, 1889), 114.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Official Report of the Proceedings of the Catholic Congress, held at Baltimore, MD, November 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1889}, (Detroit: William H. Hugues, Publisher, 1889), ix.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Columbian Jubilee or Four Centuries of Catholicity in America, being a Historical and Biographical Retrospect from the Landing of Christopher Columbus to the Chicago Catholic Congress of 1893} (Chicago, J. S. Hyland and Company, 1894), two volumes.
coming of the Mayflower is but an episode. And now when the world rings with the fame of Columbus, shall we not learn to claim our own? ... Mass was said on this soil before the spire of a meeting-house rose in Virginia, or among the New England hills. After this, who shall dare in our presence to call America a Protestant country?" 

Egan’s apologetic discourse highlighting Catholic contributions to America stood in contrast to statements, including scholarly voices, that questioned the Catholic role in America – even seeing it as a barrier for social, political and economic growth. Max Weber’s thesis that capitalism’s progress and wealth were closely linked to a Protestant ethic of individualism and strict work discipline, associated with Protestant countries, would be articulated by the German thinker about a decade after the Parliament. But the notion that Catholic countries lagged behind in economic and social development, echoed by Barrows after visiting Catholic Europe, had been articulated by English historian Lord Macaulay in the years prior to the Parliament.

Whoever passes in Germany from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant principality, in Switzerland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant canton, in Ireland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant county, finds that he has passed from a lower to a higher grade of civilization. On the other side of the Atlantic the same law prevails. The Protestants of the United States have left far behind them the Roman Catholics of Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. The Roman Catholics of Lower Canada remain inert, while the whole continent round them is in a ferment with Protestant activity and enterprise.

English Pastor Thomas Aveling, when commenting on the Great London Exhibition, similarly asserts that “while England was a Roman Catholic country … she remained an

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inferior political power…”39 The notion of Catholic social, political and economic backwardness rubbed off on Catholic immigrants to North America, particularly Irish immigrants from the great famine. Canada was not immune.40 Mark McGowan quotes Anthony B. Hawke, the Chief Emigrant Agent for Canada West. On October 16, 1847, as Irish Catholics sailed towards Canada, Hawke complained: “Upon the whole I am obliged to consider the immigration of this year a calamity to the Province.”41 Although most of the Irish immigrants to Canada were Protestant Irish, the extreme poverty of the Catholic Irish settlers tended to be attributed to their Catholic identity.42 According to the University of Notre Dame’s commemorative history of the Columbian Jubilee, nothing could be further from the truth. The active and productive involvement of Catholics in a vibrant and competitive North American economy and culture showed a very different picture that increasingly challenged Macaulay’s judgments.

She [the Catholic Church] appeared conforming to the genius of American society, appropriating its progress, forcing itself to meet its wants and repair its defects.43 Within a century, transplanted upon a new and fertile soil, this immortal Church had taken root and flourished…How is it that the oldest form of Christian worship has become acclimated to the youngest of civilized nations? How has the Roman Church escaped the real or pretended decadence of the Latin race, to renew its life beyond the seas, in an Anglo-Saxon society? How has this Church, contemporaneous with the Roman empire, associated with feudal forms and absolute monarchy in Europe, succeeded in identifying itself with the democracy of free America? And what is the outlook for Christians, for Catholics? Is it true that a new era will open to their faith in a new world, which will expand with its growth, even as there is a decline with the decrepitude of the Old World, so that her future for mankind will equal her past? Whilst in Europe many weep at the

41 Mark McGowan, Death or Canada, The Irish Famine Migration to Toronto, 1847 (Toronto: Novalis, 2009).
43 This is an allusion to the Catholic crusade against drunkenness undertaken by Irish prelates such as Archbishop John Ireland and Bishop John Keane to the dismay of German Catholics.
tomb of Christ, shall we behold him arisen in America? Are we destined to
witness upon earth this new manifestation of divine power?44

Even the Vatican joined in acknowledging the speedy progress of the United States. Pope
Leo’s encyclical letter to American Catholics, Longinque Oceani, celebrated the
prosperous condition of American Catholicism. “That your Republic is progressing and
developing by giant strides is patent to all; and this holds true in religious matters also.
For even as your cities, in the course of one century, have made a marvelous increase in
wealth and power, so do we behold the Church, from scant and slender beginnings,
grown with rapidity to be great and exceedingly flourishing.”45 These statements of
unapologetic Catholic pride within and outside the United States were symbolically
reinforced by the Vatican, which loaned precious items from its Museum and Library to
be exhibited at the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and by the American bishops’
active involvement in the Exhibition.46 As historian John Pollard writes, “four hundred
years after Columbus discovered America, the Vatican ‘discovered’ American
Catholicism,”47 a form of Catholicism in which Church and progress were not antonyms
of one another.

44 The Columbian Jubilee, II, 509-510.
45 Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter “Longinque Oceani,” (On Catholicity in the United States)
46 The items loaned by the Apostolic Library included a phototypy edition of the fourth-century
Greco-Vatican Bible and a sixth-century Codex of the Prophets known as Marchaliano, in
Egyptian language and with various notes by Origen, and several mosaics. A detailed inventory,
as well as correspondence between Archbishop John Ireland and Archbishop Francesco Satolli,
and between Satolli and Cardinal Mariano Rampolla about returning the items to the Vatican, is
found in the Secret Vatican Archives, Archive of the Apostolic Nuntiatura (Delegation) of the
United States of America 1893-1921, Position 1: Chicago Exhibition, 11.
47 John F. Pollard, “Leo XIII and the United States of America, 1898-1903,” in The Papacy and
Well-documented Catholic publications appeared to counteract the widespread assumptions of Catholic backwardness. Furthermore, it was not a coincidence that four years before his papal letter in praise of America, Pope Leo XIII published the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on the struggle of labor, showing the Church’s support for that struggle and setting the foundation of the modern social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

So the Catholic Church made its presence felt in the Columbian Exhibition both by involvement of the Bishops and Catholic schools throughout the country and by sanction of the Vatican. At their annual meeting in St. Louis in November 1891, the Archbishops had approved the Columbian Catholic Congress with William Onahan, a prominent lay Catholic leader who had been the chair of the previous lay Catholic congress in Baltimore, as its main organizer and Patrick Feehan, the Archbishop of Chicago, as chair. At the same meeting, the Archbishops also approved a Catholic Educational Exhibit for the Chicago Fair, with Brother Maurelian, from the congregation of the Christian Schools, as its main organizer, and John Lancaster Spalding, Bishop of Peoria, as president.

The idea of an Educational Exhibit had first been discussed a year earlier in Chicago by Bishop Spalding, Archbishop John Ireland, Brother Maurelian and Maurice Francis Egan. The Educational Exhibit was eventually judged a remarkable success at a time when Catholic education in North America was being hotly debated both within and outside the Church. Besides the Columbian Catholic Congress and the Catholic Educational Exhibit, the Catholic Church was visible at other levels of the Chicago Exhibition. Cardinal James Gibbons, just three weeks before the New York meeting to

48 See the survey of Paulist Alfred Young, *Catholic and Protestant countries compared in civilization, popular happiness, general intelligence, and morality* (New York: the Catholic book exchange, 1894).

decide Catholic involvement in the Parliament, was present at the dedication of the Fair buildings and grounds in Chicago, where he offered the closing prayer.\textsuperscript{51}

Therefore, Bishop Keane’s “Can the Church afford not to be there?” was not a simple question. The Catholic Church was already committed to the Columbian Jubilee at a number of levels. But these were either internal to the Church community or, in the case of Cardinal Gibbon’s attendance at the Fair’s dedication, complementary of already planned Catholic oriented events. Catholic participation in a multi-faith event such as the Parliament of Religions, an event the Church did not originate or control, an event in which the Church would stand as one among many religions, was something else.

When the Archbishops resumed their meeting after their lunch break, they again took up the Parliament issue:

After a thorough discussion of Bishops Keane’s letter, it was resolved that His Eminence should request him, in the name of the Board, to make suitable arrangements with those in charge of the so-called Parliament of Religions, for hearing twenty Catholic speakers to be selected by the Rt. Rev. Bishop to expound Catholic doctrine at their meetings.\textsuperscript{52}

Whether they realized the potential historic significance of the Parliament of Religions or not, when the American Archbishops agreed that the Catholic Church would be officially represented at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago they made a groundbreaking decision. First, such involvement would imply a tacit Catholic endorsement of religious freedom in a pluralistic context, a reality that the Catholic Church had enjoyed in

\textsuperscript{50} Corrigan to Ledochowski, New York, December 22, 1893, ASPF, NS, 1893, vol. 74, p. 524.

\textsuperscript{51} Downey, “Tradition and Acceptance: American Catholics and the Columbian Exposition,” 83.

\textsuperscript{52} Minutes of the Third Annual Conference of the Most Reverend Archbishops of the United States, New York, November 16, 1892, ASPF, NS, 1893, vol 27, p. 352.
democratic America and that had allowed the Church to grow and flourish. But benefiting from religious freedom was not the same as endorsing it. The Church’s willingness to recognize that same right for others, not in a formal declaration but by being present at the Parliament, as if one among equals, meant a basic enactment of the golden rule (acknowledge the others as you have been acknowledged; or in a negative formulation, do not discriminate against others if you do not want to be discriminated against). At the same time, by approving Catholic involvement in the Parliament, the American Archbishops set an important precedent in an area that was to become a thorny issue debated by Catholics for decades to come: religious freedom.

Second, participation in the Parliament was likely to expose the Church to open scrutiny in the American religious public square, a situation that offered the Church an opportunity to present itself in such a way as to overcome nativist misinformation and prejudice. But this exposure was not harmless. The Church also had to be ready itself for criticism. One could not go without the other.

Third, the decision of the American Archbishops to endorse Catholic involvement in the Parliament showed a healthy degree of maturity and autonomy as a decision-making body in matters pertaining to their national jurisdiction. In agreeing to participate in the Parliament of Religions, the Archbishops acted on their own without formally seeking approval from the Holy See. In doing so, they risked raising questions of relations to and even dependence on the Vatican. Barrows mistakenly thought the Archbishops had prior approval from the Vatican. He is quoted as observing, “When the American Catholic Archbishops, with the knowledge and consent of the Vatican, decided to take part in the parliament, they did much to give the meeting its historic importance.”

It was also erroneously reported that the American papal delegate approved participation. Neither


statement was correct. In fact, the autonomy of the Bishops in joining the Parliament was to become a point of tension, as was concern that some had fallen victim to Americanization at the expense of the Catholic faith.

Fourth, despite internal divisions over the nature of Catholic presence at the Parliament of Religions, the Catholic Church was in fact officially represented, with a unified institutional presence. Indeed, it was the only Christian body so represented. No other Christian denomination sent official representatives. Individual members with particular faith-linked affiliations simply chose to participate, sometimes despite the disapproval of their own Church authorities.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, the Archbishops’ decision to join other faiths in the Parliament of Religions created an official and for some an uncomfortable precedent for the Catholic Church with regard to ecumenical and interfaith relations. Involvement in the planning of the Parliament entailed courteous and strategic interactions with Protestants and Jews, always keeping in mind the best interests of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Parliament exposed the Church to representatives of other religions as partner participants, and some might argue as equals, in a non-missionary setting. With the approval of the Archbishops, the ‘one true religion’ sat at the table as ‘the one true religion’ among many ‘one true religions.’

The choice of Bishop Keane as the liaison of the Board of Archbishops to the Parliament’s Organizing Committee could not be more appropriate as far as the Parliament was concerned. Keane was truly an ecumenist. Two years earlier, Harvard University bestowed on Keane the honor of giving the annual Dudleian Lecture, despite the fact that this lecture series was originally conceived by Judge Paul Dudley in 1750 to expose the “damnable heresies of the Catholic Church.” The lecture was reported

56 This sense of exclusivity does not apply to Eastern traditions represented at the Parliament.
unfavorably by the French Press, which stated that such strange scenes could only be seen in America:

…The stranger who would have found that evening in that chapel full of Protestant ministers, among whom were some Catholics, would have been surprised, perhaps even a bit scandalized, at seeing Monsignor Keane, dressed in his episcopal garments, mount the pulpit and speak to an audience of heretics. ⁵⁷

This ecumenical gesture by Bishop Keane was consistent with his pastoral approach in general in the multi-religious American scene. It echoed in principle his comments at the laying of the cornerstone of the Church of the Holy Name in Baltimore the year before his appointment to the Parliament planning committee.

We will not come here to abuse Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Methodists, but will worship God according to our faith, minding our own business and expecting our neighbors to do the same. The Church is one of universal charity, and instead of abusing the neighbors that do not agree with us in matters of faith we can but say, Brothers, though you do not serve God in our way, serve Him the best you know how in your own way. ⁵⁸

Barrows welcomed the Catholic Church’s decision to participate in the Parliament, all the more significant because the Church of England declined his invitation to participate and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, his own denomination, categorically condemned the event. In fact, when Edward Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primate of the Church of England, received an invitation from Barrows to take part in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he declined, objecting that “the Christian religion is the one religion and cannot be regarded as a member of a Parliament without assuming the equality of the other intended members and the parity of their position and claims.” In

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⁵⁸ _Baltimore Sun_, October 19, 1891, cited by Ahern, _The Life of John J. Keane_, 114.
addition to this denunciation of religious indifferentism, the Anglican Primate was candid enough to disclose another objection. He rejected both the assumption that the Church of Rome is the Catholic Church, and the description of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America as outside the Catholic Church, an attitude he was afraid would be extended to the Church of England as well. The Archbishop stated: “That view of our position is untenable.”

This strong stand certainly generated criticism. With his characteristic irreverence, Parliament critic Clay Lancaster stated that “the churchman’s reply was rather presumptuous for one whose domain was an island smaller than New Guinea.” Another Parliament observer quoted by Barrows, British journalist Rev. Francis Herbert Stead, disagreed. He regretted the absence of the leading religious official of the multi-faith Empire of Great Britain, “which next to the earth itself is the hugest known standing Parliament of Religions.” Regarding Benson’s objection to the use of the name “Catholic,” Stead responded in his editorial that “to call the churches by the names which they themselves take is only an act of courtesy. It would be rude to prescribe names for other churches.” At that point, it would not cross the mind of the Anglican Primate that seven years after his death, his own son, Robert Hugh Benson, an Anglican priest, would convert to Catholicism and put his pen at the service of the Roman Catholic Church.

Interestingly, while some sectors of Christianity claimed exclusive right to the name “Catholic” for themselves, other sectors—particularly Evangelical groups—denied Catholics the name of “Christian.” These groups condemned Catholic governance structures and liturgical and devotional traditions as distortions of the original Christian

message and of the pure and simple life of the early followers of Jesus. However, there were also moderate Protestants who decried this denunciative attitude. Writing in the *Methodist Review*, H. K. Carroll urged, “I think we should never allow ourselves to forget that the Church of Rome is a Christian Church. It ought not to be necessary to plead for such a concession; but there are not a few who hold that it is more pagan than Christian, and that the denunciations of the Apocalypse were meant to apply to it.” Carroll also affirmed that the Roman Catholic Church “is surely better than no religion, or than any pagan religion, or than Christless Unitarianism” and offered a condescending apology for Catholicism from a Protestant point of view.

It has come down to us, through long centuries, from apostolic times. During long periods of time it alone preserved Christianity on the earth. Our own succession as Protestants comes down the same stream, through the primitive and the Dark Ages to the Reformation, when the great divergence began. It is a better Church now than it was in Luther’s time. It, too, has reformed, and the process will continue. We do no dishonor to ourselves by speaking of this great and venerable Church as respectfully as we can. We can show this respect, in one way, by calling the Church by its proper name. It has a definite title by which it desires to be known. It does not object to be spoken of as the Catholic Church, or the Church of Rome, or the Roman Church; but it does resent the terms ‘Romish’ Church, or ‘Popish’ or ‘Papistical’ Church.”

The Parliament offered the Catholic Church the opportunity to assert its Catholic identity and claim its Christian identity at the same time. Furthermore, rumblings of discontent regarding the Parliament from such prominent Church leaders and bodies brings into focus the audacity of the American Archbishops in their decision to participate in the Parliament. The next few months would be ones of intense preparation, with Bishop Keane providing constructive input to the proposed Parliament program and its rules of engagement.

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A pilgrimage to Chicago

During the previous four decades, ten cities in Europe, North America and Australia had played host to World’s Fairs: London (1851, 1862), Dublin and New York (1853), Munich (1854), Paris (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889), Melbourne (1865), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Sydney (1879) and New Orleans (1884). With three previous World’s Fairs on American soil, peripheric America in a still Eurocentric west increasingly asserted its importance as it moved center stage in commerce and industrialization. In the late 19th century Chicago dared to compete with financial New York and emerging St. Louis for a place alongside imperial London, glamorous Paris, independentist Philadelphia, and carnivalesque New Orleans as the host of the next World’s Fair. The Frontier City, home to the Monadock Building, then the tallest building in the world, won the privilege of hosting the Columbian Exhibition and became the fourth American city to host a World’s Fair. The young city pledged itself ready to invest whatever it took to outshine all its predecessors.

The “Glistening White City” built in the south of Chicago as the site for the Fair “achieved a plaster actualization of the American quest to create a New Jerusalem, a utopian ‘City on a Hill’ in the New World Wilderness.” Seventy-seven million visitors in the course of a few months witnessed with amazement the marvel of electricity together with the world debut of the zipper. As Cardinal Gibbons eloquently noted, the Windy City of Lake Michigan had experienced a transformation from “porkopolis” to “thaumatopolis,” city of wonders or the city of miracles. (The “porkopolis” nickname

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67 Lee to Satolli, July 12, 1894, ASPF, NS, 1894, vol. 36, p. 79.
was a reference to the huge meatpacking plants that sustained much of the city’s large and largely Catholic working class. The well-known “sweatshop” image of Chicago stood in sharp contrast with the marvels of the Fair. But the impact of the Exhibition transcended the city and became the signature site of a new image and international reputation for America. One observer claimed:

The world viewed the United States differently after millions visited the Fair and witnessed the American dream firsthand. The United States asserted itself as a major power—militarily, diplomatically, and economically—in part because of this presentation. The enterprises of the average citizen, the corporate strength, the immensity of the country, and the progressive nature of intellectual thought impressed all who came to Chicago.

Even with all the wonders of modern science on display, American and European Exhibition visitors were taken aback when exotic visitors from the East arrived to attend the Parliament of Religions. As expectations continued to build about the uniqueness and significance of the upcoming Parliament, organizers and critics alike sensed that something historically important was about to make Chicago a focal point of the religious universe, an axis mundi. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, a prominent Chicago Unitarian minister who formed a trio with Bonney and Barrows in the organization of the Parliament, referred to Chicago as the “Cathedral City of the World.” Bishop Arthur Cleveland Coxe of the Protestant Episcopal Church and who was originally against the Parliament, eventually referred to it as “one of the most serious events of the kind in the history of humanity, since the wise men from the East came to the cradle of Bethlehem.” Barrows expressed the fervent “conviction that within a hundred years, pilgrims from many lands

68 This working class was significantly made up of immigrants, many of whom happened to be Catholics from Eastern Europe. Upton Sinclair vividly depicts the challenging conditions these immigrants faced in his famous novel The Jungle (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

69 Bertuca, The World’s Columbian Exposition, ix.


would flock to the scenes of the World’s First Parliament of Religions, in the unhistoric City of Chicago, almost as they have for centuries flocked to Westminster Abbey, St. Peter’s Church, and the Holy Shrines of Jerusalem." While the predictions of the Chairman of the Parliament seem in retrospect somewhat overblown, they did reflect the sense of occasion represented by the Parliament.

For their part, Catholics from many parts of America and some from overseas flocked to Chicago, which was bustling not only with the Exhibition and anticipation of the Parliament of Religions, but with the many side congresses organized by the World’s Congress Auxiliary and, in particular, the denominational religious congresses coordinated by the Department of Religion. Many Catholic visitors arrived with a specifically Catholic agenda that included viewing the Catholic Educational Exhibit, participating in the Columbian Catholic Congress, one or another of the smaller congresses from Catholic associations and, of course, for some the ecumenical main event, the Parliament of Religions.

Some of the special-interest congresses also engaged Catholics. The Labor Congress, for example, was attended by Archbishop Ireland and the controversial Fr. Edward McGlynn, a social reformer whose excommunication had been lifted some months earlier. In the spirit of the World’s Fair, the American Archbishops also decided to hold their Annual Meeting in Chicago, which Archbishop Feehan would host. September 12, the day of the Archbishops’ meeting, happened to be Maryland Day at the Fair, and Cardinal Gibbons was invited by Mayor Ferdinand C. Latrobe of Baltimore to give the opening benediction at the Fair that day. September 12 was also ‘Catholic Day’ at the Parliament of Religions.

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73 Downey, “Tradition and Acceptance: American Catholics and the Columbian Exposition,” 86.
74 Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, II, 17
Chicago itself had a rich history of Catholic connection. The city’s first known religious visitor was the Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette, who drew the first map of the area. Its first permanent resident was thought to be the fur trader Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, also a Catholic. Ecclesiastically, the city fell consecutively within the jurisdiction of the bishops of Baltimore in Maryland, Bardstown in Kentucky (which would eventually become the Archdiocese of Louisville), and Vincennes in Indiana (which would become the Archdiocese of Indiana), before Chicago became an independent diocese under the pastoral care of William J. Quarter, its first bishop. Four bishops succeeded Bishop Quarter in the governance of the diocese of Chicago until the diocese was elevated to the rank of Archdiocese with Patrick Feehan as its first Archbishop. Chicago also provides an example of the extraordinary growth of the Catholic Church in the United States. By the time of the Parliament of Religions, which coincidentally was going to take place exactly sixty years after the official foundation of the City of Chicago in 1833, the Catholic Church claimed 84 churches, in addition to many affiliated schools, colleges, academies, hospitals, and charitable institutions. The Church in Chicago was also increasingly complex in its ethnic diversity. In addition to the original Irish and Blacks, there were more recently arrived Italians, Germans, Polish, Lithuanians, and Catholics of other national origins. This diversity generated conflict since some of these newer arrivals resented the supremacy of the Irish in Church leadership and their pressured imposition of English as the lingua franca of American Catholics. The preeminent role of Irish Catholics in American public life was evident in the Catholic involvement in the Columbian events.

75 100 years, n.p.


Catholic Educational Exhibit and Columbian Catholic Congress

American Catholics had reasons to feel proud of their Educational Exhibit which opened with the Columbian Exhibition on May 1, 1893. The Exhibit occupied thirty thousand square feet in the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, and was the largest of several hundred separate educational displays. A historian of the Fair described the Catholic Exhibit in all its breadth:

In addition to the exhibits of parish schools, academies, colleges, and universities, are those of normal schools, of schools of science and technology, of commercial, industrial, and manual training schools, of schools for negroes and Indians, of kindergartens and orphanages, and of benevolent and reformatory institutes.

Almost in the centre of the group is a statue of Archbishop Feehan, carved in Carrara marble, of chaste and elegant design. This was presented by the priests of the diocese of Chicago, and on the pedestal is inscribed beneath his name the simple legend: “The Protector of our Schools.” Around it are arranged in booths the exhibits of the various dioceses of which nearly all the principal schools are represented. The collections include every description and grade of educational work; but with no distinctive classification of the various grades, as in those of the public schools. Of parish schools several hundred are represented, with the diocese of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Buffalo having the largest number. Add to these the exhibits of higher institutions of learning, and of industrial, charitable, and reformatory institutes, and some idea may be formed as to the magnitude of the display, representing the aggregate results accomplished by all the numerous orders of priesthood and sisterhood, to whose care are intrusted [sic] the educational interests of Catholic America.

September 2, 1893, declared Catholic Education Day at the Columbian Exhibition, was marked by speeches from Archbishop Patrick John Ryan of Philadelphia, Archbishop John Hennessy of Dubuque, Iowa, and Archbishop Frederick Katzer of Milwaukee. Archbishop Patrick Feehan of Chicago served as host. Protestant Elizabeth Beecher

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79 Bancroft, The Book of the Fair, 238-239.
Hooker, leader in the women’s suffrage movement, and the Honorable Thomas Gargan, a prominent Boston lawyer and orator, who gave the oration, also took part.  

Fr. P. J. Muldoon, from Holy Name Cathedral and the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Chicago at the time, referred to the Catholic performance in the Exhibition at large, and particularly in the Catholic Educational Exhibit, in glowing terms:

The Columbian Exposition gloriously surpassed all former efforts in the same line, and unmistakably the Catholic Church never worked so energetically or displayed herself so conspicuously to engage the respect, admiration, and love of the world as in this Exposition. All classes and creeds, some in praise, others in criticism, announced that the Catholic Church had caught every inspiration, and had taken advantage of every opportunity. We feel that this was no where more conspicuously patent than in the Catholic Educational Exhibit.  

The Catholic educational display was not without political intent. It coincided with internal Catholic debates over the integration of the Catholic schools into the public system. Three years earlier, Archbishop Ireland, committed to advancing the Americanization of the Catholic Church, proposed to the National Education Association that the Catholic parochial schools be integrated into the public school system, a proposal that found earnest opposition among many Catholics and eventually failed. The Exhibit was certainly a statement to both Catholics and the larger community that Catholic schools were not in need of incorporation into the larger public system.

In addition to the Catholic Educational Exhibition, Catholics held their own denominational Congress, from Monday, September 4th through Saturday, September 9th, 1893. After the formal ceremonial opening, 46 papers were delivered: three on historical and current aspects related to the Columbian Jubilee, three on the Church and politics, thirteen on the Church and society, ten on immigration issues, seven on education, five

on women and delivered by women, and five delivered by Bishops plus one paper delivered by a priest. Since it was a lay congress, thirty-four of the speakers were lay people, eight of whom were women. Eighteen members of the clergy (ten bishops and eight priests) gave speeches. The speakers came from the District of Columbia and eighteen other cities as well as from England, Scotland, New Zealand, and the Vatican.

The Columbian Catholic Congress coordinator was a layman, William Onahan, chair of the first Catholic lay congress held in Baltimore four years earlier. Lay prominence also suited the mostly non-theological issues discussed. Topics included issues of labor and job skills in which lay Catholics were much involved. These issues were in tune with the then emerging social doctrine of the Church outlined just a few years earlier in Pope Leo’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on capital and labor. However, the independent display of lay initiative and leadership on those issues at the Congress must have raised some concerns among the clergy in the American Church naturally dominated and controlled by the hierarchy. This hypothesis might find a confirmation in the decision of the Archbishops gathered in Philadelphia the following year to plan the first Eucharistic Congress of the United States but with an organizing committee exclusively composed of the clergy. Other lay initiatives, such as membership in secret societies, were also being discussed by the bishops at the time. Membership in two of such lay organizations (the Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias) was about to be prohibited by the Archbishops at their annual meeting immediately following the Congress. Both organizations were condemned a year later, together with the Sons of Temperance, by the Holy Office (also known as the Inquisition) in the Vatican. Another area in which Catholic laity was becoming increasingly influential was the Catholic press. Lay control of the Catholic press prompted a resolution from the Archbishops demanding “measures for abating injury done to religion by scandalous publications in Catholic newspapers.”

Perhaps these brewing tensions about the lay role in the American Catholic Church were, in part, why Cardinal Gibbons was not totally in favor of holding the lay Congress, a concern that seemed to outweigh the Cardinal’s genuine interest in the social issues what were to be part of the Congress’ program. One and a half years earlier, Gibbons shared his reservations about the Congress with Archbishop Ireland, indicating his desire to “kill” the event or, failing that, make it the last one. However, Ireland disagreed and succeeded in persuading the Cardinal to seek and obtain papal approval for the Congress.\footnote{Ellis, \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons}, II, 13.} Perhaps Gibbons was also worried about attracting an inordinate amount of attention around the Congress from the Vatican and elsewhere at a time in which the relations between Catholic identity and American culture were under scrutiny inside and outside the Church, both in the United States and overseas.

Lay Catholic Congresses were already a common practice in Europe with strong networks in Germany, Belgium, France and Italy, but they were also becoming vehicles for furthering either Catholic liberal agendas or ultramontanist tendencies prevalent among sectors of the laity.\footnote{A helpful introduction to the topic is found in Emiel Lamberts, “Catholic Congresses as Amplifiers of International Catholic Opinion,” in \textit{The Papacy and the New World Order}, ed. Viaene, 213-224.} When news about the Chicago Congress reached Europe early in the planning process, French businessman Léon Harmel suggested to Cardinal Gibbons to make the event an international gathering, a proposal the Cardinal declined in order to avoid difficulties and embarrassments.\footnote{Ellis, \textit{The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons}, II, 14.}

The Columbian Catholic Congress was also revealing of how the Catholic Church was regarded by nativist and anti-Catholic Protestant publications. On the occasion of the Congress, Margaret Lisle Shepherd, founder of the anti-Catholic National Association of Women Loyal to American Liberty, issued a call for Protestants to beware of un-American Catholic intentions. She warned that the 5th Annual German Catholic Congress,
held in Buffalo, NY, on September 23, 1891, endorsed a German Catholic call to hold an
International Catholic Congress for the purpose of restoring the temporal power of the
Pope as an Independent Sovereign. Shepherd reported that given the political
circumstances of Europe, the intended Catholic Congress was now planned for Chicago.
Shepherd denounced the project as part of a secret design of the Church of Rome to take
control of the United States.

The evils of unrestricted immigration have given to the Church vast numerical
power, and our land is filled with a class dangerous to our welfare as a nation…

The World’s Fair will simply be utilized by the Hierarchy in America, in fact, by
it universally, to advertise its glories, and to strike the great blow against
American civil and religious liberties. This great system, which knows no mercy,
can show no pity, has no sense of gratitude, will, through the power she has
gained, plant the Papal flag over the building where will convene their Congress;
and the glorious banner of liberty will stand beside it, only a few feet LOWER. 87

While it is tempting today to dismiss Shepherd, her anti-Catholic rant fit within a larger
anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic nativism then growing in the United States, and of
concern to the Church. Shepherd was also the author of a dramatic autobiography that
deserves historiographic attention and scrutiny. In it, she disclosed her identity as the
daughter of an Irish Catholic priest who broke his vow of celibacy when he seduced her
mother. Shepherd also claimed to have been herself the mistress of another Catholic
priest. Later Shepherd spent some time in a convent for penitent recluses in England. As
a result of such misfortunes, she eventually not only left the convent but also the Catholic
Church and emigrated to America. 88 Despite Shepherd’s misconceptions about the true
agenda of the Columbian Catholic Congress and other inaccuracies of her work (she
mistakenly affirms the elevation of Archbishop Ireland to the cardinalate, an idea that

87 Margaret Lisle Shepherd, Pope Leo’s demand: He challenges Americans, and boldly claims
Temporal Power. The Great International Roman Catholic Congress to assemble in Chicago,
during the World’s Fair to execute his plans (Philadelphia: Jordan Brothers, 1892). 19-20.

88 Margaret Lisle Shepherd, My Life in the Convent: or the marvelous personal experiences of
Margaret L. Shepherd (Sister Magdalene Adelaide), consecrated penitent of the Arno’s Court
Convent, Bristol, England (Canada & New South Wales, Australia: Margaret L. Shepherd,
publisher, 1892).
never crystallized), her statements certainly show that the momentum gained by the Catholic Church through its association with the Columbian events in Chicago did not go unnoticed in anti-Catholic circles.

While Shepherd’s warnings about a papal conspiracy to subdue America are absurd, the Vatican did seek to get closer to the United States and monitor more closely the American Church through the appointment of a resident Vatican delegate. The person chosen to fill this strategic new post was Archbishop Francesco Satolli. Satolli was born, raised and trained for the priesthood in Perugia, the diocese whose bishop, Gioacchino Pecci, would become Pope Leo XIII. Satolli became an expert on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and served the Vatican in various posts, the most important of which – prior to his appointment to the United States- was as rector of the Academy of Nobles, the Vatican’s equivalent of a school for foreign affairs. Satolli had previously visited America as a papal representative for the Centennial celebration of the hierarchy in the United States. This second visit –which was originally to represent the Vatican at the Exposition- was extended by his appointment as the first permanent delegate of the Vatican to the United States, although without official diplomatic status. 89 He attended the Columbian Congress and gave an address translated from Italian by Archbishop Ireland. Referring to his hopes for the American Church, Satolli was enthusiastic.

Go forward, in one hand bearing the book of christian truth (sic) and in the other the constitution of the United States. Christian truth and American liberty will make you free, happy and prosperous. They will put you on the road to progress. May your steps ever persevere on that road. 90

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89 The Vatican Delegate did not have diplomatic status in the United States. His functions were totally restricted to internal Church affairs. Vatican-American diplomatic relations would not be established until 1982, under Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan. For a well-documented treatment of the subject, see Massimo Franco, Parallel Empires, The Vatican and the United States—Two Centuries of Alliance and Conflict (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

90 J. R. Slattery, editor, Francis Archbishop Satolli. Loyalty to Church and State (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1895), 150.
Satolli’s statement embraced the spirit of the multi-faceted Catholic presence in Chicago in the fall of 1893. In spite of nativist warnings, the appraisal of authorities of the World’s Catholic Congress Auxiliary officials was highly positive, as conveyed in a letter written by Bonney a year later. “It is universally admitted that the Catholic Congress held at Chicago last year, was one of the most important and commanding of the great series of World’s Congresses which will make the year 1893 illustrious in human history.”91 Bonney’s positive assessment was echoed by the house historian of the Exposition, who affirmed that “the most imposing of all the denominational Congresses was that held by the Catholic Church.”92

In addition to the Columbian Catholic Congress, several Catholic societies also held their own specific congresses. These included the Saint Peter Claver Catholic Union for Colored Catholics, the Catholic Young Men’s Union, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, the German Catholic Young Men’s Guilds, the Catholic Benevolent Legion, and the Young Men’s Societies.93

With the conclusion of the Catholic Congress, the next big item of the Chicago agenda for Catholics was the Parliament of Religions. Four years after Bonney first entertained the idea of a congress of faiths, two years after Barrows issued his preliminary address to the world proposing the idea, one year after the Fair’s buildings were solemnly dedicated, and four months after the Exhibition opened its doors to the world, the most unique event of the whole Columbian enterprise was about to take place. And the Catholic Church was ready to make its presence felt throughout the most encompassing religious gathering the world had ever seen.

91 The World’s Columbian Catholic Congresses and Educational Exhibit, II, 5.
93 Houghton, Neely’s History of the Parliament of Religions, 865.
“It would seem more advisable to hold assemblies apart”

The presence of the Catholic Church at the dawn of the global interfaith movement was a mixed venture, reflecting both openness and withdrawal, risk-taking and caution. On the one hand, the Church’s decision to take part in the first Chicago Parliament of Religions of 1893 was a bold attempt by some in the Church to demonstrate the ability of the Church to adapt to the demands of American democracy. Furthermore, the Church’s participation in a subsequent Pan-American Congress on Religion and Education two years later in Toronto and the enthusiasm generated among French Catholic intellectuals for the idea of a Parliament of Religions suggested for Paris in 1900 were symptomatic of a positive Catholic response to the emerging ecumenical movement.

On the other hand, Catholic exposure to the religious public square was viewed with discomfort by other sectors of the Church. They warned of the danger of religious indifferentism posed by any Church interfaith involvement and saw as a threat the demands that could derive from it. Therefore, the same Church that first supported late 19th century initiatives like the Parliament of Religions in Chicago rejected plans for a Parliament of Religions in Paris and denied any support to the idea that a Parliament of Religions be held in the context the St. Louis Exhibition in 1904, meant to be an American successor to the Chicago event.

This chapter covers a span of a decade, from the opening of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago to the Church turning its back on a follow-up congress in St. Louis. The chapter introduces the actors in favor of and against these inter-religious congresses, and the reasons they had for holding their positions. The primary milestone following Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliament was the official discouragement of participation in any similar interfaith events by Pope Leo XIII in September 1895. The chapter is divided into three main sections: the Parliament of Religions, its aftermath in North America, and the impact of the idea in Europe and the Vatican response.
The World’s Parliament of Religions

At 10:00 am on Monday, September 11, 1893, while a reproduction of the Liberty Bell tolled ten times to honor the number of global religions represented at the Parliament of Religions, an inaugural procession set out on its route in downtown Chicago. Representatives of those ten religious traditions began a solemn march towards the Hall of Columbus of the Memorial Art Palace. The venue was crowded with 4,000 people waiting in great expectation for the arrival of the unique cast. Given that Cardinal Gibbons happened to be the highest ranking member of all the religions represented, it was his honor to preside over the opening ceremony from a throne-like chair on a raised platform flanked by religious dignitaries. The Cardinal was accompanied by five other Catholic leaders --Archbishop Patrick Feehan of Chicago, Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia, Archbishop Francis Redwood of Wellington, New Zealand, Bishop Joseph Cotter of Winona, Minnesota, and Bishop John Keane, the Rector of the Catholic University of America. They were joined by one of the most prominent American Catholic laymen, the Honorable William Onahan. In total the Catholic Church had the largest representation on the platform. As a Chicagoan, Archbishop Feehan offered words of welcome to “an assembly unique in the history of the world.” He also pointed out the fidelity of each participant to their own faith without making any concessions, and emphasizing the “common humanity” of all the participants. Cardinal Gibbons offered a response stating that, despite their disagreement in matters of faith, “there is one platform on which we all stand united. It is the platform of charity, of humanity, and of benevolence.” In Keane’s original program, the response was supposed to be shared by

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Msgr. C. J. Gadd from Manchester, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Salford, England, and Cardinal Patrick Moran from Sydney, Australia, but unexplainedly neither attended the Parliament.  

A unique element of this opening ceremony reported by Cleary was that Cardinal Gibbons led the assembly in the Anglican version of the Lord’s Prayer. Cleary does not indicate his sources for this statement. Barrows simply specifies that the Cardinal opened the ceremony with a prayer. John Tracy Ellis, Gibbons’ biographer, chooses to omit any reference to the opening prayer. Whether Cleary’s reference is accurate or not, it is an indisputable fact that the Lord’s Prayer was recited every single day of the event by everyone regardless of their religion and –even more remarkably- Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago led the Lord’s Prayer as the second final act in the closing ceremony.

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3 While Cleary refers to Moran’s absence, neither Cleary nor McCann mention Gadd at all. Regarding Moran, it is an interesting coincidence that in the Fifth Parliament of the World’s Religions, held in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009, Cardinal George Pell from Sydney, Moran’s fifth successor, was scheduled in the program, but also failed to appear.


Catholic delegates and Catholic Day

Throughout the following seventeen days of the Parliament, approximately 150,000 visitors were offered a program of 194 papers, speeches, poems and sermons. The content was organized around a daily theme and Keane made sure that the Catholic Church was ably represented throughout the event. Two weeks prior to the opening, Keane made public the official list of Catholic speakers in the general program of the Parliament. It struck a remarkable balance of Catholic voices including bishops, secular priests, religious, and laity—however, with the total absence of women, although women had been active participants in the Catholic Congress the preceding week.

As Parliament scholar Dennis McCann notes, the most important thing about Catholic presenters at the Parliament was not what they said, but their strong and committed presence in the event. But who were the official Catholic attendees and what role did they play? Cardinal Gibbons was certainly the most prominent of the Catholic presenters. He wrote an address entitled “The Needs of Humanity Supplied by the Catholic Religion” that clearly responded to the guidelines set by the ninth and the tenth objectives of the Parliament: “to discover what light Religion has to throw on problems of the current age, such as temperance, labor, education, wealth, poverty… and to foster international peace.” Gibbon’s paper could well serve as a window to explore the

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12 Instead of focusing on the content of their addresses, a task already attempted by McCann, the following paragraphs will highlight the profile of some Catholic participants. A detailed relation of the Catholic participation in the general program day by day, based on direct examination of the Parliament’s proceedings and of previous lists of Catholic delegates compiled by Cleary and McCann, will be found as an appendix.

evolution of the practice of religious charity into the modern field of social
development. 14 Since the Cardinal was not feeling well, the address was read by Bishop
Keane. 15

Among the priest presenters, Fr. Walter Elliott (1842-1928) 16 stands out with a symbolic
meaning as a member of the Missionary Society of St. Paul, also known as the Paulist
Fathers. Founded in New York in 1858 by Fr. Isaac Hecker, a Protestant convert to
Catholicism, the Paulists were the first religious congregation of men established in the
United States. The original purpose of this community was to convert Protestants to
Catholicism. That was the job of Fr. Elliott, an ardent missionary among American non-
Catholics.

A significant feature of Keane’s chosen group of Catholic presenters and an element that
has been totally overlooked is that four were converts to Catholicism and one was the
grandchild of a convert.

Father Augustine F. Hewitt (1820-1897) 17 was the second superior general of the Paulist
Fathers in New York, succeeding Fr. Isaac Hecker. Born to Congregationalist parents,
Hewitt became an Episcopalian and eventually converted to Catholicism. Once a
Catholic, he became a priest of the Redemptorist congregation and a founding member of
the Paulists when they split from the Redemptorists. His paper entitled “Rational
Demonstrations of the Being of God” was read by Fr. Elliott.

14 On charity and justice-related Catholic initiatives in the United States, see Bryan Hehir, editor,
Catholic Charities USA: 100 Years at the Intersection of Charity and Justice (Collegeville,
Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2006).
Another convert was Msgr. Robert Seton (1839-1927), the Rector of St. Joseph’s Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, and a professor at Seton Hall College. He was the grandson of Elizabeth Seton, who would become the first American to be canonized a saint. She herself had been a convert to Catholicism from the Episcopal Church. Robert Seton eventually relocated to Rome, where he was made the Archbishop of Heliopolis, a virtual diocese, in recognition of his lifetime service to the Church. His paper was entitled “The Catholic Church and the Bible.”

Another prominent convert to Catholicism among the delegate priests, but who failed to attend the Parliament, was Passionist Father Fidelis Kent Stone (1840-1921). He would have been the only Catholic representative from South America at the Parliament. The son of the Dean of the Episcopal School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, educated at Harvard and Göttingen in Germany, and a married Episcopal priest with two daughters, Stone converted to Catholicism soon after his wife died. He joined the Paulist Fathers after entrusting the care of his daughters to the Sisters of Mercy. He eventually left the Paulists and entered the Congregation of the Passionists, where he played a key role in establishing that religious community in Argentina. Stone was a remarkable orator, who likely impressed Keane when he spoke at the foundation ceremony of the Catholic University of America.

Among the lay Catholic representatives, two more converts stand out, one an expert in religion and science and the other in the science of religion. Thomas Dwight (1843-1911), Parkman Professor of Anatomy at Harvard Medical School, wrote a paper entitled “Man in the Light of Science and Religion.” He converted from Congregationalism to Catholicism at the age of 13. His paper was read by Bishop Keane. Also a convert from

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Congregationalism was Merwin-Marie Snell (1863-?).\textsuperscript{21} Snell was a secretary to Bishop Keane and a scholar of comparative religion. He was the director of the Scientific Section of the Parliament, a program area set aside to accommodate papers of a strictly academic nature and delivered alongside the general program in Hall III of the Memorial Art Palace. Snell’s oversight of this section constitutes a Catholic service to the Parliament that has been totally overlooked. Snell opened the section with a paper entitled “The Practical Service of the Science of Religions to the Cause of Religious Unity and the Mission Enterprise.” His belief that “every missionary school should be a college of comparative religion” was groundbreaking.\textsuperscript{22} He also presented another paper entitled “Importance of Philosophy to the Parliament of Religions.” Snell’s participation in the Scientific Section brought him into close contact with Swami Vivekananda, a monk from the Ramakrishna Order in India, who was later acclaimed the most outstanding participant in the Parliament in spite of the Christian supremacist agenda of the Parliament organizers. Vivekananda and Snell developed a deep bond that eventually prompted the Swami to request letters of support from Snell when he later faced questions in India related to his performance in Chicago.\textsuperscript{23} That bond may well have contributed to Snell eventually becoming an ardent devotee of Hinduism, an outcome certainly not anticipated by Bishop Keane.\textsuperscript{24} Snell was later omitted by Cleary from his list of Catholic participants in the Parliament.

Despite the non-proselytizing etiquette of the Parliament and Keane’s genuine ecumenical spirit, the Catholic Church was not hesitant to present itself as the true Christian Church to other Christian churches and as the true religion to other religions. The Church was not shy either to showcase converts to Catholicism and suggest the

\textsuperscript{22} Seager, \textit{The Dawn of Religious Pluralism}, 154, 51.
\textsuperscript{24} Ziolkowski, \textit{A Museum of Faiths}, 40.
welcome that awaited others. However, despite this denominational self-affirmation, Catholic participants were also moved by the ecumenical spirit of the Parliament. The Chronicle of the Parliament reveals a remarkable incident on the occasion of another Catholic paper:

It was at the evening session in Columbus Hall that the incident (we will not say accident) occurred, which disturbed the preconcerted order of proceedings, and furnished so striking a demonstration of the genuine spirit of brotherly kindness that pervaded the assembly. Before the conclusion of the reading, by the Rev. Dr. Mullany, of the posthumous paper by Brother Azarias, Bishop Keane in the chair, it was discovered that the other speakers announced for the evening had not arrived, and the Presbyterian Congress, which was then in session in Hall No. 3, was invited to complete its evening exercises in the Hall of the Parliament. At this curiously mingled meeting Bishop Keane and Dr. Barrows alternately presided. Eminent dignitaries of the Catholic Church were sympathetic attendants on a Presbyterian Denominational Congress; and lookers-on were at a loss which most to admire, the exquisite felicity and taste with which the speakers met the unexpected occasion, or the cordial appreciation and applause of their unwonted [sic] auditors.25

One of the Presbyterian presenters was Canadian Dr. George Grant, then principal of Queen’s University in Kingston. It is also reported that another day Bishop Keane and Archbishop Ireland ended up presiding over a Jewish Conference in the Hall of Washington after failing to get into the overcrowded Hall of Columbus.26 Participation in the Parliament was similarly significant for the Jewish community. Some commentators consider the involvement of Jews and Catholics in the Parliament as a rite of passage into the American mainstream for both faith communities. Parliament scholar Richard Seager writes: “Jews and Catholics were becoming worthy if weighty guests at the banquet table of American religious history.”27


Finally, another Catholic presenter must be singled out, Fr. John Slattery, CSJ. Fr. Slattery was the founder and rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, the house of formation of the religious congregation of the same name devoted to the pastoral care of Black Americans in the United States, a cause of which he is considered by some a “foremost champion” and a prophet within the Catholic Church. He was an outspoken opponent of “what he called the ‘uncatholic’ opposition to the ordination of Black men to the priesthood.” Fr. Slattery’s paper was entitled “The Catholic Church and the Negro Race.” He had also delivered a lecture in the Catholic Congress a week earlier.

Every single day the Parliament heard a Catholic paper except Monday, September 25, the day on which absentee Fr. Stone was scheduled to speak but cancelled. However, despite this unintended Catholic silence, the Catholic Church was spoken about on this day. Professor Philip Schaff, a Swiss-born and German-educated Protestant theologian in the United States, delivered his now famous address, “The Reunion of Christendom,” in which he said: “The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the one and only Church of Christ, governed by his Vicar in the Vatican; and undoubtedly she presents the most imposing organization the world has ever seen.” In addition to this institutional compliment, Schaff pointed out, from a Protestant perspective, the challenges posed for the actual reunion of Christians, by Catholic positions, especially those affirmed by the first Vatican Council:

The difficulty of union with the Roman Church is apparently increased by the modern dogmas of papal absolutism and papal infallibility declared by the Vatican Council in 1870. These decrees are the logical completion of the papal monarchy, the apex of the pyramid of the hierarchy. But they can refer only to the Roman Church. The official decisions of the pope, as the legitimate head of the Roman Church, are final and binding upon all Roman Catholics, but they have no force whatever to any other Christians.


29 These remarks are to be found only in the original version of this paper chosen by Richard Seager for his Parliament Anthology. See Seager, The Dawn of Religious Pluralism, 104. Barrows and Houghton present differing edited versions of this paper.
What if the pope, in the spirit of the first Gregory and under the inspiration of a higher authority should infallibly declare his own fallibility in all matters lying outside of his own communion, and invite Greeks and Protestants to a fraternal pan-Christian Council in Jerusalem, where the mother-church of Christendom held the first council of reconciliation and peace?30

Schaff’s remarks shed light from a scholarly perspective on the perception of Catholics by Protestants that in more passionately nativist circles fueled strong anti-Catholic sentiments.

The last day of the general program, Wednesday, September 27, focused on the Parliament itself and included the last Catholic paper, “The Ultimate Religion,” presented by Bishop Keane. He reserved for himself the closure of the Catholic contributions to the general program. Faithful to the task entrusted to him by the Archbishops a year earlier, Keane managed to accomplish a most unique enterprise in the history of Catholicism: to furnish a diverse delegation of eighteen Catholic speakers, including a Cardinal, seven diocesan priests, four priests members of religious institutes, one religious brother, five prominent laymen from different walks of life and himself, a bishop. Each presented a Catholic perspective on the different themes of the Parliament program while, importantly, standing side-by-side in the unfamiliar company of their counterparts from the other religions represented: Shintoists, Taoists, Confucians, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Jews, Muslims, and Orthodox and Protestant Christians. Catholics even alternated papers with several prominent women ministers of religion involved in the Parliament, including the Rev. Annis Eastman, the pastor of a Congregational Church in Peoria, Illinois, and the Rev. Anna Garland Spencer, from Providence, Rhode Island.

The Catholic delegation was made up almost exclusively of Americans.31 Most of the Catholic delegates were Irish natives or descendants. Among them there were conservatives, such as Msgr. Seton who attacked biblical criticism, Professor Dwight who questioned evolutionism, and Fr. Hewitt, who later became a critic of the

31 See detailed chronicle in Appendix B.
Parliament. There were also liberals, such as Bishop Keane and Merwin-Marie Snell. Catholics constituted the second largest confessional delegation at the Parliament of Religions, second only to Protestants considered as a whole.\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to organizing Catholic participation in the general Parliament program, Keane also organized a special Catholic Day at the Parliament designed to expose Catholic doctrine and theology to any interested participants in the Parliament. This program took place in the Hall of Washington on September 12, closely following the Parliament’s inauguration. The day was divided into three sections—morning, afternoon, and evening—with Keane presiding. This Catholic Day was intended to dispel fears among concerned Catholics that by participating in the Parliament of Religions the Catholic Church was carelessly and promiscuously mingling with other religions.\textsuperscript{33} Only four faith groups chose to set aside time for focused discussion of their faith during the Parliament, the German Evangelical Church on September 24, the Anglican Church and the Free Baptist Church on the 25\textsuperscript{th}, and the Baptists on the 27\textsuperscript{th}.

Rooms were also set apart for religious groups to answer inquiries from the public and, presumably, delegates of other religious traditions. Barrows noted that Catholics and Buddhists were kept busy answering questions.\textsuperscript{34} In the Catholic case, Keane reported that priests and lay volunteers were available all day to provide information about the Catholic faith and more than 18,000 books, pamphlets and tracts were distributed. There was also a daily Catholic public lecture at 4:00 pm addressing questions deposited in a question box or raised directly from the floor related to the themes addressed in the general sessions of the Parliament.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Seager, The Dawn of Religious Pluralism, 153.

\textsuperscript{33} See detailed chronicle of the Catholic Day in Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{34} Barrows, The World’s Parliament, II, 1559.

\textsuperscript{35} Cleary, “Catholic Participation in the World’s Parliament of Religions,” 597.
Interestingly, an alternative interpretation of these activities is offered by Vendantist convert Marie Louise Burke. She claims placards were conspicuously located in the Art Palace stating that “questions regarding Catholic faith would be answered in room six” and adds that the office was set aside to assist any Catholics who may have been unsettled by the papers of the Pagan, Protestant or Agnostic delegates, so that they could be straightened out before they could leave the building. According to Burke, rather than reaching out to non-Catholics, the Catholic Church was instead trying to correct and protect the faithful from any damage provoked by exposure to ideas and doctrines that challenged their own.36

A Catholic dissenter who was not invited

Despite the spectrum of religious traditions and theological views displayed at the Parliament, not everyone was welcome as a delegate. Barrows emphatically stated that “the Parliament was rigidly purged from cranks. Many minor sects, however, tried earnestly to secure a representation, for which there was neither time nor fitness.”37 Black Americans were poorly represented while Mormons and Native Americans were not invited.38 A notable controversial figure who was not invited either –despite being located in the geographic surroundings of the Parliament, in Green Bay, Wisconsin– was Joseph René Vilatte, one of the most unique cases of intra- and inter-denominational migration in the history of Christianity.39 Born into a French family that adhered to the Petite Église, detached from Rome, he was received into the Catholic Church, in which he became in turn a novice of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and a diocesan

36 Marie Louise Burke, Swami Vivekananda in the West, Part One: His Prophetic Mission (Calcutta: Advaita Arshrama, 1985), 119-120.
39 For specific reference to Vilatte and the Parliament, see Peter F. Anson, Bishops at Large (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 111. Anson devotes two full chapters to Vilatte and the Churches claiming the Vilatte succession, 91-129, 252-322.
seminarian in Belgium, a student of the Holy Cross Fathers in Canada, a scholastic of the Clerics of St. Viator in the United States, and eventually a repentant guest in a Benedictine monastery in France. But his religious search was far from over. He was also a convert to Protestantism in Canada, served as a Presbyterian minister in the USA, received orders in the Old Catholic Church in Europe, reported to an Episcopal Bishop in the United States, and was received in the Russian Orthodox Church until he managed to be consecrated as a bishop according to the Syrian rite by a schismatic bishop in Ceylon. Eventually, he returned to the United States as the Archbishop Primate of the Old Catholic Church in America where he won over followers from different dissident Catholic groups, the Polish Catholic Church among them.

A critical issue for the Catholic Church was that Vilatte allegedly received valid orders (valid, although not licit according to long-established church law) and, therefore, had the power to confer them upon others. And he did so. He ordained not only priests, but a number of bishops in North America and Europe, raising several irregular claims of apostolic succession and authenticity that have survived until today. His relationship with the Catholic Church also continued. He later several times contacted Archbishop Satolli, the Apostolic Delegate to America, asking to be reconciled with the Catholic Church, only to relapse and continue to freely exercise his episcopal powers. Interestingly, he spent the last period of his life in a Catholic monastery in France where he eventually died. Of course, a character like Vilatte embodied the worst possible nightmare about religious indifferentism for a Catholic mind. As a result, he was kept at the margins of the Parliament.

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40 There is a dossier about him in the historical archives of the Propaganda Fide with relevant correspondence from prominent prelates related to his case, such as Cardinal Satolli, Cardinal Richard from Paris, Archbishop Bonjean from Colombo, Ceylon, Bishop Messmer from Green Bay, as well as personnel from the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office in the Vatican. ASPF, NS, Vol. 159, Giuseppe Renato Vilatte, sedicente vescovo, protocols 14401, 16914, 18226, 19707, 30256, 30634, 31252, 31918, 32151, 32191, 32884, 36429, 36877.
Adjournment of the Parliament

After seventeen intense and exhausting days of direct interaction and meetings, and four years after Charles Carroll Bonney first posed the idea for a World’s Parliament of Religions, the event concluded. On Thursday, September 28, more than 7,000 persons — many imbued with a Pentecostal spirit-- crowded the Columbus and Washington Halls in the Memorial Arts Palace in Chicago. The platform was crowded with 50 distinguished delegates, twenty-one of whom were scheduled to offer brief remarks. Twelve were from overseas and eight of them were non-Christian. Among the non-speakers there were ten different countries represented. The Hallelujah chorus from Handel’s oratorio The Messiah, interpreted by Chicago’s 500-voice Apollo Choir, added majesty to the occasion. Catholic representation consisted of Bishop John Moore (1835-1901), from St. Augustine, Florida, among the non-speakers, and Bishop Keane, the tireless architect of Catholic participation, among the speakers. Whether intended or not, Bishop Moore’s presence was charged with symbolism, considering the historical significance of the city of St. Augustine for Catholic America. Jesuit historian Charles Gallagher reports that “over half a century before the English landed at James Town in 1607 and Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620, Spanish Catholics had explored, settled and fortified the small city of St. Augustine on Florida’s northeast coast.” Moore’s presence underscored the Catholic claim that Catholicism was a foundational building block of America.41

Another subtle Catholic feature of the closing ceremony was the singing of a hymn composed by Cardinal John Henry Newman, perhaps the most famous of Anglican converts to Catholicism, which added to the discreet but consistent Catholic self-affirmation in this ecumenical and inter-religious context. The strength of Catholic involvement in the Parliament and the quality of Bishop Keane’s partnership with Barrows was reflected in the protocol decision to have Keane as the last person to address the audience, immediately before John Barrows, the Chairman of the Parliament, and

Charles Carroll Bonney, the President of the World’s Congress Auxiliary and the source of the Parliament idea. Keane took this opportunity to assert the natural right and duty of the Catholic Church to be there, based on its antiquity, seniority and universality.

When the invitation to this Parliament was sent to the old Catholic Church, and she was asked if she would come here, people said: Will she come? And the old Catholic Church said: Who has as good a right to come to a Parliament of all the Religions of the world as the old Catholic Universal Church?

Then people said: “But if the old Catholic Church comes here, will she find anybody else here? And the old Church said: “Even if she has to stand alone on that platform, she will stand on it.”

Once the speeches were ended and Rabbi Hirsch of Chicago led the assembly in the Lord’s Prayer, Keane was granted the honor of conducting the very last act of the Parliament. He offered a benediction.

The risky enterprise of the Parliament of Religions was over. Keane’s call to the Catholic Archbishops, “Can we afford not to be there?”, the year before had been amply responded to by a Catholic retinue that—including all the Parliament activities beyond the general program—assembled a cardinal, five archbishops, four bishops, fourteen priests, two religious brothers, and six laymen for a total of thirty Catholics. This organic and sound Catholic representation, without the flashes and headlines generated by more exotic participants in the Parliament, particularly the remarkable visitors from the East, signaled a symbolic rite of passage for the Catholic Church in America. It made the case that the American Catholic Church was no longer a stranger or a newcomer to the building of the United States. And the Catholic delegation showed the coming of age of a robust body encompassing nineteen cities from thirteen states and the District of Columbia as well as Belgium, France and New Zealand, a geographic scope equivalent to that of the Columbian Catholic Congress preceding the Parliament. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Catholic participation in the Parliament was that the Catholic

42 Mary Eleanor Barrows, John Henry Barrows: A Memoir (Chicago, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 182.
Church was the only Christian body officially represented as a result of a formal and consultative decision made by the Board of the Archbishops of the United States. All others attended as individuals, some with approval of their religious institutional home and others without.

It has been argued that the Parliament could only take place because it was the initiative of interested, mostly liberal-minded individuals under the aegis of a secular organizing body, the Chicago Exhibition, and the cooperation of the American government, also a secular entity. Barrows made it clear in the early stages of planning: “The Committee made its appeal to individuals [to attend] and not to organizations.”43 However, the Catholic Church managed to be there as an institutional entity despite its own internal struggles about its participation in the Parliament, and indeed about its relationship to American democratic culture as a whole. The only other institutions officially represented in the Parliament were the Imperial Government of China, the Buddhist Church of Southern India, and the Brahma Somaj, the Jains, and the Kayasth Society, also from India.44

The uniqueness of Catholic involvement in the Parliament did not go unnoticed among Protestant observers. Dr. Theodore Thornton Munger, a Congregational clergyman and graduate from Yale observed: “By far the most notable feature of the Parliament was the participation of the Catholic Church and the presence of its ablest representatives in this country, and the earnest and genuine catholicity with which they entered into its deliberations.”45


The Parliament in itself was a remarkable endeavor for its time. Keane proclaimed “the Parliament accomplished itself.”\(^{46}\) If for the Catholic Church it signaled its entry into the American mainstream, for the Eastern religions it represented their entry into North America. The arrival in Chicago of the representatives of oriental religions constituted the first time most local residents and Parliament delegates had contact with people so different in outlook and worldview. Most were received as short-term visitors. Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard, notes that American immigration regulations made it difficult, even impossible, for them to remain.\(^{47}\) They and their unusual attires fired the curiosity of many and filled the front pages of the local newspapers. The American environment and culture were equally new and young to them in comparison to their millenary traditions. Martin Marty, Professor of History of Christianity at the University of Chicago, describes the Parliament as “the most elaborate display of religious cosmopolitanism yet seen on the continent.”\(^{48}\) But above all, it was an opportunity to realize in the West, even on an era of western colonialism of culturally different lands and peoples, how little was known about the religions of the East. The discovery of the intellectual sophistication of the Eastern religious traditions meant they could no longer be simply dismissed as the religions of heathens or idolaters. They would more and more be reclaimed as the philosophy religions, particularly Hindu Vedanta and Buddhism.\(^{49}\) Seager states that their presence in Chicago “marked the beginning of a full-scale Asian mission to the Western nations.”\(^{50}\) Furthermore, Eastern religions presented themselves as alternative, valid paths for seekers of truth to explore and follow. As Swami Vivekananda stated in the closing session of the Parliament: “Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any church in the world,” a statement that was


\(^{47}\) Diana Eck, foreword to *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Seager, xvi.


met by disapproval from some members of the audience. Nor was it easy for Catholic
delegates to hear. The Catholic Church at the Parliament stretched itself to stand with this
unfamiliar company, Christian and non-Christian, side by side with members of other
religions and other Christian denominations, on the uncommon ground of their different
worldviews and the inclusivist relativism some of them promoted. Would there be a price
for doing so?

Mixed reactions

From its birth as an idea through its aftermath the Parliament of Religions generated
mixed reactions. On the one hand, the Parliament invited a mythologization that evoked
powerful biblical images in some of its supporters. Enthusiasts proclaimed it “the
defiance of the dispersion of the descendants of Noah at Babel,” an analogy to the vision
of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, a second Pentecost, the affirmation of Paul in the
Areopagus, or the realization of a New Jerusalem and a Celestial City. Others looked at
it as a “foretaste of universal brotherhood.” Parliament scholar Eric Ziolkowski states
further that the Parliament was “viewed as an axial event in the history of religious faiths,
American religious history, interfaith dialogue, and even general human history.”

On the other hand, opponents of the Parliament viewed it as “a masterpiece of Satan” or
“a polytheistic symposium.” Furthermore, in addition to the anti-Catholic nativist
conspiracy theories about the Pope trying to crush Protestantism and take over America,
there were also antisemitic remarks denouncing the active and strong involvement of
Jews in the Parliament as the “lengthening of the cords of Zion.”

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52 Ziolkowski, *A Museum of Faiths*, 42, 19-20. References for these images are found in note 47.
Catholics were also divided in their attitude toward the Parliament. While the overall assessment of Catholic involvement in the Parliament was positive, there were also deep concerns about the wisdom of Catholics having taken part. Even while the Parliament was in progress, the Catholic press in the United States was divided on Catholic participation. *The Catholic Standard* (Philadelphia), *The Pilot* (Boston), *The Northwestern Chronicle* (St. Paul), *The Western Catholic News* (Chicago), and *The Catholic World* (Paulist community) published favorable articles. *The Western Watchman* and *Church Progress* (both from St. Louis) were very critical especially of Catholics participating as equals with non-Catholics and even non-believers as if to give them and their beliefs equal status with Catholicism. Condé Pallen, editor of the *Church Progress*, wrote: “we cannot but feel the Catholic participators were made the victims of circumstances. They were indiscriminately leveled with publicans and heathens in that heterogeneous gathering making up a discordant babel of creeds.”

Cleary adds that “a storm was brewing over the Catholic participation in the Parliament.” But the Parliament was just one element in a complex web of issues that divided the Catholic Church in the United States during the last decades of the nineteenth century. One of these issues was the relation to Protestants. The Parliament was perhaps the most articulate and systematic cooperative mingling of Catholics with Protestants in American history, an engagement that challenged the classical binary opposition that defined Catholic identity against the Protestant other—an attitude that then prevailed in many sectors of the Catholic Church. While there were several examples of a positive rapport between Catholics and Protestants prior to the Parliament, particularly in the Midwest where Protestants and Catholics stood side-by-side as pioneers and shared a sense of ownership in the expansion of the American Frontier, this was mostly regarded as the exception.

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57 Bishop Edward Dominic Fenwick and Archbishop John Baptist Purcell in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the 1820s and 30s are examples of this exception. See Margaret C. DePalma, *Dialogue on the*
The dangers of fraternizing with Protestants also ran through the Catholic school controversy and the uproar over membership in secret societies. Some Catholics saw their parochial schools as a haven where Catholics could be protected from the negative influences of Protestantism or un-Catholic American values. Others advocated a closer relation to public education as a necessary step for Catholics to fully adapt and be accepted into American society. Closely linked to the school controversy was the desire, led by German Catholics, to preserve ethno-Catholic heritage, languages and traditions. For many immigrant Catholics sending their children to ethno-religious schools protected them against religious and cultural erosion. Membership in secret societies and their secret rituals of initiation, on the other hand, were a vivid reminder of anti-Catholic Masonry. Some feared these societies could alienate members from their parishes and the good influence of the clergy.

On these issues conservative Catholics looked to the leadership of Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York (1839-1902). Corrigan was not shy to assert his convictions and use all his power to enforce his views. As an example, at the Columbian Catholic Congress in Chicago that preceded the Parliament and which aimed at building bridges between Catholic faith and American freedom and democracy, in a dramatic contrast with the rest of the program Corrigan chose to give a lecture on the Holy Inquisition. Corrigan also faced a difficult relationship with Archbishop Francesco Satolli, the first apostolic delegate, who originally sided with the progressives. Corrigan even complained to Rome about Satolli’s deliberate distance and opposition to him. Despite the eventual improvement in his relations with Satolli, Corrigan is the only Archbishop of New York

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*Frontier, Catholic and Protestant Relation, 1793-1893* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2004), xii.


60 Corrigan to Ledochowski, May 26, 1893, ASPF, NS, vol 27, p. 352.
in the history of that important diocese who was never elevated to the cardinalate after his predecessor, John Cardinal McCloskey, got that honor for the particular see. Interestingly, that honor was never bestowed upon Archbishop Ireland either, despite constant rumors about it. Another important member of the conservative group was Corrigan’s mentor and friend, Bishop Bernard McQuaid (1823-1909) of Rochester, NY. McQuaid’s clashes with Archbishop Ireland were widely known and eventually forced Vatican intervention. Another prominent prelate clearly identified with the conservative agenda was Archbishop Francis Katzer (1844-1903) of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Born in Austria, he was an important defender of German Catholic interests both in his diocese and beyond.

Prominent liberal Catholic personalities in the United States were actually involved in organizing Catholic participation in the Columbian Exhibition and the Parliament of Religions. Among them were Archbishop Ireland and Bishop Keane, with the favor and support of Cardinal Gibbons, who —given his position as Primate of the American bishops— also had to show a neutral face so as to serve as conciliator between the opposing parties. But Gibbons’ progressive leanings could not be easily hidden. Another key figure in the liberal group was Monsignor Denis O’Connell (1839-1927), the Rector


63 Satolli submits newspaper article from *Democrat and Chronicle*, Monday, November 26, 1894 about complaints from McQuaid against Ireland. ASPF, NS, vol. 74, p. 577.

of the American College in Rome and the agent of the American Bishops to the Vatican.  

While the classical tension between conservatives and progressives divided the Catholic hierarchy in the United States in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, historian Jay P. Dolan warns about the danger of misrepresenting the complexity of the people involved on either side. The divide between the two camps was not always clear. Ireland, for example, the quintessential liberal bishop of the time and the utmost defender of opening the door to Catholic engagement with American democracy, often referred to the episcopal office and government in the most regal terms. In his correspondence, he refers to the see of a bishop as a throne. The same is true of Bishop McQuaid, who opposed Rome in its decision to send a papal representative to the United States. And, despite their marked differences, this was one thing on which conservative and liberal bishops agreed. They both felt uncomfortable with the Vatican’s decision to appoint an apostolic delegate to the United States. They saw this as a Vatican attempt to interfere in their affairs and exert control over their decisions. Ignoring opposition, the Vatican appointed Francesco Satolli.

Satolli was present in Chicago at the time of the Parliament. He visited the Columbian Exhibition and participated in the Columbian Catholic Congress that took place just before the Parliament. However, he did not set foot at the Parliament, a fact that historian


67 Ahern offers many instances in his life of Bishop Keane, when Archbishop Ireland was looking after an episcopal assignment for his friend. Interestingly, until recent years any bishop’s residence would be called a palace, in which there was a hall of the throne.


69 There is not a comprehensive biography of Satolli in English. For a Canadian perspective on Satolli see Louis-Ad. Paquet, *Un chapitre d’histoire contemporaine-Le cardinal Satolli* (Ottawa: Printed for the Royal Society of Canada, 1916).
Thomas McAvoy emphasized by stating that the Delegate “refused” to participate.70

While Ireland’s biographer, Marvin R. O’Connell, mistakenly alleges that Satolli attended the Parliament in the company of Archbishop Ireland, O’Connell is correct in noting the Delegate’s discomfort with the event: “Nothing Francesco Satolli had experienced in Perugia or Rome had prepared him for the spectacle of Catholic prelates mingling on professionally equal terms with all conceivable varieties of heathen.”71

Upon his return home in Washington, on October 6, 1893, Satolli wrote to Cardinal Miescislaao Ledochowski, the prefect of the Congregation of Propagation of the Faith, on his own assessment of the event he did not attend. He referred to the idea of a Parliament of Religions as an unhappy venture for the Catholic Church, noting that the president of the event was a Protestant, and highlighted that all errors from all religions were pronounced. At the same time, Satolli conceded that the program developed in an orderly fashion –grazie al Cielo procedè tutto con ordine-- and described Catholic involvement in positive terms, but not without raising the threat of religious indifferentism.72

Gibbons also began to feel uneasy about the potential blowback against Catholic involvement in the Parliament, despite some supportive messages he received from distinguished Europeans, including Fr. Kenelm Vaughan, the English writer, and Canon Salvatore di Bartolo of Palermo who wrote: “You have wonderfully opened a new era in the history of the Catholic Church by your presence and discourse at the Congress of Religions.” However, these remarks came from someone who got himself into trouble with the publication of a book, Les critères theologiques (Paris, 1889), which earned a place on the Index in May, 1891. Therefore, fearing a Vatican anti-Parliament backlash


72 Satolli to Ledochowski, October 6, 1893, ASPF, NS, vol. 10, p. 89.
Cardinal Gibbons decided to send a preemptive letter in French to Cardinal Rampolla, making it clear that the Parliament had not been a Catholic initiative and detailing Catholic involvement. The Secretary of State replied praising the Cardinal’s discretion and the positive results of Catholic involvement, but also cautioning Gibbons to be mindful of any delicate and perilous side effects. Gibbons did not have to wait long.\textsuperscript{73}

**A Methodist minister’s call to the Pope**

Cardinal Rampolla was right about unavoidable and sometimes unpredictable consequences of Catholic exposure to the pluralist American religious public square. While exposure might facilitate information exchange and even recognition and admiration of Catholic particularism, there was also the danger it would expose Catholics to negative scrutiny. On the positive side, Pope Leo XIII cast a positive image in some non-Catholic quarters. A symbolic gesture of outreach to the Pope was made by Grover Cleveland, the President of the United States. He sent a copy of the American Constitution to the Pope on the occasion of the anniversary of his priestly ordination in 1887.\textsuperscript{74}

Rev. John Lee, a Methodist minister from Chicago, for one, was also deeply impressed by the new image of the Catholic Church presented by Catholic leaders such as Archbishop Ireland and even Archbishop Satolli during the Columbian events. But Lee misread how broadly the spirit of Catholic openness ran. Lee was deeply concerned about the situation of Protestant missionaries, laboring under oppressive disabilities in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, who could not even legally marry in those Catholic lands.\textsuperscript{75} Lee

\textsuperscript{73} Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, II, 20, 21 (notes 52 and 53).


\textsuperscript{75} For a specific study addressing the establishment of Methodism in South America and their struggle for religious freedom in education, see Rosa del Carmen Bruno-Jofre, *Methodist Education in Peru, Social Gospel, Politics, and American Ideological and Economic Penetration, 1888-1930* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988). For a general survey
and a number of fellow Methodist ministers met on April 2, 1894 and adopted a resolution that they sent to Satolli to be forwarded to the Pope asking for his immediate intervention:

WHEREAS, Our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens have repeatedly and emphatically professed that their Church, as a Church, is heartily in sympathy with the kind of religious freedom and liberty of conscience that obtains in these United States.

In view of the repeated and warm approval, by the clergy and laymen of the Roman Catholic Church in this country, of religious freedom, as existing by law in these United States, we respectfully and earnestly request that the proper authorities of that Church use their good offices, under the direction of Pope Leo XIII, to secure for the Protestants of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, the same liberty of conscience that is enjoyed by Roman Catholic citizens in this country.

This resolution was accompanied by a note addressing Pope Leo in the most familiar and, given papal protocol, naïve terms.

I enclose an envelope addressed to myself with Italian stamps on it sufficient for postage and registration in which you can enclose whatever reply you deem wise to make.

That the rich blessing of God may ever rest on you is the earnest prayer of your Protestant brothers.  

In a previous letter Lee claimed: “A special communication” of Pope Leo XIII “will secure for the Protestants of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia the same liberty of conscience that is enjoyed by Roman Catholic citizens in this country. It will do more. It will secure for Leo XIII a higher place in public thought in this great and free country than anything the great Pontiff of the nineteenth century ever penned.”  

from a larger Protestant perspective, see Hans-Jurgen Prien, La Historia del Cristianismo en América Latina (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1985), 711-808.

76 Lee to Pope Leo XIII, August 24, 1894, ASPF, NS, Volume 36, p. 64.

77 Lee to Satolli, July 12, 1894, ASPF, NS, Volume 36, p. 79.
Satolli replied to Lee: “Your letter of June 22nd and document dated July 12th came duly to hand. The inclosed [sic] copy of the Encyclical Letter of our Holy Father is, I think, the most fitting reply I can make.” The encyclical Praeclara was enclosed. Clearly, in the same way some Catholic Bishops of America saw in the Parliament an opportunity to break into mainstream American culture, the Methodist ministers of Chicago saw in the Catholic Church’s exposure an opportunity to further Protestant interests in South America. This Methodist initiative sparked criticism from Fr. Louis Lambert, the editor of The New York Freeman’s Journal, a Catholic publication, to which Lee replied in kind in the Methodist Review.

Toronto’s little Congress on Religion and Education

Satolli was also concerned about the fact that the reported “success” of the Parliament of Religions would lead to similar gatherings. He was right. In July, 1895, a Pan-American Congress on Religion and Education was held in Toronto, which, in a letter to Rampolla, the Vatican Delegate mistakenly locates in Ottawa. This much smaller and lesser known parliament of religions also counted on Catholic participation, both from English Canada and the United States. The Toronto Globe reported, “The days of mutual suspicion and exclusion seem to be gone for ever. Roman Catholics, Anglicans,

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78 Satolli to Lee, July 31, 1894, ASPF, NS, Volume 36, p. 102.

79 John Lee, “Should Methodists “sing low?” The Methodist Review, 13 (1897): 531-544. Interestingly, Fr. Lambert’s criticism of the Methodist initiative and defense of Catholicism stands in opposition to his ecumenical spirit and the defiance of his own bishop, Bernard McQuaid, when Lambert attended Toronto’s Pan-American Congress on Religion and Education two years earlier in 1895. Eventually the Methodist cause succeeded in its goal at least in Bolivia, but not because of Vatican concessions. As a result of domestic political upheaval, in 1906 the constitution of Bolivia was amended and freedom of religion was proclaimed. For a complete treatment of this issue from a Protestant point of view, see John Lee, Religious Liberty in South America, (Cincinnati: Jennings, 1907).

80 Satolli to Rampolla, Washington, August 12, 1895, ASV, SS, 1897, Rubric 280, Fasc. 4, p. 60, n. 26372.
Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Unitarians and Hebrews are all found in its programme.”  

The Congress opened at the Pavilion in the Horticultural Gardens on Thursday, July 18 and ran until Thursday, July 25, 1895. The program included sections on Missions, Education, Philanthropy, and Young People. Among the American delegates were Protestant Episcopal Bishop Gilbert of Minnesota and Rev. H. W. Bennett of Akron, Ohio. The Congress also attracted prominent Canadian Protestants, including Chancellor Nathaniel Burwash of Victoria University, who was one of few Canadians involved in the Chicago Parliament of Religions.

There were three addresses delivered by Catholics, including one by Dean Harris, described as “the most prolific Catholic author of his generation in English-speaking Canada.”.  

Toronto’s Catholic Register reported that “the most striking address of the week was the one given … by Dean William Richard Harris of St. Catherine’s on the missionary work of the Catholic Church.”

The second Catholic address was read by Rev. Thomas James Conaty of Worcester, Massachusetts, on “the Catholic Church in the Educational Movement.” The year after his participation in this Congress, Conaty replaced Bishop John Keane as the rector of the Catholic University of America in Washington after Keane was deposed as rector in the midst of the conservative/liberal tensions of the Catholic Church in America. Five years

81 The Globe, Toronto. Saturday, July 20, 1895, 7. The newspaper published daily the proceedings of the entire congress from beginning to end.


83 The Catholic Register, Thursday, July 25, 1895, 1.
later, Conaty was appointed bishop of the Diocese of Monterrey-Los Angeles. These ecclesiastical promotions of Conaty cast doubts over scholarly suggestions that Keane’s involvement in the Chicago Parliament was a factor in Keane’s dismissal as rector of the university.  

The third Catholic address was offered by Fr. Ryan on “the Catholic Church and Charity.” Fr. Ryan was the Rector of St. Michael’s Cathedral in Toronto. The introduction to his address opened a window into the busy schedule of any regular Catholic priest, which made even more remarkable Ryan’s availability to include in his busy agenda the participation in the ecumenical Congress. Ryan explained, “Our learned and eloquent Brother, the Rev. Dr. from Detroit told us this morning that there are ministers of the seventh day and ministers of the seven days. I am a minister of the seven days and indeed I may say of the seven nights, for after 14 hours of work a day I am liable to a sick call anytime of the night.” Fr. Ryan’s words foretold one of the most common arguments raised by Church leaders for not engaging in ecumenical or interfaith work. He ended his speech encapsulating the spirit of the Congress with a distinctively Canadian signature: “The Pan-American Congress may not convert the world. It will, we hope, be the means of banishing ignorance, prejudice and bigotry from this Canada of ours, of bringing religious peace and social harmony to our beloved country of which Catholics have such reason to be proud.”

Disappointment ensued when news arrived that Archbishop Ireland, who was expected from St. Paul, Minnesota, to serve as a keynote speaker and partake the hospitality of St. Michael’s Palace offered by Archbishop John Walsh of Toronto, could not attend. Father Ryan offered the audience Archbishop Ireland’s regrets. But a prominent Catholic who

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85 The Catholic Register, Thursday, August 1, 1895, 1, 4.

86 The Globe, Toronto, Saturday, July 20, 1895, 7.
did attend was the Rev. Dr. Louis Lambert, a priest of the Diocese of Rochester, New York, and the editor of the *New York Freeman’s Journal*. The Catholic Register reported that “it was a great disappointment to many on the closing day of the Pan-American Congress to go without an address from Lambert,” who had acted as chairman of the Congress. Fr. Lambert attended the Congress despite his bishop’s disapproval. Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester had previously disapproved the Chicago Parliament, which—in his own words—was attended by “every pretense of religious denomination from Mohammedanism and Buddhism down to the lowest form of evangelicalism and infidelity.” Of course, the Toronto Congress did not look any better to the eyes of the bishop of the nearby diocese across Lake Ontario.87

At the conclusion of the Toronto Congress, *The Globe* and *The Catholic Register* differed in their appraisal of the event. While *The Globe* candidly reported that the Congress was “not a complete success,” marred by low attendance and the absence of the keynote speaker,88 *The Catholic Register* assessed it in glowing terms:

> From the Catholic point of view the Congress was nothing less than a signal triumph. It brought about an introduction of ministers of all the denominations within earshot of three or four typical Catholic priests… Remembering the composition of the Congress, the educational influence… is decidedly profitable and will assuredly bear fruit in creating a better understanding among the community at large. In point of fact the Congress did not dissolve before this feeling was expressed by resolution. Let us hope for and help its continuance. The Catholic people of Canada have very good reason to appreciate the success of their spokesmen at the Congress.”89

This optimistic assessment of the Toronto Congress must be read in the context of the often tense relations between Protestants and Catholics in what was then a still very

88 *The Globe*, Wednesday, July 24, 1895, 2.
89 *The Catholic Register*, Thursday, August 1, 1895, Vol. III, No. 81, 4.
Orange Toronto, a relationship scarred by conflict and occasional violence. Any initiative to improve relations was to be welcomed.⁹⁰

European responses and Vatican discouragement

While these ecumenical and interfaith gatherings were unfolding in North America, great enthusiasm was also developing in Europe for the idea of another Parliament of Religions, this one in Paris, for which the Chicago Parliament was an inspiration and a model. The proponents of such a Parliament hoped to hold it as part of the World’s Exhibition planned for Paris in 1900. French Protestant intellectuals such as Albert and Jean Réville had sent papers to be read at the Chicago Parliament, and Gaston Bonet-Maury, one of the French delegates in Chicago, translated the Parliament proceedings into French. The translation was welcomed, generating a favorable climate for a Paris Parliament that—in the words of Catholic historian Gerald Fogarty—“captured the imagination of French intellectuals.”⁹¹ Barrows’ speaking tour in Europe following the Chicago Parliament and Archbishop Ireland’s prestige among progressive French Catholics contributed to igniting the desire for a Paris Parliament.

But there were also opposing views on the idea of a Parliament in Europe. On August 26 1894, Fr. William Tapper, a former faculty member of the Catholic University of America, denounced the Chicago Parliament at the Katolikentag, an assembly of German-American Catholics gathered in Cologne. Two weeks later, at the Third International Catholic Congress in Brussels, Bishop John Keane, who happened to be in Europe at the time, defended the Chicago Parliament. However, his remarks did not necessarily help the cause of a Paris gathering. Keane defended the Chicago event by


⁹¹ Gerald Fogarty (1985), The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 140.
arguing that it had only been possible in the climate of American religious freedom, an environment far different from that of Europe.92

Support of and opposition to a Parliament of Religions within French Catholic circles created a state of tension and confusion that soon reached the Vatican. For his part, in his second attempt to reach the Vatican, Barrows had taken the initiative to send, on April 4, 1994, a beautifully bound edition of the two volumes of his History of the Parliament to Pope Leo through Cardinal Gibbons. The gift was personally presented to the Pope by Monsignor Denis O’Connell, who wrote to Barrows offering him a detailed account of the event.

‘Holy Father, I present you a history, not only unique in its kind, but absolutely the only one ever written on this new subject, since the world began.’ ‘And what is that?’ he inquired. ‘Your Holiness, The History of the Parliament of Religions.’ ‘It is presented to you,’ I continued, ‘by the Reverend John Henry Barrows of Chicago, President of the Parliament, who sent the work to London to have it finished in this artistic manner for your Holiness.’ All his interest was awakened. He inquired more about the Parliament, asked what part the Catholic Church had taken in it and heard with pleasure that it was well represented. Then volume after volume he turned over all the pages to see the illustrations, and asked me explanations of the most striking ones. Finally, placing the volumes on his little writing table, he charged me to write you his most cordial thanks and to assure you that your present was most gratifying and that he appreciates very highly what you have done.’

The letter from O’Connell to Barrows was in a way a response to the unanswered letter Barrows had sent to Cardinal Rampolla two years earlier, soliciting Papal support for the Chicago Parliament. And Barrows was plainly delighted at O’Connell’s letter. “I must say that I read this letter with very deep interest. It was a compensation for much of the hard labor and anxiety which I have undergone in the last four years. Just think of all my labors with the dignitaries of the Catholic Church from the time when I called on

Archbishop Feehan in the spring of 1890 to this consummation of my work with the benediction and thanks of the Pope of Rome.”

Despite Pope Leo’s polite and even friendly response to Barrows, during the following year an increasing uneasiness took a hold in the Vatican about Catholics mingling with non-Catholics in North America. On August 12, 1895, the Vatican Delegate in the United States wrote Rampolla asking the Holy See to make a formal and prohibitory pronouncement about Catholic involvement in any ecumenical and interfaith congresses that might take place on American and Canadian soil in the aftermath of the Chicago Parliament of Religions. To add urgency to this request, on September 10, 1895, *Le Soleil du Midi* wrongly reported on the prospect for a Paris Congress of Religions, stating that the idea had the approval of the Pope. On September 14, just four days later, the Cardinal Pro-Secretary of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office sent a copy of the article to the Secretary of State for his action. It took Cardinal Rampolla just four more days to have the Pope sign a resolution on Catholic participation in inter-faith gatherings. In a letter addressed to Archbishop Francesco Satolli, on September 18, 1895, Pope Leo stated that while meetings of Catholics with non-Catholics had been prudently tolerated (*ad hunc diem prudenti silentio tolerati sunt*), from that moment on such meetings would be discouraged. Instead, it would be advisable that Catholics should hold their congresses entirely separately (*consultius tamen videatur si catholici homines suos seorsum conventus agant*) from non-Catholics. Arrangements could be made to invite non-Catholics to take part as auditors so that they could benefit from Catholic wisdom.

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and truth, but from now on all inter-faith gatherings were only to take place under Catholic auspices and leadership.  

The Pope’s response in Latin was almost a literal translation of Satolli’s request in Italian, which was obviously used by Cardinal Rampolla as a draft for Pope Leo’s pronouncement. About two months later, Satolli was elevated to the Sacred College of Cardinals. However, while Satolli’s agency and American interfaith gatherings were crucial for the papal pronouncement, Cardinal Rampolla’s expeditious follow-up on Satolli’s request was obviously strongly motivated by the pressure coming from France around the Paris Parliament.

In the meantime, consultations and denunciations coming from France and the Netherlands regarding the Paris Parliament continued. Ten days after the Papal pronouncement was issued, prominent French intellectual Charles Benoist, from the Revue des Deux Mondes, wrote to Cardinal Rampolla expressing his positive interest in the Parliament and asking for clarification as to whether the event had the approval of the Pope.  

Echoing Anglican rejection of the Chicago Parliament, Rampolla replied that in principle the Holy See did not favor such congresses because the only true religion would be placed at the same level as dissident religions. He enclosed the Pope’s pronouncement in support of his response. The Secretary of State sent the same enclosure to Cardinal François Richard, Archbishop of Paris, who had also inquired about the papal attitude to a Paris Parliament.

It is important to note that the Pope’s pronouncement was not a solemn condemnation, not even an official disapproval. It was more a discouragement as was indicated by the

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97 Pope Leo to Satolli, ASV, SS, September 18, 1897, Rubric 280, Fasc. 4, p. 58, n. 26372.
language chosen: “It would be more advisable…” Another relevant clarification relates to the nature of the document in which the pronouncement was made. It was not a formal decree of any kind nor an encyclical letter, but a regular letter addressed to Satolli in response to the Delegate’s request. However, the letter was read as expressing the opinion of the Vatican toward the Paris initiative and it was magnified by the adversaries of the Parliament of Religions, specifically by Bishop McQuaid of Rochester, New York, not as a caution but as a prohibition. McQuaid sent copies of the letter to the press.  

Concerns were also raised by Mgr. Francesco Carmassi, the Inter-nuncio in Amsterdam, who denounced a speech of Abbé Victor Charbonel, a French Catholic priest deeply committed to the idea of a Paris Parliament. Charbonel was accused of overstepping himself by proposing the democratization of the Catholic Church and supporting the Parliament idea. Charbonnel was admonished that the Church was not about to democratize and it was not about to accord false religions a platform alongside itself, the only true religion. Charbonnel eventually left the Church. He resisted any suggestion that the failure to convene a Parliament in Paris was primarily due to his passionate but exaggerated campaign in favor of it.

Bishop Keane was proven right in his address to the Catholic Congress in Brussels a year earlier. Europe was not America. In Europe the separation and even hostility between Catholics and Protestants were still engrained in the general consciousness. This was far less the case in America. Despite the tireless work of those in favor of the Paris Parliament, the Catholic opposition prevailed. The Paris Parliament never took place. Instead, the first International Congress on the History of Religions was organized, an exclusively academic engagement of intellectuals and scholars. The negative role that the Vatican played in the failure to convene a Parliament of Religions in Paris along the line

of that in Chicago was articulated by Professor Jean Réville, the secretary of the substitute congress.

…it was the formal refusal of the Catholic church to take any part whatever in a conference of such a character. This was really the deciding factor. In a country like France where the vast majority of the people are, at least in name, professing Roman Catholics, a parliament of religions in which no authorized representatives of Catholicism took part would be doomed to failure from the start. It is a remarkable fact that the same Catholic church which, in America, consented to take a leading part in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, should obstinately refuse to do so in Europe, where it is in no wise constrained to make the same concessions to the spirit of democracy.  

Reville’s take on the situation proved accurate. In opposition to more ecumenically-minded Catholics, opponents to the Paris Parliament prevailed. Five years earlier, Cardinal Guillaume Meignan –the Archbishop of Tours- had argued, “America is not France. Neither her [America’s] people nor her clergy are like those in France. The fact that something succeeded in the New World does not guarantee its success in France.” And on a more theological note, Abbé Moreau, the vicar-general of the Diocese of Langres, would later be cited as saying: “It is well and good to invite Protestants, Jews and Orientals, but the Catholic Church has no place there. The supporters of the project think that it will bring about tolerance, but tolerance in matters of dogma is heresy. The Catholic Church, which alone possesses the truth, has nothing to learn from others, and has no concession to make. It will be well and good for other religions, but the Catholic Church is excluded by the very principle on which it lives.”

This attitude of Catholic exclusivity has long been a marked feature of Catholic identity and a convenient differential, particularly in contexts where Catholics are a minority. It is


not difficult to understand how challenging American notions of religious pluralism and ecumenism were for Catholics in other contexts. Ecumenical contacts were an issue for Catholics in South Asia on the occasion of the coronation of Edward VII as King and Emperor of India. The controversy started with a letter of inquiry on January 6, 1902 from Bishop Francesco Pozzi of Khrishnagar, Bengal, asking the Vatican for advice about Catholics attending services in Protestant Churches to mark the occasion. The matter was submitted to the Holy Office which recommended that the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in London, Herbert Vaughan, be asked for advice. The matter even involved the Primate of Armagh in Ireland, Cardinal Michael Logue. Things got still more complicated when the Archbishop of Calcutta, Brice Meuleman, sj, decided to celebrate the Catholic mass in thanksgiving for the coronation instead of the Te Deum that was prescribed, a breach denounced to the Vatican by the Apostolic Delegate in India, Archbishop Ladislao Zaleski. This overlooked episode, buried in the Vatican Archives, serves as a clear illustration that Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliament was not a matter taken lightly in the Vatican.106

The Parliament idea “on hold”

In America, the Parliament idea remained vivid in the minds of its Protestant organizers. As the Parliament came to a close, many believed the Chicago Parliament would be the first of a long series of similar ecumenical and interfaith events. “When the parliament adjourned, it really began its permanent sessions. Its utterances have continued to echo around the huge whispering-gallery of the world.” 107 Anticipation of subsequent events led the Chicago Parliament to the establishment of the Religious Parliament Extension Society under the leadership of Paul Carus, another outstanding participant in the Parliament. This Society was mandated to support the planning of similar events. In

106 Coronation of Edward VII, ASPF, NS, Vol. 255. The following protocols contain detailed information about the case: 47946, 48675, 48922, 49149, 49292, 49586, 50336, 50345, 51523, 53046, 54109, 54368, 56074, 57147.

107 Barrows, “Results of the Parliament,” 135, 139.
addition to the Paris initiative, there were also plans to hold congresses in Benares and Jerusalem.

With the failure of the Paris proposal, Carus transferred his energy to planning for a Parliament to be convened at the next World’s Expo on American soil scheduled for Saint Louis, Missouri, April 30-December 1, 1904. In that hope, two years before the St. Louis Fair was to open, Carus requested Satolli’s support of Catholic involvement. Instead, Carus received a discouraging response from Satolli, whose earlier letter to Leo XIII had shaped the negative Papal pronouncement on the matter. “It is my conviction, which I frankly dare to express, that such a Parliament would only lead to skepticism and to naturalism. I must declare that no Catholic, whatever his condition or rank in the Church might be, should be allowed to take part or even sympathize with your work.”

Satolli was no longer the Apostolic Delegate to the United States. He was writing from Rome where a state of high vigilance regarding the United States was generated by the Spanish American War in 1898, which was felt to put in jeopardy Catholic interests in America’s newly conquered territories. Furthermore, discomfort in Vatican circles about American Catholics trying to adapt the Church to the circumstances of the age and to the open and democratic American way of life had prompted those circles to have the Pope condemn in 1899—through the letter Testem Benevolentiae—what was termed Americanism.

A factor that led the Vatican to take this action was the emergence of an Americanist movement in France. French Catholic Americo-philia suggested not only American democracy as the best political system for other nations to imitate but also separation between Church and State and freedom of religion as an ideal to be embraced. Despite Pope Leo’s pro-democracy policy towards France earlier in the decade, democracy and

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108 Moynihan, The Life of Archbishop John Ireland, 45. Note 24, Carus to Ireland, La Salle, Ill., October 8, 1902.

Church-State separation were still looked at with suspicion in Vatican circles.\textsuperscript{110}
Moreover, the translation into French of a widely read \textit{Life of Fr. Isaac Hecker}, the founder of the Paulists, ignited further interest in American Catholicism among French Catholic progressives. This biography, written by Fr. Walter Elliott, one of the Catholic delegates at the Chicago Parliament, included a prologue by French priest Felix Klein. The prologue spoke of America in glowing terms that irritated anti-Americans in Europe, among them Abbé Charles Maignen. In response, Maignen wrote an inflammatory book attacking Fr. Hecker and calling into question his virtue.\textsuperscript{111}

The fear of creeping French Americanism soon drew in the Pope. His letter \textit{Testem Benevolentiae} referred to Elliot’s controversial biography of Hecker and warned against the new opinions “that, in order the more easily to bring over to Catholic doctrine those who dissent from it, the Church ought to adapt herself somewhat to our advanced civilization, and, relaxing her ancient rigor, show some indulgence to modern popular theories and methods.” The Pope also noted there was a difference between a positive \textit{Americanism} and a negative one, and referred to the latter as raising “the suspicion that there are some among you who conceive of and desire a church in America different from that which is in the rest of the world.”\textsuperscript{112} The papal letter included a series of propositions under negative \textit{Americanism} that were condemned as heretical. However, no one was charged with being a heretic. Interestingly, this particular letter does not refer at all to Catholics mingling with Protestants and attending inter-religious events. However,

Catholic historian Fr. Thomas McAvoy frames Catholic involvement in the Parliament within the larger picture of Americanism.\textsuperscript{113}

The reaction of the American bishops was one of total obedience to Rome. However, a look at the minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Archbishops at which the matter was addressed reveals great tension. The vote of Cardinal Gibbons broke a tie between the prelates about launching an inquiry throughout the dioceses of the country in search of evidence and clarification of Americanist charges in order to challenge Rome’s indictment.\textsuperscript{114} The Cardinal’s prudence, humility and negative vote probably prevented the issue from getting worse. In the end, the formulation of Americanism as a heresy proved not to be too strong doctrinally. It looked more like the use of orthodoxy to counteract the hetero-praxis of the experiments of the Catholic faith in democratic America, such as Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliament of Religions. Father Klein, whose prologue to the biography of Fr. Hecker inflamed the controversy, eventually dismissed Americanism as “a phantom heresy.”\textsuperscript{115}

However, Testem Benevolentiae was not without impact. After the Americanist crisis, conditions were no longer propitious for Catholic participation in another Parliament. The position of the progressive Catholic bishops in the United States had been seriously compromised by the sharp rebuke from Rome. Just as the Parliament of Paris failed to crystallize without the support of the Catholic Church, the St. Louis Parliament also fell through for the same reason. In Chicago, the Catholic Church had dared to cross boundaries, standing next to Protestants, to women ministers of religion, and to Jews,

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\footnote{Th}\textsuperscript{113} Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., \textit{The Americanist Heresy in Roman Catholicism, 1895-1900} (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 83. The same framework was also adopted by French scholar Albert Houtin, who devoted a full chapter to the Parliament of Religions in his book on Americanism. See Albert Houtin, \textit{L’américanisme} (Paris: É. Nourry, 1904), 105-128.

\footnote{Minute}\textsuperscript{114} Minutes Annual Conference of the Archbishops of the United States, held at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, October 12, 1899, ASV, Sezione II, Stati Uniti, Posizione 34, Incontri annuali degli arcivescovi 1893-1896, 1894-1900.

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Muslims, and representatives of the non-Abrahamic faiths. As Seager states, the Parliament was “an event that was meant to be quintessentially modern.”116 In the wake of the Chicago Parliament, the Catholic Church’s flirtation and “coqueting” – a word used by several Parliament adversaries - with the modern age was to be halted. The Church was enlisting all its might to launch a crusade against its new and most dangerous adversary: modernity. It would take a long time before the Church would be willing and able to take part in another interfaith gathering of the scale and diversity of the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

“Let the fresh air come in:”

From Anti-Modernism to Aggiornamento

“I, [Name,] firmly embrace and accept each and every definition that has been set forth and declared by the unerring teaching authority of the Church, especially those principal truths which are directly opposed to the errors of this day.”¹ With these words the Sacrorum antistitum, also known as the Oath Against Modernism, begins. The Oath encapsulates the Catholic Church’s crusade against the threat embodied in the ideas, doctrines and opinions brought about by modern times and that challenged the Church’s dogmas and authority. An effective way of dealing with this problem internally in the Church was not only to crush dissent but to avoid diversity of opinions that might lead to relativism and strife. Novelty, ambiguity and disagreement were to be avoided in favor of tradition, utmost doctrinal precision, and consensus based on the supreme authority of Rome. The contrasting attitudes inside the Catholic Church about the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago and the Church’s involvement in the Parliament exemplified that dangerous territory of internal diversity in the Church that might lead to misunderstanding and ambiguity.

Despite this staunch resistance to modernity and the fight against modernism, as the twentieth century advanced there were also counter-pressures for change unfolding inside the Catholic Church. The Church could no longer simply ignore the signs of the times. A shift from suspicion of modernity to engaging and reassessing modernity (aggiornamento) was brewing.

Both resistance to and embracing of modernity might be better grasped if framed within the Church’s relationship with culture at large, understood as the conglomerate of

economic systems, political institutions, legal instruments, social organizations, philosophical and scientific frameworks, and non-orthodox religious ideas and practices that could simply be called “the world”. The relationship between the Catholic Church and culture is complex and long and it reflects an inter-dependence in which the Church and its surrounding environments have shaped each other over the centuries.

A significant instrument for managing interactions between the Church and “the world” has been the convocation of major or minor councils to discuss, discern and decide the Church’s position and response to the challenges coming from outside, as well as regulate its own internal issues. The last two major or ecumenical councils of the Catholic Church, Vatican I (1869-1870) and Vatican II (1962-1965), bracket a century characterized by the Church’s effort to cope with the hopes and fears, opportunities and threats posed by modernity--issues that if not addressed could call the very identity and mission of the Catholic Church into question and that required the Church to proceed with great caution, discernment and historical responsibility.

This chapter intends to build a bridge of Catholic history between the first Parliament of Religions in 1893 and the Centennial Parliament in 1993. It focuses on the struggle of the Catholic Church with modernity, tracing the concrete campaign against what came to be called “modernism” outside and inside the Church during the Anti-Modernist controversy in the early twentieth century, and the Church’s transition from opposing to befriending modernity, which found its climax in the Second Vatican Council. There are three milestones in this historical journey. The first one is the Anti-Modernist crusade launched by Pope Pius X, the immediate successor of Leo XIII, through the decree Lamentabili Sane on July 3, 1907, a syllabus condemning the errors of the modernists; the encyclical letter Pascendi Dominici Gregis on September 8, 1907, in which the Pontiff issued a formal condemnation of modernism as a heresy; and the Oath against Modernism on September 1, 1910. The second milestone is the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the specific promulgation among its sixteen documents of the dogmatic constitution Lumen Gentium on November 21, 1964 about a new understanding of the Church as the people of God; the pastoral constitution Gaudium et Spes on December 7, 1965 in which
the conciliar fathers of Vatican II articulate a new attitude towards modernity; and the declaration *Nostra Aetate* on October 28, 1965 addressing the relation of the Church with non-Christian religions. The third milestone is the *World Day of Prayer for Peace*, the first inter-faith summit ever convened by a Pope, hosted by Pope John Paul II in Assisi on October 27, 1986. The chapter is accordingly divided into three sections: the struggle of the Catholic Church with modernity, the Second Vatican Council as a response to that struggle, and the Catholic Church and other religions.

**A new *contemptus mundi*: modernity as an enemy**

During the Tridentine era, the three-hundred year period between the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council, Europe experienced a multifaceted transformation that would bring it to the forefront of intellectual, political and economic development globally. But this process, as historian David Levine asserts, took root much earlier, around the turn of the first millennium C.E. It flourished in the Renaissance and the Humanist movement and unfolded throughout the nineteenth century.

The Renaissance shifted attention from the thinkers and authorities of Medieval Christendom to a Classical Pre-Christian era. Erasmus’ Humanism moved beyond the “untouchability” of the Sacred Scriptures into the philological dissection of language, an avenue that gradually transformed the way in which Western intellectuals viewed the Bible. With Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*, epistemology gave metaphysics a veritable *coup d’etat* in the realm of philosophy, a shift that sustained the rationalism of Spinoza and Leibnitz and found its climax in the idealism of Kant and Hegel unleashing the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. Hume’s empiricism precipitated the development of the

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2 The following paragraphs in this sub-section are the writer’s personal recollections, summary and assessment of commonly known historical events, people and movements in the history of philosophy and modern history at large. General references are provided for an in-depth treatment of the various topics addressed.

modern scientific method. Copernicus, Galileo and Newton unveiled a new vision of the universe that demoted the earth from its cosmological centrality and confined it to a marginal and collateral position in a space that went from limited to limitless. In the same spirit, Comte’s positivism not only considered religion to be a primitive interpretation of reality but declared the caducity of philosophy by welcoming science as the new Messiah of the modern world.4

Equally important, immigrants in the New World challenged the social predestination of the Old World. While expanding the geographic frontier of America, the newcomers also shifted borders into a more inclusive society in which freedom and prosperity based on personal effort and achievement challenged inherited privilege. The American Revolution applied this new paradigm to the political realm and laid down a milestone for the development of modern democracy. The American Constitution followed, stripping religion of its primacy in political affairs and making all faith groups compete as equals in the marketplace of ideas. Similar ideas circulated in Europe and found a dramatic expression in the cry in the Bastille for liberté, égalité et fraternité only a decade after the American Revolution. The ensuing Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen documented the spirit of freedom, unleashing new ideas in an old world. Both the American and the French revolutions caused a domino effect across the Spanish American colonies, which -one by one- within a short span of twenty years (1810-1830), fought wars of independence and emancipated themselves from Spain.5 This also meant that a vast and solid Catholic empire was falling apart and some new actors were taking over, primarily anti-clerical France under Napoleon and his successors, and Anglican (and multi-denominational) England, spreading its dominions and succeeding Spain as

4 See Guillermo Fraile, Historia de la Filosofía, Volumen III, Del Humanismo a la Ilustración (Siglos XV-XVIII) (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1978); Teófilo Urdanoz, Historia de la Filosofía, Volumen IV, Siglo XIX: Kant, idealismo y espiritualismo (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1975); Teófilo Urdanoz, Historia de la Filosofía, Volumen V, Siglo XIX: Socialismo, materialismo y positivismo. Kierkegaard y Nietzsche (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1975).

the world’s largest imperial power. In this context of political revolutions and transformations, the Church of Rome would more and more rely on the Austro-Hungarian Empire for protection and support.⁶

The feudal economy, with its stability and predictability, had been overcome by a mercantilist system of trade and commerce that increased the wealth of those with purchasing power. Modern capitalism began to evolve from the unrestricted generation of wealth of those in charge of the mode and means of production, whose growing wealth stood in stark contrast with the condition of those dependent on wage labor. Technological developments also brought unprecedented changes to the economy and the world of labor. Sophisticated equipment precipitated a shift from manual labor to machine-based mass production. Reason, science, technology and wealth supported a meta-narrative of progress that would lead society to a pinnacle of extraordinary development. Adam Smith’s *invisible hand* was the symbol of a *laissez-faire* liberal economy counterbalanced by state regulation in concerned systems. Marx’s *Das Capital* offered an alternative meta-narrative of the redemption of the proletariat by demonizing capitalism and envisioning a new era in which workers would become their own rulers through state regulation for equal rights in a socialist-communist system that intended to overcome capitalism. This alternative not only despised religion, *the opium of the masses*, but endorsed materialism and atheism as necessary pre-conditions for a truly humanistic freedom. Eventually, tensions between these two narratives –capitalism and socialism– would polarize the economic and political landscape of the twentieth century.⁷

For a Church that perceived itself as the heir of antiquity and the preserver of culture and tradition, for a Church that believed it alone filled the political vacuum left by the fall of

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the Roman Empire through the claim of universal supremacy of the Pope, for a Church that contributed to the formation of Europe in its feudal configuration through the spread of labor-based monasticism and Saint Benedict’s *ora et labora*, the changes brought about by modernity represented a series of seismic threats that shifted the crust in which the Church felt immutably rooted.

For centuries, the Church had perceived “the world” as antagonistic to the realm of God, that is the eternal heavens that should represent the deepest aspiration of any believer who lives and weeps *in hac lacrimarum valle* (“in this valley of tears”). This dualism managed to survive in the Church despite the Church’s acknowledgment of the goodness of creation and of nature and the Church’s own rejection of extreme dualisms such as Gnosticism, Pelagianism, Catharism, and Jansenism, which the Church condemned as heretical at different times throughout history. The labeling of the world as negative, suspicious and dangerous, something to be feared and fought against, was epitomized in one of the most popular classics of medieval Christian spirituality, Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi* (Imitation of Christ). It is seldom realized that the complete title of this influential book included the phrase *Contemptus Mundi*, that is rejection of the world. By the mid-nineteenth century, that “world” had grown from a passive rival that could be easily counteracted through rhetorical preaching and scholastically reduced to an enemy of the soul to become a contender that threatened the very existence of the Church and

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8 *Salve Regina* antiphon, Marian hymn, probably from the 11th century, generally attributed to Anselm of Lucca, Bernard of Clairvaux, or Hermann de Reichenau. See Anthony M. Buono, *The greatest Marian prayers: their history, meaning and usage* (New York: Alba House, 1999), 49-54.


10 In classical Catholic catechisms, the world is listed as one of the three enemies of the soul. The other two enemies are the devil and the flesh. This catalogue may be based on New Testament sources, such as Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 2:1-3 or the first letter of John 2:14-17. The three enemies of the soul are found in Christian theology as early as Peter Abelard, in his commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, section “Lead us not into temptation:” “Quia autem sunt quae nos tentant, caro, mundus, diabolus. Caro nos tentat per gulam et luxuriam: mundus per prospera et adversa: per prospera ut decipiatur, per adversa ut frangiat. Diabolus omnibus modis nos agreditur, et ad omnem nequitiam nos perducere conatur.” (There are three things which temp us, the flesh, the
religion at large. The “world” was no longer a child to be easily controlled, or demonized if perceived as too powerful. It had come of age through modernity, and was now an enemy of the Church to be feared and fought. However, the systematic fight against the modern times that the Church would campaign in the early twentieth century stood in contrast with the pontificate of Leo XIII, which took the first steps towards the encounter of the Church with modernity.

The enemy inside de house: the heresy of the twentieth century

The long pontificate of Leo XIII, a quarter of a century from 1878 to 1903, bridged the Catholic Church into the twentieth century. Pope Leo inherited a Church that no longer had territorial possessions, although it remained in tension with the Italian Kingdom. This tension between the Vatican and the Quirinal resulted in a papal order against Italian Catholics participating in Italian elections, a measure intended to make a statement of non-recognition of the Italian regime that had stripped the papacy of its temporal power. However, while the Vatican was at odds with democratic procedures in Italy, Pope Leo began to look with some favor on democracy in France during the Third Republic, a pontifical policy known as ralliement, which caused a stir among more conservative and anti-democratic Catholic sectors in France and other parts of Europe. Pope Leo also looked favorably at democracy in America, although with reservations regarding the separation between Church and State. Also an important step in the Church’s dialogue with modernity and the democratic state was the publication of the encyclical Rerum Novarum, on Capital and Labor.
These preliminary steps of engaging democracy and the world of labor have gained for Leo XIII the title of “the first modern pope.” It has been said that the program of his pontificate was “the Christianization of modern life and the modernization of Christian life.” However, these papal inroads into modernity were halted by his successor Pope Pius X, whose name choice revealed a program for the Church more in tune with his namesake Pius IX than with his immediate predecessor. As the motto of his pontificate indicated (*Instaurare omnia in Christo*, to restore all things in Christ), his program was one of restoration of tradition and not accommodation to modernity. As modern ideas continued to bubble up at the dawn of the twentieth century and began to make inroads into Catholic theology and practice, the Vatican attempted to contain if not eradicate the influence of the modern spirit in Church life. Pius X took decisive action with the endorsement on July 4, 1907 of the decree *Lamentabili Sane*, prepared by the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition, a document very similar in tone and purpose to the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pius IX.

With truly lamentable results, our age, casting aside all restraint in its search for the ultimate causes of things, frequently pursues novelties so ardently that it rejects the legacy of the human race. Thus it falls into very serious errors, which are even more serious when they concern sacred authority, the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, and the principal mysteries of Faith. The fact that many Catholic writers also go beyond the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church herself is extremely regrettable. In the name of higher knowledge and historical research (they say), they are looking for that progress of dogmas which is, in reality, nothing but the corruption of dogmas.

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12 The Syllabus of Errors (December 8, 1864) was a catalogue of doctrines condemned by the Vatican. The list consists of eighty propositions declared by the Church to be erroneous. Among them was “indifferentism,” the evil of assuming the equality and goodness of all religions, which would be particularly relevant when addressing the Church’s reservations about the first Parliament of Religions in 1893. See Enrique Denzinger, *El Magisterio de la Iglesia* (Barcelona: Herder, 1963), 404-412.

Thus begins the decree that lists sixty-five erroneous deviations “condemned and proscribed” from Catholic doctrine and theology. A significant feature of this document is that it acknowledged that the threat to the Church was not only to be found outside but within the Church itself, particularly among Catholic intellectuals. “The fact that many Catholic writers also go beyond the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church herself is extremely regrettable… These errors are being daily spread among the faithful.”

Just two months later, on September 8, 1907, Pius X made a more solemn declaration on the subject through the promulgation of his encyclical letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. In this document, the Pope articulated and systematized the multifaceted phenomenon of modern ideas as a heretical doctrine that he labeled *Modernism*. Similarly to *Lamentabili*, the pontiff stated that the problem of erroneous modern ideas had infiltrated the Church itself. “That We make no delay in this matter is rendered necessary especially by the fact that the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; they lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart, and are the more mischievous, the less conspicuously they appear.”

The encyclical states that “every Modernist sustains and comprises within himself many personalities; he is a philosopher, a believer, a theologian, an historian, a critic, an apologist, a reformer[,]” and the document is structured so as to respond to each of the seven profiles.

As a general thesis, the Pope described the “evil” of Modernism as characterized by questioning of ecclesiastical authority based on a spirit of freedom, an inclination to change and reform for their own sake, the rejection of anything fixed or static, and an illusory expectation of reconciling the irreconcilable as was attempted not only by the ecumenical and interfaith movements but by the dialogue between theology and secular ideologies, primarily atheism. The last section of the document identifies seven remedies.

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to Modernism: the study of scholastic philosophy, the Church’s own traditional form of intellectual inquiry, against new scholarly methodologies; practical application of the given prescriptions, particularly in seminaries, houses of formation for religious orders, and Catholic universities; episcopal vigilance over publications, tightening up the apostolic prerogative to read and keep forbidden books; censorship, emphasizing the *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat* rules; prohibition of priests in editor or director positions in papers and periodicals; prohibition of congresses of priests, except on very rare occasions, authorized by the Bishop in writing, in order to avoid “usurpation of sacred authority”; diocesan watch committees to ensure effective purging and to report suspects; triennial evaluations for an effective oversight and follow-up of the strategy. Needless to say, the prohibition even of meetings of priests made the liberties taken by Catholics during the Parliament of Religions in Chicago look like an impossible exception.

The papal concern suggested that an urgent search had to be conducted within the Church. Modernity had disguised itself in the form of necessary dialogue with culture and the modern age. The Church perceived this interaction as an unwanted intercourse and not only found a name for it—*Modernity*—but also declared it a heresy, in fact “the heresy of heresies” because it harbored all possible heresies in its most inclusive tenets.

This multi-headed beast the Vatican intended to fight did not appear overnight. As the weed that comes together with the wheat in the Church’s perceptions, it grew along inevitable historical developments. Therefore, its eradication required concrete and decisive methods. A most visible and dramatic development in the battle against Modernism unfolded three years later when the Pope approved the *Sacrorum antistitum*, also known as the “Oath Against Modernism.” This oath became a ritual and canonical expression of the Church’s untiring vigilance to secure orthodoxy and submission to its teaching authority. Any member-to-be of the Catholic clergy was required to take the oath prior to his ordination to the diaconate, the priesthood and even the episcopacy. Faculty members at seminaries and Catholic universities were also required to take the oath. The purpose of the oath is clearly summarized at the end of the formula:
I declare that I am completely opposed to the errors of the modernists... I firmly hold, then, and shall hold to my dying breath the belief of the Fathers in the charism of truth, which certainly is, was, and always will be in the succession of the episcopacy from the apostles. The purpose of this is, then, not that dogma may be tailored according to what seems better and more suited to the culture of each age; rather, that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different, may never be understood in any other way. I promise that I shall keep all these articles faithfully, entirely, and sincerely, and guard them inviolate, in no way deviating from them in teaching or in any way in word or in writing. Thus I promise, this I swear, so help me God.15

The anti-Modernist sentiment persisted in overt or subtle ways throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It resulted in several excommunications as any criticism of the Church was interpreted as an act of disloyalty and unfaithfulness.16 This systematic crusade conducted by the Church within the Church took the form of a revitalized Inquisition that depressed but did not annihilate the ability of the Catholic Church to come to terms with modern times. It was an institutionalization of fear through which the ecclesiastical career and future of anyone suspected of giving way to modern thought would be doomed.

Despite the Vatican’s formal denunciations of the dangers and threats of the modern spirit, the Catholic Church and Christianity at large were not immune to the “virus” of modernity. How could they be? Religion is not impermeable to the pervasive currents of change that intersect it. As the 20th century moved on, new modes of thinking and analysis made inroads in the understanding of social realities, the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures, the forms of Christian worship, the expansion of Christianity to other lands, the dialogue and cooperation among Christians of different denominations, and the acknowledgement of value in non-Christian religions. Some of these ferments had already started in the nineteenth century. Others would begin or would find expression in

15 “The Oath.”

16 The major figures included Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), George Tyrrell (1861-1909), Ernesto Buonaiuti (1881-1946), Maude Petre (1863-1942), and Pierre Batiffol (1861-1929). See Darrell Jodock, Catholicism contending with Modernity, Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
the early twentieth century. They found organizational form in Catholic movements inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Church (especially that of Leo XIII), the Biblical Movement, the Liturgical Movement, the Missionary Movement, the Ecumenical Movement, and the Interfaith Movement. All these ferments were very much present at the 1893 Parliament of Religions. Most of them were also of enough concern to the Vatican to lead some to realize thatarming the Church against modernity was no longer a solution. The “enemy” had already penetrated the porous walls of the anti-Modernity fortress.

The spreading industrialization of the economy continued to raise concerns about the situation of workers under oppressive conditions. Leo XIII, the successor of Pius IX, surprised the world in 1891 with his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, in which he denounced the abuses inflicted on workers.¹⁷ The Pope stated that the Church could not be indifferent to the suffering not only of its children but of all people. He adopted an approach to social realities that served as a model for decades to come: to see, to judge and, finally, to act. This encyclical became the foundational document of what would become the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church. The fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* would be marked by a second social encyclical, this one by Pope Pius XI – *Quadragesimo Anno* - in which the pontiff expounded the principle of subsidiarity, at that time understood as the moral responsibility of well-off nations to lift with their disadvantaged counterparts. In this letter, Pius XI also denounced the evils of totalitarian regimes. The Social Doctrine would continue to evolve through the second half of the twentieth century through the magisterium of John XXIII and his *Pacem in Terris* (1963) about peace in the world and against nuclear proliferation, Paul VI and his *Populorum Progressio* (1967) about development as the new name for peace, and his *Octogesima Adveniens* to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, and John Paul II and his three social encyclicals: *Laborem Exercens* (1981) about the spirituality and

¹⁷ The following description of the social encyclicals will follow the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, a document published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.
ethics of work, *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio*, and *Centesimus Annus* (1991) – to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.

The emergence of historical criticism would also put into question the historicity of the portentous deeds and miracles attributed to God, the angels, the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles in the Bible. The Copernican and Darwinian revolutions also raised questions about the centrality of the earth in the biblical cosmology, the story of creation in six days (hexameron) and the uniqueness and supremacy of man over all other creatures. The development of literary criticism would unveil the composite character of books in the Bible originally believed to have been penned by a single author, the editorial assembling of separate literary traditions into a single redaction, and questions of authorship of homogeneous documents, such as some of the letters ascribed to the Apostle Paul.\(^\text{18}\) This obviously put into question two primary beliefs of the Church regarding the Bible: its divine inspiration and its inerrancy. Although the Biblical movement began and gained wide influence within Protestantism, it also made moderate inroads in Catholicism. Several Popes issued encyclicals to safeguard the inspired and inerrant character of the Bible while making modest room for the new developments: Leo XIII’s *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), Benedict XV’s *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), and Pius XII’s *Divino Afflante Spiritus* (1943).

But a new understanding of the sacred scriptures led easily to a new attitude towards the liturgy of the Church, the context in which the Word of God was constantly proclaimed. In response to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent had fixed the canon of the Mass and the seven sacraments in an attempt to protect the cultic tradition of the Church. The liturgy of the Church had continued to be a priestly affair. The laity was obliged to attend mass every Sunday and other holy days but as spectators, as passive witnesses of the mysteries that were celebrated in Latin, a language that only the educated would command. However, a Benedictine Abbot from the Monastery of Solesmes in France,

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Dom Prosper Guéranger, began the so-called Liturgical Movement, a process that started by rescuing the medieval liturgical tradition of the Church, particularly as expressed in Gregorian chant, but that soon reached out even earlier in history, trying to unearth the earliest worship practices of Christianity in antiquity. Although the Church during the reign of Pius X (1835-1914) encouraged a more active participation of the faithful in worship through hymns and gestures, and welcomed children for the first time to receive communion, it also felt uneasy about the innovations that were taking place in its millenary liturgical traditions.¹⁹

The geographic explorations, conquest and colonization by the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the French, later followed by the Belgians, of new lands and peoples gained for the Catholic Church vast territories in the New World, Africa, South Asia and even the Far East, with the amazing and exotic accounts of the penetration of the Jesuits Francis Xavier in Japan and Mateo Ricci in China. For the care and oversight of missions in the different parts of the world, in the early 17th century the Vatican established the Propaganda Fide, the congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. However, the expansion of the British, Dutch, and German empires provided the opportunity for the many branches of Protestant Christianity developing in Europe and North America to undertake their own aggressive missionary campaigns that would catapult Protestant Christianity onto the global scene and would grant it an ironic but highly desired character of catholicity.²⁰ The inroads made by the West in “the whole inhabited world” (the meaning of the word “Ecumenism”) through colonialism would also offer the Catholic Church the same opportunity for missionary expansion, often in competition with Protestant outreach. To that effect, in addition to the missionary activity developed by the traditional mendicant orders of the Middle Ages, primarily the Franciscans, the Dominicans and the Augustinians, the missionary paradigm inaugurated by the Jesuits

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inspired the foundation of numerous missionary congregations of priests, brothers and sisters that would be willing to die as martyrs if necessary to gain the world for Christ in the Catholic Church.21

It was, however, the missionary activity of Protestant Christianity that prompted the birth of the Ecumenical Movement. It was soon evident that the dissension and competition among denominations springing from the bosom of Protestantism could be even more problematic than the long-standing binary opposition of Catholics and Protestants. The factions within Protestantism, and the mutual opposition between Protestantism and Catholicism, came to be seen as a scandal and a contradiction in missionary lands. The tension and sometimes animosity between competing churches, all wanting to gain new converts for the same Christ, worked against the ideal of Christian community that missionaries wanted to present to the inhabitants of mission lands. This problem was addressed at the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, which gathered churches and missionary societies from most active denominations in missionary lands. It is considered the seminal event of the modern Ecumenical Movement. But even as the Conference sought pan-Christian cooperation, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox were not invited to participate. Based on Pope Leo’s resolution after the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Catholics would likely not have attended anyway even if they had been invited.

A result of the Conference was the establishment of the International Missionary Council. Two other ecumenical initiatives for doctrinal dialogue (Faith and Order) and for pastoral cooperation (Life and Work) would eventually merge and would be followed by the International Missionary Council into what became the World Council of Churches, the

largest ecumenical body today, of which the Catholic Church is a committed observer rather than a member.\textsuperscript{22}

The contact of Christendom with other latitudes through trade and colonialism raised awareness of other religions. International expositions of industrial commerce and communication soon opened the door to global exchange in other realms of society and culture. This was the case when the Chicago Columbian Exposition planning committee announced its intention to establish the World’s Congress Auxiliary and, through it, convene the first Parliament of Religions. This Congress has been widely acknowledged as the foundational event of the modern interfaith movement. It would be followed by other global interfaith initiatives, such as the International Association for Religious Freedom, the World Congress of Faiths, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace.\textsuperscript{23}

Even as the Church was struggling externally and internally against modernity and Modernism respectively, modernity itself was facing its own potentials for creativity, invention and progress as well as for conflict, destruction and annihilation: a paradox of promise and failure. In the short span of a few decades, the world had changed dramatically. On the one hand, modernity brought the impressive advantages of technology. The telephone and the telegraph would pave the way for what would eventually become a web of global telecommunications. Motorization also changed the landscapes of cities and countries through cars and trains. Air transportation would also bring nations and continents together at a speed never imagined before. This also facilitated international circulation of knowledge and information. Urbanization was also overcoming millennia-old rural lifestyles, and major cities were becoming ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse through global migrations.

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On the other hand, modernity also generated great concerns. The breach between the rich and the poor became ever wider. The demographic explosion also contributed to a state of hopelessness about the ability of the poorer nations to ever overcome poverty and to provide for the education of their populations so that they could enter the emerging world economy. Nationalism increased rivalry between competing powers. Colonialism disrupted the local ethos and the overall rhythm of entire continents. Technology developed sophisticated weapons of individual, group and mass destruction. Wars of a global scale demonstrated how wrong things can go in the handling of national interests and international alliances. The Holocaust, arguably the most horrifying episode of human degradation and terror, showcased the use of up-to-date technologies and organizational methods for truly horrible ends. Despite its promise of unstoppable progress, the modernity project left the world disoriented, in desolation, and at the mercy of mighty contenders with the potential of further and graver destruction that would convert the planet into a minefield for more than four decades during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{24} This perplexity generated a craving for transformation that materialized in a number of events in the 1960s, a decade that historian Harold Troper remembers as pivotal:

> Popular memory recalls the 1960s as a permissive decade, the ‘swinging sixties,’ a time of youthful exuberance, political upheaval, and recreational drug use. Hair was long; skirts were short. The pill hit the market in 1960, pantyhose in 1965. Bullets snuffed out the life of an American president, a presidential candidate, and a Black leader with a dream of racial harmony. An American astronaut walked on the moon and the acrid smell of smoke hung over riot-scarred Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles. There was the Chicago Democratic Convention, Woodstock, the Prague Spring, the Bay of Pigs, the Second Vatican Council, the War on Poverty, the Tonkin Resolution, the Tet offensive, and \textit{Hair}.\textsuperscript{25}

Sharing the front page with the pill and pantyhose, the Second Vatican Council made headlines during the first half of the “permissive decade,” showing that the Catholic


\textsuperscript{25} Harold Troper, \textit{The Defining Decade. Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 3.
Church not only was listening to the symphony of change around it, but was finally willing to take part.

The Second Vatican Council: the Catholic Church embracing modernity

Like the captain of a ship struggling not to drown in the stormy sea of modernity, the Vatican led the Church through the first decades of the twentieth century. However, as time passed, the Vatican began to feel less reluctant to navigate the currents of modern times while still steering clear of shores it did not want to approach. But the world was changing so much that, sooner than later, the Vatican would have to come to terms with it.

Outside the walls of the Vatican, at the grassroots level and in some of the learned circles within Catholicism, many believers were beginning to hold in high esteem some of changes and movements that had emerged in the 19th or 20th centuries. In addition to the social, biblical, liturgical, missionary, ecumenical, and interfaith movements, there were new avenues of theological reflection, among them La Nouvelle Theologie, seen by its critics as the embodiment of Modernism in disguise. A new openness among theologians combined with a significant awakening in the laity through the establishment of an official lay organization called Catholic Action (1905). This lay association fostered the formation of an institutionally active laity, defined in this context as co-operation in the apostolic activity of the Church, particularly in secular settings where lay Catholics were active as workers or professionals, and to which the clergy had limited access. Along Catholic Action, other movements sprang in the Church, such as the Young Christian Workers, founded by Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, the Young Christian


Students and the Christian Family Movement. Other strong and global Catholic lay organizations that continue to be very active today appeared at the grassroots level, slowly paving the way to a more protagonistic role for the laity in the Church. These movements included Opus Dei (1928), the Focolare Movement (1943), Communion and Liberation (1954), and the Neocathecumenical Way (1964). This increasingly empowered laity added to the ferment that culminated in so transforming an event as the Second Vatican Council. However, the Vatican had felt safer within the fortress it had built for itself and behind the garrisons it established across the globe, holding fast to a monarchical structure and style. It would take an independent-minded Pope to push the gates of the fortress and “let the fresh air come in.” That Pope was John XXIII (1881-1963).

The good Pope and Vatican II

Eugenio Roncalli was out of the fortress and exposed to the world in a unique way while serving the Church as a diplomat in such critical places as Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece, and France. In Bulgaria he came into close contact with Orthodox Christianity (1925-1930).
Turkey allowed him not only to further his interaction with Orthodox Christianity but also to learn about Islam. In Turkey (1935-1944), he was witness to the abolition of the Sultanate after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the transformative impact of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. France, the home of powerful challenges to Rome from Lyons through Avignon to Gallicanism, gave him experience with a secular democratic power in a non-Italian context (1944-1953). As a Cardinal and the Patriarch of Venice, Roncalli arrived in Rome in 1958 with a return ticket in hand expecting to head back to Venice after the conclave that would elect the successor of the late Pius XII. In a polarized papal election in which neither of the two candidates was able to number the two-thirds majority necessary for election, Cardinal Roncalli was proposed as a compromise candidate. To the surprise of many Cardinals, Roncalli was elected.\footnote{See Fr. Lawrence F. Murphy’s version of the conclave in “The Unlikely Election of John XXIII,” http://www.catholicireland.net/church-a-bible/church/history/108-the-unlikely-election-of-john-xxiii, accessed June 30, 2012. Peter Hebblethwaite’s version states Roncalli did not receive the two thirds plus one he needed until the eleventh ballot. See Peter Hebblethwaite, John XXIII, Pope of the Century (New York: Continuum, 2000), 141.}

Given his advanced age, Roncalli was widely regarded as a compromise to unlock the conclave, and, as such, a transitional Pope. It was expected he would occupy the papal office as a guardian of the status quo. No one imagined that this unexpected Pope would initiate the most dramatic change that the Catholic Church had experienced in centuries: reconciliation with its most challenging archenemy – Modernity. Just three months after his election, on January 25, 1959, the feast day that commemorates the Conversion of St. Paul, and from the Basilica of the same Apostle outside the walls of Rome, John XXIII surprised the Church and the world by announcing the convocation of the Second Vatican Council.

John XXIII inaugurated the Council but died eight months after its opening. His death was a cause of grief not only for Catholics and other Christians, but for concerned people around the world.
The Council was continued by his successor, Pope Paul VI (1897-1978). Paul not only brought it to successful completion, but he set about with seriousness the task of implementing the Council’s decrees during the remaining thirteen years of his pontificate.32

Appraised as a new Pentecost, an image that had often been used in referring to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago seventy years earlier, the theme of the Second Vatican Council was expressed in the Italian word aggiornamento, that is the updating or adapting of the Church to new times.33 The gathering addressed all aspects of Church life. It left a legacy of four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations, which are outlined below: 34

The dogmatic constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, focused on the Church as the People of God, a significant shift in language from the hierarchy-centered discourse that had prevailed for centuries in official church teaching. While there was no shift away from the hierarchical structure of the Church, Vatican II proclaimed the centrality of the body of the baptized—described in Lumen Gentium (following the language of the epistles of the New Testament, especially I Peter 2: 9-10) as a royal, prophetic and priestly people. The clergy are called to serve this people with the unique and necessary functions with which the ministers of the Church have been invested.35

The dogmatic constitution on Revelation, Dei Verbum, recognized the centrality of the Bible in Catholic life and doctrine and encouraged the familiarity of all the faithful with

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the sacred book. In some previous generations, private reading of the Scriptures by lay people in their own languages had been associated with the risk of deviant interpretations (and, of course, with Protestantism.) In the Second Vatican Council, access to Scripture for everyone, in vernacular languages, was strongly encouraged.36

The dogmatic constitution on the liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, welcomed the reform of the liturgical calendar, highlighting the centrality of Christ and eliminating feasts of saints whose historicity had been put into question by historical criticism. In an effort to engage the laity, it also approved the celebration of the mass in vernacular languages. As an important inter-faith gesture, it also led to a striking change in the Good Friday ritual, editing out a harshly worded prayer for the conversion “of the perfidious Jews” and replacing it with language that refers to the Jewish people as “the first to hear the Word of God,” and prays “that they may continue to grow in the love of God’s name and in faithfulness to his covenant.”37

The decree on the bishops, Christus Dominus, affirmed the collegiality of all bishops, working in cooperation with the Pope in the leadership of the universal Church. Similarly, the decree on the priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis, aimed at an integration of the life and ministry of priests, emphasizing the priesthood as a vocation and lifestyle and not simply a profession or occupation. The decree on formation for the priesthood, Optatam Totius, proposed a holistic program of clerical education addressing spiritual, psychological, academic, disciplinary and pastoral aspects. The academic aspects would require not only sound theological education, but the prerequisite of humanistic and philosophical formation.38

37 See Piero Marini, Serving the people of God: remembering Sacrosanctum Concilium (Ottawa: Novalis, 2006).
The decree on the religious, *Perfectae Caritatis*, recognized the gift that men and women members of religious orders represent for the Church and for the world and encouraged the orders to refresh their communal life and work by reflectively returning to their origins, to the spirituality and apostolic intuition of the founders and foundresses of their institutes.  

The decree on the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, officially confirmed, endorsed and encouraged the right and duty of the laity to participate in the apostolic activity of the Church.  

The decree on the Oriental Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, respectfully acknowledged as a valuable Christian heritage the ritual, historical and cultural diversity of the non-Latin Churches in full communion with the Church of Rome.  

The decree on Missions, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, reaffirmed the mandate of the Church to spread the message of the Gospel to all peoples but condemned coercive conversions and called for respect for the cultures and religions of the receiving peoples.  

The decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, opened the door to a dialogue towards unity and concrete cooperation with other Christians.  

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39 On the great impact the Council had on women religious, see Joan Chittister, *The way we were: a story of conversion and renewal* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005).


The decree on the Mass Media, *Inter Mirifica*, highlighted the strategic importance of modern means of communication technology for the apostolic activity of the Church.\(^{44}\)

The declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, was a controversial document and perhaps one of the most sensitive in relation to the anti-modernist reservations the Church had held for a long time. The document that won the approval of the majority of the Council Fathers insisted on freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Its opponents felt inclined to a decree on religious tolerance instead.\(^{45}\)

The declaration on the Christian Education of Youth, *Gravissimum Educationis*, emphasized one of the most important and influential ministries of the Catholic Church worldwide, affirming the universal right to education and the rights of Catholics to a Catholic education.\(^{46}\)

All the documents of the Second Vatican Council had important though often different degrees of impact in the realms that they addressed. However, for the purposes of this discussion, there are two documents that constitute milestones for the Church’s relationship to modernity and, in particular, to other religions. They are the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the declaration *Nostra Aetate*.

*Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope) addresses the position of the Church in the current world. This document might be considered the *Magna Carta* of the Church’s embrace of modernity. It acknowledges the natural interaction between religion and culture and their influence on each other. It addresses topics such as the dignity of the human person,

\(^{44}\text{See Norman Tanner, *The church and the world: Gaudium et spes, Inter mirifica* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005).}\)


economic development, the political community, and the promotion of peace. It also encourages dialogue between the Church and the modern sciences. In sharp contrast to the statements made by opponents of the plan for a Parliament of Religions in Paris that the Catholic Church alone possesses the truth and has nothing else to learn, Gaudium et Spes solemnly affirms that the Church has not only given but received from the development of the human race throughout history:

Just as it is in the world's interest to acknowledge the Church as an historical reality, and to recognize her good influence, so the Church herself knows how richly she has profited by the history and development of humanity.

The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too. For, from the beginning of her history she has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the ideas and terminology of various philosophers, and has tried to clarify it with their wisdom, too. Her purpose has been to adapt the Gospel to the grasp of all as well as to the needs of the learned, insofar as such was appropriate. Indeed this accommodated preaching of the revealed word ought to remain the law of all evangelization. For thus the ability to express Christ's message in its own way is developed in each nation, and at the same time there is fostered a living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of people. To promote such exchange, especially in our days, the Church requires the special help of those who live in the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties, and grasp their innermost significance in the eyes of both believers and unbelievers. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage".  


48 Pastoral Constitution about the Church in the modern world, Gaudium et Spes, 44. Official English translation from the Vatican website, www.vatican.va.
While the Church retains its claim to be the true faith received by divine revelation, this change of attitude towards reconciliation, dialogue and even friendliness towards “the world” truly constitutes a historic milestone in the Church’s relationship to modernity.49

The commitment to the dialogue between faith and culture as well as the emphasis on the Church as the People of God and on the collegiality of the bishops for its universal governance, amply portrayed in content and process in the Second Vatican Council, stand in sharp contrast to the rejection of modern culture and the exaltation of the Supreme Pontiff presented by the First Vatican Council. As there were dissenters in Vatican I, who disapproved of the pontifical infallibility and formed new branches of the Old Catholic Church, a similar –but reversed- process took place in Vatican II. Traditionalists interpreted the Council’s acceptance of a new vision as a blasphemous infiltration of modernism into the papacy and the Church at large. They rejected the reforms enacted by the Council. French Archbishop Marcel-Francois Lefebvre, for example, would establish the Society of St. Pius X, a schismatic organization, also known as the Lefebvrian Movement.50 Interestingly, the dissent around infallibility did not vanish one hundred years after its dogmatic definition in Vatican I. German theologian Hans Küng was outspoken in opposition to the notion of papal infallibility. As a result, together with other doctrinal concerns of the Vatican about Küng’s writings, his teaching appointment at the Catholic Faculty of the University of Tübingen was withdrawn.51 However, his priestly faculties remain intact and he will emerge a key player in the Centennial Parliament of Religions drafting the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic.

The Second Vatican Council has been considered a modern equivalent to the Copernican Revolution. Others, judging its aftermath, have interpreted it more as a restoration than as

49 See Rafael González Moralejo, El Vaticano II en taquigrafía: la historia de la “Gaudium et spes” (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2000).
50 See Patrick Madrid, More Catholic than the Pope (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004).
a renewal.\textsuperscript{52} There is no doubt that both continuities and discontinuities are actively at work in Vatican II. While the central tenets of Christian doctrine and Catholic tradition were reaffirmed, the official openness to and engagement with modernity certainly represented a clear departure from the Church’s position, particularly from the beginning of the twentieth century. But Vatican II also represents the dawn of the official engagement of the Vatican with other religions in a non-adversarial framework. The key interfaith statement of the Second Vatican Council, \textit{Nostra Aetate}, addressed the relation of the Church with non-Christian Religions. It was certainly in the spirit of this document that the Catholic Church became part of the Centennial Parliament of Religions in 1993.

\textbf{The Catholic Church and other religions}

For many a surprise outcome of the Second Vatican Council was the Church’s response to religious diversity and pluralism. The attitude of the Catholic Church towards other religions has been marked by a paradox. On the one hand, the Church sees itself as God’s chosen depository of the message of salvation to be proclaimed throughout the earth. It believes that its mission includes a divine mandate to baptize all willing human beings in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, thereby incorporating them into the community of salvation. Therefore, any non-Christian human being constitutes a missionary target since the Church perceives it both a duty and a right to bring the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to those outside the Church. On the other hand, as part of its \textit{aggiornamento}, that is updating to modernity, the Church officially acknowledged the truth and goodness present in other religions by rescuing from oblivion

references to the subject in early Patristic literature\textsuperscript{53} and looking back to an interaction with other faiths as long as its own history.\textsuperscript{54}

From its very origins and throughout its development, Christianity has been related to other religions. It was born in the bosom of the religion of Israel and was tutored by the philosophical religious currents of Greco-Roman culture. It found in Islam its most threatening contender and in its missionary incursions it subdued the native religions of the New World and faced the untamable faiths of the East.

Christianity was an offspring of the Jewish religion. Christianity remembers that Jesus was born a Jew and was raised according to Jewish law. He was circumcised and presented to God in the Temple at Jerusalem eight and forty days respectively after his birth. He complied with the ritual visits to the Temple as did his parents, and read from the \textit{Torah} scrolls. His closest disciples and collaborators were all Jewish. Their Jewish identity did not seem unaltered after Jesus’ death, since they expected new recruits to the Jesus movement to follow Jewish law as they did, including circumcision and dietary restrictions. But the religion of Israel was not a monolith. It was internally divided. There were Pharisees and Sadducees along with the politically motivated Zealots and the monastically organized Essenes. The movement of the followers of the Nazarene might have been just another scion of the Judaic tree.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{54} The following paragraphs are the writer’s own recollections, summary and assessment of events and people commonly known in the history of Catholic inter-faith relations. General references are offered for a detailed exploration of the various topics. An interesting overview of the subject is offered by Julien Ries, \textit{Les chrétiens parmi les religions. Des Actes des Apotres a Vatican II}, (Paris: Desclée, 1987).

\textsuperscript{55} For an emphasized version of this perspective, see John Fieldsend et al., \textit{Roots and branches: explorations into the Jewish context of the Christian faith} (Bedford: PWM Trust and The Centre for Biblical and Hebraic Studies, 1998). Fieldsend is a Messianic Jew and an Anglican priest.
However, it was precisely a passionate Jew—one who was originally opposed to the followers of Jesus—who would make decisive moves to differentiate Christianity from the religion of Israel. Saul of Tarsus, renamed Paul after he joined the followers of Jesus, saw as his task and mission the spread of the message of Christianity beyond the community of Israel. His mission strategy included a decision to invite the Gentiles to join the new community without having to comply with the specific rituals and demands of Jewish law, including circumcision, a clear breach between the new faith and its parent tradition. In this move the followers of Jesus took themselves out of the community of Israel. In addition to being a tireless missionary and founder of Churches throughout the Mediterranean basin, Paul also became the first theologian and documerter of the new faith, a faith he preached as an ecumenical and unifying path: “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.”

The planting of Christian communities in Greco-Roman soil made unavoidable the infiltration of Hellenistic ideas and practices into the very formation and constitution of Christianity. The Pauline corpus of epistles arguably reveals the influence of Stoic ideas in the early Christian discourse as well as a dualistic dichotomy between the soul and the flesh: “who will rescue me from this body of death?” The Gospel according to John differs significantly from its synoptic counterparts for its strong Platonic tones. In its famous prologue, the author portrays Jesus as the *logos*, which was eternally with God prior to becoming flesh and dwelling among humanity.

When the new faith entered into contention with Greco-Roman philosophers, learned converts from the same milieu—later known as the Apologists, Justin among them—defended Christianity from the attack of its critics by beginning to accommodate its message within Hellenistic categories. The first Christian thinkers were trying to make sense of the gospel within a Greco-Roman framework. Gnosticism soon made inroads into the new faith while doctrinal disputes

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56 Romans 10:12.
57 Romans 7:24.
about the divinity and humanity of Jesus spread, causing divisions and schisms. The doctrinal definitions articulated in the first ecumenical councils clearly reflect the official adoption of Hellenistic concepts in the shaping of Christian orthodoxy.59

The adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire meant its definite triumph over paganism, which would be slowly and lawfully crushed and extirpated. The smashing of the idols perpetrated by St. Martin of Tours in Gaul constitutes a vivid example of the transformation of a suffering and persecuted community into a judge and persecutor of the “heathen”.60 Soon Christians would trade the darkness of the catacombs for the splendor of the Roman basilicas. The magnificent Pantheon, now the Church of Our Lady of the Martyrs in Rome, still stands as a testimony of the conversion to Christianity of pagan architecture. The altars and incense once used to make sacrifices to the gods now became locations and instruments of Christian worship. Pagan feasts were soon Christianized.61 It has also been strongly suggested that St. Augustine’s intercourse with Manichaeism—a religion of Persian origin—prior to his conversion to Christianity, left an indelible imprint on him, despite his formal rejection of it. This influence was reflected in the works of this theological giant and specifically in his proclivity to interpret human sexuality in negative terms.62 Furthermore, there is another hypothesis claiming that the extreme practices of early Christian asceticism as well as the development of Christian monasticism in the desert were the result of a blending of Christian faith and Eastern practices then widespread in the Roman Empire, since Jesus

59 See Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismo Dunderberg, editors, Stoicism in Early Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2010). For an argument downplaying such influence, see Ronald H. Nash, Christianity and the Hellenistic world (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan; Dallas, Tex.: Probe Ministries Internacional, 1984).
and his disciples were neither hermits nor monks and withdrawal from society was frowned upon by mainstream Judaism.  

As Christianity spread it encountered other religions beyond the confines of the Mediterranean world. An ancient tradition states that Christianity reached India for the first time through the alleged missionary activity of St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. For centuries, the so-called St. Thomas Christians in South India have preserved their Christian faith in the midst of a religiously diverse South Asian landscape. Another significant example is Nestorian Christianity. Condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431, Nestorians did not comply with the orthodoxy imposed on them and continued to develop as a parallel community, spreading into the heartland of Central Asia and eventually reaching the millenary Chinese capital of Chang’an, also known as Xi’an. In the Forest of Steleae, an impressive museum of stones in that city, there is an ancient tablet with a Nestorian inscription. There, this form of Christianity certainly encountered Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism.

But the most dramatic encounter of Christianity with another religion came with the emergence of Islam. This faith—which claims to be the rightful heir to its Abrahamic predecessors—soon went beyond its cradle in the Arabian Peninsula. In short order it spread and conquered vast territories around the Mediterranean basin and beyond. This expansive Muslim enterprise crushed Christian prominence in cherished historical centers such as Damascus (635), Antioch (636), Jerusalem (638), Caesarea (640), Alexandria (642) and Carthage (697). The seemingly unstoppable armies of Islam continued to spread further east and west, conquering Afghanistan (699) -and from there moving into


65 See Richard C. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road, Overland Trade and Cultural Exchange from Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).
South and South East Asia—and Spain (715). Islam’s penetration into the heart of Europe was stopped by Charles Martel in Tours (732). But Islam’s challenge to Christianity continued. Furthermore, Islam was not only a military threat. It was an enlightened civilization in which the cultivation of the sciences and the arts reached levels of sophistication Europe did not know. 66

The most articulate and controversial response of Christianity to the threat of Islam was the launching of the Crusades in the hope of re-conquering the sites in the Holy Land lost to the Muslims. However, despite some temporary military successes, this costly and painful enterprise proved to be devastating for Eastern Christendom and did not remove Islam from its conquered territories. On the contrary, Constantinople fell to the power of Islam in 1453. 67 Despite the successful expulsion of Islam from the south of the Iberian peninsula, orchestrated by the Castilian monarchs, Islam continued to represent a threat to Europe. A telling reflection on the struggle between Christianity and Islam is found in the conversion of Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, the most important basilica in Byzantine Christianity, into a mosque, and in the conversion of the impressive mosque of Cordova, Spain, into a Catholic Cathedral. 68

The European colonial explorations of the fifteenth and sixteenth century opened a wide door for the encounter of Christianity with other religions and eventually the spread of the Christian faith to all the regions of the earth. The mendicant orders of the Middle Ages, which addressed the needs of new urban societies that could not be met by the traditional and more rural-oriented monastic orders, adapted themselves to the new challenges and accompanied the explorers in their overseas enterprises. Spanish and


Portuguese conquistadors and missionaries dismissed the religious practices of the indigenous groups of the Americas as demonic and superstitious and undertook to eradicate them and Christianize the native populations. Archaeological excavations in Tenochtitlan (Mexico), Cuzco (Peru), and elsewhere in the New World reveal that Christian churches were literally built atop the destroyed temples of the aboriginal religions, continuing the practice of early Christianity of which the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome is an example. Portuguese incursions down the west coast of Africa and into South and East Asia brought contact with the religions of these places.  

The missionary activity of the Jesuit saint Francis Xavier has become legendary. He baptized hundreds in India, established Christianity in Japan, and died a few miles from the coast of China, his most cherished but un-reached destination. His remains are currently venerated in Old Goa, a former Portuguese colonial enclave in southern India. Two other Jesuit missionaries stand out for the strong attraction they felt to the millenary cultures of India and China and their creative attempts to adapt and express the message of Christianity in those ancient cultural centers, reaching back a thousand years to the example of the Church’s incorporation of aspects of Greco-Roman Culture. In India Jesuit Robert de Nobili attempted to inculcate Christianity into the powerful Brahmin caste. Even more creative was the work of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci. He mastered Mandarin, and, with intelligence and audacity, gained the trust of the Chinese emperor.

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who granted him permission to establish Catholic Christianity in China. Ricci faced a controversy related to the rituals that Chinese converts to Christianity still had to observe in regards to the Chinese Emperor. Rome became uncomfortable with what it regarded as pagan practices, declaring them idolatrous. In this case, Rome seemed to have forgotten how Christianity survived and expanded thanks to its ability to adapt itself to the conditions of Greco-Roman culture. Some global enthusiasts of Christian missions regret that this move from Rome denied the Church what might otherwise have been a blossoming of Christianity in Asian lands. Subsequent French, Belgian, Dutch, and British imperial expansion boosted missionary activity within their respective imperial domains. But this time it was not only Catholic but also Protestant missionary activity that expanded.

The encounter of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, with non-Christian religions was not limited to interaction with its sister Abrahamic religions around the Mediterranean basin nor to the colonizing and missionary incursions of the West in other parts of the world. The phenomenon of global migrations also brought eastern religions to the West. The bustling metropolis of Europe and North America are today ripe with religions that reflect a new urban pluri-ethnic and multi-cultural landscape. It is no longer only the traditional missionary religions (Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) that are global. Ethnic and national religions have also reached a global scope while new religious movements have also appeared on the global scene. Both the millenary history of the interaction between Christianity and other religions and the expansive marketplace of religious

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72 For a specific treatment of Ricci, see John Young, *East-West Synthesis: Matteo Ricci and Confucianism* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, 1980).


options brought about by modernity prompted the Catholic Church to formally address its place and role in that changing world at the Second Vatican Council.

The declaration *Nostra Aetate* (Our Age) could be considered the *Magna Carta* of the Catholic position with regard to non-Christian religions. A short document of five and a half pages, it is organized in concentric circles, addressing first the religions most distant to Christianity such as Hinduism and Buddhism, acknowledging later Islam as part of the Abrahamic heritage, and granting Judaism the highest status among non-Christian religions and closest proximity to Christianity. It begins with an exhortation that outlines the Catholic inter-faith plan: “The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.”

It is significant to note that another translation of the official Latin text uses “improve” as the third verb above instead of “encourage.” The declaration ends with another exhortation to universal fraternity and non-discrimination. However, *Nostra Aetate* does not stand alone regarding the Council’s attitude toward other religions. Seven of the sixteen documents of Vatican II refer explicitly in different degrees to the reality of other religions.

The Constitution about the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, breaks new ground in soteriology (i.e. the theology of salvation) when it states that the followers of other religions can be saved. This is such an important statement that it deserves to be fully quoted:

> Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues. But the plan of

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76 Decree *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

77 See Anthony J. Cernera, *Examining Nostra Aetate after 40 years: Catholic-Jewish relations in our time* (Fairfield, Conn.: Sacred Heart University Press, 2007).
salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Saviour wills that all men be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel.\textsuperscript{78}

While non-Christians and atheists may reject these statements as a patronizing attitude on the part of the Church and might not care less, there is no doubt that this declaration is revolutionary. From a soteriological (salvation) standpoint, the Catholic Church now claims no patent on salvation, a position that many other Christian churches reject. For a Church that has affirmed and confirmed in perennial theology that there is no salvation outside the Church, \textit{Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus}, the affirmation that God’s grace acts outside the confines of the Church is quite an opening into a new theological reflection.

Another relevant document is the decree about the missionary activity of the Church, \textit{Ad Gentes Divinitus}, which “strictly forbids that anyone should be forced to accept the faith or be induced or enticed by unworthy devices.”\textsuperscript{79} Special attention is paid to the potential bridge between Christian and non-Christian monasticism: “[Catholic members of religious orders] should carefully consider how traditions of asceticism and contemplation, the seeds of which have been sown by God in certain ancient cultures before the preaching of the Gospel, might be incorporated into the Christian life.”\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} Constitution \textit{Lumen Gentium}, 16. Official English translation from the Vatican website.

\textsuperscript{79} Decree \textit{Ad Gentes}, 13.

\textsuperscript{80} Decree \textit{Ad Gentes}, 18.
Similarly important is the declaration about religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, which again is a radical departure from a previous position of mere tolerance of other religions. 81

Other documents are of lesser importance in regards to other religions. The constitution about Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, states that editions of the Bible should be specifically annotated and explained for the followers of other religions. 82 The decree about the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, exhorts lay Catholics to cooperate with followers of other religions. 83 And the pastoral constitution about the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*, advocates for respect for those who profess other religions and states that dialogue excludes no one. 84

After these seminal Conciliar documents, the theme of other religions was also present in the magisterium of Pope Paul VI, who referred to it in two Encyclicals, two Apostolic Exhortations, two Apostolic Constitutions, and two Apostolic Letters. 85 He also spoke about and/or to other religions in nine allocutions, eight of them outside of the Vatican: in Bethlehem, Bombay, Istanbul, Kampala, Manila, Sydney and Djakarta. 86 But perhaps the most significant initiative that unfolded in conjunction with the Council was the creation of two official structures within the Vatican governance system to ensure the continuity of the Council’s breakthroughs and a systematic and programmatic strategy of engagement with other religions. On Pentecost Sunday, 1964, Pope Paul VI instituted the


82 Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 25.

83 Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 27.

84 Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 73 and 92.


Secretariat for Non-Christians, which would be renamed in 1988 as the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.\(^{87}\)

Ten years later, in agreement with the primacy given to Judaism in the *Nostra Aetate* document, the Holy See decided that Jewish-Catholic relations should be dealt with separately and, to that effect, it established on October 22, 1974, the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Interestingly, the degree of closer proximity between the Catholic Church and Judaism is also conveyed by the fact that this commission is under the aegis of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Relations with all other non-Christian religions are channeled through the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. This was the state of affairs that Cardinal Karol Wojtila found when he became Pope John Paul II in 1978.\(^{88}\)

**John Paul II and the Assisi Event of 1986**

The long and hyperactive pontificate of John Paul II would not only enact what could be called the globalization of the papacy but would gain for the office of the bishop of Rome, occupied by a former Polish actor, a renewed and fresh prestige beyond Catholicity. However, John Paul II’s papacy would also embody the paradox of being modern and anti-modern at the same time. On the one hand, he became a pilgrim Pope, reaching out to the farthest regions of the earth, making himself available to the poor and the rich, the young and the old, the believer and the non-believer. He amended inquisitorial procedures from the past by lifting Galileo’s excommunication and

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\(^{88}\) The following remarks about the life of Pope John Paul II are the writer’s own recollections, summary and assessment of events commonly known about his long pontificate. For an analysis of the first decade of his pontificate, see Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John Paul II and the Church* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995).
reinstating controversial writers such as Antonio Rosmini Servati and Faustina Kowalska whose works he released from the Index of Forbidden Books. He even canonized Kowalska and paved the way for the beatification of Rosmini, which took place in 2007. On the occasion of the Jubilee of the year 2000, John Paul II surprised the world with an unprecedented apology for the past sins of the members of the Church, including the Crusades, the Inquisition and anti-Semitism. He also diversified the book of saints, making it global and inclusive, beatifying and canonizing Catholics from every continent and state of life, particularly lay and married. He also contributed to the collapse of Soviet Communism and the melting of the Iron Curtain.  

On the other hand, John Paul II crushed Liberation Theology in Latin America as unorthodox and reached out to the traditionalists who separated in opposition to Vatican II, hoping to reinsert them into full communion with the Church. He endorsed the ultraconservative group Opus Dei by granting the group special canonical privileges and canonizing their controversial founder. He also slowly reshaped the episcopal college with the appointment of a whole new generation of conservative bishops, much in his own mold. But perhaps the pontifical act that reflected the most this paradox of endorsing tradition and change at the same time was the beatification of Popes Pius IX and John XXIII in the same ceremony, men who somewhat represent an antithesis of each other: the Pope King, upholding the fight against modernity and in favor of the absolute supremacy of his office through pontifical infallibility, and the Good Pope, embracing modernity and promoting the collegiality of the bishops as his effective and needed collaborators in the leadership of the Church universal.


90 See Javier PÊrez PellÛn, Wojtyla, el ´ltimo cruzado: un papado medieval en el fin del milenio (Madrid : Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 1994).

There is also another aspect of the pontificate of John Paul II that makes his papacy stand out in the whole history of Christianity and central to Catholic participation in the Centennial Parliament of Religions: his reaching out to other religions. The specific historical circumstances of John Paul II’s life, shaped by a global war and an oppressive political regime, and his personal conviction of the force and power of religion, vividly verified throughout his pastoral trips around the world, prompted him to take the unprecedented initiative of issuing a call to prominent representatives of the religions of the world to join together and pray for peace. The United Nations proclaimed the year 1986 as the International Year of Peace and, on the same day and from the same place that his predecessor John XXIII had convoked the Second Vatican Council seventeen years earlier, at the conclusion of the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, on the eighth year of his pontificate, John Paul II issued an invitation:

I launch a pressing appeal to all Christian brothers and sisters and to all persons of good will to join during this year in incessant and fervent prayer to implore from God the gift of peace. The Holy See wishes to contribute to the arousal of a world movement of prayer for peace which, surpassing the boundaries of individual nations and involving believers of all religions, will reach the point of embracing the entire world…

I wish to announce on this solemn occasion that I am initiating opportune consultations with the leaders, not only of the various Christian Churches and communities, but also of the other religions of the world, to organize with them a special meeting of prayer for peace, in the city of Assisi. The seraphic figure of St. Francis has transformed this place into a center of universal brotherhood. It will be a day of prayer, in which the spiritual movement mentioned above will have one of its most significant and important moments. The date and details of this meeting will be decided as soon as possible, in agreement with those who will accept the invitation to take part.  

The meeting was scheduled for October 27, 1986, ninety-one years after Pope Leo XIII issued his letter to Cardinal Francesco Satolli discouraging interfaith gatherings not

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hosted by the Church in the aftermath of the first Parliament of Religions. Probably without realizing it, the Pope’s initiative was in full compliance with that earlier directive of his predecessor as he was the one who extended the invitation and would host the event. However, two predecessors had formally insisted on discouraging any inter-religious meetings. In 1917 Pope Benedict XV promulgated the Code of Canon Law which forbade “Catholics from holding disputations or meetings … with non-Catholics…”  

His successor, Pope Pius XI, insisted on the subject, this time with the formality of an encyclical letter.  

In Mortalium Animos, issued on January 6, 1928, Pius XI stated the following about those working towards religious unity:

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. For which reason conventions, meetings and addresses are frequently arranged by these persons, at which a large number of listeners are present, and at which all without distinction are invited to join in the discussion, both infidels of every kind, and Christians, even those who have unhappily fallen away from Christ or who with obstinacy and pertinacity deny His divine nature and mission. Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion.


94 This encyclical constitutes a foundational document for the critics of the Assisi initiative. See Johannes Dörmann, Pope John Paul II’s Theological Journey to the Prayer Meeting of Religions in Assisi, Part I (Kansas City, Missouri: Angelus Press, 1994), 1-7.

95 Pope Pius XI, encyclical letter Mortalium Animos, January 6, 1928, 2. Official English translation from the Vatican website.
As seen earlier, this extreme caution towards mingling with non-Catholics, so characteristic of the Anti-Modernist spirit, would slowly loosen during ensuing decades. During World War II, Pope Pius XII extended an invitation to “all men of good will” to work together for a peaceful world order in his Christmas messages of 1939, 1941 and 1942. In the post-war period, the ecumenical movement continued to grow as an endeavor of Protestants and Orthodox Christians, who regretted the absence of Catholics from their initiatives.  

96 In view of the new circumstances, the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office issued an instruction on February 28, 1950 to the Catholic bishops throughout the world, authorizing and encouraging them to appoint suitable candidates to confer with Christian non-Catholics.  

97 An important feature of this document is that it distinguishes between meetings to discuss matters pertaining to religion and theology and gatherings to work for the common good. It also allowed Catholics to recite the Lord’s Prayer with non-Catholics, something that had already taken place almost sixty years earlier during the Parliament of Religions in Chicago but raised objections from Church conservatives.

The Assisi initiative of John Paul II did not invite discussion of theological or ethical matters. While focused on the ethical issue of peace, it was intended to be an affirmation of commitment to a culture of peace through prayer. The worship nature of the Pope’s invitation raised the controversial issue of the so-called *communicatio in sacris cum acatholicis*, that is participation in public worship with non-Catholics. However, on the eve of the event and aware of the discomfort and criticism that his Assisi initiative was eliciting in some Catholic sectors, the Pope clarified that the participants would not pray together but would simply be witnesses of each other’s prayers:


What will take place in Assisi will certainly not be religious syncretism but a sincere attitude of prayer to God in an atmosphere of mutual respect. For this reason the formula chosen for the gathering at Assisi is: being together in order to pray. Certainly, we cannot “pray together,” namely, to make a common prayer, but we can be present while others pray. In this way we manifest our respect for the prayer of others and for the attitude of others before the divinity; at the same time, we offer them the humble and sincere witness of our faith in Christ, Lord of the universe.98

The Pope appointed French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who was the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to organize the event and he enlisted two lay-led organizations for the program and logistics, the Focolare Movement and the Community of Saint Egidio.99 The Focolare Movement was founded by Chiara Lubich in the context of the Second World War as a practical call to unity inspired in the most basic Christian message of the gospel. The Community of St. Egidio was formed in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council and ever since has gathered in the Roman quarter of the Trastevere for daily prayers at which all are welcome. The Assisi event was arranged as part of the program for a papal pastoral visit to Perugia.

In the weeks prior to the scheduled gathering, L’Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, published a series of articles in relation to the event written by high-ranking Vatican officials. The Pope’s initiative to pray for peace was seen by Jorge Mejía, Vice-President of the Pontifical Commission “Iustitia et Pax” as a response to the widespread secularism of the end of the twentieth century. Cardinal Francis Arinze, President of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, referred to it as “an unprecedented step” in the history of religions and Philippe Delhaye, General Secretary of the International Theological Commission, called it “a prophetic sign” of the papacy of John Paul II. Angelo Scola, of the John Paul II Institute of the Pontifical Lateran University, perceived the event as “a

happening of culture and civilization,” while Marcello Zago, Superior General of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and former Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, identified prayer as an education for and a road to peace. Zago’s syntactic precision also helped clarify what the world religious leaders were to do in Assisi: “they will not pray together, but they will be together to pray.” Zago’s clarification was relevant because the event could be misunderstood in several ways. Pietro Rossano, Chancellor of the Pontifical Lateran University, warned everyone “not to run the risk of being diverted and confused by the originality and the spectacular aspect of the event,” while Max Thurian, of the Taizé Community and a member of the “Faith and Constitution” Commission of the World Council of Churches, warned that any unwanted form of religious syncretism “would violate the participants’ conscience.” On the contrary, far from falling into syncretism, for Thurian the Assisi event should be seen as “a model of prayer among believers… respectful of the other’s convictions.” Jesús Castellano Cervera, a Discalced Carmelite and the Vice President of the Pontifical Theological Faculty and Pontifical Institute of Spirituality “Teresianum”, referred to the method of getting together to pray separately as a “profound dialogue of silence by listening to each other’s prayer.” And on the eve of the event, Emilio Castro, a prominent Protestant worldwide and Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, anticipated that it would be “a day of great spiritual enrichment” and that the event would serve “to stir the conscience of mankind.”

On October 27, 1986, one hundred and fifty representatives of twelve religions were present in the town of Saint Francis to attend the Pope’s convocation. There were Aboriginals from Africa and North America, Shintoists, Hindus, Jains, Tibetan Buddhists, Mahayanan Buddhists from Japan and Korea, Muslims, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. The Tibetan delegation was presided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Buddhist delegates from Japan included the heads of the Tendai Order, the Zen-Soto Order (Eihei-ji), the Shingon Order (Koyasan), the Jodoshin Order (Honganji-ha), the Japan Religious Committee for the World Federation, and Rissi Kosei Kai. Korean Buddhists at the event represented the Cho-gye Order. There were Muslims from the World Muslim League of Saudi Arabia, the High Council of Ulamas of Morocco, the Islamic Call Society of Libya, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, the Mosque of Cocody in Cote d’Ivoire, Turkey’s Department of Religious Affairs, and the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy. One of the Hindu delegates was Rev. Swami Bhavyananda of the Ramakrishna Center in Buckinghamshire, Great Britain, the order that would be instrumental in organizing the Centennial Parliament of Religions in Chicago seven years after the Assisi event.

Among the Christian delegates, there were representatives of the Syrian Patriarchate of Antiochia and all the East, the Armenian Catholicossate of Etchmiadzine, the Armenian Catholicossate of Cilicia, the Syrian Church of India, and the Assyrian Church of the East. Representatives of the Orthodox Churches included the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antiochia, and Orthodox Churches of Russia, Georgia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Finland. There were also delegates from the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council, the Disciples of Christ, the Baptist World Alliance, the World Council of Churches, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, the Mennonite World Conference, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (Religious Society of

101 The following information is from the official Vatican report after the event in Pontifical Commission “Iustitia et Pax,” Assisi, World Day of Prayer for Peace, 189-201.
Friends, Quakers), the World Young Women’s Christian Association, the World Young Men’s Christian Association, and the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) with close ties to the Unitarian Church. Neither a General Assembly of the most diverse World Council of Churches nor the most ambitious General Conference of the World Conference of Religions for Peace ever assembled in a single gathering such a diverse and official delegation of top religious leaders combining both the religions of the world and the internal diversity within Christianity. The reunion of Christians alone including Oriental Churches, Orthodox Churches and the various branches that sprang from the Protestant Reformation is an ecumenical marvel of great historical uniqueness and significance. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, declared that “Assisi must rank as one of the more notable ecumenical events since the Second Vatican Council.”

The program for that historic day consisted of four parts: an opening ceremony, separate prayer services at different locations, silent processions from those locations to the Basilica of St. Francis, and a closing ceremony at the lower square of the Basilica. First, the Pope welcomed the delegates at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, which houses the little chapel (the Portiuncula) restored by Francis of Assisi during his conversion. An opening ceremony took place in the interior of the Basilica. Sixty-one religious delegates stood next to the Pope in a semi-circular arrangement. To his right were the representatives of the Christian Churches and ecclesial communities with the delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury immediately next to the Pope. There were five women among the Christian delegates. To his left were the delegates of the non-Christian religions with the Dalai

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Lama immediately next to the Pope. In his welcoming remarks the Pope clearly stated the religious nature of the event:

The coming together of so many religious leaders to pray is in itself an invitation today to the world to become aware that there exists another dimension of peace and another way of promoting it, which is not a result of negotiations, political compromises, or economic bargainings. It is the result of prayer, which, in the diversity of religions, expresses a relationship with a supreme power that surpasses our human capacities alone. We come from afar, not only, for many of us, by reason of geographical distance, but above all because of our respective historical and spiritual origins.  

Once in their assigned locations, the different delegations offered a prayer of peace according to their own tradition and style, the Zoroastrians lighting their sacred fire and the Muslims facing Mecca. The organizers took great care to accommodate such diverse prayer styles and practices, and to make the various guests feel comfortable to perform their rituals while respecting the traditions of the Catholic hosts.

Christians of all the denominations indicated above met at the Church of Saint Rufino, the Cathedral of Assisi, where the Pope addressed them:

Despite the serious issues which still divide us, our present degree of unity in Christ is nevertheless a sign to the world that Jesus Christ is truly the Prince of Peace… Our prayer here should include repentance for our failures as Christians to carry out the mission of peace and reconciliation that we have received from Christ and which we have not yet fully accomplished.

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105 A mishap is reported to have taken place when the Buddhists, gathered in the local Church of Saint Peter, enthroned a statue of the Buddha on top of a tabernacle, the most sacred place for Catholics, where the Eucharist is kept for the adoration of the faithful, even though the tabernacle was emptied for the occasion.

The residents of the medieval town of Assisi were filled with interest and curiosity as the processions of leaders from the different religious traditions walked through its crooked streets towards the Basilica of St. Francis. Once there, the leaders gathered in the lower square in a similar arrangement to that of the morning, Christians to the right and non-Christians to the left of the Pope. After a representative of each religion stood and addressed the assembly from the podium and the Christian representative offered the Lord’s prayer, the Pope offered his concluding remarks referring to himself “as a brother and friend”:

It is my faith conviction which has made me turn to you, representatives of the Christian Churches and ecclesial communities and world religions, in deep love and respect. With the other Christians we share many convictions and, particularly, in what concerns peace. With the world religions we share a common respect of and obedience to conscience, which teaches all of us to seek the truth, to love and serve all individuals and peoples, and therefore to make peace among individuals and among nations.  

After the historic day in Assisi, the delegates made their way to Rome to be hosted one more time by the Pope in the Vatican before returning to their various places of origin across the globe. Gathered in St. Peter, the Pope offered his farewell with an important reference to the golden rule:

Jesus Christ, whom we Christians believe and proclaim to be our Lord and Savior, reminded us of the golden rule: “Treat others as you would like them to treat you” (Lk. 6:31). Your various religious creeds may have a similar injunction which meets an imperative of every human conscience. The observance of this golden rule is an excellent foundation of peace. Peace needs to be built on justice, truth, freedom, and love. Religions have the necessary function of helping to dispose human hearts so that true peace can be fostered and preserved.


With this final gathering in Rome, the Assisi initiative was adjourned leaving many Catholics, both those who favored and opposed the gathering with the feeling that something truly transcendental had happened, for better or worse respectively in the city of St. Francis. These reactions, pro and con, among Catholics were similar to those following Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliament of Religions the previous century. However, something absolutely unique was at stake this time. The Pope himself was at the vortex of the Assisi gathering. On the one hand, supporters of the event celebrated it as the epitome of universal fraternity and respect of religious differences for the sake of peace. On the other hand, opponents condemned it with various degrees of disapproval that ranged from looking at it as lending to misunderstanding and confusion to denouncing it as the work of the devil through the good offices of “anti-Pope” John Paul II. Among the ones scandalized by the event were those who also dissented from the Second Vatican Council, who saw in Assisi the ultimate actualization of the disastrous deeds of the Council. To them Assisi was a self-inflicted wound by which the Church was denying itself the position as the one true Church—the only successor of God’s covenant. ¹⁰⁹

The aftermath of the Assisi event saw the organization of similar inter-faith gatherings at a local level in various locations during the several years that followed. Rome, Warsaw, Bari, Malta, and Assisi again hosted small-scale inter-religious meetings in what was known as the “Spirit of Assisi.”¹¹⁰ That stream of enthusiasm crossed the Atlantic and motivated ecumenical and inter-faith activists in the United States to organize an Assisi-like conference on American soil, attended by the some of the early dreamers of the


possibility to re-convene a Parliament of Religions in Chicago as the centenary of the largely forgotten event began to appear in the horizon.

Efforts to barricade the Church from the threat of modernity and polluting contact with non-Catholics had turned around 180 degrees. The Church opened doors to interfaith contact and mutual understanding. The Church that advised against the rubbing of religious shoulders with others after the first Parliament of Religions in 1893, officially considering such fellowship a threat to the faith of Catholics, would be a working force in the Centennial Parliament in 1993.
The Vatican’s efforts to prevent a Parliament of Religions from taking place during the Paris World Exhibition of 1900 and Cardinal Francesco Satolli’s discouragement of a plan for a second American Parliament of Religions at the St. Louis World Exhibition of 1904 (also known as the Louisiana Purchase World’s Fair) helped put the Parliament idea on hold. Furthermore, the Catholic Church’s crusade against Modernism during the first decades of the twentieth century made official Catholic involvement in any interfaith initiative inconceivable. But Catholic refusal to participate did not prevent the interfaith movement from developing. This global movement, born at the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago, had concrete expressions in the International Association for Religious Freedom (1900), the World Congress of Faiths (1936), the Temple of Understanding (1960) and the World Conference on Religion and Peace (1970). These international interfaith networks grew almost totally independent of the Catholic Church, although there were some notable and individual exceptions including the key and steady involvement of Roman Catholic Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of Delhi, India, in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and the occasional presence of Catholic world figures, such as Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, also in the WCRP, and of Mother Theresa and Thomas Merton in the Spiritual Summits organized by the Temple of Understanding. At the local level, a growing number of grassroots Catholics also proved open to some association with these and other interfaith initiatives. However, the giant strides made in the Catholic dialogue with the modern world and other religions following Vatican II, reinforced by the groundbreaking interfaith Assisi initiative of John Paul II, radically changed the climate for Catholic involvement in the global interfaith movement.

This chapter returns to Chicago and explores how the memory of the 1893 Parliament of Religions remained alive for those who benefited the most from it, particularly the Vedantists and the Baha’is, and how the centenary of the 1893 event revived interest in holding a modern Parliament. Conversations about organizing a centennial Parliament of Religions began at least a decade before the anniversary, but concrete planning only began with the establishment of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (CPWR) in 1988. A major milestone in the Chicago centennial planning was the decision of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago to endorse the event. The Catholic endorsement paralleled the endorsement of the Parliament by the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC), of which the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, was an influential founding member.

Even with these endorsements, some doubted the Parliament would take place, let alone be a success. Plagued by financial and organizational problems, even Parliament planners were surprised when, in the last few weeks before the Parliament opened, all the pieces fell into place and the number of registrations surpassed expectations. This chapter explores the planning for the 1993 Parliament. It is divided into three main sections: efforts to raise awareness of the upcoming Parliament centennial and the constitution of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions; the decision of the Catholic Church to participate; and the challenges faced by the organizers in bringing the Parliament idea to fruition.

Towards a Centennial Celebration of the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions

The centennial celebration of the 1893 Parliament of Religions has a significant antecedent in another anniversary. Forty years after the first Parliament of Religions, Chicago celebrated its centennial. For the occasion, the city organized the Century of Progress World’s Fair. The official Catholic reluctance to get involved in interfaith gatherings that sank any hope of holding a second Parliament of Religions at the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904 did not prevent interested individuals in Chicago from
attempting to pull together a gathering of religious leaders, with or without Catholic participation. There was a model for doing so: the Catholic Church was absent from the Edinburgh International Missionary Conference in 1910, acknowledged as a foundational event of the modern ecumenical movement. Similarly, the Catholic Church was officially absent from this lesser known interfaith initiative held in conjunction with the 1933 Chicago centenary.

The 1933 Parliament of Religions in Chicago

This 1933 parliament of religions was convened as the International Convention of the World Fellowship of Faiths. The World Fellowship of Faiths was the successor organization to the so-called “Threefold Movement,” which combined the League of Neighbors—for racial unity—founded by Chicago social activist Charles Frederick Weller in 1918; the Union of East and West—for cultural unity—founded by London Orientalist Kedarnath Das Gupta; and the Fellowship of Faiths—for religious unity—founded jointly by Weller and Das Gupta in 1925. Weller and Das Gupta combined in organizing an interfaith gathering in Chicago referred to by some as the second Parliament of Religions and by others as the first International Convention of the World Fellowship of Faiths. As Weller testifies, “[for] the first time in history, people of All Faiths, Races and Countries are drawing together—seeking spiritual solutions for man’s Present problems—such as War, Persecution, Prejudice, Poverty/Amidst/Plenty, Antagonistic Nationalisms, Ignorance, Hatred, Fear.” This was certainly true in the context of the American Depression and emerging ideologies of Fascism and Nazism in Europe. Weller’s use of capital letters seems to emphasize both the inclusive approach of

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the organizers and the social orientation of the program. While the 1893 Parliament has been appraised as a predominantly Christian and Anglo-Saxon affair, the 1933 Parliament extended an invitation to participate not only to mainstream religions but to “All Faiths, Races and Countries.” Furthermore, although fifteen years had passed since the end of the First World War, the memory of its devastation was still vivid. Peace became a central theme of this second Parliament, which drew the attention of peace activists.4

The event took place at the Morrison Hotel in Chicago from August 27 to September 17, 1933, a period of twenty-two days with a total of fifty programs organized in two or three sessions daily. In addition to the main Chicago program, twenty-three supplementary sessions took place in New York City between October 1933 and May 1934. Combining both locations, there were 242 addresses by 199 presenters on themes of world unity, politics, philosophy, religion, economic projects, youth, women, race, fear, security, adult education, motion pictures, peace, war, ahimsa (non-violence), mysticism and theosophy. Registrants included visitors from Persia, India, Ceylon, Nepal, China, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the West African Gold Coast, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Norway, Sweden, England, Canada, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. Time Magazine reported that “speakers of all creeds and colors, many of them world-famed, arose one by one.” Prominent presenters included “the seventh richest man in the world, the temporal and spiritual head of nearly 2,500,000 Hindus and Moslems—His Highness Sir Sayaji Rao III, the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda, in present-day Gujarat, India,”5 Buddhist leader Angarika Dharmapala—leading Buddhist representative in the 1893 Parliament, American philosopher John Dewey, and—in the New York sessions—English spiritual writer Sir Francis Younghusband, founder of the World Congress of Faiths.6

4 Weller, World Fellowship, v.
The Baha’i Faith, which made its first appearance in the West during the 1893 Parliament, was also formally represented in the 1933 Parliament. So too was Mormonism, which was absent in the 1893 Parliament. The Sikh religion, recently established in North America at the time of the original Parliament, was present in the second one. A regretted absence was that of Mohandas Gandhi, who declined a personal invitation with a cabled message: “Fellowship of Faiths attainable only by mutual respect in action for faiths.” When previously asked for a written message to be conveyed to the participants, Gandhi replied: “What message can I send through the pen if I am not sending any through the life I am living? Let me for the present try to live the life as it may please God.”

Like the 1893 Parliament, the 1933 gathering counted active female participation. Both Chicago Peace activist Jane Addams—the 1931 Nobel Peace laureate—and Holyoke College President Mary E. Woolley—America’s woman delegate to the Disarmament Conference in Geneva—addressed the Parliament. The participation of Maud Ballington Booth, leader of the American Volunteer movement and daughter-in-law of the founders of the Salvation Army in England, together with African-American anti-racism activist Mary Church Terrel and birth control advocate Margaret Sanger underscore the spectrum of interests, causes and ideologies reflected among women present at the 1933 Parliament. Prominent women also came from overseas. Among them were Madam Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi—the first woman legislator in India; Muriel Lester—a settlement worker from East London, England; and Mary Hanford Ford—a spokesperson for the Baha’i Faith in England, Ireland, and Switzerland.

Although the Roman Catholic Church was not officially represented at the 1933 Parliament, one of the most prominent lay Catholic leaders in America at the time, Patrick Henry Callahan, did participate. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Callaghan settled in Kentucky where he became an industrialist noteworthy for his commitment to the labor

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cause. Through a partnership with social analyst and activist Fr. John Ryan of the Catholic University of America, Callahan implemented an innovative profit-sharing plan at his plant. He was also one of the organizers of the National Catholic War Council, which would eventually evolve into the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States. Callahan also held several lay-Catholic leadership positions, including chairman of the Knights of Columbus. Callahan’s address at the 1933 Parliament was entitled “A Century of Tolerance” and, as the sole Roman Catholic speaker at the event, he was introduced as having been honoured by Pope Pius XI with a papal knighthood, a clear emphasis on his Catholic identity and good standing within the Church. But his presence in the Parliament was in no way endorsed by the Church. It was a personal act. Moreover, in what seemed a violation of Church policy regarding ecumenical and interfaith relations at the time, Callahan was also the Vice Chairman of the National Council of the World Fellowship of Faiths.  

The same Pope that acknowledged Callahan’s merits by making him a Knight of St. Gregory also authored the 1928 encyclical letter *Mortalium Animos*, five years before this Parliament of Religions, in which the pontiff denounced the dangers of the ecumenical movement, including the possibility that it might lead to naturalism and atheism, and strongly discouraged any Catholic clerical or lay involvement in it. Much as Callahan’s Catholic roots were noted, he was not officially or unofficially speaking for the Church.

The inclusive program of the 1933 Parliament of Religions certainly confirmed the Pope’s concerns. Episcopalian Bishop William Montgomery Brown gave a talk entitled “Communism –The New Faith for a New World.” Nor was the Pope alone in his concerns. Brown –also known as the Bad Bishop- was the first Anglican bishop since the Reformation to be tried for heresy and the first American bishop ever deposed on the

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grounds of harboring heretical views.⁹

Following the lead of its 1893 predecessor, the 1933 Parliament was largely the result of the labor of individuals with strong liberal leanings and not of endorsing institutions. Not all assessments of the event are positive. DePaul University Professor George F. Hall comments that “participants came on their own credentials. Some presented papers, they left and there was no genuine plenary session. The meetings were dominated by quasi-religious political groups who hoped to duplicate [the] success of Swami Vivekananda in 1893 in getting publicity and support. Scholars sensed this ‘sensation seeking’ atmosphere and retreated quickly lest they be caught in the limelight with these leaders and be publicized accordingly, i.e. guilt by association.”¹⁰ But not everyone “retreated quickly.” Interfaith chronicler Marcus Braybrooke observes that during its almost three weeks “twenty seven gatherings were held in Chicago, with a massive total attendance of 44,000 people.” Nonetheless, he also argues that the 1933 Parliament is “still a forgotten event.”¹¹

Interestingly, this Parliament of Religions did not have a monopoly on religion at the 1933 Chicago Exhibition. Time Magazine reported: “Piety at the Fair is represented by Christian Scientist and Roman Catholic exhibits, and a long, L-shaped Hall of Religions with a Gothic tower, containing such churchly wares as Protestants have cared to show, notably the silver Chalice of Antioch which may have been the Holy Grail, and Col.

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¹⁰ George Hall to Dennis McCann, June 13, 1988, Archives of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (ACPWR), Box 9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder May-August 1988.

Henry Stanley Todd's virile portrait of Christ.” Furthermore, while Catholics were forbidden to mingle with non-Catholics in events like the 1933 Parliament, they were represented at the larger Exhibition as they were forty years earlier through the Catholic Educational Exhibit at the Columbian Fair.

“We are both beneficiaries”

The 1933 Chicago Parliament was not the only forgotten Parliament of Religions. Parliament scholar Richard Seager reports that the original 1893 Chicago Parliament also disappeared from the scholarly radar for more than half a century. However, there was a group from whom memory of the 1893 Chicago Parliament never vanished, the

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13 In addition to the second parliament of religions in Chicago, there are references to a World Parliament of Religions revived in New York on November 15, 1953, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Chicago event, by the Rev. Richard E. Evans, director of the Presbyterian Labor Temple, 242 East Fourteenth Street. As it was expected, no Catholics were involved in a Board of Directors composed of Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. This New York-based Parliament of Religions was not an event but an ongoing organization. A Good Will Tour, which included a visit to Moscow at the invitation of Metropolitan Germogen, Exarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, is reported to have taken place in the summer of 1954. See “Thirty Clerics to Pay a Visit to Moscow,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 1954, accessed June 25, 2012, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=FA0B12FD3F5C177B93CBA8178DD85F4085F9.

Furthermore, there are also references to an intended third parliament of religions to be celebrated in 1973, but that never crystallized. *The Hindu*, India’s national newspaper, in December 1982 published an article referring to a letter “by one Ramamurty of Madras bemoaning the fact that the third world parliament of religions had failed to materialise. Ramamurty made a case for holding it 50 years later, the following year. He wrote: ‘I do hope this thought will reach Chicago and competent person or persons will organise the third conference of religions for the unity of all religions. May this message reach Chicago!’” It would certainly take more than a year to organize a third parliament of religions in Chicago. See Mohan Tikku, “After the Swami in Chicago,” accessed June 25, 2012, http://www.hindu.com/mag/2011/02/27/stories/2011022750310400.htm.

Ramakrishna Order and its network of Vedanta Centers around the world. Ramakrishna, also known as Paramahansa by his devotees, was a renowned Indian mystic. His most prominent disciple and successor was Swami Vivekananda, who participated in the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago while still a young monk. Vivekananda’s presence in the 1893 Parliament is considered by many a highlight of the gathering. His speeches were acclaimed as the most insightful uttered at the event. His visit to Chicago and subsequent trips to North America are recalled as key to the penetration of Hindu thought and practices in the West.

After two years of lecturing in the United States and England, Vivekananda returned to India, where he organized the Ramakrishna Order and founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He and other members of the Order also established centers in North America. Known today as Vedanta Centers, these communities have expanded across the continent and into other parts of the world. Unlike the other charismatic gurus who brought Hindu wisdom to the West, including Sri Aurobindo, Yogananda, Swami Prabhupada of the Hare Krishna Movement, or Sathya Sai Baba, Vivekananda provided a monastic organization to the early disciples of his master Ramakrishna. These monastic Vedanta Societies share much in common with Western Christian monasticism. At the same time, they also give priority to social outreach, which makes them also similar to apostolic, non-monastic Roman Catholic religious orders.

While Swami Vivekananda had an impact in the 1893 Parliament of Religions, the first Chicago Parliament also served as a springboard for Vivekananda’s mission to the West and the resulting growth and development of the Ramakrishna Order. Because of that

16 On other influential gurus in North America, see Philip Goldberg, American Veda: from Emerson and the Beatles to yoga and meditation: how Indian spirituality changed the West (New York: Harmony Books, c2010).
relationship, there remained a powerful symbolic association between the original Parliament and the Ramakrishna Order. The Order recalls the event as an axial moment in which its founder solemnly proclaimed a message of religious unity to the world; as such, the 1893 Parliament remains inscribed as a foundational event in the Order’s history and a call to the Order’s universal mission. Thus, while the Parliament was forgotten by many, memory of the 1893 Parliament was cherished in Vedantist circles. The Order commemorated the 40th anniversary of Vivekananda’s participation in the 1893 Parliament with celebrations in Chicago concurrent with the 1933 Parliament. Furthermore, the centennial of Vivekananda’s birth was commemorated with a parliament of religions in India in 1963. After the Vivekananda centennial, the Order became a key proponent of a Chicago Parliament in 1993, the centennial of the original Parliament.

The Parliament’s centennial was also to be celebrated by the Ramakrishna Order in India and in its Vedanta Centers across the globe; but the commemoration had a special significance for the Vedanta Center of Chicago. Founded in 1930 by Swami Gnaneswarananda, the center, known as the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, has grown to include a monastery and retreat center in Ganges, Michigan—often frequented by Catholics involved in Hindu studies. The person responsible for this expansion was the second successor of the Chicago founder, Swami Bhashyananda, the Swami-in-charge of the Chicago center from 1965 to 1993. The end of his third decade of leadership was to coincide with the Parliament centennial. It was under Bhashyananda’s oversight that another Swami, Sarveshananda, undertook the task of reviving interest in the 1893 Parliament and persuading prominent Chicagoans of the need and value of organizing some sort of a centennial commemoration. This eventually crystallized into the establishment of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions that, against

heavy odds, organized the 1993 Parliament.

The earliest documented gathering of individuals interested in organizing a centennial commemoration of the 1893 Parliament was on November 21, 1982. It counted in attendance Swami Sarveshananda, accompanied by four other Vedantists. The meeting took place at 1700 E. 56th Street, Chicago, the home of John Dubocq, the only Christian present. In addition to Dubocq and the five Vedantists, the four other attendees were a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Jew, and a Muslim. Some of these first ten participants would remain committed to the centennial idea and saw the organizational process through more than a decade. Several held key Board positions on the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, including Rabbi William Sulkin and Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna.  

The composition of the November 21, 1892 meeting reflects two significant things. First, while the disciples of Vivekananda were the main promoters of the Parliament centennial and felt a justified sense of ownership, they did not want to commemorate the event alone and even less to monopolize what they held had to be an interfaith celebration. Reaching out to other faiths in their centennial efforts reflected an ecumenical spirit, totally consistent with their mission and vision of religious unity. Second, this original group was almost totally comprised of representatives of religious minorities within the rich religious landscape of metropolitan Chicago. Other “outsiders” would be joining soon, particularly the Baha’is. In a letter to Dr. Robert Henderson of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States, Swami Sarveshananda wrote: “As you may know now, we Vedantists (“Hindus”) were perhaps the most notable beneficiaries of the 1893 Parliament; but we are glad to learn from Mrs. Campbell that the Baha’i movement also had its first public mention in this country from one of the platforms of that Parliament… We are both beneficiaries…”  

Mrs. Leilani Campbell, a member of the


local Baha’i community in the Chicago area, agreed. She became a steadfast supporter of
the Parliament idea and her sense of ecumenical fellowship and solidarity, together with
other Baha’i supporters, would be the major driving force in making the centennial a
reality.

Echoing events that unfolded a century earlier, the city of Chicago planned to apply to
hold a World’s Fair in 1992. Hoping to benefit from the framework a 1992 World’s Fair
would provide, Parliament enthusiasts approached the city. On January 31, 1983 a letter
was addressed to George Burke, Vice President of the Chicago World’s Fair 1992
Corporation. In it, World’s Fair organizers were introduced to the notion of convening a
Parliament of Religions in conjunction with the 1992 World’s Fair.

Such a commemorative event can only be held in Chicago. Our “Bill of Rights”
has enabled all the religions of the world to feel at home in the United States.
Chicago, as one of our nation’s major cultural centers, has all the major religions
of the world well represented within its environs. A Parliament or Festival of
Religions held here would be a fitting reflection of both the freedom of religion in
the United States and the diversity of Chicago’s religious culture.

The time is right for such a celebration. Our Twentieth century—with its growing
emphasis on the importance of scientific achievement, the computerization of life,
the enhancement of materialism, and the dominance of military power—needs the
humanizing influence of world religions.

All major religions have as their goal the illumination of life and a better
comprehension of its meaning and purpose. All stress the importance of the
spiritual, the metaphysical. All are liberation movements and emphasize the
importance of the freedom of the human spirit. And what is more, all major
religions are religions of peace—peace of mind and peace among them. Each in its
own way moves its devotees toward inner peace and its counterpart, harmonious
living with others.

The human family needs the enrichment and strength that a broad knowledge and
close relationship with other religions has to offer. In today’s shrinking world,
such a Parliament or Festival of Religions can enable us to be more comfortable
with differences and more appreciative of the beliefs and practices of others.
Moreover, and perhaps above all, it can help us discover the basic truths that unite
us.

Therefore, the undersigned, request that the Chicago World’s Fair Corporation
consider the immediate appointment of a group, committee, or commission to
develop the strategies for and the implementation of a Parliament or “Festival of World Religions” to be held in conjunction with the World’s Fair in 1992.

Such a “Festival” would provide a common sharing of the beauty and the strength of these religions as exemplified in their beliefs and practices. The values and truths of these traditions could be demonstrated through their history, their rites and liturgies, their art and music, their drama and scripture.

We believe that the majority of members for the Committee to develop this “Festival of Religions” could be found among the outstanding leaders of each of the world’s religions working in or near Chicago. If it would be helpful, we could make recommendations or nominations for membership on such a committee. We are also prepared to provide background information about the Parliament of 1893 and to assist the Chicago World’s Fair 1992 Corporation in any way that would be helpful in the implementation of this proposal.22

Of the seven persons signing the letter, four were attendees at the organizational meeting two months earlier. The signatories also deliberately underscored the religious diversity of the early organizers by inserting their individual religious affiliations along with their names: two Hindus associated with the Vedanta Society of Chicago, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Jew, a Protestant, and a Roman Catholic, Thomas E. Wogan, a lay graduate of the nearby University of Notre Dame. Interestingly, with the exception of Rabbi William Sulkin, they were all lay people within their respective religious traditions. Furthermore, their request to have the Fair Corporation appoint a committee which would oversee the organization of a centennial Parliament not only implied that financial support for the complex and costly project would, in whole or part, fall to the World’s Fair Corporation but—perhaps inadvertently—that the control of the proposed Parliament of Religions would be handed over to a secular entity, as had been the case with the original Parliament, organized by the World’s Congress Auxiliary of the Columbian Exhibition.

The potential of a Parliament of Religions sponsored by a world’s fair fell through when the city of Chicago dropped its bid to host the 1992 Fair. This move left the pioneers of a

centennial Parliament uncertain about the viability of their project for five years before anything concrete could come out of their early dreams.

Attempts of other potential stakeholders

Perhaps not realized at the time, new circumstances and new players were emerging. Two days after the centennial pioneers signed their 1983 letter to the Chicago World’s Fair Corporation and five months after his transfer from Cincinnati to Chicago, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago –Joseph Bernardin- was in Rome receiving his cardinal’s hat. Clearly committed to the changes brought by the second Vatican Council, Cardinal Bernardin was a man of vision and a supporter of participatory leadership. He was commissioned by his fellow American bishops to lead a committee convened to undertake a nationwide consultation to address issues of peace, a project that was meant to crystallize in a collective pastoral letter from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States. But Cardinal Bernardin was best known for his proposal of what he called a “consistent ethic of life,” intended to bridge the anti-abortion Catholic discourse to other Catholic ethical concerns such as euthanasia and the death penalty. By using the image of “a seamless garment” the Cardinal wanted to expand the Catholic pro-life discourse, showing that these and other issues belonged together. Following on Vatican II, Cardinal Bernardin was also attentive to the importance of interfaith relations for the Catholic Church. He was taken with the Parliament centennial idea and began to persuade prominent Chicagoans, regardless of their religious affiliation, to take up the cause. The Cardinal approached American religious history scholar Martin Marty of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago.

In 1983, when the World’s Fair plans fell through, Cardinal Bernardin and Dr. Willard Boyd of the Field Museum both wrote to Dr. Marty, telling him of the importance of having a 1993 Parliament for Chicago anyway and asking him to do something. Dr. Marty did try to organize a committee at the Divinity School for that purpose. However, shortly afterwards, he was appointed President of the Park Ridge Center and two years ago was also awarded a MacArthur 5-year grant
to study world fundamentalisms, and these new responsibilities kept him from being able to head up such a committee.\textsuperscript{23}

The cardinal did not give up. He launched a second initiative in partnership with the Illinois Humanities Council, but this effort also fell through due to lack of concerted leadership and of funds.\textsuperscript{24}

Two other attempts to organize a centennial parliament in Chicago also fell through. When the University of Chicago began preparations for a celebration of the university’s centennial, the organizing committee considered “adorning” their celebration with a centennial parliament of religions. Swami Bhashyananda reported that “talks with several distinguished faculty at the Divinity School, starting with Dr. Martin Marty, reveal that long and serious attention was given to adding a parliament of religions to their centennial program, but as the dates are separated by one year, and there were no official delegates at the 1893 Parliament from the infant university, such plans did not materialize. Still, there is a strong likelihood of their playing host to such a Parliament in 1993 as sequel to their Big Year.”\textsuperscript{25} However, this Parliament plan was eventually dropped for lack of university interest. Yet another push for a centennial parliament was begun by the National Council of Christians and Jews, led by Rev. Stanley Davis. The group even booked the Art Institute of Chicago - where the original Parliament took place - to hold the event. But this initiative would eventually yield to the resurrected efforts of the early pioneers.\textsuperscript{26}

Attempts to commemorate the 1893 Parliament were not limited to Chicago. In 1985, two


\textsuperscript{24} Lawrence’s chronology of events, May 14, 1988, ACPWR, Box 9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: May-August 1988.

\textsuperscript{25} Swami to Maharaj, May 1988 draft, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: March-April 1988.

\textsuperscript{26} Swami Sarveshananda to Druyvestein, February 19, 1988, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: January-February 1988.
years after Chicago’s unsuccessful attempt for a centennial parliament linked to a World’s Fair, Anglican clergyman, Rev. Marcus Braybrooke of Bath, England, hosted a meeting in Ammerdown, near Bath, of leaders of important interfaith organizations with a global reach, including the International Association for Religious Freedom, the World Congress of Faiths, the Temple of Understanding, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Braybrooke was a pioneer in shaping the global interfaith movement. His efforts began in the late 1970s when he compiled a historical directory of interfaith organizations, which was decisive in rescuing the Chicago Parliament of Religions from oblivion and crafting its rightful niche as the genesis of the modern, global interfaith movement.²⁷ Braybrooke’s first acquaintance with the 1893 Parliament began in his early years as a student when he came across Barrows’ proceedings of the Parliament in the stacks of the University of Cambridge Library.²⁸

The Ammerdown gathering took place in a Catholic retreat house of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, a religious order committed to dialogue between Jews and Christians. The idea of the creation of a World Council of Religions was discussed, but it was eventually dropped due to fears of bureaucratization of what most hoped should continue to be a movement of networking rather than a fixed organizational body. Three years later, a second meeting took place again in Ammerdown followed by other meetings in Melbourne, Frankfurt, New York, Chichester, and Bangalore. The results of what started in Ammerdown were manifold: a resolution to work for the declaration of 1993 as an international year of inter-religious understanding and cooperation, the establishment of an international interfaith organizations coordinating committee for 1993, the decision to plan for a centennial event in New Delhi, India, along with a four-day program in Bangalore, India, entitled “Religious People Meeting Together, Sarva-Dharma-

²⁷ Marcus Braybrooke, _Inter-Faith Organizations_, 1-8; Braybrooke expanded his treatment of the Parliament in his _Pilgrimage of Hope_, 5-42.
Sammelana,” to be held in August 1993.²⁹

Back in Chicago, two years after the Chicago Fair plan cancellation, conversations about the Parliament centennial resumed again under the initiative of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society. A new Swami, Varadananda, a convert from Catholicism, joined the efforts of Swami Sarveshananda to build a broad based committee to revitalize the centennial initiative. They were tireless in contacting key Chicagoans hoping to get them involved. At the beginning, meetings took place in the kitchen of the Vedanta Society of Chicago. By the spring and summer of 1988, the meetings were rotating from the Vedanta Society to the Chicago Baha’i Center, the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, the Unitarian Universalist Meadville/Lombard Seminary in Hyde Park, and the Common Ground Center in Deerfield, Illinois, among other venues. In addition to Swamis Sarveshananda and Varadananda, other names became intrinsically associated to these renewed efforts: Vedantists Judy Lawrence and Daniel Gómez Ibáñez, Baha’is Charles Nolley, Robert Henderson and Leilani Campbell, Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna, Unitarian Universalist Gene Reeves (who was also involved in the planning of centennial celebrations in Japan), self-identified Catholic Jim Kenney of the Common Ground Center, United Church of Christ minister Stan Davis of the National Council of Christians and Jews, Buddhist convert from Catholicism Ron Kidd, and DePaul University Professor Dennis McCann among many others.

These efforts reached a milestone on March 13, 1988 when –more than five years after the failed attempt to work with the Chicago World’s Fair Corporation- the first formal meeting of a Parliament steering committee was held. Two initial objectives of the committee were the legal incorporation of the organization and the formal establishment of a Board of Management for a proposed centennial parliament of religions. On May 11, 1988 the committee voted to establish a non-profit organization and, shortly after, the

initiative was incorporated as the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. “The signers of the articles of incorporation were: Dr. Paul Sherry (Community Renewal Society, United Church of Christ), Leilani Smith-Campbell (Secretary of the Chicago Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is) and Dr. Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez (Director, Strategic Business Planning, Wisconsin Power and Light, Madison, Wisconsin; also a member of the Vedanta Society). The fact that the centennial Parliament would not take place under the aegis of a World’s Fair shifted the focus of the early organizers into a more local event, drawing on Chicago-based resources and hoping to build a solid interfaith network in Chicago. Therefore, they changed the original name from the World’s Parliament of Religions into a Parliament for the World’s Religions. On July 17, 1988 the first Board of Management was formed with Baha’i Charles Nolley as Chair, Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna as Co-Chair, Vedantist Judith Lawrence as Secretary, and Science and Religion scholar David Breed as Treasurer. The leadership of minority religious groups remained particularly noticeable.

While these developments were unfolding in Chicago, enthusiasm about the idea of a centennial commemoration was growing elsewhere. Wayne Nelles, then a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia, was captivated by the Parliament idea and he became a mobilizer for a centennial celebration in Vancouver. After all, “Vancouver was the port where many of the Asian delegates to the Parliament first landed –including Swami Vivekananda, who made such a dramatic debut at the Parliament. So Vancouver has some historic connections to the 1893 event and is a very fitting location for a 1993 program –a kind of ‘western gateway’ to world religions.” In November 1987, Nelles

30 Lawrence to University of Chicago Divinity School, April 07, 1989, ACPWR, Box 5, Folder Council Meeting Correspondence, January-August 1989.
33 Lawrence to Wayne Nelles, January 20, 1989, ACPWR, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: January 1989.
released a discussion paper as an initiative towards the centennial. He soon heard about the Chicago initiative and informed its organizers about the developments in Vancouver: “… we have progressed substantially in terms of ideas and concrete planning. One of the main interests in the Vancouver community, and recent focus of our planning is the idea of establishing a Religious “United Nations” or ongoing “Parliament of Religions.” How similar are your goals? Can we work together?”

Nelles’ idea about linking the centennial celebration with the foundation of some sort of religious United Nations had already been pondered at the Ammerdown meeting by the representatives of the big international interfaith organizations but eventually was dropped. The idea of a Vancouver Parliament was also dropped. It transmuted into a conference project entitled “Religion, Culture and Values in the Global Village: Understanding, Cooperation and New Directions for Our Common Future,” organized by Nelles’ Global Interfaith Network. But Nelles’ idea of a religious United Nations would still be entertained by the Chicago organizers, with supporters like Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, who would go as far as meeting with representatives of UNESCO for that purpose. Not everyone agreed. Among the Chicago detractors was Gene Reves, who strongly favored a centennial with a local emphasis.

Not far from Vancouver, in Seattle another centennial initiative was put forward by William E. Swailes. But instead of proposing a Seattle congress, Swailes hoped to build a resource center for the centennial commemorations. Optimistic, Swailes pledged, “Our organization is acting as an unofficial clearing house for groups intending to

34 Nelles to Rev. Stanley Davis, February 1988, ACPWR, Box 8B, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Folder: Correspondence and Information Concerning the Vancouver’s World’s Parliament 1988-1990.
The Chicago, Vancouver and Seattle initiatives clearly suggest that the North American soil was ripe not only for a centennial commemoration of the 1893 Parliament of Religions but for an ongoing and well-established interfaith organization with broad reach beyond the existing ecumenical frameworks. The Assisi interfaith peace prayer initiative of Pope John Paul II on October 27, 1986 was still vivid in the memory of interfaith activists in North America who decided to celebrate a similar event on the occasion of its second anniversary. With a continental planning committee that expanded to include the Temple of Understanding, Thanksgiving Square, The United Church of Canada, and prominent interfaith organizations from Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Washington DC, and Texas, the event was hosted by Interfaith Ministries, Wichita, from October 30 to November 1, 1988, and counted in its program on prominent interfaith scholars and practitioners, among them Professor Diana Eck from Harvard University. Interestingly, despite its inspiration in the Pope’s initiative, neither the planning committee nor the program indicated any official and specific Catholic involvement. This conference gave birth to the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN), now one of the largest and most active regional interfaith organizations.

But the growing interfaith momentum of the late 1980s was not welcomed by everyone. In Chicago, for example, Swami Sarveshananda’s laborious networking was not always received with enthusiasm. This was certainly the case with Rev. John M. Buchanan of the

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39 Invitation and preliminary program of the North American Assisi, ACPWR, Box 9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: March-April 1988. There were Catholic individuals and organizations as Board or staff members of some of the interfaith organizations involved, such as Fr. Elias Mallon, a Graymoor Friar and Board member of the Temple of Understanding, and Ms. Elizabeth Espersen, Executive Director of Thanksgiving Square.

4th Presbyterian Church in Chicago, who initially distanced himself from any connection with the parliament idea:

Dear Swami:

Neither my schedule nor my priorities will allow me to be involved in planning for the Council for a Parliament of the World Wide Religions.

Please discontinue sending minutes of the Council meetings to me and please remove my name from all of your mailing lists.

Thank you for your attention.  

Questioned by Rabbi Herbert Bronstein of North Shore Congregation Israel nine months later, Buchanan softened his tone: “The simple truth is that I am unable to be a responsible participant in many of the groups to which I have committed myself. It would not be honest, nor very helpful for your important work.” Buchanan’s unavailability stands in sharp contrast with John Barrows’ involvement as chair of the first Parliament of Religions while pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago in 1893. However, Barrows’ support of the Parliament was a personal initiative, since the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church openly condemned the event. A century later, Buchanan’s attitude also reflected a personal stand since the Presbyterian Church in the United States eventually became a sponsor of the 1993 centennial Parliament. Interestingly, Buchanan eventually changed his mind about the Parliament and accepted to be a


42 Buchanan to Bronstein, June 13, 1989, ACPWR, Box 9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: June 1989 (1 of 2).

43 Margaret Orr Thomas, Associate for Interfaith Relations, Presbyterian Church USA, Global Mission, Ecumenical/Interfaith Relations, to Ron Kidd, April 21, 1990, Box 10, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: April 1990.
Six months after its establishment, in December 1989 the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions faced an unexpected leadership vacuum when Swami Sarveshananda was transferred from Chicago to the Vedanta Center in Boston. He had been at the heart of the centennial initiative and a few months later he would be formally recognized as the founder of the Council at its first Annual Meeting.

There would be no Parliament of the World’s Religions if Swami Sarveshananda had not pulled it into existence out of his telephone. He tells us that Swami Tapasananda is at least as responsible for the idea as he himself is and that Professor Martin E. Marty’s advice that this effort was only possible through one-pointed concentration sustained him through discouraging times. He knew the idea was worth enough to brave indifference and incredulity. And when the work began to form around him, he never claimed credit nor pride of position, but reminded us all that this was in truth not fit work for a monk at all. We had the pleasure of saluting his efforts on January 15 at the Baha’i House of Worship on the occasion of his first move to Boston; as he leaves us again to resume the contemplative life, we wish him well and we send him our gratitude and prayers.45

At this juncture, in December 1988, a proposal from Ron Kidd, a committed volunteer with the centennial, to work for the Council without pay until funds became available, was accepted by the Board.46

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45 As reported at the First Annual Meeting held at North Shore Congregation Israel, July 9, 1989, ACPWR, Box6A, Board of Directors, Folder: Annual Report and Drafts, July 1989.

The decision of the Catholic Church to participate

After the early but unsuccessful attempts by Cardinal Bernardin to support a major interfaith gathering in Chicago, Catholic involvement in a proposed centennial Parliament took several different roads. Professor Dennis McCann of the Center for the Study of Values at DePaul University in Chicago, was drawn to the Parliament idea, became a regular participant in the early informal planning meetings, and attempted to engage his university in the Parliament’s emerging organizational network.

On May 17, 1988 I had my first meeting with Swami Sarveshananda of the Chicago branch of the Vedanta Society, regarding the prospects for a centenary celebration of the 1893 Parliament of Religions. During that first week of initial enthusiasm, I met with [De Paul] Dean Meister and with Msgr. Egan, both of whom seemed to look with favor on DePaul involvement in such a project. 47 Eventually, DePaul University became the custodian of the Archives of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. McCann’s involvement also opened the door to a positive academic presence alongside the larger group of interfaith practitioners involved in the project. Together with Jeffrey Carlson, another member of the faculty at DePaul, Robert Shreiter, from the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago, and others, McCann joined scholars of other denominations in bringing the Parliament to the attention of the American Academy of Religion, which in turn hosted sessions discussing the 1893 Parliament at its annual meetings held in Chicago (1988), New Orleans (1990), and Kansas City (1991).

But much as McCann’s involvement and DePaul’s support were appreciated, Parliament advocates knew this was not enough regarding Catholic participation. In her notes on early Council meetings, Judith Lawrence, a Vedantist volunteer who brought to the Council her expertise as the secretary of the Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, wrote that winning the formal endorsement of the Archdiocese of Chicago

47 McCann to Kay Read and George Hall, June 30, 1988, Box 8B, DePaul University (1988-1993), Folder: General Correspondence/DePaul Correspondence, August 1988-August 1993.
was key to the success of the centennial. This is probably the reason why Lawrence expressed concern when the administrator of the Council, Ron Kidd, contacted dissident Catholic theologian Hans Küng and secured his participation in the centennial project as an advisor. Earlier that year, Küng had given a lecture at the Rockefeller Chapel of the University of Chicago entitled “No World Peace without Peace among the Religions” in which he addressed his dream of a global ethic. This talk brought Küng to the attention of the centennial organizers. However, Küng was a controversial Catholic theologian from Tübingen, reprimanded by the Vatican for his controversial views on doctrinal issues. Lawrence feared that any involvement of Küng in the centennial might turn the Archdiocese of Chicago off to the Parliament idea. Hence Lawrence wrote:

Several people in the Chicago wpr [world’s Parliament of religions] group feel we should be developing broad-spectrum support locally for a gathering in Chicago and try to be as inclusive as possible and develop the 1993 program for that base. So when I saw the reply letter from Dr. Küng, which was the first I had heard about all this [sic], I was very concerned, since our group has not gotten enough support from all the major denominations here (especially, for example, the Archdiocese!).

All this makes me even more concerned, because I have since heard that some denominational leaders in Chicago are concerned that the “theology” of our project might not accord to their own views and that in that way it might not be possible for them to support this venture, though they might feel that the idea of sharing information about the world’s religious traditions and the theme of brotherhood is perfectly fine.

Lawrence’s remarks were justified and sharp. It would not always be easy or even possible for some religious groups, confronted with the idea of working together with other religions that were so different from their own, to find enough common ground to set aside those differences. But in spite of Lawrence’s fears, the Archdiocese was not deterred nor was it absent at this early stage. Sister Joan McGuire, a member of the

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Dominican Order with a doctorate in Sacred Theology and the Director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago, was a committed observer throughout this process. Her ecumenical presence, leadership as a Catholic religious woman, and ecclesiastical savvy and tactfulness were like a gentle wind that swept over the waters of these early converging currents. As Cardinal Bernardin’s official representative on ecumenical and interreligious matters, Sister McGuire was instrumental in gaining for the centennial project the support not only of the Archdiocese but of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago in which the Cardinal was a major player. Established through the efforts of Cardinal Bernardin and other prominent Chicago leaders, this Council was unique in bringing together not only Catholics and various Protestant denominations but also the Jewish community, all of them interacting as equal partners.

On December 6, 1988, Baha’i Charles Nolley, chair of the Board of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (CPWR), wrote to Cardinal Bernardin informing him that the CPWR had been asked to make a presentation at the next Executive Committee meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago on December 21. The meeting took place at the Rectory of Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. Baha’i Charles Nolley was joined at the meeting by Vedantist Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez and Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna. The fact that these centennial ambassadors came from Chicago’s minority religions clearly indicated that the Parliament would be a forum that engaged a multiplicity of religious voices.

Two months after this meeting, Sister McGuire reported to the centennial organizers that a special committee appointed by the Chicago Council of Religious Leaders consisting of herself, Rev. William Voelkel, and Dr. Donald Senior, had met to discuss the work of the Parliament Council and had prepared a proposal which would be discussed at the general

50 Nolley to Bernardin, December 6, 1988, ACPWR, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: December 1988.
meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders in March.\textsuperscript{51} The third member of the committee, Donald Senior, was also a prominent Catholic. A member of the Passionist Congregation, he was the president of the Catholic Theological Union, a house of study for members of different Catholic religious orders in the Chicago region. The special committee recommended support of the Parliament. Three months later, Rabbi Herman Schaalman wrote to CPWR chair Chales Nolley on behalf of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago:

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago has instructed me to inform you that it looks with favor on the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions without thereby implying agreement with all of the activities or theological assumptions that may be forthcoming.

Therefore, the CRLMC will promote the Parliament, encourage sponsorship and participation by judicatories and organizations, and distribute materials on the Parliament when appropriate at CRLMC meetings.

Our affirmation of the Council does not include funding by the CRLMC, agreement on theological assumptions of the Parliament, or the use of CRLMC on letterhead of Parliament stationery.

We direct the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions to seek directly sponsorship and membership from our judicatories and organizations. The proposed event which Chicago will host in 1993 has the potential for furthering racial and ethnic harmony as well as religious understanding among people. Therefore, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago judges the project worthy of the consideration and support of our members.

We also have appointed Sister Joan McGuire as a liason [sic] between the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago and the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. As liason [sic] Sister McGuire does not speak for the Council but rather serves to insure communication and mutual understanding between our two groups.

Your efforts towards the promotion of interreligious harmony deserve our careful consideration.\textsuperscript{52}


The Council of Religious Leaders’ letterhead reveals the breadth of this strategic endorsement. Thirty well-established religious denominations and theological organizations comprised the membership of the CRLMC at the time of its endorsement of the CPWR, including not only Catholic and Orthodox Christianity and various Protestant denominations but also the Chicago Board of Rabbis. The presence of Jews and Catholics in Chicago’s Council of Religious Leaders reflects the close relationship between Cardinal Bernardin and several Jewish constituencies in the Chicago area, a strong liaison that gave rise to numerous public expressions of mutual respect. Just one month before the Cardinal died in 1996, he addressed the Jewish community in the afterword to a Catholic-Jewish related publication:

... I wish to tell you how much I love you and how much the Catholic-Jewish friendship has meant to me during the years I have been in Chicago. As we both go forward into the future God has planned for us, I want you to know that the dialogue has been a blessing for me. After 14 years I truly feel that you have accepted me as Joseph, your brother.

The Jewish response to the Cardinal’s passing was one of genuine sadness and respect.

An unprecedented gathering took place during the wake of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, archbishop of Chicago, on November 19, 1996. Never before, while the local bishop lay in state, had such a group of prominent Jewish leaders gathered in a Catholic cathedral to offer words of tribute and respect. Entitled: A Jewish Farewell, the members of the Catholic-Jewish delegation to Israel led by Cardinal Bernardin in spring of 1995 spoke before a standing room only congregation as part of the official program for the Cardinal’s wake and funeral.53

Of course, this unique relationship was built not only on respectful dialogue but also on shared action. The endorsement of the centennial Parliament constitutes a remarkable example of ecumenical teamwork for an inter-religious cause.

As noted in Rabbi Shaalman’s letter, the CPWR would still have to seek the specific and individual sponsorship of the CRLMC judicatories and this was no less true of the

Catholic Church. Two weeks after the CRLMC’s endorsement, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, the Parliament’s Program Director, accompanied by Rabbi Herbert Bronstein of North Shore Congregation Israel, visited Cardinal Bernardin.

Gómez-Ibáñez reported that His Eminence had received them very cordially and that he had asked that a letter be sent which summarize the main points of their talk. The Cardinal had inquired as to whether the Parliament was being planned as a Chicago event, to which international visitors might come, or whether it was an internationally planned event that just happened to choose Chicago as a location. Mr. Gómez-Ibáñez and Rabbi Bronstein assured the Cardinal that it was the former... His Eminence also told them that he wishes to keep the ecumenical offices of the American Council of Bishops and the Vatican informed of developments, and further that he might know of some persons whom the Council might approach for possible Board membership.54

If the centennial was to be primarily a local event, oriented to Chicago, then according to Catholic polity and protocol, the involvement of the Catholic Church would fall within Cardinal Bernadin’s jurisdiction. Otherwise, approval of Catholic involvement would necessarily have to come from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington DC or even the Vatican. The day after this meeting, Gómez-Ibáñez, aware of Bernardin’s position and urged by the Council’s need for the Archdiocese’s support, made a formal plea to the Cardinal.

We ask you to join us in co-sponsoring this work, by bringing to it your ideas, energy and the good name of the Archdiocese. We want you to help us shape our plans.

There is some urgency to this request. It is already late to be planning an interfaith effort of this scope for 1993. Other judicatories in Chicago, whose support also is essential, are waiting to see how the Archdiocese plans to respond. As we discussed, the Parliament’s board of directors is being enlarged. We are looking for suitable nominees to the board and I am sure you can be of great help here. Finally, we plan two events this year in which we would like to have the Archdiocese participate: our annual meeting on July 9, and the first public announcement of our plans—the interfaith service at Rockefeller Chapel on the afternoon of October 15.

54 Minutes of CPWR Board meeting, May 25, 1989, ACPWR, Box 5, Folder May 25, 1989.
If the Archdiocese were able to become a co-sponsor before the July 9 annual meeting, you or your representative could help elect the new board of directors and its officers. And your personal participation in the October event, alongside other religious leaders, would be very important.\textsuperscript{55}

Other members of the Council echoed Gómez-Ibáñez’s concern about securing Catholic sponsorship of the centennial Parliament. Lawrence wrote, “Frankly, I feel the CPWR absolutely needs the support of the Archdiocese for one, and there are other organizations, too, which would surely join in and should join in with the CPWR’s efforts.”\textsuperscript{56}

But Catholic involvement in the centennials was not only critical for the CPWR organizers. It was also important to the Catholic Church itself. A lot was at stake in the Cardinal’s decision. A century had passed since the American archbishops were faced with a similar issue. The conditions were very different then. The poignant question of Bishop John Keane –“Can the Church afford not to be there?”- was pregnant with powerful arguments for the Church to get involved in the 1893 Parliament. Despite dramatic changes in American Catholicism since the original Parliament, had the same question been whispered in Cardinal Bernardin’s ear, his response would likely have been the same as Keane’s. The Catholic Church was no longer defending itself from its nativist enemies or standing at arm’s length from engagement in the larger American society. On the contrary, the impact of the Second Vatican Council facilitated a fluid interaction between Catholic identity and American culture and values. The tension felt between being “both fully Catholic and unapologetically American” seemed to be over.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{57} Peter Steinfels and Robert Royal, Introduction to American Catholics, American Culture: tradition and resistance, ed. Margaret O'Brien Steinfels (Lanham Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), xii.
Jesuit scholar Mark Massa, in his book *The American Catholic Revolution*, argues that the 1960s, and particularly—but not exclusively—the Second Vatican Council, changed the Church forever. Massa highlights Garry Wills’ assertion that “the church’s secret, hidden away in official teaching, minimized when it could not be ignored, was change.” Massa affirms that perhaps the most important change brought into the Church by Vatican II was precisely a growing awareness of change as a basic fact of life, and specifically of the Catholic Church’s life throughout its long history. Massa also draws attention to Jesuit historian John O’Malley’s reference to the so-called law of unintended consequences, according to which “historical events have consequences separate from (and even sometimes quite opposed to) the intentions of the historical actors who set those events in motion. These unintended consequences are just as important as intended ones that did not come to pass and have the same historical validity. Indeed it is possible that they are considerably more important.” Massa illustrates how both axioms—unacknowledged but ever-present change and unintended consequences—were fully at work in different realms of the American Catholic Church during the sixties—before, during and after the Second Vatican Council. It cannot be denied that changes, and their consequences, abounded during this decade. Massa focuses on the liturgical changes within the Latin Rite as a whole, supported in the USA by the careful work of Fr. Frederick McManus; the controversy unleashed among American Catholics by the papal encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* on contraception; the related suspension of moral theologian Fr. Charles Curran from his teaching chair at the Catholic University of America; the renewal of religious life adopted by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles and ensuing division of the congregation; the acts of civil disobedience performed by Catholic peace activists against the Vietnam war; and the endorsement of pluralism by Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles—later made a Cardinal—through his work about different and non-mutually exclusive models of the Church.  

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But as the acts of civil disobedience suggest, the Catholic revolution of the sixties was far from being limited to the internal Church issues. It made the Church more present and active than ever in the American public square. As Catholic writers Peter Steinfels and Robert Royal argue, “by calling for a stance toward modern culture marked by dialogue at least as much as by combat or rejection, the church lowered the walls of the Catholic subculture and contributed, intentionally or not, to the assimilation of Catholics into mainstream American culture.” Catholics found themselves so much at home in America that they felt free to speak out on sensitive issues such as nuclear war and the economy. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, rather than turn its back on the public square, issued consultative pastoral letters on those matters. After all, as Catholic scholar Chester Gillis states, “American Catholics and their episcopal leaders no longer thought it incumbent on them to support American policy at all costs. The Catholic community in America was no longer an exclusively immigrant one seeking confirmation of its patriotism. It had toed the mark long enough to gain respectability and had risen above suspicion that it was beholden to a foreign power in Rome. These pastorals symbolically represent an American Catholic community come of age.”

It seemed as if the American Catholic Church had been baptized anew in the spirit of American democracy and this was to have an impact on the exercise and interpretation of ecclesiastical authority. Catholic historian Patrick Carey describes the spirit of the post-conciliar age and helpfully compiles a number of initiatives that paralleled, and sometimes challenged, the traditional authority of the Church’s hierarchy:

The bishops continued to be the most organized voice for the church at the national level through the yearly meetings of the NCCB. Other in the Church, however, also became more fully organized at the national level and issued their own statements that complemented and at times competed with the bishops’ voice: the National Federation of Priests’ Councils (1968), the National Black Sisters’ Conference (1968), the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (1968),

59 Steinfels and Royal, Introduction, xvi.

60 Chester Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 114-115.
Priests Associated for Religious, Educational, and Social Rights (PADRES, 1969), the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (1971, formerly the Conference of Major Superiors of Women, 1956), Consortium Perfectae Caritatis (1971), Las Hermanas (1971). These new national institutions were created to give voice to special interest groups in the church and were typically American in their emphases on democratic procedures. These representative organizations represented the diversity of opinion in the church, and at times their competing voices paralyzed decision making and made consensus and common actions impossible except in small groups of very like-minded people. The democratic élan, the aspirations, and the techniques used in these bodies moreover tended to disguise the issue of ecclesiastical authority as defined by the council.  

It should not be supposed that the experience of internal Church disagreement was welcomed by all. Far from it. The same freedom that allowed Catholics to embrace and criticize American culture was also exercised to criticize the Church. In a sharp contrast with the restrictions imposed during the anti-modernist struggle at the beginning of the century that left many Catholics silent and “happy to pray, pay, and obey,” Carey argues that “[p]ost-Vatican II American Catholicism experienced an unprecedented period of polarization, conflict, and indeed acrimony as different factions in the church fought with one another over a variety of ecclesiastical, moral, political, and cultural questions.”

Beyond the Church mainstream, new developments unfolded in favor of and against the transformations brought about by Vatican II. On the one hand, the promoters of change and openness pushed for the Church to move forward on more democratic structures and procedures, gender equality and the inclusion of sexual minorities. Among these were groups such as Call to Action, the Women’s Ordination Conference, and Dignity, a national association for gay and lesbian Catholics. On the other hand, the defenders of the Church’s tradition questioned or flatly rejected such innovation and change. They originated the Catholic pro-life movement among moderate conservatives and separatist

62 Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America, 72.
63 Carey, Catholics in America: a history, 122.
movements such as the Society of St. Pius X or its American counterpart, the Society of St. Pius V.

This polarization precipitated an identity crisis among American Catholics. As Catholic sociologist Michael Cuneo states, “[B]efore long the American church was suffering from an epidemic of relevance, and the very idea of what it meant to be Catholic had become endlessly negotiable. In trying to be all things to all people, the American church seemed to be perfectly willing to dispense with everything that had once made it distinctive.”

Catholic scholar Luke Timothy Johnson goes further. He argues that “it was at this moment that American Catholicism began to become, in effect, the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the country, precisely in its loss of a single vision and a single voice.”

In the midst of this internally divisive controversy, the Church was at once engaged in the pro-life war against pro-choice secular America and in its own internal battles related to its own identity. Furthermore, the Church was also beginning to face what was to become a crushing burden of scandal as the news of sexual abuse by clergy became a major theme in North American media. In this maelstrom, challenges posed by religious pluralism in America and the danger of religious indifferentism were pushed into the background. With the Church hierarchy focused elsewhere, mainstream Catholics were more engaged than ever not just with other Christians, but with followers of other religions. In a more and more religiously pluralist America, non-Catholics were fellow citizens, co-workers, classmates, neighbors, friends, and sometimes relatives. This was particularly evident in large metropolitan areas like Chicago, the largest Roman Catholic archdiocese in the country and a city where all religions of the world seemed to have found a home.


Cardinal Bernardin, a leader in interfaith dialogue, had enough reasons to endorse the centennial Parliament. He had even tried to organize a similar centennial celebration during his early years in Chicago. The issue at stake was whether he would be willing to endorse a project not led by the Catholic Church but by several religious minorities, most non-Christian, and whether the Archdiocese of Chicago would be willing to partner with those groups in organizing a new parliament of religions. A century earlier the American Catholic Archbishops decided that the Catholic Church could not afford to be left out of the first Parliament of Religions, nor could the original Parliament afford the absence of the Catholic Church.

A similar perception developed around the centennial. The difference with the centennial Parliament was that the Catholic Church, despite its internal turmoil, was the single largest and most powerful religious organization in Chicago and a main religious player in the country at large. From this position of relevance and public presence, both the Church and the Parliament’s organizing committee could not afford to let a centennial Parliament occur without the Catholic Church being fully present and engaged.

On June 21, 1989 Cardinal Bernardin answered Gómez-Ibáñez’s letter of four weeks earlier. Bernardin announced the Archdiocese of Chicago would become a co-sponsor of the centennial Parliament and he enclosed a signed co-sponsorship form. The Cardinal also appointed the Rev. Thomas Baima, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago who held the position of Director of the Office of Non-Christian Relations in the Archdiocesan Curia, as a nominee for Board membership. With the appointment of Fr. Baima, the Cardinal would rest assured that the most orthodox interests of the Catholic Church would be safeguarded in the pluralistic environment of the Parliament Council. A staunch defender of Catholic doctrinal orthodoxy and pastoral orthopraxis, Fr. Baima originally was not in favor of a parliament of religions. However, his commitment to the mission entrusted to him as the official representative of the Cardinal soon translated into support for the Parliament. Throughout the complex planning process with a myriad of sensitive issues at stake, Fr. Baima’s ecumenical spirit took hold and he became a key player and a trusted partner on the Council. Sister Joan McGuire, who soon would be called away to
take on important leadership projects within her religious order, was nominated by the Cardinal as a Council’s advisor. A third name was also proposed by the Cardinal, Dr. Clarisse Croteau-Chonka, who served as Consultant for Planning and Technology at the Archdiocesan Office for Religious Education and had previously attended several meetings of the Council. She was nominated a member of the Program Committee. With these formal Catholic appointments, the Cardinal indicated how seriously he took the involvement of the Archdiocese in the Parliament organization.

The awaited Catholic involvement was warmly welcomed. When the Cardinal’s letter was read to the Council’s Board by Chair Charles Nolley, the “news was greeted with a hearty round of applause by everyone.”

Finally, fifteen months after the first Council meeting, the Catholic Church was fully involved as a partner in planning the event. However, the core Council leadership continued to be held by the pioneers, mostly adherents of minority religious groups in Chicago. On July 9, 1989, during its first annual general meeting, the Council voted on the admission of new Board officers. While the name of Fr. Baima was included in the ballots for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary of the Council, he was then still an unfamiliar face. While Fr. Baima was welcomed on the Council, Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna and Religion and Science scholar David Breed remained in their positions as Vice-Chair and Treasurer respectively, and Vedantist Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez and Baha’i Leilani Smith were appointed as Chair and Secretary respectively. Buddhist Ron Kidd continued as the Council’s administrator with deferred pay.

At this juncture the Council still only counted eighteen official co-sponsoring organizations. Securing the formal support of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago and the official sponsorship of the Catholic Church represented a

66 Bernardin to Gómez-Ibáñez, June 21, 1989, ACPWR, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: June 1989, 1 of 2.
solid start. However, despite these encouraging developments, there were numerous challenges ahead that would make it uncertain whether the intended centennial Parliament would ever crystallize.

“Inexperienced, underfunded, understaffed and running out of time”

Following its first annual general meeting, the Council began preparing a ceremonial event conceived as the inauguration of the centennial activities. The event was held at the Rockefeller chapel of the University of Chicago on November 4, 1989. Among the speeches delivered, the one offered by Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios –Metropolitan of Delhi for the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East and President for Asia of the World Council of Churches—stood out. He took advantage of this solemn occasion to propose a vision for the Parliament.

What is before us is a rich, deep, penetrating respectful understanding of each other’s religions. Not a common universal religion which puts everything into one pot; we do not want a religion which unites all religions. [Instead,] a Global Concours of Religions—a flowing together, a running together—of all religions… without losing their identity, but in relation to each other, with mutual respect, and moving toward certain specific goals.68

Gregorios’ vision framed the centennial Parliament within the sound understanding of interfaith relations commonly accepted and endorsed by the big historic players in the interfaith movement. Instead of intending to create a supra religion through the fusion of the individual religions, the goal was to affirm the identity and specificity of every religion involved in the process of interfaith dialogue.

In addition to this solemn inauguration, several small and local interfaith conferences were organized on the so-called “critical issues” related to social and ecological justice. However, despite these good initiatives, the next four years would prove a thorny path through the planning process surrounded by a justified lack of credibility in the

centennial’s feasibility. This skepticism was clearly articulated in the negative response from Chicago’s Northwestern University to the Council’s proposal to hold the centennial in the university premises. The university saw little likelihood that the Parliament could come together if it was led by a Council regarded as “inexperienced, underfunded, understaffed and running out of time.” Northwestern’s discouraging prediction of failure was actually an objective evaluation of the Council’s situation.\(^69\)

Organizing an event that, although officially identified as local, was global in its proposed content and planned to bring together world religious leaders like the Dalai Lama was an enterprise for which the well-intentioned pioneers had neither previous experience nor proven expertise. Furthermore, the new Chair of the Board and future Executive Director of the Council, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, was neither a religious professional nor an internationally recognized leader in any ecumenical and interfaith organization. Raised in a religiously indifferent household, he earned a PhD in geography, lectured on geography for a time, and, sensitive to issues of corporate social responsibility, he eventually became an executive with Wisconsin Light and Power, Co.\(^70\) His association with the Vedanta Society brought him into contact with the Parliament Centennial project.

However, any lack of ecumenical, “institutional savvy” in Gómez-Ibáñez\(^71\) was compensated for by his excellent communication and organizational skills, a genuine passion for the Parliament project, and his time availability and total commitment to making the Parliament happen. It has been argued in retrospect that without the steady

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\(^{69}\) Gómez-Ibáñez to the Board, October 8, 1991, ACPWR, Box7A, Board of Directors Correspondence, Folder: January-October 1991.

\(^{70}\) Delegate Biographies, ACPWR, Box 34A, Delegate Biographies, Folder: G-L.

\(^{71}\) Richard Seager reports that the “absence of mainstream Protestants [in the centennial] was attributed to the lack of institutional savvy on the part of the centennial organizers.” Seager’s remarks do not allude to Gómez-Ibáñez specifically but to the members of the Council in general. See Richard Seager, “The Two Parliaments, the 1893 Original and the Centennial of 1993: A Historian’s View,” in *The Community of Religions, Voices and Images of the Parliament of the World’s Religions*, ed. Wayne Teasdale and George Cairns (New York: Continuum, 1999), 30.
efforts of Gómez-Ibáñez the 1993 Parliament of Religions in Chicago would not have happened.  

Perhaps the most significant challenge facing Gómez-Ibáñez and the Council was defining a clear vision for the Parliament centennial. There was a strong inclination to make the centennial a genuinely religious event with clear references to the impact of religion in all areas of social, political, and economic spheres. However, Gómez-Ibáñez working with Dr. Gerald Barney, the director of the Washington-based Institute of 21st Century Studies, brought about a shift of focus of the Parliament objectives into what would eventually be formulated as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. For the integration of the millennium goals within an interfaith framework in the context of a centennial Parliament, Gómez-Ibáñez counted on the advice and support of Jim Kenney. Growing up Catholic, Kenney pursued doctoral studies on comparative religions and became chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Barat College in Lake Forest, IL. He was also the director of Common Ground, a grassroots organization that focused on the implications of religions for the human experience. Kenney served as the program director of the Council.  

In addition to the challenge of finding a unifying vision, there were also problems with the so-called “bottom line,” the budget. Lack of funds made it impossible to keep Ron Kidd as administrator and led to the closing of the Parliament’s first office, a space donated by Block Carus, a relative of Paul Carus, one of the leading participants in the 1893 Parliament. For several months, Gómez-Ibáñez ran the Council out of his own  


73 Gómez-Ibáñez aspired to link the Parliament to UNESCO, and he met with leaders of the organization for this purpose, which never crystallized. See Gómez to Dr. Federico Mayor-Zaragoza-UNESCO, January 3, 1993, ACPWR, Box8A, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez Correspondence, Folder: January February 1993.
home in Cambridge, Wisconsin. He succeeded in obtaining a leave of absence from Wisconsin Light and Power, which allowed him to devote all his time and energy to the Parliament project. He also managed to switch positions from Chair of the Board to Executive Director of the Council as a result of an offer from Wisconsin Light and Power to donate his salary to the Council for a limited transition period. Gómez-Ibáñez was succeeded as chair of the Board by Rev. David Ramage, the President of McCormick Presbyterian Seminary of Chicago, who lent his prestige to the Parliament project, thus increasing its credibility.

As soon as Gómez-Ibáñez was released from his corporate duties and was able to devote himself exclusively to the centennial project, important advances began to take place. He was able to secure pledges of financial support from the Rockefellers and from the Templeton Foundation. As a result of this dramatic shift in the financial prospects of the Parliament project, Gómez-Ibáñez opened an office in downtown Chicago, hired staff, and was eventually able to sign a contract with the Palmer House to hold the Parliament there. Throughout this process, he also continued to count on the generous volunteer work of the early pioneers of the centennial project. At the same time, he re-connected with Marcus Braybrooke and the global plans to declare 1993 a year of interfaith understanding, bringing the Chicago plans to the international scene, particularly through trips to Europe and India. His efforts to make the centennial Parliament a truly global event were especially crowned when Cardinal Bernardin informed the Council that the Vatican would send a delegate to the centennial. However, while the list of co-sponsors grew both in number and diversity, as the Parliament launch drew nearer, there was still great uncertainty about the final outcome. Fr. Thomas Baima reports that “prospects looked bleak 80 days before the event when CPWR had rented the entire Palmer House Hilton and had only 1200 paid registrations.”

Through its decision to embark on the centennial Parliament project the Catholic Church was not only sharing in the historical significance of the centennial commemoration but also taking the risks that such complex event entailed. However, some of these risks would soon turn out into great opportunities of interfaith dialogue and learning.
“The most diverse celebration in history”

As word spread that a centennial Parliament of Religions was being planned, great enthusiasm erupted across the world: a solitary monk from “Christ in the River Hermitage” in Australia; a scientist of religion in India who argued for a new discipline called “spiritometry”; agents on economic and social development from Sri Lanka and Italy; religious congress experts from Belgium; descendants of the pastor composer of Iceland’s national anthem who attended the 1893 Parliament; a Hindu-Catholic guru from Peru; a Caribbean theosophist inquiring about simultaneous translation into Spanish of the Parliament sessions; several incarcerated inmates in American jails; and an elderly retired philosophy professor who exclaimed “I have waited 55 years to see the Parliament of Religions!” All were among the hundreds of interested people who contacted the Council in Chicago seeking information about the proposed gathering in the months prior to the Centennial.  

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The Council was also casting the net as wide as possible by sending letters of invitation to Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Russian ex-premier Michael Gorvachev, Vice-President Al Gore, First Lady Hilary Clinton and other prominent individuals. As the date of the event approached, any uncertainty surrounding the actual shape and size of the Centennial gathering rapidly vanished. Just a few weeks before the opening day, registration reached its maximum. The organizers declared the event sold out “under pressure from the local fire department.” After much effort, the centennial Parliament was finally about to happen.

In addition to the Chicago event, other celebrations were organized in different parts of the world. Major commemorations of the 1893 Parliament took place in Delhi and other Indian cities. Vedantists performed special celebrations throughout India and at their centers in various locations worldwide, and Zoroastrians organized special worship services named jashans “in a chain of prayers encircling the globe starting with Australia, India and Pakistan, UK, and thence the USA and Canada, as Zarhustis gathered in their Agiaries, Halls and Darbe Mehrs to commemorate the Parliament of the World’s Religions.” A significant congress, entitled “Religious People Meeting Together, Sarva-Dharma-Sammelana,” organized by the global interfaith organizations, took place in

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Bangalore, India, shortly before the Chicago Parliament, and another important commemoration was organized in Tokyo, Japan. Some global interfaith leaders, such as Rev. Marcus Braybrooke of the World Congress of Faiths of Oxford, England, circumnavigated the planet in just a few weeks in order to take part in all the major celebrations. But the final destination of interfaith globetrotters like Braybrooke and religious pilgrims and seekers from different parts of the world was Chicago, where the ultimate centennial commemoration was to take place. As happened a hundred years earlier, Chicago once again became the navel of the religious universe through the centennial Parliament. The scope of its program, the tensions it generated, the diversity of its participants, but above all the extent of its inclusivity, were about to make the 1993 Parliament of Religions “the most diverse celebration in history.”

The Parliament of the World’s Religions

Eleven years after that first documented meeting of interested interfaith activists in the home of Mr. Dubocq on Chicago’s 56th Street, the Palmer House in downtown Chicago was ready to host the Parliament of the World’s Religions. On Saturday, October 28, 1993 hundreds of registrants flooded the halls of the Palmer House to take part in the opening plenary of the centennial Parliament while “outside, fundamentalist Christians handed out tracts on hell and paradise.”

The halls of the Palmer House are a swirl of color. Saffron-robbed Buddhist monks mingle with dark-suited Protestant clergy; Native Americans in ceremonial dress stand alongside turbaned Sikhs. A Catholic cardinal compliments a Pagan from the Earth Spirit Community on his choice of color in robes, and he laughs – they both wear the same shade of crimson. As the opening procession of the Parliament of the World’s Religions unfurls in Chicago this August,

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representatives of dozens of spiritual traditions come together for the first time in a century – Witches and Pagans among them.9 While it was not really the first time in a century that a Parliament met in Chicago – due to the overlooked Parliament of 1933- and the reference to a Catholic cardinal comparing attires with other religious leaders is certainly a graceful literary resource of the writer’s imagination, the observer is accurate in the fact that Cardinal Bernardin not only was present for the opening ceremonies of the 1993 Parliament but led the inaugural procession of dignitaries, co-sponsors, and host committees.10 He was accompanied in the procession by other Catholic representatives from the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, the Focolare Movement, DePaul University, Catholic Theological Union, St. Isidore Church and St. John De La Salle Church. Moreover, Benedictine monks Fr. Julian von Düerbeck and Brother Gregory Perron of St. Procopius Abbey in Lisle, Illinois, served as the Processional Marshal and an Attending Marshall respectively.11 Another prominent Catholic was among the religious leaders that presided over the overture of the centennial, James Yellowbank, a Winnebago Indian, aboriginal activist and lecturer, and director of the Aniwim Center for Native American Catholics of Chicago.12 But perhaps the most striking feature of this opening ceremony was the presence of new religious movements, particularly those embracing the tenets of ancient so-called pagan religious traditions. A direct witness, Vedantist David Nelson, relates that “the singing swelled


throughout the hall while the Reverend Baroness Cara-Marguerite Drusilla, Priestess Hierophant of the Lyceum of Venus [apparently a former Catholic nun], dressed as Nefertiti, glided by, serenely aware of the titters and muffled comments in the nearby Red Lacquer Ballroom…”

Once the opening procession was over, the honorary chairs of the Parliament – Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, who happened to be an Irish Catholic, and Illinois Governor Jim Edgar- greeted the assembly, after which executive director Dr. Daniel Gómez Ibáñez welcomed the participants and Chair of the Board Dr. David Ramage solemnly declared the Parliament open. One after another, invocations and blessings were offered by representatives of the many religious traditions gathered at the event. Cardinal Bernardin’s invocation was noted by Vedantist Nelson as follows:

We will pray, listen, dream, plan, challenge ourselves and others. O God, creator and sustainer of life… blessed are you who have brought us together from throughout the world. Despite the efforts of our predecessors, our world still suffers. Grant us wisdom, openness and willingness to listen to one another and faith to foster love and respect for all peoples.

With these words and many other similar expressions, the Parliament of the World’s Religions was inaugurated. By the time of the opening, the Parliament counted 198 co-sponsors representing a variety of Baha’is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Neo-Pagans, Sikhs, Taoists, Unitarian Universalists, Wiccans, and Zoroastrians. Furthermore, among the co-sponsors there were academic institutions, civic organizations, ecumenical and interfaith networks, and publishing houses. It is important to note that 180 out of these co-sponsoring organizations had American addresses. The eighteen remaining were located in Bangladesh, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Korea, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda.

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and the United Kingdom. A unique presence among the co-sponsors were six separate Humanist bodies, giving agnostics and atheists a voice at the gathering.

In sharp contrast with the attendance-related concerns raised just a few weeks prior to the event, the number of participants was much higher than expected. There were approximately 8,100 registrations and 6,500 attendees. The event was amply covered by the media, with 857 representatives from the press. In addition to domestic media, there were press correspondents from Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, India, Germany, England, and Canada. As was expected, 57% of participants were from the United States, with all states represented except Alaska. Illinois, California, and New York were the most widely represented. The remaining 43% came from 55 countries. Canadian participation comprised 2% with registrants from all ten provinces. Not surprisingly, Christians constituted the largest faith represented, followed in descending order by Hindus, Buddhists, Baha’is and Muslims. This extraordinary display of diversity throughout the unfolding Parliament was eloquently described by Rabbi Howard Sulkin, President of Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago, in a sermon given on Yom Kippur morning at the Chicago Sinai Congregation, just two weeks after the Parliament’s conclusion:

Sit back. Close your eyes… but not too tightly, and activate all your senses: your sense of sight, of sound, of smell, of taste, and of touch.

See thousands of people in a rainbow of skin-tones, wearing saffron robes and mantles of white, saris and gowns, turbans and yarmulkes, headdresses of feathers and crowns of the Pharaohs, see Neruh-jackets and western dress.

See Moslems and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs, Catholics and Protestants, Secularists and neo-Pagans, Buddhists and Shintos, Orthodox and Zoroastrians. Watch these people as they listen and search, teach and learn, enter into conflict and learn to dialogue.

Arrive very early in the morning, and see Jews in tefillin, Muslims kneeling on prayer rugs, Buddhists in meditation, hundreds on the floor of the hotel lobby in yoga positions, and still other hundreds in the grand ballroom practicing tai-chi, as if captured by slow-motion picture camera.

Smell curry and pizza, incense and candles, flowers and herbs. Hear chanting and prayer, bells and gongs and silence, probing questions and tentative answers, long impassioned speeches of words and brief gentle phrases of wisdom.
Shake hands with people of deep faith, and those who are questioning or who have lost their faith, with persons of every race and creed, from every continent in the world. Meet secretaries and teachers, housewives and doctors, priests and rabbis, ministers and swamis, and the Dalai Lama.

Go forward to the past and back to the future. Welcome to the 1993 Parliament of Religions.\textsuperscript{15}

Rabbi Sulkin spoke with the authority not only of being a direct witness and organizer of the Parliament but also of being among the earliest pioneers of the centennial idea. He was among the ten guests who attended the first documented centennial planning meeting eleven years earlier at the home of Dr. Dubocq in 1982.\textsuperscript{16}

An almost totally inclusive program

Over the course of nine days, from Saturday, August 28 to Sunday, September 5, registered participants had access to a rich and complex program. Program Director Sarah Berstein reported that “over a period of eleven months, the program staff compiled a monstrous database containing over 1300 detailed program proposals, submitted by fifteen major faith traditions and two hundred co-sponsors.”\textsuperscript{17} Jim Kenney, Chair of the Program Committee and main architect of the program, stated as the theme of the Parliament’s program “that the world’s religions should gather to proclaim their respective visions, to acknowledge each other, and to celebrate together the values they share and their common commitment to addressing the critical issues confronting human kind at the threshold of the 21st century.”\textsuperscript{18} This overarching theme was actualized in six


\textsuperscript{16} List of attendees at meeting on November 21, 1982 at the residence of Dr. Dubocq. ACPWR, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: January-February 1988.


Fr. Thomas Baima used the image of concentric circles to describe the organization of the Parliament’s vast and varied program. “At the center was the Parliament Assembly, an invitation-only gathering of about 250 persons drawn from among the religious and spiritual leadership around the world. This core gathering would address the official document of the parliament, *Toward a Global Ethic, An Initial Declaration*,” the original version of which was drafted by Catholic theologian Hans Küng. The next circle was the Plenary sessions, a series of gatherings described by Berstein as nine “full-scale productions” on relevant topics of the Parliament and expected to be attended by everyone, since no other activities were planned for the times when they were scheduled. The third circle of programming included the Major Presentations, a series of 175 lectures delivered by distinguished representatives of the participating religious traditions. The forth circle consisted of 454 seminars and lectures together with special interest symposia on the academy, pluralism, science, violence, business, and the media, along with artistic performances, such as The Festival of Sacred Performing Arts, “a five-hour global extravaganza.” Berstein referred to the total program as “an intricate maze of over 800 addresses and seminars,” comprised in a 152-page program catalogue, in which over 40 sessions were available concurrently at any given time. Baima identified the vendor area, also known as the “county fair of religions,” as a fifth circle, followed by the final circle: the “parliament of the people,” an event held during lunch hour over four days with the purpose of establishing communication among ordinary participants, whom Berstein called the “little people” of the Parliament.

Program Chair Jim Kenney referred to the comprehensive character of the Parliament program “as though the curriculum of a great university ha[d] been comprised into the

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20 The image of a maze is quite appropriate since the program book has no index of any kind.
space of a single week.” And Kenney’s analogy corresponded to the college-like experience related by a Parliament participant:

The opening day at the Parliament of the World’s Religions was like the first day at college, only more confusing. My initial fear was assuaged when I discovered (unlike another member of my party) that I had successfully registered. I was sure of this when, after standing in a long line amidst the dense hubbub of the other “students,” and after stuttering my name to the official behind the computer, I was given a name tag with my identifying organization, “Vedanta Society NYC.” Along with this I.D. I was presented with a daunting catalogue of “courses.”

Now I was clearly out of my league. This was like an open graduate university with no one telling me where to go or what classes to take. And I had eight days to get an education. Many professors were famous, who taught courses like “The Ontological Foundation of Gender Equality” or “Religion in the Emerging Era of Electronic Equality” and “Contemplative Dwelling I: Dwelling Process Failure, Planetary Crisis, Underlying Causes and Alternative Dwelling Design.” The worst part was they seemed to be all coinciding, and overlapping, and all equally important.

I decided to be like a leaf in the stream and be bumped from place to place. Sometimes I wandered the halls with catalogue in hand peeking into six or seven “classrooms” until I felt a pull to enter. Then I floated in and settled into this pool for a little while. I would feel another pull, float out again and repeat the process. If two conflicting truths can co-exist, this was certainly a verification!

If the program seemed rather overwhelming to most, the great diversity of religions represented was even more daunting. The liberal mindedness of Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez and Jim Kenney opened the doors wide open to welcome everybody. The protocol was “to reach out as broad as possible. All who responded would be invited.”


24 Kenney, “The Parliament experience,” in The Community of Religions, ed. Teasdale and Cairns, 136. While this was the official policy of the Parliament organizers, there were a few groups who were not allowed to become co-sponsors of the Parliament centennial. These exceptions are explained later in this section.
A prominent presence in the Parliament was that of the Aboriginal religions. Neglected and excluded from the 1893 Parliament, they were very visible and outspoken throughout the centennial Parliament. A highlight of the opening ceremony was the blessings from the four directions and the center led by representatives of the Onodaga, Navajo, Hopi, Crow, and Patowatomi nations. There were also numerous sessions on various indigenous issues, not only from North America but also from Latin America and Africa. A notable example was the inclusion in the program of His Imperishable Glory, Bambi Baaba of Uganda, Intra-Being Ansenserenist and Guardian-Inventor of Ansenserenica, an African Native esoteric tradition.

No less prominent was the presence of several Neo-Pagan and Wiccan groups, also very visible from the start of the event. Among these Witch and Goddess oriented groups were The Covenant of the Goddess, the Fellowship of Isis (FOI), the EarthSpirit Community, the Lyceum of Venus of Healing (a Fellowship of Isis center), and the Circle Sanctuary. Their inclusion in the Parliament was interpreted by some as a sort of a pagan coming of age: “I believe,” wrote one follower of Wicca, “that Wiccan participation in the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions was the most important event in our history since the publication of Witchcraft Today (by Gerald Gardner).” They overcame municipal obstacles to hold a Full Moon ritual at a Chicago public park and were pleasantly surprised by the welcoming attitude of many Parliament participants to their contribution to the Parliament program. “Imagine our surprise when our presentations had to be moved to larger rooms because of space considerations… I had thought that being around

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so many ‘conservative-mainstream-religionists,’ I would have to defend my religion and myself. Not so!”

Another group absent at the 1893 Parliament, the Mormons, was granted full participation and religious recognition among the many peer religions represented at the 1993 event. Moreover, the elasticity of the Parliament’s welcome reached even beyond the realm of religion to include Humanist groups representing the interests and concerns of agnostics and atheists.

Inclusivity not only embraced minority religious and secular groups but also sexual minorities, although to a much lesser degree. There was, for example, a session on gay and lesbian clergy facilitated by Annie Holmes and Tony Larson and sponsored by the Unitarian Universalists. While open discussion of sexual orientation in the Parliament of Religions may have caused anxiety among some participants, others regretted the limited reference to gay and lesbian concerns at the Parliament.

Where were the visible gays and lesbians in the great circle Monday night? Where are we at this Parliament? If we find ourselves in our scriptures, we do not find ourselves in our churches. Or in our churches, but not in our leadership. Or in our leadership, not in our dialogues. Would the circle have been complete without people of color, or women? Why do you think it is complete without me?

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29 PWRPC, 59. For a comprehensive resource on Mormonism, see W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall, editors, Mormonism: a historical encyclopedia (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2010).

30 PWRPC, 67. For the topic of sexual orientation across religious traditions, see Arlene Swidler, editor, Homosexuality and World Religions (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1993).

But what seemed a boundless inclusivity did have its limits. The Council faced difficulties in accepting three groups: the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Of the three groups, the most determined to participate was the Unification Church. Founded in Korea in 1954 by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, as its name indicates, a basic tenet of the Unification Church is to work for the unity of all Christian churches and ultimately of all religions. However, the purpose of uniting all religions into one global religion, together with doctrinal developments that consider the group’s founder as a new Messiah and the organization’s cult-like tactics of recruitment and maintenance of members, made the Unification Church fall in disfavor with mainstream religions. On several occasions, leaders of the International Religious Foundation, an organization sponsored by the Unification Church, approached Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez showing the Unification Church’s interest in becoming a co-sponsor of the Parliament. They even invited Gómez-Ibáñez to be part of their own interfaith events. These Unification Church conferences were said to court the participation of distinguished scholars of religion from prestigious universities who allegedly received very generous stipends for their support and involvement. Interestingly, Hans Küng showed an early awareness of this issue when he reported that “the second Parliament should not be left to a certain religious sect with considerable financial resources which had already shown interest in it.”

32 Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel, *A Global Ethic*, 45-46. For repeated attempts of the Unification Church to get involved in the Parliament, see Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, International Religious Foundation, to Gómez-Ibáñez, May 11, 1990; Huston Smith to Gómez-Ibáñez, July 29, 1992; Thomas G. Walsh, Inter-Religious Federation of World Peace, New York, to Gómez-Ibáñez, April 29, 1993, and Thomas G. Walsh to Gómez-Ibáñez, July 30, 1993, alleging support of Huston Smith and even Martin Marty: “I recall Dennis McCann calling me in 1989 or early 1990 because at one of the initial planning meetings for CPWR he had heard Martin Marty state that before any great effort be launched, other interfaith organizations should be consulted, and Dr. Marty even mentioned, along with others, the work of the IRF, which, as you know, receives most of its funding from the Unification Church.” ACPWR, Box 8A, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez Correspondence, Folders: 1989-1990, April 1993, and July 1993.
Centennial Parliament, the Unification Church’s application for co-sponsorship was declined by the Parliament Board.\textsuperscript{33}

Similarly, the Church of Scientology approached Gómez-Ibáñez on two occasions showing interest in getting involved. Founded by L. Ronald Hubbard, also in 1954, the Church of Scientology was the subject of several scandals and accusations of brainwashing. Allegedly, told that their involvement in the Parliament would be controversial, Scientologists declined to apply to become a co-sponsor.\textsuperscript{34}

The Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam, the third entity that was not accepted into the Parliament, considers itself a branch of Islam. The movement was founded in India at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century around the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who was in favor of dialogue among religions. This Movement is also well known for organizing its own World Religions Conferences.\textsuperscript{35} After having been accepted as co-sponsors of the Parliament in December 1992, objections were raised among mainstream Muslims about the authenticity of the Muslim-ness of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Ahmadiyya representatives wrote on March 11, 1993 to Gómez-Ibáñez making a case for their right to be called Muslims. The issue of Ahmadiyya co-sponsorship of the Parliament was unresolved until the last minute. On August 23, 1993, five days before the opening of the Parliament, Catholic Brother Wayne Teasdale made a motion to the Board asking for the acceptance of the Ahmadiyya Movement as a co-sponsor as recommended by the Executive Committee. However, the motion did not pass, although with abstentions. The issue did not die there. Ahmadiyya participation was included on the agenda of the

\textsuperscript{33} On the Unification Church, see J. Isamu Yamamoto and Allan W. Gomes, \textit{Unification Church} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2012).


\textsuperscript{35} See Iain Adamson, \textit{Ahmad, The Guided One, A life of the holy founder of the Movement to unite all religions} (Islamabad; Tilford; Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd, 1997).
Council’s Annual General Meeting that took place in the Palmer House while the Parliament was in session. Unfortunately, the minutes of the meeting are missing but, in the end, the Ahmadiyya Movement was not allowed to take part in the Parliament. Interestingly, while Catholic organizers were flexible enough to accept the participation of the Liberal Catholic Church as a co-sponsor of the Parliament, mainstream Muslim organizers were unable to concede sharing their name with an organ not recognized by the majority.36

There was another notable absentee in the Centennial Parliament: American religious history scholar Martin Marty of the University of Chicago. Involved in the early initiatives to launch the Centennial celebrations, his academic schedule prevented him from participating. However, he served as a discreet advisor during the earliest stages of the Council formation. His absence from the 1993 Parliament parallels the absence of Max Müller from the 1893 Parliament.37

Conflict at the Centennial Parliament

While the exclusion of the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, and the Ahmadiyya Movement was certainly a subject of tension and discomfort for all parties involved, many more frictions challenged the spirit of religious harmony that constituted

36 For the official acceptance of the Ahmadiyya Movement as a Parliament co-sponsor, see the Board Minutes, December 1, 1992, Box6B Folder Board of Trustees Agenda, Minutes December 1, 1992; for the controversy that ensued following the co-sponsorship, see Tashid Yahya, Minister of Religion, Midwest Region, Ahmadiyya Movement, to Gómez Ibáñez, March 11, 1993, Box8A Folder March 1993; for the failed attempt at restoring Ahmadiyya co-sponsorship, see Board Minutes, August 23, 1993, Box6B, Folder Board of Trustees Minutes, Agenda and Notes August 23, 1993; and Annual Meeting and Board of Trustees Meeting at Palmer House Hotel, September 5, 1993, Box6B Folder Annual Meeting Agendas September 5, 1993. On the tension and differences between mainstream Muslims and the Ahmadiyya Movement, see Ziauddin Sardar, “Islam must embrace different sects,” New Statesman, 135, 4806, August 21 (2006): 21, Factiva (Document NSTS000020060914e2810000p).

the very essence of the Parliament. It was basically impossible that such a diverse and complex array of religions and personalities actively present at the 1993 Parliament of Religions could be immune to conflict.

India-related issues

Given the original Vedantist support for the centennial idea and the fact that the 1893 Parliament was regarded an entry point for some South Asian traditions into the West, there was a sense of an Indian ownership of the event. This sense of ownership was found first and foremost among Vedantists, who considered the Parliament as part of their own larger celebration of the 1893 Parliament. In fact, the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, the Vedantist headquarters, issued its own programme and appeal for a centennial year, from September 11, 1993 (opening date of the 1893 Parliament) to September 27, 1994 (its closing date). In the United States, the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago also scheduled a week-long commemoration of the 1893 Parliament following the end of the 1993 centennial Parliament. Furthermore, the Indian ambassador in Washington and the Consul in Chicago sent a joint letter of appreciation to the Major of Chicago and proposed that a street be named in honor of Swami Vivekananda. As a result, a street adjacent to the Art Institute of Chicago, where the original Parliament was held, was renamed after the Hindu guru.

But the memory of Swami Vivekananda in relation to the 1993 Centennial found its main sources of support at the core of the Council in Chicago. Executive Director Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez first became involved in the Parliament project through his association

39 The exact days were September 6-12, 1993, as reported by Swami Varadananda to Catholic scholar Dr. Beatrice Butreau, December 2, 1991, ACPWR, Box 11, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: October-December 1991.
with the Vedanta Society and his Vedantist leanings, if not identity, were known to the Council members. This Vedantist interest materialized in the official program of the centennial Parliament in Chicago, which was impregnated with the remembrance of Swami Vivekananda. In fact, the 1993 Parliament program had ten sessions exclusively on Swami Vivekananda: three major presentations, four seminars, two sessions in the Academia section, and one artistic performance. No other religious figure received such individual attention in the 1993 program as did Swami Vivekananda.\footnote{PWRPC, 41, 42, 49, 64, 70, 110, 119, 129, 149.}

But Indian influence on the 1993 Parliament was certainly not restricted to Swami Vivekananda and Vedantist circles. The Chicago centennial was a veritable showcase of Indian religious diversity. A summary look at the Parliament program reveals that Indian religions, primarily various forms of Hinduism, had the largest number of presentations and seminars in every single category of the Parliament program. In addition to Vivekananda, but lower in number, other individual personalities had specific sessions named after them, such as Paramhansa Yogananda and Sri Aurobindo.\footnote{PWRPC. For Aurobindo, see 51, 62, 80, 81, 126. For Yogananda, see 35, 41, 61, 112.}

However, this Indian ownership of the event was pregnant with different tensions and elicited some assertive reactions. The notion that Eastern religions were triumphally penetrating the West was allegedly conveyed in a video about the first Parliament that was produced for educational purposes in the months prior to the centennial and in preparation for the youth plenary at the Parliament entitled “The Next Generation.” Some Protestant volunteers brought this concern to Gómez-Ibáñez, claiming a pro-Eastern and anti-Western bias in the learning materials. The fact that the person expressing her misgivings declared herself both a Christian and a disciple of Sri Chinmoy, a Hindu guru settled in the United States, added weight to her remarks given her own personal appreciation and commitment to Eastern traditions.\footnote{Janet Kerschner to Gómez-Ibáñez, March 26, 1993, ACPWR, Box8A, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez Correspondence, Folder: March 1993.}
As a result of the close association of the Parliament with India, many Indians from different religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural traditions, including Jains, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs –both from South Asia and from the US- came to Chicago to take part in the centennial. And this Indian diversity begot its own tensions. Ken Walker, from the Vedanta Free Press, summarized several public conflict-filled exchanges that took place during the plenary session entitled Voices of the Dispossessed.44

The country to get the most “flak” was India. The Tibetans thanked India for refugee support during the Chinese invasion, but the other Buddhists delivered heavy criticism towards India. The Muslims from Kashmir got into the roasting of India on self-determination issues going back to independence from Britain. Then the Sikhs polished off the attacks with a denunciation of India and a call for Khalistan, the name for an independent Punjab. The atmosphere became heated, and the Hindus in the front got real upset. I thought for a minute that this Parliament of the World’s Religions was going to become the battlefield of a holy war. Riot police were said to be waiting in the wings, and plain-cloth security became more prominent.45

An interesting outcome of this open confrontation was that it elicited the mediation of Native Americans present at the session, who succeeded in calming down the conflicting parties by performing a peace dance.46 Another aspect of the tension among participants from India had to do with issues of visibility and seniority of Hindu religious leaders. Buried in the Parliament archives, an awkward, hand-written and almost illegible note contains a threatening warning from a certain Yogi Shanti Swaroop to Gómez-Ibáñez. Yogi Shanti Swaroop wrote that he would self-immolate by fasting unto death if the Executive Director did not comply with his demands:

I am extremely sorry that you have broke [sic] your promise & allowed H-H Bal Shiv Yogi –President of Universal Peace Foundation of India on stage –when there was one extra Assistant of H-H Acharya Shulkumar Jain Mani you allowed to seat [sic] on stage which according to my knowledge not on 1st [preceeding

44 PWRPC, 22.

46 Teasdale and Cairns, The Community of Religions, 11.
word not clear] so, now if you don’t allow H-H Bal Shiryogi to do last universal prayer OM SHANTI on the stage, I have no choice [sic] to fast unto death. As I promised Shri H-H Bal Shiv Yogi to keep quiet – for the insult you have made to him – who was respected by so many great saints & Sir Robert Muller – Vicechancellor of Peace Univercity [sic] of Costa Rica.  

India-related conflicts before and during the Parliament might be regarded as the result of the almost total inclusivity policy of the Parliament organizers. Prior to the Parliament, an article appeared in an Indian newspaper portraying the event as part of the Indian radical group Vishwa Hindu Parishad’s World Vision 2000 program, an allegation that was categorically denied by Gómez-Ibáñez.  

While the Council’s denial was accurate, it was true that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, based in Berlin, Connecticut, had been accepted as a co-sponsor of the Parliament, which was problematic for Muslims, who considered the group as anti-Muslim. Two weeks after the press report, the Indian Muslims of America objected to the listing of Swami Chimayanand, leader of the VHP, in the Parliament program.

We wish to remind you that this organization [the VHP] is a fascist and fanatically militant organization that believes in suppressing [sic] religious minorities like Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in India. In the last ten years they have organized several sectarian riots against the minorities resulting in considerable loss of life and property. Only six months ago they organized the demolition of the 450 year old ‘Babri Mosque’ in India and the killing of about 5,000 innocent Muslim children, women and men. Their actions of burning houses and buildings resulted in about 100,000 Muslims becoming homeless in major Indian cities like Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, New Delhi, Kanpur, etc. Swami Chinmayanand who operates many branches of his mission throughout the world personally endorsed the demolition of the Babri mosque…

We fervently appeal to you in the name of simple humanity to not allow these fascists who are masquerading as Hindu Leaders into your conference. Undoubtedly Hinduism is an egalitarian religion and one of the major faiths of the


Interestingly, while some Muslims had prevented the participation in the Parliament of the Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam, a case of decision-making based on intra-religious sensitivity, other Muslims could not stop the involvement of the VHP in the Parliament, a case of decision-making based on inter-religious sensitivity. Such were some of the issues concerning India and the Parliament.

**Jewish withdrawal**

Other conflicts also erupted. While some Muslims objected to the involvement of some Hindus—as in the case of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad—some Jews objected to the involvement of some Muslims. In what seemed a chain of inter-religious clashes that continued to challenge the centennial Parliament, four Jewish organizations withdrew in protest at the inclusion in the Parliament’s program of controversial leader of the Nation of Islam Louis Farrakhan. While some Jewish leaders were totally involved in the Parliament planning from its very inception and throughout its planning period, there were some Jewish organizations that only hesitantly endorsed the event. Michael Kotzin, Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, wrote to Gómez-Ibáñez five months before the Parliament regarding its co-sponsorship:

We take this step [of endorsing the Parliament] with a degree of trepidation. All too often international fora have been exploited by individuals, organizations, and nations with beliefs and goals detrimental to the well-being of the Jewish people.
and the State of Israel. We welcome your assurance that the leadership of the Parliament is committed to taking appropriate steps to prevent that from happening in this case.

This apprehension seemed justified when on the third day of the Parliament, August 30th, 1993, the *New York Times* reported that Louis Farrakhan would be making a presentation in the event. Kotzin immediately faxed Gómez-Ibáñez asking for clarification. The next day, three other Jewish organizations – the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League of the B’nai B’rith – echoed Kotzin’s concerns. All three co-signed a message to Parliament Chair Dr. David Ramage:

> We understand that Minister Farrakhan will be speaking because one of the host committees has selected him to do so, and we recognize that his topic is not, on its face, inflammatory in the manner of much of which he has written and said. Nevertheless, given Minister Farrakhan’s long-standing tendency to espouse a racist, anti-Semitic ideology replete with scapegoating of Jews and rhetorical “Jew-baiting,” we cannot but be troubled by the fact that he will be speaking in such a setting.

> His divisive beliefs and style seem totally at odds with the Parliament’s purpose of furthering inter-religious respect and harmony. It would be a shame if attention were to be diverted from the noble purposes and hopeful events of the Parliament by controversy surrounding Minister Farrakhan…

On September 2, Ramage sent Kotzin a carefully worded reply:

> The concerns you and several of your associates have expressed have been received… As the Parliament leadership, we feel we have addressed your concerns. We are committed to mutual respect by all participants for the members of all faith communities.

> We regret any suggestion or perception that you have had that we in any way were sponsoring someone with an understanding that the participation would cause hurt and grief. We have tried to follow the beacon of hope that persons who have so vigorously disagreed and have been hurt by each other in the past might come together and find some basis for new beginnings and hope and harmony for the future.

Ramage’s response generated a domino effect. On the same day, one after another, the three major Jewish organizations officially withdrew from the Parliament with explicit remarks of deep regret. The next day, Ramage issued a conciliatory statement:
We regret their withdrawal, but understand that each participating group must determine for itself with whom it wishes to be in interfaith conversation. While these groups have withdrawn, we are grateful that they continue to support the purposes of the Parliament and that they respect the work of the many religious leaders and other persons from every faith community around the world who helped stage the 1993 Parliament…

The leadership of the Parliament is quite clear that it does not and will not endorse or condone any presentation which contains anti-semitic rhetoric or any other negative rhetoric about any religious or spiritual group.  

Fortunately, Farrakhan, aware of the controversy provoked by his involvement in the Parliament, avoided any mention of Jews. However, the pre-emptive Jewish reaction was clearly a learning opportunity about the complexity of interfaith relations and the issue of selectivity and timeliness for partnerships in interreligious dialogue. Furthermore, this incident also showed the rich internal diversity among Jews. While these three influential Jewish organizations withdrew their support, there were many individual Jews who continued to participate in the event, particularly those who cherished the Parliament idea and nurtured it from its seminal stages.

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50 For the series of exchanges, see Michael Kotzin to Gómez-Ibáñez, March 24, 1993; Michael Kotzin, Jewish Community Relations Council, Sylvia Neil, American Jewish Congress, Rebecca Galler, American Jewish Committee, Michael Sandberg, Anti-Defamation League, to David Ramage, August 31, 1993 and September 2, 1993; Ramage to Kotzin, September 2, 1993; Statement by Ramage, September 3, 1993, ACPWR, Box 7A, Board of Directors Correspondence (1988-1993), Folder: Correspondence Concerning Jewish Withdrawal, March 24-September 7, 1993.

Greek Orthodox withdrawal

By the time Ramage issued his statement, news of the Jewish organizational withdrawals had already reached the Chicago Tribune. The morning edition reported that at the Parliament “Threads of unity became further frayed among the diverse religions.”\(^5\) But conflict and confrontation were not limited to non-Christian religions. The word “further” in the Tribune’s piece referenced the fact that the Jewish withdrawals were preceded by another withdrawal, that of the Greek Orthodox.

The Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago, showing an ecumenical spirit that paralleled that of other Orthodox bodies at a global level, was a member of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago when this Council endorsed the centennial Parliament initiative. However, the Council’s endorsement did not automatically mean specific co-sponsorship from its members. Two and a half months after this endorsement, Andre Kopan, a Greek Orthodox faculty member of Catholic DePaul University wrote to Ron Kidd, the CPWR administrator, volunteering himself as an advisor. Kopan’s enthusiasm for the Parliament idea was also instrumental in persuading Bishop Iacobus of Chicago to involve the Greek Orthodox Diocese in the Parliament. Kopan wrote to his Bishop: “I am confident that our Church would want to participate in this momentous event just like it did one hundred years ago when it was in its infancy in this country.” Kopan was referring to the presence of Dionysius Latas, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Zante at the 1893 Parliament, the only representative (along with his assistant, the Rev. Homer Peratis) of Orthodox Christianity at the event.

Bishop Iacobus agreed and the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago announced it would be a co-sponsor of the centennial. A Pan Orthodox Host Committee was organized, under

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the direction of Fr. Demetri Kantzavelos, to coordinate the involvement of Greek with other Orthodox Churches, and substantial sessions were included in the program.53

However, the ecumenical intention of the Orthodox did have its boundaries. The sensitivity against any shared worship activity with other Christians is a well-known fact about Orthodox Christian involvement in ecumenics.54 Furthermore, the seemingly boundless inclusivity of the Parliament was beyond what some of the Orthodox faithful were able to accept in good conscience. The presence of the Neo-Pagans, with their non-monotheistic and nature-oriented framework, was particularly challenging. Therefore, some Greek Orthodox bodies decided to pull out from the Parliament in protest against the inclusion of what they regarded as “pseudo-religious pagan groups that profess no belief in a God or a Supreme Being.”55 On August 31, 1993, Board Chair David Ramage issued another conciliatory statement:

Some Christian Orthodox communities have informed the Parliament leadership that they do not wish to continue in relationship to the parliament. We regret this very much. … We understand that these communities are not comfortable with being in conversation with the breadth of religious participation actively present at this parliament. It is my hope that fruitful conversations will continue by these Christian Orthodox communities with many, if not most of us here, as we walk together into a faithful and cooperating future for the good of the world and for the reduction of unnecessary religious conflict. We honor their integrity and hope that their bonds of deep relationship will not be broken as a result of this determination that they have faithfully made.56

56 Statement by Chair David Ramage concerning Orthodox Withdrawal, ACPWR, Box6B, Board of Trustees, Folder: Board of Trustees Statements concerning Jewish and Christian Orthodox Withdrawal, August September 1993.
Ramage was not disappointed. Despite this incident at the Parliament, the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago remained a member of the Board of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, but not without facing its own struggles when confronted with initiatives it found problematic. This was still an issue two years after the Parliament. In a letter to then chair of the Board, Rabbi Howard Sulkin, Fr. Kanzavelos expressed his concerns.

After a restless evening, I am taking this opportunity to register a letter of protest as a trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions and as a faithful Greek Orthodox Christian. This protest is being lodged on the basis of two incidents which occurred during the closing minutes of our meeting: First the decision to send a letter of congratulations to the Dalai Lama for his recognition of the reincarnation of the Pachen Lama; and, second, the corporate act of prayer lead [sic] by Ms. Jaya Bhagavati.57

These sincere and heartfelt concerns of Fr. Kanzavelos highlight the complexity of interfaith interaction and raise the question about where limits on interfaith cooperation should be drawn and what the levels of interreligious engagement should be. This certainly constituted one of the main challenges for the Parliament organizers.58

Other issues

From the earliest stages of the planning process there had been differences of opinion between those who wanted the Parliament to be a religious event and those who preferred to make it a religious platform for open discussion of the most compelling and critical issues of the age. Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, a non-religious professional, saw it as his role to ensure the social orientation of the Parliament’s vision and program. But this was not

57 Kanzavelos to Sulkin, June 7, 1995, ACPWR, Box6B, Board of Trustees, Folder Board of Trustees Correspondence 1995-.

58 A helpful history of the larger Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is provided by George Papaioannou, “The Diamond Jubilee of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America,” Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 45. ¼, Spring, (2000): 217-306, ProQuest (ID 220263695). For a history from the earliest origin of Greek Orthodox Church in America, see Miltiades Efthimiou, “A Brief History of Greek Orthodoxy in America,” Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 45. ¼, Spring (2000): 193-216, ProQuest (ID 220282456).
without challenge. In December 1992, Leon Rhodes, editor of the Pennsylvania-based *Bryn Athyn Post*, a Swedenborgian publication, complained to Gómez-Ibáñez:

We are eager to support a council of the world’s religions, but distressed—not by your financial difficulties—but for the shift in vision. It has been evident that forces have been at work to redirect the Parliament—to “critical issues of our time: violence, poverty, injustice and environmental damage”. Commendable objectives, these are far less important than the spiritual issues implied by the word “religion”. It would not be difficult to list the REAL issues faced by humanity [sic]—piety, morality, spirituality, honesty, kindness and eternal values.59

Mr. Rhodes’ remarks probably reflect some nostalgia and a sense of lost ownership of the Parliament by the Swedenborgian community. It is important not to forget that the idea for the 1893 Parliament came from Swedenborgian Charles Bonney and that his vision for the Parliament was one of “all religions against irreligion.” Therefore, memories of the 1893 Parliament were not only treasured by Vedantists and Bahai’s, but also by Swedenborgians, who organized a program of commemorations scheduled for August 1993 at their Bryn Athyn Cathedral in Pennsylvania.60

Thus the social-issue orientation of the Chicago Parliament represented an area of tension between Parliament organizers and those, like the Swedenborgians, who saw it as a deviation from the faith-oriented event they expected. But even among those committed to the social and political implications of religion in the modern world there were important tensions, including a potential competition between the Chicago Parliament initiative and other global interfaith organizations. Despite the good wishes of Paul Carus and the Parliament Extension initiative he led in 1893, the Parliament idea remained dormant for most of a century. However, other interfaith initiatives were active in the global landscape, primarily the International Association for Religious Freedom, The


While these organizations joined in organizing the centennial celebrations and warmly welcomed the Chicago initiative, it seems that the emerging Chicago Council posed some inter-organizational challenges. When the centennial idea crystallized in Chicago and the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions was incorporated, some Chicago pioneers began to entertain the idea that the newly born organization would transcend the centennial celebration and evolve into a permanent Parliament of Religions linked to the United Nations and UNESCO. Moreover, Hans Küng’s rationale for his Declaration “Towards a Global Ethic,” intended to become the centerpiece of the Parliament, was that there would not be peace among the nations without peace among the religions. Therefore, world peace was certainly at the core not only of the Parliament objectives but potentially of the ongoing Council’s pursuits following the Parliament centennial celebration. This represented a possible overlap between the interests of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, already based at the United Nations in New York and the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. Unitarian Universalist Homer Jack, one of the founders of the World Conference of Religion and Peace, commented on possible challenges in this regard.61 Despite these tensions, Dr. William Vendley, director of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and a Catholic, appeared as a prominent presenter of peace-related sessions at the Violence Symposium of the Parliament.62

In addition to these inter-organizational tensions, other problems unfolded during the centennial celebration in Chicago. The Parliament of the People was organized at lunch time on four consecutive days as a forum for registered participants to make contact among themselves and express any concerns. Their proactivity and creativity

61 Homer Jack wrote to Gómez-Ibáñez on February 1, 1992: “I am very sorry about the churlish manner in which WCRP/USA has reacted to your Chicago effort.” ACPWR, Box8A, Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez Correspondence, Folder: January-February 1992.

62 PWRPC, 138, 139.
materialized in twelve on-site issues of a newsletter titled *Your Voice*, which served not only as a helpful sounding board but also as a vehicle for criticism of certain aspects of the Parliament. One problematic issue was the Council’s policy preventing any exchange of information materials. Literature on display on the tables was consistently being cleared by the hotel staff, including the issues of *Your Voice*. Another concern was the apparent unavailability of the officers of the Council during the Parliament. Of course, members of the Board of Management were extremely busy not only tending to their own denominational involvement in the Parliament but addressing the conflicts that threatened to disrupt the Parliament. Furthermore, Council members were overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the event that exceeded their expectations and administrative capacity. Despite these challenges, there is no doubt their efforts were rewarded with an unprecedented success in the history of religious gatherings.

And even as Council members struggled to keep under control the event they had organized, they also had to deal with their own internal issues. From its very inception, the Council was tested by ownership-related confrontations and possible conflicts of interests, most noticeably between Secretary Judith Lawrence and Administrator Ron Kidd, between acting-Executive Director Ron Kidd and Chair-turned-into-Executive-Director Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, and between Gómez-Ibáñez and his successor as Chair of the Board, David Ramage. The tension between Gómez-Ibáñez and Ramage escalated to the point that Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez resigned during the Parliament. The only reference to this event is provided by astute observer Anthony Judge, from the Brussels-based

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63 Stanley Davis, Executive Director of the National Conference of Christian and Jews, to Judith Lawrence, June 8, 1989, ACPWR, Box16, Nominations Committee, Folder: Correspondence March-November 1989.

64 See Ron Kidd files in their entirety. A separate section in the ACPWR, they document a painful grievance that came as a result of the dismissal without pay of Ron Kidd as the administrator of the Council in December 1990. After various appeals from religious entities, both American and international, sympathetic to Kidd’s cause and several mediation sessions, a settlement was reached on June 7, 1993, just three months before the Parliament took place. For the settlement, see Gómez-Ibáñez to Rabbi Bronstein, June 8, 1993, ACPWR, Box7A, Board of Directors Correspondence (1988-1993), Folder: Mr. Ron Kidd Contract, correspondence.
Union of International Associations. According to Judge, “The last minute resignation of the Executive Director of the organizing group reflected some other major tension which was never disclosed.” Unfortunately, the minutes from a Board of Trustees meeting that took place at the Palmer House during the Parliament are missing. But in an interview with Carroll Fisher, Gómez-Ibáñez candidly disclosed that he had not always kept the Board informed of his actions as he should have and that this acting on his own divided the Board. He also referred to a clash of visions in the Board in relation to the Parliament, an “encounter” approach held by the original board and an “event” approach held by the expanded board that did not trust in his leadership.

In the midst of these extremely complex and problematic scenarios, with so many inter-religious blessings and conflicts intertwined in the Parliament’s web, and in which “one person’s celebration [seemed to be] another person’s alienation,” the Catholic Church was facing its own intra-religious blessings and conflicts as well. The Parliament provided an opportunity to bring under the same roof a far greater diversity of Catholic voices and positions than the Church itself could welcome in its own official venues. As a result of being one among many, and not one above the rest in the context of the Parliament, the Catholic Church experienced the impact of the Parliament’s inclusivity within its own ranks, exposing the richness and complexity of its own internal diversity to the Parliament and the larger public square, not with one, unified and unison Catholic voice, but with many and sometimes discordant Catholic voices.

As at the 1893 Parliament, Catholics were present everywhere throughout the 1993 Parliament. They participated as presidents, co-sponsors, presenters, performers, and simply as registered participants. However, unlike the 1893 Parliament where official Catholic participation in the proceedings was carefully designed and tightly controlled by Bishop John Keane, at the 1993 Parliament the involvement of Catholics in the program was not channeled and scrutinized by any single person. Some Catholic participants were officially appointed or formally invited to participate by Church authorities, primarily Cardinal Bernardin and his representative at the Council, Fr. Baima. Others, however, were invited directly by the Council at the discretion of Executive Director Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez, Program Chair Jim Kenney or any other program organizer, Catholic or non-Catholic. Furthermore, mirroring the self-selection process of Board membership that characterized the Council, the vast majority of Catholics in the official program independently appointed themselves simply by submitting proposals that were accepted by the program organizers. The result of this decentralized process was an extraordinary diversity of Catholic voices in the Parliament program: male and female, clerical and lay, monastic and socially-immersed, pastoral and academic, conservative and liberal, obedient and dissenting, domestic and international, old and young, ethnically mainstream and minority-based, ordinarily able and differently able, coalescing in the same space and time as had never occurred in the millenary history of the Catholic Church. As happened a century earlier, and to the astonishment of those who marveled at or mistrusted the involvement of the Catholic Church in the first Parliament of Religions, once again, a parliament of religions provided the Roman Catholic Church with the opportunity to achieve something unique and potentially groundbreaking in its

1 The active and numerous presence of Catholic women at the 1993 Parliament alone serves to justify this ambitious claim, provided that in the Second Vatican Council there were only 23 women as observers. See Adriana Valerio, *Madri del Concilio, Ventitré Donne al Vaticano II* (Roma: Carocci editore Sfere, 2012).
life and history: to experience and publicly portray the wide spectrum of its own internal
diversity, testing the capacity and elasticity of its own internal and cherished unity. While
the Church throughout its long history had experienced the tensions of its own internal
diversity of opinions, as was portrayed particularly in the ecumenical councils, this
happened for the most part behind closed doors, perhaps with the exception of Vatican II
which counted numerous non-Catholic observers. However, the Church at the centennial
Parliament exposed its many faces to the most diverse religious public square ever in
history. From its own internal diversity, the Catholic Church engaged other religions in
their own internal diversity as well, which made the 1993 Parliament an eye-opening
encounter of diversities.

This chapter is divided into four sections: an overview of the complex Catholic
involvement in the 1993 Parliament of Religions, Catholic involvement in the
controversial Declaration Towards a Global Ethic, the Catholic place in the disrupted
Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the adjournment and aftermath of the
centennial for Catholics.

The Complexity of the Catholic presence\(^2\)

Cardinal Bernardin appointed Rev. Theodore M. Hesburg of the Congregation of the
Holy Cross, President Emeritus of Notre Dame University and a world peace activist, as
the Roman Catholic president of the Parliament. Hesburg was one of 25 presidents
representing 18 religious traditions. Of the 198 local, national and international official
cosponsors of the Parliament, eleven were Catholic institutions. In addition to the
institutional involvement of Catholics at the opening ceremony, eight of the nine plenary
sessions had Catholic facilitators, including Bishop Samuel Ruiz García—the
controversial advocate of the rights of indigenous peoples in Mexico—and the Honorable

\(^2\) This section relies heavily on the Parliament of the World’s Religions Program Catalogue
(Chicago: Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, 1993) (PWRPC), which has no
index of any kind. Here only the page numbers of the presentations are indicated. Please refer to
Appendix C for specific information on the title and date of presentations.
Robert Müller—former Deputy General Secretary of the United Nations and founder of the University for Peace in Costa Rica. Furthermore, every day there were major presentations delivered by Catholics—18 out of 175, that is over ten percent of the total. Taken together, these major presentations offer a window into the Catholic messages to the Parliament of Religions. The Catholic presentations can be grouped in six areas: Vatican II and parallel Catholic ecumenical developments, pressing ethical issues, Aboriginal-Catholic identity, Buddhist-Catholic dialogue, Hindu-Catholic interaction, and women at the Parliament.

**Vatican II and parallel ecumenical developments**

The presence of an official Vatican delegate at the 1993 Parliament of Religions underscored the fact that Catholic participation in the event received the highest possible endorsement. Different from the 1893 Parliament, at which Archbishop Francesco Satolli—the first Apostolic Delegate to the United States—chose not to set foot, the centennial Parliament counted on the participation of another Francesco, a Capuchin friar made into an Archbishop. His presence clearly showed how much things had changed in the Catholic Church’s understanding of and relation to other Christians and non-Christian religions as a result of the Second Vatican Council. Archbishop Francesco Gioia came to the Parliament as a chosen representative of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, led by African Cardinal Francis Arinze. It was agreed between Arinze and Bernardin that since the Parliament—despite its global scope and significance—remained a local Chicago initiative, Catholic involvement in the event would still fall under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Chicago. Accordingly, rather than come himself, Arinze sent Archbishop Gioia. Cardinal Bernardin would thus be both the Catholic host at the Parliament and the highest ranking Catholic delegate at the event.

Archbishop Gioia gave a major presentation on the Catholic Church’s Theology of Religions. ³ He grounded his presentation in Vatican II documents, particularly the decree

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³ PWRPC, 45.
Nostra Aetate, highlighting the aspects of truth and goodness present in all religions, and the decree Ad Gentes, referring to the seeds of the Word also to be found in non-Christian religions. Gioia also quoted extensively from the encyclical letter Ecclesiam Suam by Paul VI, which he called the “Carta Magna of Dialogue.” After referring to the danger of syncretism as an immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs, he addressed the theme of salvation and the Vatican II doctrine that even non-believers who do not know Christ through no fault of their own can be saved.⁴

Archbishop Gioia attended the Chicago gathering accompanied by Fr. Enzo Fondi who participated in the Parliament as the official delegate of the Focolare Movement. Founded by Chiara Lubich in Trento, Italy, in 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, the Focolare Movement is an international organization that promotes universal unity and brotherhood. The Italian word Focolare comes from Fuoco –fire- and conveys the idea of a bonfire. As a unique initiative, they undertake the establishment of mini-cities called Mariapolis or Cities of Mary, envisioned as utopian villages where unity “happens” in the present through the practice of love and communal work and despite doctrinal and other religious differences. The Catholic identity of the Focolare Movement is not only indicated through the name of these utopian villages but clearly reflected in the official name of the movement: the Work of Mary. The founder, Chiara Lubich, was both a charismatic leader and a faithful daughter of the Catholic Church. She was also a personal friend of Pope John Paul II. The Focolare Movement remains an all-encompassing transnational network that includes consecrated single men and women, whole families, and priests.⁵ Fr. Fondi and a local Chicago Focolare member, Jo Ellen Karstens, led separate sessions on the Focolare ideal and the mini-cities respectively.⁶

⁶ PWRPC, 47, 108.
The Focolare Movement did not stand alone in Catholic ecumenical and interfaith outreach. One of the major achievements of Vatican II for the purposes of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue was the establishment of a supporting organizational structure within every diocese across the world. It was precisely in the local Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs office of the Archdiocese of Chicago, led by Sister Joan McGuire, where official Catholic participation in the centennial Parliament was first discussed and acted upon. The same type of structure has been set in place by the conferences of bishops in many countries. In the United States, the U.S. Bishops’ Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs was established in 1964 while the Second Vatican Council was still in session. Dr. John Borelli, the Committee’s executive secretary for Interreligious Relations, was present at the Parliament. So too was the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (NADEO), currently called CADEIO (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Officers), which organized three separate sessions on Jewish-Catholic, Muslim-Catholic, and Buddhist-Catholic dialogue, facilitated by Paulist Father Michael McGarry, Dr. John Renard, and Professor Donald Mitchell respectively.

Furthermore, in addition to these official Catholic structures for interfaith dialogue, many Catholic religious orders, particularly missionary congregations and monastic communities active in non-Christian lands, contemplate ecumenism and interfaith relations as part of their mandate. But there are two distinct American religious congregations whose mandates revolve around ecumenical dialogue that were also present at the Parliament: The Paulist Fathers (1858), and the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement (1898). The Paulist Fathers had played a major role at the 1893 Parliament. Fr. Isaac Hecker, the founder of the Paulists, was a convert to Catholicism.

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7 See Matthew Bunson, editor, Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Almanac (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor’s, 2000), 584-585.
9 PWRPC, 67, 87, 113.
As he envisioned it, the purpose of this priestly Society was to work for the conversion of Protestants. However, this original mandate—certainly active around the 1893 Parliament—was different in 1993. In light of Vatican II, the Paulists reframed their mission and vision as the facilitation of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.\textsuperscript{10} Paulist Father Tom Ryan, Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism of Montreal and a recognized ecumenical leader and author, led a session at the Parliament on Catholic interfaith relations. Other Paulists, Richard Chilson and Thomas Kane, also led sessions on Spirituality and Africa respectively.\textsuperscript{11}

The founders of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement, also known as the Graymoor Friars and Sisters, Fr. Paul Wattson and Sister Lurana White, were Anglicans who later converted to Catholicism and had their religious community received into the Catholic Church. Early in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, they established the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Their ecumenical vision found affirmation and official endorsement in Vatican II.\textsuperscript{12} Their Graymoor Ecumenical and Interfaith Institute was one of the Catholic co-sponsors of the Parliament and Graymoor Friar and interreligious scholar and practitioner, Fr. Elias Mallon, attended the Parliament as a delegate.\textsuperscript{13}

Besides these two American-born religious families, a third Catholic community with a distinctly ecumenical mandate was present at the Parliament. The Sisters of Our Lady of Sion were founded in France in 1843 by a Jewish convert to Catholicism, Fr. Maria Theodore Ratisbone. The Sisters’ original mission was to promote the conversion of Jews by opening houses in the Holy Land and around the world. In light of Vatican II, the Sisters now work to improve Catholic-Jewish relations and to witness God’s faithful love.

\textsuperscript{10} See Boniface Hanley, \textit{Paulist Father, Isaac Kecker: An American Saint} (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), with a concluding section entitled “Who are the Paulist Fathers?”

\textsuperscript{11} PWRPC, 116, 121, 85.


\textsuperscript{13} Confirmation of his attendance is stated in his registration form. ACPWR, Box 34B, Delegate Biographies M-Z.
to the Jewish people.\textsuperscript{14} The Sisters of Sion were actively present at the Parliament at the grassroots level, particularly at the Parliament of the People section. The Parliament of the People had a newsletter, called \textit{Your Voice}, in which participants could post messages. In this newsletter Sister Marge Boyle wrote that the “[p]rimary apostolic mark of the Sisters of Scion [sic] is bettering Jewish-Christian relations, becoming a paradigm for reconciliation of all peoples suffering prejudice and marginalization. Along with Jewish-Christian bridge building I also work to reduce prejudice, bias, violence and hate crimes.”\textsuperscript{15} Sister Boyle was also a panelist at an interfaith session.\textsuperscript{16}

**Common ethical concerns**

Catholic theologian Chester Gillis argues that an inevitable consequence of the Church’s encounter with the modern world is the acknowledgement of other religions that coexist in that world.\textsuperscript{17} These religions are brought together in dialogue and shared action about the critical issues faced by the modern world, such as economic injustice, war, and the ecological planetary crisis. Catholic interfaith scholar Paul Knitter in his Parliament-session entitled “Religions and Globality” underscored the importance of building a bridge between religious identity and what he calls the two Others, that is the religious other and the suffering other:

To be a religious person today requires one to relate one’s own religious identity to the identity of other religious persons and to the identity of others who are

\textsuperscript{14} A very helpful history of this religious community is to be found in Congregation of Our Lady of Sion, \textit{A Nineteenth Century Miracle: The Brothers Ratisbone and the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion}, translated from the French by L. M. Leggatt (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1922). For their post-Vatican II outreach, the most helpful resource is the official website of their generalate, accessed June 27, 2012, http://www.notredamedesion.org/fr/index.php

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Your Voice}, Issue #2, August 28-September 5, 1993, ACPWR, Box 2, Your Voice Newsletter, Folder 2.

\textsuperscript{16} PWRPC, 99.

\textsuperscript{17} Chester Gillis, \textit{Roman Catholicism in America}, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 193.
suffering. Other persons who are religious in ways different from our own and other persons or beings who are suffering because of their social or economical or ecological situation—these two Others today confront and challenge anyone who would call her or himself religious.18

But Knitter goes further to state that genuine dialogue is actually impossible if it is not grounded in the work for justice. In his post-Parliament article “Pluralism and Oppression: Dialogue between the Many Religions and the Many Poor,” Knitter called attention to the relation between what religions are saying and what people are asking, stating that under current unequal conditions, dialogue is not possible.19 The need to address social challenges was clearly articulated by many Catholic presenters at the Parliament, including Bishop Willie Romelus of Haiti and layman John Carr of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in sessions on the poor of the world and social and economic theology respectively.20 In a complementary fashion, Hans Küng’s statement that “there will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions” insisted on the inherent link between religion and public life.

The Parliament also served as a platform for one of the most pressing issues on the contemporary American Catholic agenda: the Church’s stance against abortion and other related concerns. Very fittingly, Cardinal Bernardin’s Parliament lecture on euthanasia fell within this pro-life framework and exemplified his own idea of a consistent ethic of life, imaged as “a seamless garment.” Through this vision the Cardinal attempted to link abortion not only to other life-related concerns—such as euthanasia and the death penalty-


20 PWRPC, 22, 48.
but to the larger issues of economic injustice and human rights. Lectures by Helen Alvare of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and by Francis Hannigan and Mary Hallan of the Archdiocese of Chicago, echoed the Cardinal’s pro-life message.

Prominent among the issues addressed by the Parliament were the Earth and its preservation. Here the contribution of Catholic scholar Fr. Thomas Berry was particularly outstanding. A member of the Passionist Congregation, a professor at Fordham University and one of the most articulate and recognized eco-theologians, Berry affirmed that “the result of the Parliament should be the recovery of an exalted sense of the divine in the grandeur of the natural world.” Eight other sessions led by Catholics elaborated on the ecological imperative of the present age. Completing a space framework with a reflection on history, another Fordham professor, Erwin Cousins, built on Karl Jaspers’ concept of “the Axial Age” to propose that humanity is undergoing a “Second Axial Age.” He argued that if the first Axial period saw humanity’s transition from tribal to individual consciousness, then this second Axial period is moving humanity from individual to global consciousness. Berry’s and Cousins’ affiliation to Fordham University in New York brings attention to other interfaith scholars and practitioners from the same Catholic house of studies present at the Parliament, such as Fr. Thomas Matus, Brother Wayne Teasdale, and Dr. John Borelli, and suggests an interfaith effervescence at Fordham in the 1970s that was still bearing fruit.

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22 PWRPC, 40, 67, 108.

23 PWRPC, 85. See also Thomas Berry, “The Role of Religions in the 21st Century,” in *The Community of Religions*, ed. Teasdale and Cairns, 182.

24 PWRPC, 80, 86, 91, 95, 110, 112, 118


26 The writer owes this realization to a remark made by Fr. Thomas Matus in conversation at the Camaldolese Incarnation Monastery in Berkeley, California, in the summer of 2011.
Aboriginal-Catholic identity

A highlight of the 1993 Parliament was the participation of Native religions and of Aboriginal adherents to other religions. Such was the case of Aboriginal Catholics. This posed an interesting challenge for the Catholic Church in the specific religious public square provided by the Parliament. It is not easy to draw a line between the religious and the cultural identity of Aboriginal Catholics, an issue referred by some scholars as “the crossing of two roads.” Many Catholics of Aboriginal background owe their denominational affiliation not so much to persuasion or personal conviction, but to a kind of coercion resulting from the historic pressure of Spanish, or Portuguese, or French, or British, or American imperial expansion at the expense of their own religious and cultural traditions. A process of reconciliation of Native and Catholic identities is under way in our lifetime in America and around the world, but that movement has not yet reached the goals it has set for itself. Burton Pretty on Top was among those experiencing this tension. A spiritual leader and a pipe carrier from the Crow Nation, Pretty On Top was formally invited by the Vatican to participate in the World Day of Prayer for Peace convened by Pope John Paul II in Assisi seven years before the Parliament.

At the Parliament, he shared the platform with aboriginal delegates from other nations and referred to his Assisi experience by stating: “That was the first time that a Native American religion had been allowed to participate in interfaith dialogue, that his people were at last allowed to join the rest of humanity.” He was also quoted as saying:

28 For a treatment of this tension in a Latin American context, see Eleazar López Hernández, Teología India, Antología (Cochabamba: Universidad Católica Boliviana, Editorial Verbo Divino, 2000). For an Australian perspective, see John Harris, One Blood: 200 years of aboriginal encounter with Christianity, a story of hope (Sutherland, N.S.W.: Albatross Books, 1990).
The Native American is greatly concerned that his ancestors’ bones lie gathering dust in boxes in museums… [They are] said to have been bought, when in fact there is proof they were stolen from graves. The Eucharist is not displayed in museums, nor should the sacred objects of indigenous people be. What goes for Catholic should go for Native Americans.  

A largely overlooked incident at the Parliament concerning Catholic-Aboriginal relations was reported by Archbishop Francesco Gioia, the Vatican Delegate to the Parliament. In his report to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue following the Parliament, Gioia enclosed a Declaration of Vision written by indigenous activists demanding a restoration of their dignity and rights.

We call upon the people of conscience in the Roman Catholic hierarchy to persuade Pope John Paul II to formally revoke the Inter Cetera Bull of May 4, 1493, which will restore our fundamental human rights. That Papal document called for our Nations and Peoples to be subjugated so that the Christian Empire and its doctrines be propagated. The United States Supreme Court ruling Johnson vs. McIntosh 8 Wheat 543 (1823), has adopted the same principle of subjugation expressed in the Inter Cetera Bull. This Papal Bull has been, and continues to be devastating to our religions, our cultures, and the survival of our populations, Since 1492, 85% of our 145,000,000 populations have been decimated by the effect of the papal Bull!  

Archbishop Gioia noted that this declaration was read in public in one of the sessions and that the session moderator asked the participants to raise their hand in support of the Declaration. The session was almost unanimous in its support. Shortly after the session, Archbishop Gioia, together with Fr. Baima and Dr. John Borelli of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, met with Pretty on Top to discuss the issue. According to Gioia, Dr. Borelli stated that the issue of Aboriginal rights had already been placed before the Bishops and that in due time the Bishops would provide an official answer.

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This incident took place the day before the Centennial’s adjournment with very little time for further discussion. So this matter fell discreetly through the cracks.32

**Buddhist-Catholic dialogue**

Buddhist-Catholic dialogue was strongly represented at the Parliament. Important was a Major Presentation on the Buddhist concept of *SUNYATA* (Emptiness) and the Christian concept of *KENOSIS* (Self-Emptying). Presenters included representatives of Sri Lankan, Thai, and Tibetan forms of Buddhism—Including the Dalai Lama- and Catholic monastics—men and women-, among them David Steindl-Rast, an explorer of the interface between spirituality and science who has frequently been compared with Trappist monk Thomas Merton.33 The session was organized by the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID), which constitutes an important interfaith initiative in the modern history of religions. In the 1960s, Catholic Benedictine and Cistercian Congregations established the *AID A L’IMPLANTATION MONASTIQUE* (AIM) to support new monastic foundations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A pan-Asian congress of Catholic monks in Bangkok was followed by similar meetings in Bangalore and in Sri Lanka. These gatherings led, in turn, to a series of direct encounters with Buddhist monasticism that unfolded in various initiatives of mutual knowledge and understanding during the 1970s and 1980s. The Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican showed interest and offered support, and in 1977 two separate organizations were established: the *North American Board for East-West Dialogue* and *Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique* in Europe. These two organizations eventually merged into the *Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique/Monastic Interreligious*

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33 See Clare Hallward, editor, *David Steindl-Rast, Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010). An insightful reference to an exchange Steindl-Rast had with Merton is to be found on page 24.
Dialogue (DIMMID), an international monastic organization that continues to foster dialogue with men and women from not only Buddhism, but Hinduism and Islam as well.

Regarding Buddhism, particularly significant in the United States was the Intermonastic Hospitality Exchange with Tibetan monks exiled in India, through which Tibetan monks and nuns visited American Catholic monasteries and American Catholic monks and nuns visited Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in India. Similar Catholic exchanges with Japanese and other monasteries were organized in Europe. This process of Buddhist-Catholic interaction and learning facilitated other interfaith initiatives, such as seminars, symposia, and retreats.  

The monastic session at the Parliament of Religions was a milestone in the process of Buddhist-Catholic dialogue and a witness to the importance the Catholic Church gave to interreligious engagement. As Catholic monk Pierre François de Béthune, a Parliament participant, wrote: “more than a bridge, the monastic ideal is like a tunnel which ensures unseen communication between monks of different traditions.” The participation of the Dalai Lama in the session was particularly significant. It provided the inspiration for his proposal of continuing that dialogue in a monastic setting, where he could be “a monk among other monks.” His suggestion was well received by MID and eventually crystallized in three inter-monastic encounters at the Gethsemani Trappist Abbey in Kentucky. Gethsemani Abbey was the home of the late Thomas Merton whom the Dalai Lama met in Bangkok on the occasion of the first Pan-Asian Congress in 1968 during which Merton died. Sister Margaret Funk, the organizer of the Gethsemani Encounters and also a Parliament participant, recalled these gatherings as:

an opportunity to bring together, for an extended period of time in a monastic setting, a small group of Buddhist and Christian monastics who are mature


practitioners and teachers of spirituality. They would live, practice, and celebrate together; and in that contemplative setting, they would dialogue about the practice of the spiritual life and its value for the world today. While there had been local intermonastic hospitality exchanges and dialogues in different parts of the world in the past, this would be the first time an organized international monastic dialogue on the spiritual life would be held at this global level of encounter.

To date these inter-monastic encounters have taken place every six years. The first encounter, Gethsemani I, took place in 1996, three years after the Chicago Parliament, and, like the Parliament, was attended by the Dalai Lama. The theme of this first gathering was the Spiritual Life in the Buddhist and Christian monastic traditions. In 2002, Gethsemani II addressed the theme of suffering and finding peace in troubled times. The encounter in 2008, Gethsemani III, dealt with the relationship of monasticism to the environment. Taken together, these gatherings may be considered the most concrete and enduring fruit of the Buddhist-Catholic dialogue session at the Parliament.36

In addition to this monastic session at the 1993 Parliament, two other major presentations led by Catholics addressed Buddhism: Donald Mitchell’s “Two Types of Religious Pluralism,” co-presented with Professor Masao Abe, Buddhist Studies scholar from Nara University in Kyoto, Japan, and Jim Kenney’s “Convergence: The Sacred Wheel.”37

**Hindu-Catholic interaction**

Like Buddhist-Catholic dialogue, the interaction between Catholicism and Hinduism was exemplified by several prominent Catholic participants in the Parliament, but it found its most remarkable expression in the interfaith session entitled “Bede Griffiths – Swami Dayananda- Visionary Guide and Universal Saint.”38 A disciple of C. S. Lewis at Oxford and a Catholic convert from Anglicanism, Griffiths was an English Benedictine monk who went to India in 1955 in search of “the other half of my soul.” In India he followed

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37 PWRPC, 62, 113, 60.
38 PWRPC, 43.
the footsteps of other Catholics enchanted by the richness of Hinduism, particularly Fr. Jules Monchanin (Swami Paramarubyananda) and Fr. Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda), co-founders of the Shantivanam ashram in the village of Thanirpalli in Tamil Nadu. Griffiths took possession of the Shantivanam ashram and made it his home for the rest of his life. Griffiths also changed his name and became totally immersed in a sannyasi (Hindu ascetic) lifestyle while continuing to claim his Christian identity, which, in the eyes of some, made him a living embodiment of both traditions. Together with Monchanin and Le Saux, Griffiths is considered to be part of the “Trinity of Thanirpalli.”

Griffiths wrote extensively and went on several speaking tours of Catholic monasteries in the United States. It was expected that Griffiths would be at the Parliament, but he suffered a severe stroke in December 1992 and passed away the following May, just three months before the Parliament. The tribute session at the Parliament offered to his memory brought together several people who had known him personally and had spent time in his ashram. Among them were Sister Pascaline Coff, a spiritual friend and confidant of Griffiths; Brother Wayne Teasdale, who was initiated as a sannyasi in the Griffiths’ lineage; Fr. Raimundo Panikkar, who was one of Griffiths’ early teachers in

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41 The Bede Griffths Collection at the Archives of the Graduate Theological Union (AGTU) contains a treasure of correspondence between Fr. Bede Griffiths and Sister Pascaline Coff, comprising letters over a span of almost twenty years. This exchange reveals a fine case of spiritual friendship and contains precious information about Fr. Griffiths’ spiritual life and particularly his crisis of faith, which he confides to Sr. Pascaline. Box 25, Folders Correspondence BG to Sr. Pascaline Coff 1975-1983 and Folder Correspondence BG to Sr. Pascaline 1983-93.
India; Russill and Asha Paul D’Silva, who were disciples of Griffiths and played Indian
music at the service, and Fr. Thomas Matus of the Camaldolese Benedictine congregation
to which Griffiths belonged and who documented his time with Griffiths in India in his
Ashram Diary.\[^{42}\] Sister Coff reports that Fr. Matus “read a magnificent six-page tribute to
this man of God, a heartfelt description of his guru, written by the new Prior of
Shantivanam, Brother John Martin.”\[^{43}\] A signed poster preserved at the Bede Griffiths
collection in the Archives of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California,
reveals that in addition to the Catholic participants primarily from the Benedictine,
Camaldolese, and Trappist Orders and the Catholic academia, those distinguished
attendees of this memorial session included His Holiness The XIV Dalai Lama; His
Eminence Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi and the North Syrian Orthodox
Church of India and past President of the World Council of Churches; Dr. Karan Singh,
President of the Temple of Understanding, India Chapter, and former Indian ambassador
to the United States; Samdhong Rinpoche, Director of the Institute of Higher Tibetan
Buddhist Studies in Varanasi, India; and Swami Jyotirmayananda, author of the most
comprehensive study on Vivekananda.\[^{44}\]

These friends and admirers of Griffiths constitute among themselves unique cases of
Hindu/Christian coalescence. Benedictine Sister Pascaline Coff was the founder of the
Ossage Monastery, a Catholic ashram in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, and a highly regarded
center of contemplation and interfaith dialogue for twenty-eight years until its closing in
2008. Sister Coff led sessions on Spirituality and Healing at the Parliament.\[^{45}\]

\[^{43}\] Brother John Martin Kuvarapu was expected at the Parliament but was prevented due to other
2012, monasticdialog.com. The author is grateful to Camaldolese monk Fr. Bruno Barnhart, who
printed out this article for him at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California.
\[^{44}\] “In memory of Bede Griffiths” (document with signatures of attendees), AGTU, Bede Griffiths
Collection, Box 4:15 Folder Misc. Papers, Parliament of Religions In Memory of Bede Griffiths.
\[^{45}\] PWRPC, 57, 114.
Wayne Teasdale co-authored with the Dalai Lama the Universal Declaration on Non-Violence. He also led a session on non-violence at the Parliament. In the years following the Parliament, a unique event in Teasdale’s life was that Cardinal Francis George, the successor of Cardinal Bernardin in the Archdiocese of Chicago, received Teasdale’s monastic vows as a Catholic sannyasi. Also exemplifying a unique integration of Hindu and Catholic elements was Fr. Raimundo Panikkar, a scholar and former Opus Dei priest expelled from the organization due to his unconventional views. Born in Barcelona, Spain, to a Roman Catholic Spanish mother and a Hindu Indian father, Panikkar’s unique religious journey made him affirm: "I left Europe [for India] as a Christian, I discovered I was a Hindu and returned as a Buddhist without ever having ceased to be Christian." Panikkar also led sessions at the Parliament on identity and technology as part of the larger symposia on pluralism and science respectively. Participating was also Fr. Thomas Matus, who was initiated into Kriya Yoga by disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda before he became a Catholic. Matus joined the Camaldolese order, where he found a space for integration of his Hindu and Christian identities.

Interestingly, Dr. Beatrice Butreau, a Catholic expert in interreligious monastic spirituality, referred to Fr. Griffiths’ memorial as an indirect tribute to Swami Vivekananda, also known affectionately as Swamiji, the most memorable figure at the 1893 Parliament.

46 PWRPC, 97.
47 The laudatio of Panikkar offered by Josep-Maria Terricabras on the occasion of the honorary doctorate Panikkar received from the University of Girona is a helpful biographical summary of this extraordinary figure, just two years before his death in 2010. It may be found in Spanish in Panikkar’s official website, accessed June 27, 2012, http://raimon-panikkar.org.
48 PWRPC, 133, 136.
49 In addition to his Ashram Diary, In India with Bede Griffiths, Fr. Matus is the author of Yoga and the Jesus Prayer (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984), praised by Joseph Campbell, and co-author with Fritjof Capra and David Steindl-Rast of Belonging to the Universe (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991) among other works.
One of the events at the Parliament of Religions that was an indirect memorial to Swamiji was a commemoration of Dom Bede Griffiths, OSBCam, who died May 13, 1993. I call it an indirect memorial to Swamiji because Dom Bede was doing, during his long life, the sort of thing that Swamiji was doing and urging. He was trying to arrive at a lived experience of the spiritual Reality by using truths discovered in various cultural traditions. [And she adds, Fr. Bede] created a living room in which Christianity and Hinduism could share their beautiful treasures in confidence and deep friendship.  

Beyond the memorial to Fr. Griffiths, there were other exemplars of Hindu-Catholic identity. A surprising case came from Quito, Ecuador, in the person of the Rev. Dr. César Dávila, a diocesan priest turned into a yogi and founder of the Asociación Escuela de Autorrealización (School of Self-Actualization), a center for yoga and meditation. Fr. Dávila delivered a major presentation at the Parliament entitled “East and West in a Spiritual Embrace.” Another Catholic presenter strongly drawn to Hinduism was Sister Charlene Altemose, a missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart, who lectured on the Bhagavat Gita. John Schlenck of the Vedanta Free Press shared interesting insights about Sister Altemose from a Hindu perspective:

Of all the groups at the Parliament, the Catholics seemed the least concerned with self-presentation, the most intent on dialogue. One of my most beautiful experiences was attending a lecture in a small room, given by a Catholic nun on the Bhagavad-Gita. With an almost childlike enthusiasm for the Gita, she proceeded chapter by chapter until, when she reached the eleventh chapter, she


51 A documented biography, El Yogi de los Andes, was written by Edgar Aguilar Camacho. A very limited edition, bibliographic details are lacking. For information about Fr. Dávila and his school, see in Spanish Angel Ledesma Ginatta, Director Centro de Guayaquil, Asociación Escuela de Autorrealización, to Gómez-Ibáñez, April 16, 1993, ACPWR, Box8A Folder April 1993.

52 PWRPC, 55.

53 PWRPC, 65.
described her own epiphany in Benaras, where one day at dawn, as she looked out over the Ganges, the rising sun became for her the Christian host, the transformed body and blood of Christ. One only wishes that more of the Vedantists at the Parliament had been able to share a similar expression of dialogue.  

Needless to say, these Catholic cases of dual religious identity and experience pose a challenge to a Western understanding of religious identity and to Catholic orthodoxy. While a fluid exchange and circulation across religious traditions is common among adherents of Eastern religions, religious identity in the West has been traditionally defined by clear boundaries. In the case of the Catholic Church, cases considered exceptional, such as those of Griffiths and Panikkar, were often kept at bay with utmost discretion and were carefully scrutinized by the doctrinal authorities of the Church. In sharp contrast with the Church’s discretion, these cases of dual Catholic religious identity found in the Parliament a forum that showcased them to the world. Without a doubt, some Catholic participants in the Parliament might have been rather perplexed by the extent and implications of Catholic relations with other religions as embodied in the embrace of dual religious identities.

Catholic Women at the Parliament

Perhaps one of the most unexpected revelations of the Catholic presence at the Centennial was the active participation of women as presenters. Totally absent from the Parliament program in 1893, women accounted for more than fifty percent of Catholic presenters in 1993. They articulated a strong voice in all six areas of the program. They included laywomen, such as ecumenist Hanne Marstrand Strong of the Manitou Foundation, and Asha Paul D'Silva of Fr. Griffiths Ashram in India; cloistered nuns who left their convents to attend the Parliament, such as Benedictine Sisters Margaret Funk, Johanna Becker, and Susan Zuercher; accomplished scholars such as Sister Virginia Ann Froehle, who lectured on the feminine images of God, Professor Mary Hunt, who presented on feminism, and Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, who lectured of ecology; ecology

activists, such as Carolyn Ford of Saint Isidore Parish in Joliet, IL, and Pat Smuck of the National Council of Catholic Women and Ecology; and several combinations of the above. They spoke about spirituality, prayer, popular religiosity, healing, women, pro-life matters, prostitution, philanthropy, disabilities, ecology, feminism, ecofeminism, and other religions. They also prayed, chanted, and danced.55

The extraordinary diversity of Catholic women at the Parliament is perhaps best exemplified by Edwina Gateley and mother and daughter Claire and Mary-Ann Langton. Edwina Gatelay, a lay leader and writer, is the founder of Genesis House, a house of hospitality and nurturing for women involved in prostitution in Chicago, and of the Volunteer Missionary Movement, a lay missionary organization with the motto “working together in a divided world.” An English immigrant in Chicago, she underwent a profound spiritual experience, first secluded as a hermit for a year and then living on the streets among the homeless for another year prior to founding Genesis House.56 Her talk at the Parliament was entitled “The World’s Oldest Oppression – Women in Prostitution.”57

Mary-Ann Langton was at the time of the Parliament co-director of the Office of Persons with Disabilities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut. Born with cerebral palsy, Mary-Ann benefitted from her mother’s resilience in keeping her connected to family, church, educational and job-related networks. Both daughter and mother became actively involved in support networks for differently-able persons. They co-presented a session entitled “Restoring the Shattered Community for People with Disabilities” with Canadians David Wetherow of Winnipeg and Scott Klassen, a leader of the disability rights movement in Canada.58

55 See appendices C and D for details.
57 PWRPC, 107.
58 PWRPC, 117.
Among non-presenters, other prominent Catholic women attending the Parliament were Dolores Leaky of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, feminist Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether of Garret Evangelical Seminary, and Sister Joan M. Chatfield, a Maryknoll Mission sister, Director of the Institute of Religion and Change in Honolulu, and Chair of the Faiths in the World Committee of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers.\(^{59}\)

The strong presence of Catholic women at the 1993 Parliament is a testimony to women’s leadership in many aspects of Catholic life and in the religious public square despite the restrictions imposed by an all-male Catholic priesthood and the millennia-old patriarchal ethos of the Catholic Church.

**Catholic critics, dissenters, “apostates” and absentees**

The great latitude of the Parliament and of the Catholic Church’s involvement in the event allowed for Catholic critics to take part. Without doubt the most prominent Catholic critic involved in the Parliament was dissenting theologian Hans Küng, who became an advisor at the earliest stages of the Parliament Council’s formation and held the primary role of drafting the Parliament’s *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic*. Another prominent case of Catholic dissent was that of the group *Call to Action*. Inspired by a papal encyclical and a conference with the same name held in Detroit, *Call to Action* – born in Chicago – advocates women’s ordination, a married priesthood, and a democratic form of Church governance.\(^{60}\) The group acted as co-sponsor of the Parliament.

However, Catholic diversity at the Parliament was not free of tension. The involvement of outspoken Catholic priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley, a professor at the University of Chicago, was a source of distress for some Catholic organizers. Greeley

\(^{59}\) See VIP lists, ACPWR, Box 35B, Folder: List of Prominent Attendees as of June 27, 1993.

\(^{60}\) For information on Call to Action, see its official website, accessed June 27, 2012, [http://cta-usa.org](http://cta-usa.org).
was scheduled to serve as keynote speaker of the Youth Plenary session, but he claimed “this intent was vetoed by representatives of the Archdiocese.” He added, “I have protested vigorously to Cardinal Bernardin about this veto. He assures me that he did not know of it, does not support it, is investigating the matter and will if necessary reverse it.” However, for reasons unexplained in the program files, Fr. Greeley remained excluded from the Parliament program.

The Parliament program also featured self-identified former Catholic priests and nuns, such as James Kavanaugh, who led an autobiographical session on freedom, and Regina Sara Ryan, who lectured on spiritual families. The Liberal Catholic Church, an esoteric community in Chicago, was also welcomed as a sponsor and presenter while former Catholics such as Buddhist Ron Kidd and Vedantist Swami Varadananda held key roles in the Parliament planning process.

There were also notable Catholic absentees. Mother Teresa was expected to attend the Parliament, where it was hoped she would preside over a plenary session, but she sent regrets. She had travel restrictions imposed by her doctor. Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the pioneers of the liberation theology movement in Latin America, was also listed among the delegates. He too was unable to attend. Similarly, Abbot Thomas Keating, the monk leader of the Centering Prayer movement from Snowmass, Colorado, was also expected to take part in the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue session, but was unable to attend due to ill health. Another Catholic absentee was spiritual writer Fr. Henri

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62 PWRPC, 104.
63 PWRPC, 90, 118.
64 PWRPC, 8.
65 See VIP lists, ACPWR, Box 35B, Folder List of Prominent Attendees as of June 27, 1993.
Nouwen, the author of *The Wounded Healer* and *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. At the time of the Parliament planning, Nouwen was immersed in the world of differently-abled persons as a chaplain at L’Arche Daybreak Center in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

It was also suggested on several occasions during the Parliament planning process that the Pope himself should be invited to the Parliament, but Catholic organizers objected to the idea. They warned that given the prominence of the Pope, had he attended, it would have been difficult to prevent the Parliament from becoming a sort of a “Popefest.” The Pope visited the United States just two weeks before the Parliament began, but the objective of his visit was to preside over a World Youth Day celebration on August 12-15, 1993 in Denver, Colorado. Although the Vatican previously endorsed the Parliament, in his speeches during the visit, the Pope did not make any references to the upcoming gathering in Chicago.

Despite these Catholic absences, no single religious denomination had as many speakers and sessions in the centennial Parliament as the Catholic Church. While representatives of various forms of Hinduism had the largest number of presentations across the program, they did not claim to belong to any unified or centralized body as was the case of the Catholic Church. Of a total of over 800 sessions, there were ninety in which Catholics took part, primarily as sole presenters, more than ten percent of the entire program. Jesuit Fr. David Toolan, of *America Magazine* and also a presenter in the Media symposium, noted about Catholic participation: “Over recent decades, it would appear, we Catholics have learned to listen to the truth in other traditions, and we now like a cooperative, interfaith approach to major questions—a good sign.”

67 In the Council’s archives a note reads as early as 1990, “Pope—has been suggested by many. Must be discussed with Archdiocese.” See ACPWR, Box 35B, Folder Information Status for Religious Leaders and VIPs, October 17, 1990.

The Declaration towards a Global Ethic

Another central area of the centennial’s work under key Catholic influence and leadership was the Declaration towards a Global Ethic, which was intended to be the most enduring legacy of the centennial Parliament. However, this document may have been a source of anxiety to some Catholic organizers since the idea of a declaration of this nature was first proposed and later drafted by Catholic dissenting Swiss theologian, Tübingen professor Hans Küng. A peritus (expert) during the Second Vatican Council, Küng was shrouded in controversy in the early 1970s after authoring the book Infallible? An Inquiry, in which he questioned the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility.69 Towards the end of the decade, Küng was stripped of his teaching faculties as a Catholic theologian but he remained as a tenured professor of ecumenical theology at the University of Tübingen until his retirement. He has also remained a Catholic priest in good standing.

Küng’s scholarly research exposed him to other religious traditions and he began to consider the possibility of a basic, global ethic on which all religions could agree. In early 1989 Küng presented this idea at a colloquium organized by UNESCO in Paris and the following month he gave similar lectures at the University of Toronto and the University of Chicago. He recalled that “in the lecture in the Rockefeller Chapel in the University of Chicago I called on those responsible for planning the centenary celebration of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions to proclaim a century later a ‘new ethical consensus’ of religions.”70 A month later, the Council’s administrator, Ron Kidd, contacted Küng who eventually agreed to become an advisor to the Council. Coincidentally, Küng’s appointment as an advisor to the Council was announced to the Board in the same meeting in which the Board also learned about the endorsement of the Parliament by the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, which appointed Sister Joan McGuire as its liaison and what would also be the preamble for official Catholic

endorsement. Therefore, Hans Küng was “in” just a few weeks before the Archdiocese of Chicago officially became a Parliament co-sponsor.

As the work of the Council continued to crystallize, the idea of a global ethic was also maturing in Küng’s thoughts and reflections. In 1990 Küng published his book Projekt Weltethos, and the following year an English translation was published with the title Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic.71 In early 1992, Gómez-Ibáñez met Küng in Tübingen and formally commissioned him to draft a declaration for the centennial. Küng agreed and planned his summer seminar at Tübingen that year around the topic of the ‘Global Ethic.’ He also initiated a process of consultation, both interreligious and international, and towards the end of October he sent a draft of the proposed Declaration to the Council in Chicago. However, the draft was met with objections regarding its length, content, and style. The document was challenged by some as too long, too Western and Eurocentric, and too academic. Fr. Baima recalls that the draft proposed four universal directives that were easily identifiable with four of the ten Mosaic commandments.72 Particularly critical were the members of the Monastic Interfaith Dialogue:

No one has a disagreement with the values and truths this statement contains. The problem arises in its tone, its expression, its style and its ommisions [sic].

We need to find another language, a new way to express these truths, values and attitudes etc. that is more truly universal, less western, Eurocentric, less formal, abstract, even “less” Christian …

What is needed is a declaration that inspires, while it conveys guiding principles. It shouldn’t exceed more than two pages…


An “ethic” for the religions has to have its orientation from Ultimate Reality, since this statement, this declaration is meant to be a prophetic call to the whole of humanity…

There can be no global ethics without a universal spirituality. An ethics based on reason alone is not sufficient …

Küng’s draft does not reflect a cosmic or creation-centered view. While he mentions the environment, we do not get the sense that this is anything more than a perfunctory bow to a pressing issue. The issue needs much greater attention in such an important document as this is planned to be.

Küng shows no genuine awareness of or sensitivity towards other cultures. His draft is harshly juridical. It needs to be intuitive and concise, as has been suggested above.73

Particularly relevant was the notion that the declaration should not make any explicit reference to God, because by doing so it would automatically exclude Buddhists from endorsing it, since they are—at least from a theoretical standpoint—a non-theistic tradition, hence the reference to an “Ultimate Reality” instead. A model document in length and simplicity was another declaration written by Brother Teasdale with the support of the Dalai Lama and endorsed by the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue on April 2, 1991, *The Universal Declaration on Non-Violence*, which was eventually presented by Teasdale in his session on non-violence at the Parliament.

Given the strong reaction to Küng’s draft, an extensive consultation involving 40 scholars in Chicago was launched by the Council under the direction of DePaul Professor Jeffrey Carlson. A specific concern had to do with language, since the original draft by Küng was written in German and later translated into English. A new short text was written by Gómez-Ibáñez, Fr. Baima, and Ms. Yael Wurmfeld,74 which was intended to become the Declaration and introduce at the same time Küng’s draft now entitled the “Principles.” At

74 Draft of Executive Summary, ACPWR, Box14A, Executive Committee, Folder: ExCom Agenda and Minutes July-August 1993.
the end of the long process, Fr. Baima wrote: “All parts of the text emerged out of a process of interreligious dialogue. A process by which the historic religions of the world were already engaged in conversation with each other about ethical norms. More than 200 theologians, scholars of religions and religious leaders critiqued the basic paper which Dr. Küng drafted. Such that, every paragraph of the original paper was altered.”

Eight months later, the two drafts –Declaration and Principles- were sent for a final version back to Küng for comment. He wrote: “The initial basic structure and language had remained the same through all the phases, but details of the text had been considerably improved.” Regardless of the difference of opinions about content and style and the modifications of the text, Hans Küng remains indisputably the source of the idea of a Global Ethic as well as the architect and primary engineer of the Declaration. The next step after the Chicago consultation was to send the document to religious leaders across the globe for endorsement prior to the Parliament. Unfortunately, the document was held too long by the Council despite Küng’s insistent requests for a response after seven months of silence. Therefore, it was too late to circulate the final version of the document as Küng intended. Such endorsement was to be sought instead directly at the Parliament during the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, perhaps the most important event of the Centennial.

The Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

At the core of the Parliament was a convocation of prominent leaders of organized religions and spiritual movements, invited to network at high-level, to endorse the Parliament’s Declaration, and to offer strategic advice to the Council on the next steps upon the adjournment of the Parliament. The very title of this Assembly –summoning not

75 Thomas Baima, “How to read the Declaration on a Global Ethic,” CPWR Newsletter, September 1994, ACPWR, Box 1, Folder Vol 6, No. 1 September 1994.


77 Küng to Ramage, May 7, 1993, Box 7A Kung’s folder.
only religious leaders but spiritual leaders as well- reveals the inclusivity of the Centennial and reflects the growing distinction between institutional religions and flexible, charismatic spiritual initiatives outside the traditional religious frameworks.\textsuperscript{78} The Assembly met the last three days of the Parliament in the afternoon, in a summit-like event that took them out of the Palmer House into the capitalist hospitality of Mammon at the Chicago Stock Exchange. There about 200 participants representing all the official religious and spiritual traditions present at the Parliament were organized in roundtables, each with a member of the Council’s Board and with a volunteer facilitator and without access to a microphone. The only microphone in the room was at the stage occupied by Chairman David Ramage.

While this initiative was enticingly original and held great promise, there were several challenges associated with bringing together so much religious and spiritual “capital” (to be consistent with their location) to the same place and under strict time constrains. First, the very idea of separating the leaders from the rest of “average” believers seemed to emphasize the idea of separation and exclusivity of certain ranks of the religious ladder. If registered participants with no place in the general program, who gathered at lunch time for the Parliament of the People, were called by Barbara Berstein the “little people” of the Parliament, then \emph{la crème de la crème} gathered at the Assembly might be called the “giants of the Parliament,” certainly an unfair statement to the whole body of participants. Second, given the Assembly’s time limitations, the spokespersons for the religious and spiritual traditions represented -who had so much to say- felt highly constrained as to when and how much they would say. Third, it was unlikely that leaders of the highest caliber in their religious traditions would all accept to be led. Finally, when asked to support the Declaration, many refused to endorse a document with which most of them had had nothing to do until that moment.

The Declaration revolved around four irrevocable directives: a commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, a commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just

economic order, a commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness, and a commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. Some traditions resisted two of the directives in particular. It was argued by some that the commitment to non-violence should not preclude the right to self-defense. Equally problematic was the notion of equal rights and partnership between men and women, particularly for those from religions and cultures where women are held to be subordinate to men. In addition to the problems related to its content, there were objections to the procedure implemented, which allowed no changes to the final document presented to the Assembly. The Council explained to the leaders that the document was the result of an extensive interreligious and international consultation, but some leaders disagreed with the decision to prevent further modifications to the text. One of the facilitators at the tables, Anthony Judge, commented in retrospect:

How could the organizers have led themselves to believe that people of such authority would allow themselves to be steered and herded in this way? And why would they want it to be so? What antiquated understandings of consensus and order were governing their efforts? …

Neglect of such questions led to a degradation of the Assembly process on its final day when the pressure to sign the *Global Ethic* was brought to a focus. Different factions refused to be maneuvered, and endeavoured to make lengthy speeches. Amazingly, there were shouting matches and key figures walked out. The organizers, endeavouring to conduct the performance of a pre-scripted piece of music, were faced with an orchestra that had abandoned the score. Members were playing their own tunes irrespective of the resulting sense of discord. Enlightenment was less than evident for such a spiritual assembly.

The situation got completely out of the control of Chair David Ramage. Küng wrote: “The lack of an agenda made it difficult for the Chairperson of the Assembly, Dr. David Ramage, to bring order to a debate which often became passionate.”

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79 For a detailed account of these discussions, see Küng and Kuschel, *A Global Ethic*, 65-72.


referred to the whole Assembly experience as “a really good try!” And Parliament
program director Barbara Berstein wrote that a “once in a lifetime moment for authentic
dialogue [was] painfully undercultivated.”\(^{82}\) However, despite the confusion and distress
of the situation, half of the Assembly followed the Dalai Lama in signing the Declaration
after it was suggested it be renamed *Towards a Global Ethic, An Initial Declaration*,
which implied it was a work in progress, a provisional project to be further developed.
Among those who refused to sign was Canadian senator, the Rev. Dr. Lois Wilson, the
first female moderator of the United Church of Canada. One of her objections was the
absence of any reference to homosexual persons in the document.\(^{83}\)

Eighteen Catholics signed the Declaration, including Cardinal Bernardin and two other
Bishops; Sister Joan McGuire –the one who first got the Archdiocese of Chicago
involved in the Parliament, Dolores Leaky of the National Conference of Catholic
Bishops and two other women; Abbot Timothy Kelly from Gethsemani Abbey in
Kentucky, Brother Wayne Teasdale and two other monks; Rev. Albert Nambiaparambil,
a most prominent interfaith leader in India, Fr. Maximillan Mizzi, delegate of the
Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Rev. Thomas Baima, and another priest; Dr.
Robert Müller and another layman, and of course Professor Hans Küng.\(^{84}\) However, not
all Catholic members of the Assembly signed. The Vatican Delegate had agreed in
advance –prior to his arrival in Chicago- that he would not sign it so that the most official
Catholic endorsement would come from Cardinal Bernardin if he decided to sign it. The
Vatican Delegate also reported that Dr. Vendley, the secretary of the World Conference
on Religion and Peace, also a Catholic, did not endorse the document either.\(^{85}\) Similarly,

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\(^{82}\) Barbara Fields Berstein, “A Parliament of the People,” in *The Community of Religions, Voices
and Images of the Parliament of the World’s Religions*, ed. Wayne Teasdale and George Cairns,
(New York: Continuum, 1999), 54.

\(^{83}\) The writer got this information in an informal conversation with Rev. Wilson in the spring of
2008.

\(^{84}\) For a complete list of Catholic signers, see Appendix.

\(^{85}\) Francesco Gioia, *Relazione-Nota sulla dichiarazione*, Courtesy of the Pontifical Council of
Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City.
eco-theologian Fr. Thomas Berry did not sign objecting that the Declaration only referred to the “human pathos” and overlooked the “planetary pathos.”

With his characteristic generosity of spirit, Cardinal Bernardin not only signed the Declaration but also agreed to contribute an article to an anthology about the Global Ethic edited by Hans Küng—despite the editor’s uneasy relationship with the Vatican. The Chicago Cardinal wrote about the Declaration:

> Thoroughly Christian, it is also thoroughly Buddhist, thoroughly Jewish, thoroughly Zoroastrian. Said another way, it is thoroughly human…

While an interfaith document cannot be expected to reach full conformity with comprehensive Catholic teaching, a high degree of agreement is possible on many particulars among the historic world religions. I am encouraged by how easy it has been to dialogue with this document. It corresponds well with Christianity. What is needed is to become as specific as the dialogue will permit. This will not be easy. But if this experiment succeeds, the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions will have given a special gift to humanity. May God will it to be so!

It is still far too early to assess the impact of the centennial Parliament and, specifically, of the Declaration towards a Global Ethic, but perhaps Cardinal Bernardin’s words may turn out to be prophetic and dissenting Catholic theologian Hans Küng might end up becoming the Vivekananda of the 1993 Parliament of Religions. History will tell.

### Closing Plenary and Aftermath

More than a decade after the first meeting at the home of Mr. Dubocq and the subsequent meetings in the kitchen of the Vedanta Society in Chicago to dream of a centennial Parliament, and after an intense week of excitement and anxiety, of harmony and conflicts—and hundreds of sessions, the Parliament of the World’s Religions assembled in Chicago’s Grant Park on Saturday, September 4, 1993 for the closing ceremony of what

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was considered by some observers as “unquestionably the most diverse celebration in history.”

Fr. Thomas Baima reported that 30,000 people gathered at the site for the closing. Vedantist David Nelson chronicled that “[a]t 8:00 pm, two hours behind schedule, the plenary began at last.” A solemn procession, which included 225 members of the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, 14 Task Force members, and 41 Trustee members, was marshaled to the stage—as in the Opening Plenary—by Benedictine Fr. Julian von Duerbeck. “Dignitaries were slowly and ceremoniously escorted to their places on stage, one by one, and there were 32 in total,” including His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama and His Eminence Cardinal Bernardin. With a touch of humor, Nelson added:

[The Dalai Lama] was quick to affirm the Buddhist reverence for life. “Life is very precious, but look around you. We have too much life.” He implied the need for nonviolent population control in the form of contraception. The idea drew applause, while Cardinal Bernardin, prominent among the dignitaries on stage, sat defensively, probably in a slow burn. Then the Dalai Lama laughed his wonderful laugh and suggested another method: “We need more monks and nuns!”

Nelson’s portrayal of a defensive Bernardin does not match the natural openness of the Cardinal in a pluralistic milieu. In fact, Cardinal Bernardin, something of a risk-taker and an adventurous archbishop, was the one who opened the door to official Catholic participation in the centennial Parliament. There he was at the closing ceremony, standing with unfamiliar company on uncommon ground, with the humility of being one among many, the pastor of the most powerful religious institution in Chicago, a bishop of the largest denomination in the country, and a prince of the largest religious body in the world, supporting an event conceived and actualized by the “little religions” of Chicago after failing in his own attempts to launch such a gathering. Thanks to his ecumenical

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88 Teasdale and Cairns, *The Community of Religions*, 12.


spirit the Catholic Church was fully present throughout the planning process and the event, and it was now totally present in community for the closure of the Parliament.

After working together on the Parliament for years, the unfamiliar company began to be transformed into nourishing friendships of mutual support and understanding, and the uncommon ground began to be leveled off by Küng’s dream of a Global Ethic shared by all religions while keeping intact their theological differences. Not long after the Parliament was over, Chicago’s “little religions” were welcomed among the well-established Christian and Jewish religious bodies of the city. The Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Chicago, and the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, the pioneers of the centennial Parliament, joined the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, together with the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago, the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, and even the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints excluded from all Councils of Churches, a totally unprecedented membership expansion in the history of ecumenical organizations. That ‘miracle’ could never have happened but for the centennial Parliament.

The Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions also continued its operations after the Parliament was over. Its work in organizing the 1993 Parliament was recognized with the 1994 City of Chicago Human Relations Award, granted by the Commissioners of the City of Chicago.

However, the successful celebration of the centennial Parliament did not mean that the work of the Council was over. One important outcome of the Parliament at the local level had been discussed and decided while the Parliament was in session. On August 31, 1993, a Metropolitan Assembly of Religious, Spiritual and Civic Leaders met at St. James Episcopal Cathedral to plan the establishment of a local interfaith organization in


92 Daley to Ramage, January 4, 1994, ACPWR, Box 14A Folder Executive Committee Correspondence 1991.
Chicago. Furthermore, in the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, Dr. Robert Müller called for an international initiative through which future parliaments of religions would take place in different parts of the world. Müller’s appeal has crystallized in three other Parliaments of Religions: Cape Town, South Africa (1999), Barcelona, Spain (2004), and Melbourne, Australia (2009). All were similar in scope to the Chicago centennial and all of them with active involvement of the Catholic Church at different levels. The next Parliament of Religions is scheduled to be held in Brussels, Belgium, in 2014.

The story of the 1993 Parliament of Religions and its aftermath and the key involvement of the Catholic Church in it reflect not only the emergence of what Hans Küng refers to as the contemporary ecumenical paradigm in the history of Christianity but also the Catholic Church’s ongoing embrace of this paradigm in the post-Vatican II era. However, the openness of the Catholic Church to engage with other religions has also been marked by tension. On the one hand, there is an open official endorsement of ecumenical and interfaith initiatives at the local, national and Vatican levels. On the other hand, there is also understandable resistance given the theological and political implications such endorsement has for the Church. As an example, at the local level this tension was embodied by Fr. Thomas Baima’s engagement in the ecumenical process of the Parliament. While committed to the Parliament as the official representative of Cardinal Bernardin in the Council, he showed a state of orthodox alert in regards to the way the Catholic Church lent itself into the Parliament planning process and how the Church’s involvement was perceived by non-Catholics. Just ten days before the Parliament started, he wrote to Catholic volunteer at the CPWR, Xaverian Brother Ted Funk, demanding more doctrinal precision in the way the Catholic Church would be introduced in the Parliament information materials produced by Funk. Brother Funk’s

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text read, “The Catholic Church was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ on Pentecost in 33 A.D.…,” certainly a claim of doctrinal orthodoxy. Fr. Baima’s revision of the text read: “The Catholic Church was inaugurated by the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed by the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on Pentecost in 33 A. D.…,” an even stricter orthodox interpretation of the origins of the Catholic Church. These interpretations remain a matter of theological and historical debate in scholarly circles.  

Such guardianship of Catholic truth and identity was understandable in the context of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, which constituted an easy pot for religious indifferentism. An interesting example comes from the very “founder” of the Council, Vendantist Swami Savershananda, when he wrote a long letter to Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna proposing the World Day of Prayer for Peace convened by Pope John Paul II in Assisi in 1986 as an exemplar of similar meetings that the Worship committee of the Council could organize in preparation for the centennial. The letter showed the highest appreciation for the Pope’s initiative in Assisi, which the Swami praised throughout and commented in great detail, particularly the Pope’s speeches. Regarding the Pope’s reference to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, the Swami wrote candidly:  

We Hindus readily can agree: we accept Jesus as an Incarnation of God, who is finally ONE with Him, and this with all other Incarnations; as Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita, everyone lives inl y [sic] in and through Him; and logically “He” differs from “Jesus” only in the NAME. Not having this universal view, of course, the Pope proceeds to analyse the differences which keep other religions apart, as being due to human imperfections, which “have to be overcome in progress towards the realization of the mighty plan of unity…” And here lies the R.C. church’s task to heal the “wounds and divisions…” while searching out and reverencing the “seeds of the Word present in such religions…” It ‘rejects nothing

96 Baima to Funk, August 19, 1993, ACPWR, Box 29, Co-Sponsor Cover Sheets, Folder: Roman Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Chicago.
in these religions that is true and holy” and “aims” to recognize…promote the spiritual…values that are found in them.\textsuperscript{97} Certainly, this appropriation of Jesus as a Hindu reincarnation, while revealing the kindest theological hospitality and inclusivity on the part of the Vedantists, is totally unacceptable to the Catholic faith and poses a challenge to Catholic orthodoxy in the context of interfaith relations.

At the national level, the Parliament equally served as an example of this tension. The definition and scope of the centennial Parliament as a local Chicago event, but with a national and a global impact, created blurry boundaries of competences and ownership for the Catholic Church. From the early stages of the planning process, the Archdiocese of Chicago got involved under the agreement that the centennial project would be a local initiative and as such any Catholic involvement fell under the jurisdiction of Cardinal Bernardin. However, the centennial commemorated the 1893 Parliament, which has been appraised as a watershed event in American religious history.\textsuperscript{98} Accordingly, the centennial Parliament mobilized organizations and people across the country, who flocked to Chicago for the special occasion. However, for reasons that are not totally clear, some Catholic interfaith leaders at the national level apparently were not totally supportive of the Parliament idea. Rev. Homer Jack, one of the founders of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, reports that some major Catholic interfaith circles were “running a major campaign against 1993!”.\textsuperscript{99} Was it because the Centennial celebration was “hijacked” by the religious minorities of Chicago and was not in the hands of the Catholic Church? Was it due to the amateurism of the Chicago pioneers, some of whom were not theologians by profession? Was it because the emergence of the

\textsuperscript{97} Swami Sarveshananda to Rohinton Rivetna, February 4, 1989, ACPWR, Box9, General Parliament Correspondence, Folder: February 1989.


Council for the Parliament of the World’s Religions as a new interfaith organization posed a threat to already existing and well-established interfaith organizations that enjoyed the favor and support of Catholic officials? But in spite of these possible reservations, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops was represented at the Parliament by outstanding officers, such as Helen Alvare and John Carr, who were listed in the program as major presenters, and Dolores Leakey and John Borelli, who were lay members of the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders.

There was a deeper issue at stake regarding the American Catholic Church in relation to the Parliament of Religions. Perhaps no other event in American religious history made so manifest the assimilation of the Catholic Church into American religious pluralism as did the Parliament. It was the crowning of a lengthy process that started with Catholic assimilation in other spheres. In 1989, Jesuit Joseph M. McShane, former president of Fordham University, offered an overview of this itinerary, although not in the most positive light:

In the past 40, and especially the last 20, years, however, the church has finally had to face the corrosive effects of pluralism. Many of the barriers that once differentiated Catholics from other Americans have simply disappeared. The schools initially founded to insulate Catholic students from the lure of the outside world and other religions have become instruments of social mobility.

The postwar suburbanization of America has been doubly destructive of the protective Catholic sense of uniqueness. It has lured Catholics out of the cities and away from their institutional empires, frustrating bishops and pastors who have attempted to duplicate the networks that made urban Catholicism a way of life and a world apart. Meanwhile, in the homogenizing suburbs, ethnicity has evaporated or diminished to mere sentimentality or nostalgic attachment to folk customs.

Finally, the fortuitous rise of ecumenism (aided by the elections of John F. Kennedy and the pontificate of John XXIII, and given theological justification by the decrees of Vatican II) undercut the motive for theological intolerance toward other religious Americans. The breakdown of these old bases of differentiation
both signaled and facilitated the almost complete assimilation of the Catholic community into the American mainstream.¹⁰⁰

But Catholicism did not only become American. In the eyes of some, even inside the Catholic Church, it converted itself into a “denomination,” one among the many religious options in the diverse American religious market, or—as noted above—the Catholic Church became the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the country.¹⁰¹ Needless to say, this was a tragedy for those segments in the Catholic Church deeply committed to tradition and unhappy with the wave of post-Conciliar changes. Catholic senator David Carlin refers to this change in imperial-like terminology as the “decline and fall of the Catholic Church,” which he attributes precisely to what he calls the “denominational mentality.” According to Carlin, this denominational mentality puts harmony before doctrine with the purpose of forging denominational consensus. As a result, he concludes, it weakens Church loyalty, causes membership decline, destroys the dogmatic principle, and erodes orthodoxy. For him, Catholics with this mentality are not “real” Catholics and they should not count as Catholics so that the Church may get its numbers straight and not presume a demographic majority it really does not have.¹⁰²

At the Vatican level, this tension is also present. The process of contact with people of other faiths encouraged by the Second Vatican Council was theologically supported by the magisterium of John Paul II, who showed an extraordinary degree of recognition of other religious traditions. In his very first encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II not only recognized that God acts outside the Church but humbly suggested that the faithfulness of non-Christians could be a subject of emulation by Christians:


Does it not sometimes happen that the firm belief of the followers of non-Christian religions—a belief that is also an effect of the Spirit of Truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body—can make Christians ashamed at being often themselves so disposed to doubt concerning the truths revealed by God and proclaimed by the Church and so prone to relax moral principles and open the way to ethical permissiveness?\textsuperscript{103}

Six years later, in the encyclical \textit{Dominum et Vivificantem}, the same Pope wrote that “the wind blows where it wills. Vatican II reminds us of the Holy Spirit’s activity also outside ‘the visible body of the Church’.” The Council speaks precisely of “all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way.”\textsuperscript{104} Four years later the Pope confronted the tension between the missionary mandate of the Church and the dialogue with other religions in his encyclical \textit{Redemptoris Missio} in which he once again stated that the Church does not have a monopoly of salvation while making it clear though that it has total access to it. Of this the Pope wrote: “Non-Christians can receive God’s grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means, but the Church alone possesses the fullness.”\textsuperscript{105} These solemn statements by Pope John Paul II were accompanied by welcoming interfaith encounters throughout his extensive trips and they reached a decisive and historic climax in 1986 in Assisi on the occasion of the World Day for Peace.

However, this level of familiarity and fraternization with people of other religions made it necessary to issue a counterbalancing reminder of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only Savior and of the Church as necessary for salvation, through the Declaration \textit{Dominus Iesus} on August 6, 2000. Issued by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of

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the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* is a great and solemn recognition of Jesus Christ in the context of the Holy Jubilee. The document was ratified and confirmed by the Pope. While the Declaration simply affirms essential Catholic truths, its timing was perceived by some as damage control in regards to the consistent affirmation of other religions in the papal magisterium.  

*Dominus Iesus* elicited immediate reactions around the world, among them a manifesto from 53 Belgian theologians who rejected the sense of Catholic superiority conveyed in the document and stated that parity with other religions is possible without absolutizing, that judging other religions through Catholic lenses is a dead-end street, and that the document shows a disregard of the ongoing ecumenical and interfaith progress. Statements from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation also followed. However, what seems to be overlooked is that *Dominus Iesus* does affirm the Vatican II doctrine that God bestows salvific grace to individual non-Christians in ways known to Himself, even though they receive it in a gravely deficient situation. Regardless of how discouraging the last clarification may be for Catholic interfaith enthusiasts, the affirmation of God’s business outside the Church in such a restorative document is nonetheless a concession of enormous proportions within a larger historical picture characterized by Church exclusivity.

It is also important to highlight that this concession is never made to other religions as such, but to individual adherents of those traditions. Similarly, the Catholic Church avoids referring to dialogue with other religions. Instead it prefers to say that the dialogue takes place with people of other faiths, preserving in that way the unicity of the Church as the vehicle of divine revelation. The *Dominus Iesus* initiative of then Cardinal Ratzinger

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The tragic events of September 11, 2001 in the United States and their impact worldwide prompted Pope John Paul II to summon a second interfaith summit of prayer for peace in Assisi in early 2002. Again, prominent representatives of the world’s religions accepted the hospitality of the Pope and prayed together but separately for a world that seemed to be crumbling under the threat of terrorism fueled by religious fundamentalism. John Paul II’s openness to other religions certainly never meant any incursion into religious indifferentism. On the contrary, his papacy was characterized by a consistent call to strengthen Catholic identity in the midst of religious pluralism and of the secularizing tendencies in the contemporary world. His appointment of like-minded bishops and his intolerance of dissent within the Church made some of his appraisers consider his papacy as “restorationist.”109

The election of Cardinal Ratzinger as his successor suggests a continuity in this restorationist approach. However, Pope Benedict XVI’s transition from his doctrinal laboratory to his pastoral presence in the public sphere of the real world also suggests an intriguing learning curve for a position like the papacy. Incidents such as the Regensburg speech in Germany—which stirred Muslim protests across the globe—and his silence, interpreted as prayer, at Istanbul’s Blue Mosque during his trip to Turkey clearly manifest the sensitivity of interfaith matters in today’s pluralistic world. He elevated to the altars


as a Blessed the Pope who summoned non-Christian religious leaders to the town of Saint Francis to pray “together” and he followed his predecessor’s footsteps by commemorating the 25th anniversary of the historic summit with a similar convocation in 2011 to the dismay of his most devout restorationist admirers.¹¹⁰

Time will tell what the new developments will be in regards to the Catholic Church’s positioning with respect to other religions. Surely waiting for a trinity of Parliaments, in the expression of Parliament scholar Richard Seager,¹¹¹ to be completed if another one is celebrated in 2093 will provide a better historical perspective to appreciate how unfamiliar will be the company and how uncommon will be the ground offered by other religions to the Catholic Church, pilgrim of dialogue in a multi-religious world. It is only hoped that, as in many instances in the past, the Church will rely on its ages-old wisdom, when addressing diversity: In necessariis unitas, in aliis libertas, in omnia caritas –Unity in essentials, in all else liberty, and in everything charity.¹¹²


¹¹² While this principle is commonly attributed to Saint Augustine, Armenian Christians claim the authorship of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, who lived a century earlier. After completing the third draft of this chapter, I came across Peter Hebblethwaite’s In the Vatican, How the Church is run –its personalities, traditions and conflicts (Bethesda, Md.: Adler&Adler, 1986). As an interesting coincidence, Hebblethwaite ends his book with a reference to this patristic maxim (p. 204). Rather than change my original choice, I join Hebblethwaite in bringing attention to this insightful quote.
Point of arrival: Catholic identity, the non-Catholic other, and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

This was the story of the involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions; a story of a community of communities struggling to be true to itself among many other communities; a community of diversities among many other communities internally diverse; a community incarnate in many worlds but claiming to transcend all these worlds for the sake of a hereafter for which it also claimed to be the door; a community born in history and maker of history, comfortable with the preservation of tradition and cautious about innovation.

This study has explored a threefold tension experienced by the Catholic Church in its relation to the Chicago Parliaments of Religions. First, the tension between being the one and true religion and acknowledging the existence and rights of other religions with similar claims of uniqueness and authenticity. Second, the tension between a universal Catholic identity and Catholic inculturation in America. Third, the tension between the immutability of Catholic truths considered to be revealed by God, and their translatability into the new languages offered by the modern world.

It was argued that in the three cases, a shift took place, but not a complete break. Instead a stretch occurred, enacting a lived intra-Catholic tension between those who welcomed and those who regretted the Church’s intercourse with other religions, with American culture, and with modernity.

In all three instances of tension between tradition and innovation within Catholic identity and policy, Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions demonstrates the capacity of the Catholic Church to hold in her bosom the polarities of religious pluralism, of cultural diversity, of historical discernment, and adaptability, without shedding her sense of her own identity. Catholic involvement in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions offers a window through which to view the development of Catholic
interfaith relations in the century framed by both events from a primarily exclusivist position with signs of inclusivity to a primarily inclusivist position with signs of exclusivity, and an unintended incursion in the 1993 Parliament into a pluralist position in which the Church acted and was assumed by its partners as one religion among many religions. This Catholic interfaith journey provides the opportunity to raise important questions about Catholic identity, the Catholic understanding of non-Catholics, and Catholic interfaith relations. Some of these questions are:

What is the meaning of being Catholic? Is there one homogeneous Catholic identity or are there many Catholic identities? How do Catholic identity and ongoing Catholic interaction with surrounding cultures relate to one another? Who is the non-Catholic other for the Catholic self? What are the degrees of proximity and/or separation between Catholics and non-Catholics? How are Catholics perceived by non-Catholics? What is the relation between the missionary mandate of the Catholic Church and the Church’s commitment to interfaith relations? How do the Catholic Church and the global interfaith movement relate to one another? What are the official forms of interfaith dialogue and the unintended consequences of such forms? What were and could still be the unintended consequences of the American Catholic Church’s decision to get involved in such public forums as the Chicago Parliaments of Religions?

These questions are pregnant with a creative tension. Their potential answers also suggest the unavoidability of the permanence of such tensions. Inasmuch as moments in history can provide snapshots of processes which in themselves continue for millennia, one set of potential answers to our questions could be articulated in the light of the Chicago Parliaments of Religions. These questions and their answers belong to the realm of ecclesiology, particularly historical ecclesiology. But they equally pertain to the social sciences. Both ecclesiological considerations and social investigation require historical research as a necessary source of data and hermeneutical insights. ¹ At the theological

¹ On the relation between theology and the social sciences, see Michael Horace Barnes, editor, *Theology and the social sciences* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 2001).
level, the necessary relation between Christology and ecclesiology emerges in any effort to articulate an answer to these questions, because the core Christian concept of *kenosis* or incarnation seems to shed light over some of the answers.\(^2\)

**The meaning(s) of Catholic identity and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions**

José Ortega y Gasset’s maxim – “I am myself and my circumstance” – seems to accurately describe the key role that context plays in the shaping of individual and collective identities.\(^3\) The long history of Christianity and the specific history of the Catholic Church offer ample evidence of how the interaction between religion and culture is filled with mutual influences and with tension, particularly because the Church sees itself as being in the world but without belonging to it. This tension suggests that a dynamic and fluid rather than static and fixed understanding of Catholic identity seems to more faithfully honor the experience of being Catholic.\(^4\)

This was the case from the earliest days of the Church. The first contextual challenge the primitive Church faced was to differentiate itself from the religion of Israel while interpreting itself in continuity with it as the Christian adoption of the Hebrew scriptures shows.\(^5\) After its early incursions into the Greco-Roman world as a counter-cultural movement, the Church became institutionalized as the official religion of the Roman Empire. Inculturation became the norm as the Church accommodated to its new situation

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\(^2\) The author first heard about the kenotic approach to interfaith dialogue from Harvard Professor Harvey Cox at a lecture entitled “Self-emptying and the courage to witness. Re-thinking identity.” offered by Cox at the Pontifical Gregorian University in the Winter semester of 2010.

\(^3\) See José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones sobre la Literatura y el Arte* (Madrid: Castalia, 1987), 65.

\(^4\) For an interesting categorization of various styles of being Catholic, see Frans Jozev van Beeck, *Catholic identity after Vatican II: three types of faith in the one Church* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985).

of political privilege. This was not an easy process. Some Christians rejected the Church’s marriage of convenience to her imperial suitor, formerly her oppressor, and decided to join the monks of the desert. In doing so, they might have asked themselves whether the Roman Empire converted to Christianity or Christianity converted to the Empire. A DNA test of Christian doctrine, morals, rituals, laws, and organization would offer indisputable evidence of the strong –though selective- assimilation of Greco-Roman features by the early Church, and specifically the Church of Rome. The Church borrowed widely from the language, philosophical categories, rites of initiation, festivals, and political structures of the Greco-Roman world so as to make sense of itself within that particular context and explain itself to it.\(^6\) A similar process of tension and assimilation took place when the Church interacted with the Germanic peoples, losing control over the erection of churches and the designation of bishops and clergy to the secular powers but gaining material power and wealth through the assimilation of the feudal system into monasticism, bishoprics, and the papacy.\(^7\)

In this way, the very world that the Church was meant to evangelize and save became entrenched in the Church’s development as an institution, which, in the case of the Roman Church, eventually evolved into the temporal power of the papacy and the still-current statehood of Vatican City. However, by incorporating features of the world around, the Church became a world in itself. The community that was meant to be a servant of the Kingdom of God on earth slowly evolved into an end in itself, in tension with the “new” world around, that is anything outside the Church.

Tension is also reflected in Church governance as related to the level of the competencies of local bishops vis-à-vis the oversight of the Pope, and between Councils as privileged

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\(^6\) For a different opinion, see Ronald H. Nash, *Christianity and the Hellenistic world* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan; Dallas, Tex.: Probe Ministries International, 1984).

sources of Church doctrine and legislation and the ongoing leadership of the Pope.\textsuperscript{8} Can inculturation and its tensions be another dimension of the incarnation, but this time porous and permeable, in which the wheat and the weed are meant to coexist in the same field of Church life?\textsuperscript{9}

Inculturation was precisely the primary source of tension for the Catholic Church in the United States at the time of the 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Catholics in America faced the dilemma of being faithful to their Church, which had its center in Rome, and at the same time being loyal to America. This was not an easy tension. The Catholic Church claimed to be the only and true religion. America was the land of religious freedom. The Catholic Church operated within a monarchical framework that demanded obedience from the faithful. America was the land of democracy and freedom of expression. The Catholic Church’s political philosophy, in accordance with its self-understanding as the only true religion, was to keep its exclusive or at least privileged status in the affairs of the state. America proclaimed the separation of religion and the state. The Catholic Church was the quintessential manifestation of the Old World, an embodiment of antiquity and the custodian of tradition. America was the emerging leader of the New World, embracing modern progress and fostering innovation and change. This tension permeated the identity of American Catholics and was lived out fully within the Church itself. It divided those who perceived the Americanization of the Catholic Church as a threat to its Roman identity from those who saw Americanization as seizing the opportunity for full inclusion in America although not in opposition to Rome. The defenders of all things Roman were not always aware that the Roman character of Catholicism was precisely the result of another and similar process of historic assimilation and selection and of cultural canonization.\textsuperscript{10} For both Church factions,


\textsuperscript{9} Matthew 13: 24-30.

however, the 1893 Parliament of Religions constituted a liminal space of surrender and survival, at the same time a situation of utmost compromise between the Church’s absolute claim of religious supremacy and its obligating need for social and political inclusion in America. As an immigrant Church, perceived by many Protestants as an unwelcome outsider, the exclusivist Catholic Church had to acquiesce to be included as one among many in pluralist religious America. At the same time, the Church was also regarded by the event organizers as a necessary partner for the first Parliament of Religions.

Closely related to issues of inculturation are the implications of contextuality. What was possible in the United States was not necessarily feasible in Europe. As French Cardinal Guillaume Meignan stated in arguing against the idea of a Parliament of Religions in Paris, America was not France. What goes for Catholics in America does not necessarily apply to Catholics elsewhere. This implies an unavoidable contextual relativism within an overarching Catholic identity, in creative and accommodating tension.

When in a situation of historic and political privilege, Catholic identity is diluted into the culture. This creates a blurry relationship that seems to invite laxity among relaxed Catholics and zeal among concerned Catholics. Furthermore, in this case the Church has the option of being condescending with non-Catholics at various degrees of ecumenical, interreligious and inter-cultural flexibility or being intransigent even with Catholics, as was the case during the Inquisition.

When in a position of being a minority religion, as in the American case, Catholic identity tends to become highlighted and sharply defined in contrast to the host culture. This creates a marked delimitation of boundaries that demands clearly identifiable Catholic features against the religious others. But, at the same time, being a religious minority may also open the door to learning about the religious others, comparing self to

others, and even assimilating some acquirable elements from the host culture. This is what happened to the Catholic Church in the United States. Reversely, in this case the Church must have the humility to be counted among many and to join other religious minorities when it asserts its right to exist and proclaim its message. This diversity of positions is not only necessary but unavoidable within a Church whose definition is precisely being Catholic—that is, universal—and that has become the largest and most powerful religious institution in world history.

Tension is not only a feature of coexisting but differently located contexts. It is also a feature of the relation between the past and the present, and between the present and the future, with various accents and to different degrees. Tension similarly permeated the Church’s relation to modernity, both against it during the twentieth century anti-Modernist controversy and in favor of it in the context of the second Vatican Council. The main challenge for the Church in its anti-Modernist struggle was that the modernist enemy had managed to infiltrate within the fortress that the Church built around itself. In that moment of time, Catholic modernists were a minority. The Second Vatican Council was also marked by a strong diversity of opinions about where the Church was heading in its effort to comply with the demands of modern times. In this case, however, the opponents of aggiornamento were a minority among the Council Fathers. The shift from minority to majority and vice versa suggests that tension is fluid and dynamic. A paramount evidence of the Catholic embrace of ecclesial tension was the recent simultaneous beatification of Pope Pius IX and Pope John XXIII, each of whom embodied quite contrasting paradigms of Catholic understanding and authority.

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This fluid tension was also at work in the United States during the time of Vatican II, both between Church and American culture and within the Church itself. By the time of the Centennial Parliament, the Catholic Church had become not only a religious powerhouse in Chicago, but a critical player in the American culture wars. However, despite its power, the Church continued to be one among many and it was as such that it became involved in the 1993 Parliament of Religions. However, in this case the Church participated as a majority religion sharing equal participation rights alongside the largest conglomerate ever of minority religions, some of which had dubious credentials indeed from a Catholic standpoint. To this kenotic tension of humbling itself as one among many, a no longer invisible tension was at work within the Catholic Church. In addition to its structurally diverse internal make-up (laity and clergy, bishops and lower clergy, and the many different religious orders which claim a place within Catholic unity), the Church was faced with publicly displaying its own internal tensions.

For example, Catholic women in full exercise of their theological credentials and religious leadership, Catholics in dialogue with non-Catholic ideologies at work in places like Latin America, Catholics lobbying for radical reform in the Church—such as members of the radical group Call to Action, Catholics claiming a dual religious identity—all of these claimed a voice and a cause at the 1993 Parliament. Even more startling, perhaps, was the prominence of dissenters like Professor Hans Küng, the architect of the most important official statement to come out of the Parliament—the Declaration towards a Global Ethic. Küng had earned official disapproval as a Catholic theologian; he was no longer accredited to teach Catholic theology in a seminary or theology faculty approved by the hierarchy. Nevertheless, this widely read, admired and quoted theologian was not excommunicated. He remained a Catholic and a priest in good standing. The apparent ambiguity in the handling of Professor Küng’s case by Church authorities offers new evidence of the fluidity of Catholic identity and equally adds to the political and circumstantial dimensions of Catholic inclusion and exclusion. Other theologians, past and present, have been excommunicated for lesser “transgressions” than
Küng’s. However, Küng has been “kept” inside the Church. The 1993 Parliament, like no other event in the history of the Catholic Church, made this composite portrait of internal Catholic diversity and tension possible and public in a given space and time.

But perhaps the most compelling evidence of the omnipresence and complexity of diversity in the Catholic Church is what might be called “individual inner diversity,” as displayed in the sometime contrasting positions manifested by individual Catholics. There are those who promote a conservative stance on some issues such as liturgical and devotional practices; at the same time they adopt a liberal position in other issues, such as ethical and political matters. And this tension within Catholic individuals is also present in the Church as a collective body. It is particularly evident in the modern Catholic acceptance of the true and the good present in other religions, a new post-Conciliar feature of official Catholic orthodoxy. All this suggests that it might be pointless to aspire to a homogeneous Catholic identity while evidence points to a wide heterogeneous spectrum within what is known as being Catholic today. The Catholic Church has a track record of centuries in bringing together, synthesizing, and canonizing the most varied and even opposite elements. At the same time, faithful to its doctrinal responsibility to preserve the truth entrusted to her, the same Church has elaborate mechanisms for safeguarding orthodoxy. Being Catholic is being in tension.

The non-Catholic Other and the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

In Foucauldian terms, Catholic identity is also shaped in opposition to the religious other and in response to non-Catholic perceptions of Catholics. In fact, there are some religious groups, and specifically some Catholic associations, that often explain themselves by stating what they are not rather than what they are. But who is the non-Catholic other? The common ground, whether historic or doctrinal, that exists among some religious groups allows for a model of concentric circles to serve as a helpful tool to explain how they relate to each other in varying degrees of proximity and/or separation.

In the case of the Catholic Church, the circles could begin with the Catholic Latin rite at the center in relation to the Oriental Churches in communion with Rome in the immediate circle around it, followed by the recent converts from the Anglican Church to the Roman Church, who still honor their Anglican roots and heritage. What Oriental and Anglican Catholics have in common is that they function under the authority of Rome while acknowledging their distinct non-Roman history and exercising their liturgical and canonical traditions. These first three circles comprise the current ritual diversity of the Catholic Church.

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16 On Foucault’s notion of the formation of social identities, see Debbie Epstein and Richard Johnson, *Schooling Sexualities* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1998), 33.
18 For examples of the application of a concentric circles model to ecumenical and interfaith relations, see Carlos Hugo Parra-Pirela, *Who is my neighbour? A Window into the Interfaith Experience and Potential of Member Churches of the Canadian Council of Churches* (Toronto: The Canadian Council of Churches, 2010), 16-17.75-76.
19 On the Eastern Catholic Churches, see Joan L. Roccasalvo, *The Eastern Catholic churches: an introduction to their worship and spirituality* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, c1992). There are other liturgical rites in Catholic history, such as the Mozarabic rite in Spain or the Ambrosian rite in Milan, Italy, but both are considered part of the Latin rite of the Catholic Church. There used to be specific rites in certain religious orders, such as the Carthusian, Carmelite and the Dominican rites. With the exception of the Carthusian rite, still in existence, these religious orders rites were abandoned as a result of the liturgical reforms decreed by the Second Vatican Council.
The next circle would include the Orthodox tradition, which strengthened by the patronage of the Byzantine empire- developed parallel to the Roman Church and in mutual communion with it for the first millennium. The Orthodox tradition includes the ethnic and national Orthodox Churches derived from it. Orthodox Churches acknowledge the primacy of honor of the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as a bond of pan-Orthodox unity throughout the world while remaining autonomous in their governance. The Catholic Church sees itself almost in total doctrinal agreement with the Orthodox
Churches. The following circle would comprise the ancient Churches of the East, some of them known as the oriental Orthodox Churches, (e.g. Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian, and Armenian), which, due to doctrinal differences and political circumstances, remained independent since the early ecumenical councils. What all these Churches have in common with the Roman Catholic Church is their historicity, their venerable traditions preserved until the present time, and their undisputed right to claim a genuine and ancient Christian identity.

The next circle would be comprised by the churches and/or ecclesial communities that broke with Rome as a result of the Reformation. What all the religious entities in this circle have in common is that they share to varying degrees a past related to the Church of Rome even if some of them have tried to deny it by bypassing the mediation of the Roman factor and linking themselves to the early Apostolic Church.

The first concentric circle beyond the realm of Christianity would be comprised by Jews, who hold for Catholics the primacy among non-Christians, given the historic and theological bond between Judaism and Christianity. The next circle would correspond to Muslims, who believe in only one God and claim an Abrahamic heritage in the lineage of Ishmael. The Second Vatican Council acknowledges that the One God to whom Muslims surrender is equivalent to the Yahweh of the religion of Israel and the Father of the Christian Holy Trinity. However, the Prophet Muhammad was not described by the Council Fathers as the recipient of a new revelation from God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have been grouped together as the monotheistic and Abrahamic traditions or as the

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22 This is the case of some Baptist churches.
23 See Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, 3.
religions of the Book, although not without reasonable objections from different sectors within each of these faith communities.\textsuperscript{24}

The next circles outward would include representatives of the so-called great religions of the East, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, with which the Vatican has official dialogues but whose frameworks are more distant from that of Catholicism, historically and doctrinally. However, some common ground with the Catholic Church is to be found in their mystical traditions, popular religiosity, and monastic institutions. Other outer circles would comprise the less institutionalized aboriginal and native traditions and the so-called nature religions in which the environment or its elements may be identified as divine. Moreover, in recent times, agnostics and atheists have also taken part in interfaith roundtables-offering to articulate their position based on philosophy and science as valid alternatives among the religious voices of the world. All these circles have in common the search for answers to the perennial questions of the human existence: Who are we?, Where do we come from?, What happens after we die?, What is the origin of the universe?, Is there a God?, etc.\textsuperscript{25}

This model of concentric circles is useful if one’s intention is to categorize who the religious other is from a Roman Catholic theoretical, theological, and hierarchical perspective. However, it could turn out very different if the center shifts. For instance, the degrees of proximity and separation in other contexts may well be very different for a Catholic in India surrounded by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians, and a Catholic in Latin America, where religious diversity is articulated differently. In other words, as Catholic identity itself is partially determined by specific contexts, the religious other for Catholics is similarly contextualized.

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The immersion of the Catholic Church in the American context was what made possible the involvement of the Catholic Church in the 1893 Parliament of Religions. In America, the religious other for Catholics were the Protestants in their diverse forms and denominations. They were rivals in the realm of religion, but they were bound in a common citizenship. Here the Catholic Church was faced with a further tension, since Protestants held much of the economic and political power in a nation where Catholics were often looked upon with suspicion and disdain, particularly in nativist circles. Furthermore, being American meant to seek freedom in the exercise of religion and freedom from any state control of religious institutions. However, both practices were far from Catholic thought at the time, which endorsed the notion that error had no rights and was uneasy about the separation of Church and state.26

In the 1893 Columbian Exhibition the Catholic Church claimed its citizenship rights among other Americans, but most of those Americans happened to be Protestants. In the 1893 Parliament of Religions, the Catholic Church claimed not only its religious rights but its self-conceived religious supremacy and exclusivism among Protestants and representatives of the religions of the world while at the same time the Church acknowledged their right to exist within the religious freedom framework from which the Catholic Church itself benefited in America.

Although the 1893 Parliament of Religions was meant to transcend the realm of inter-Church relations by reaching out to non-Christian religions, for the Catholic Church it really meant to stand side by side with its Protestant nemesis within the civilized regulations imposed by the Parliament and required by religiously-free America. This choice to “play by the rules” of the American democratic context alarmed some Catholics both in America and Europe, who saw the Parliament as fraternizing with heretics and capitulating the Catholic inherent right of religious supremacy and exclusivity. It was wrong for the only true religion to mingle with error.

Catholic-Protestant interaction during the 1893 Parliament also raised identity issues not only for the Catholic Church but also for other Christians in relation to the Catholic Church. One of these issues pertained to the Catholic identity of the Church of Rome as conveyed in the complaint issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury about Catholics claiming the title Catholic solely for themselves. For some Protestants, the real issue was whether or not the Catholic Church could be considered Christian. More radical Protestants had for generations described Catholicism in terms of idolatry rather than as an older form of organized faith in Jesus Christ. More ecumenically-minded Protestants were emphatic in acknowledging the continuing Christian character of the Roman Catholic Church.  

While the Catholic Church’s identity was disputed among non-Catholics, the Catholic Church was very clear about presenting itself as the only option as far as true religion was concerned. This was clearly conveyed in the choice of converts from Protestantism among the Catholic speakers at the Parliament and the active presence in the event of the Paulist Fathers, established to bring Protestants to the Catholic faith in the footsteps of the congregation’s founder. This sense of triumphalism was equally challenged by Catholic convert Merwin-Marie Snell, responsible for the Scientific Section of the Parliament, who became strongly drawn to the person and thought of Swami Vivekananda.

The 1893 Parliament of Religions has also been appraised as a most remarkable ecumenical achievement before there was an ecumenical movement. This assertion assumes the conventional agreement of considering the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 as the foundational event of the ecumenical movement. However, this understanding is totally Eurocentric and ignores the Chicago Parliament seventeen


years earlier as an undeniable evidence not only of the interfaith movement but of the ecumenical movement at the non-institutional level, since most delegates attended the Parliament as interested individuals and not as official representatives of their traditions. But this was not the case with the Catholic Church. As the only Christian body officially represented in the 1893 Parliament, the Catholic Church in the United States unintentionally became a pioneer endorser of both the interfaith movement and the ecumenical movement at the same time, despite its official withdrawal from both movements a few years later as a result of formal advice from the Vatican.29

By the time of the Centennial Parliament in 1993, Catholics in the United States had befriended their primary religious other from the past, that is Protestants and Jews, and had constructive dialogue with people of other faiths as a result of the ecumenical and interfaith relations encouraged by the Second Vatican Council. Many dioceses and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops created official channels for such engagement through the establishment of offices of ecumenical and interfaith relations. But the Church remained cautious in conducting its ecumenical and interfaith activities for fear of betraying its own self-understanding as the depository of the full truth of Christian revelation. As an example, the Catholic Church has remained an observer and has never applied for membership in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA or in the World Council of Churches. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom and other British Commonwealth countries,30 understandings have been reached that facilitate Roman Catholic participation in the relevant national ecumenical councils. But at the grassroots level an informal and powerful interaction between Catholics and people of

29 Pope Leo to Satolli, September 18, 1895, Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Segretaria di Stato (SS), 1897, Rubric 280, Fasc. 4, p. 58, n. 26372.

30 In England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the ecumenical councils of Churches have restructured themselves and have adopted a forum model to make room for the Catholic Church to become a full member and sponsor. This forum model allows the Catholic Church and other member churches to abstain from endorsing certain pronouncements, primarily around sensitive moral issues, about which the Catholic Church may have different normatives and opinions.
other faiths has unfolded. They are neighbors, classmates, co-workers and fellow citizens—a familiarity that tends to soften inter-denominational tensions.

The Centennial Parliament provided the Catholic Church with the opportunity to recognize its own struggle from the past in the new religious others in America, such as the Vedantists, the Zoroastrians, and the Baha’is, which like Catholics of an earlier day were attempting to find a place in the context of American religious pluralism. From its new position of religious power and authority in America, the Catholic Church agreed to work together with these minority religious groups without intending to convert them, that is, in a genuine ecumenical spirit.  

In the face of the extraordinary and overwhelming religious diversity displayed at the Parliament, American Catholics proved more elastic than their Orthodox brethren, who withdrew from the Parliament in protest against the inclusion of new religious movements that upheld polytheism and/or pantheism. However, there was discomfort if not tension among some Catholics regarding the religious diversity at the Parliament. In a phone conversation with the writer, Archbishop Francesco Gioia, the Vatican delegate at the Parliament, pointed out his perplexity at running into living founders of new religions everywhere at the Palmer House in Chicago. Another challenge for Catholics was the presence of former Catholics, some of them former priests or nuns, among the Parliament presenters.

But perhaps the most compelling confrontation of Catholic identity with its religious other was to see this other reflected when looking at oneself in the mirror. This was the


32 Statement by Chair David Ramage concerning Orthodox Withdrawal, ACPWR, Box6B, Board of Trustees, Folder: Board of Trustees Statements concerning Jewish and Christian Orthodox Withdrawal, August September 1993.

case of multiple religious identities embodied in figures like Father Bede Griffiths and Professor Raymond Panikkar, or Aboriginal Catholics. This recognition of the religious other as inherent to a specific and historically defined religious identity may well be more natural than exceptional from a comparative standpoint due to the borrowings and the fluidity that have circulated throughout the genealogical tree of religions across the centuries. In the case of Christianity, and specifically of the Catholic Church, a DNA test would easily reveal the selective appropriation of elements from other religious and cultural traditions, first from the religion of Israel, later from the Greco-Roman world, and even from post-Christian Islam. In regards to Islam, there are serious hypotheses about the influence of Sufi mysticism, particularly the school of the pure love of God (that is, loving God neither out of interest in the heavenly rewards nor out of fear of eternal damnation but for the sake of God Godself) in Spanish Catholic mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

In relation to the Neo-Pagan groups present at the Parliament, perhaps the Catholic Church had more in common with them from a religious phenomenology standpoint than anybody might think. Ironically, the danger of religious syncretism that the Catholic Church has so adamantly identified as a distorted outcome of interfaith relations may be a constitutive element of the ages-old and slowly seasoned Catholic identity, particularly in the earliest formative years of Christianity. But the Catholic Church has managed to re-interpret and elevate this syncretism to a whole new level of doctrinal orthodoxy and ecclesiastical canonicity. This adventurous statement should not necessarily sound


alarming or disrespectful of the integrity of Catholic dogma. On the contrary, it is totally consistent with the doctrine of Vatican II that acknowledges the true and the good that exist in other religions, a doctrine as old in Christian thought as St. Justin the Apologist in the second century C.E.\textsuperscript{37} It is precisely those true and good inputs coming from other traditions and compatible with Christian revelation that the Church may look at and recognize as its own. This awareness may also make the Catholic Church more capable of engaging the religious other from its own internal composite nature. At the same time, the awareness of religious and cultural borrowing may be instrumental in acknowledging more easily what is and should remain essential in Catholic faith and practice and what is and should remain accidental and therefore subject to change. As a result, the Church might become less concerned about orthodoxy and more vigilant about orthopraxis in imitation of its Master and Lord.

There is yet another subtle but powerful area of identification between Catholics and the religious other in what could be called “trans-denominational philosophical and political empathy.” There is evidence of Catholics pushed to the margins by Church doctrine on controversial issues, such as gender equality or sexual orientation, finding common ground and mingling with non-Catholics equally pushed to the margins by their religious denominations on the same issues. At the grassroots level, they are brought together by exclusion. Similarly, at the other end of the ideological spectrum, Catholics striving for the preservation of the traditional role of the family or fighting against abortion make subtle or overt alliances with conservatives in other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions to further their common cause. In either case, tradition or change become magnets for a highly polarized political ecumenism.

\textsuperscript{37} See Declaration Nostra Aetate, 2. See also André Wartelle, editor, Apologies, Saint Justine: introduction, text critique, translation, commentary and index (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987).
Catholic interfaith relations at the Chicago Parliaments of Religions

The tension experienced by the Catholic Church regarding its own identity and the identity of the non-Catholic other is naturally transferred into the arena of Catholic interfaith relations. The primary tension in this realm is between the missionary mandate of Christianity so prominent in the Gospels (“Go and make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”) and in the epistles of Paul and the respect and recognition of the true and the good present in non-Christian religions as affirmed in the Second Vatican Council. As a result of the Council, the Catholic Church has entered into formal dialogue with non-Christian religions and established official channels to conduct such dialogues at the local, national, and global levels. However, the Catholic dialogue with other religions unfolds in various forms. Without any order of priority, they are known as the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange, and the dialogue of religious experience.

The dialogue of life refers to the ongoing interaction with people of other religious traditions in the contexts of life: neighborhood, school, workplace and other environments. This dialogue of life is almost unavoidable in highly multicultural and pluri-religious locations. This dialogue supposes an attitude of openness and respect for

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38 Matthew 28:19.

39 The relationship between the missionary mandate of the Catholic Church and the Church’s commitment to interfaith dialogue was addressed by Pope John Paul the second in his encyclical letter Redemptoris Missio, December 7, 1990.

religious diversity and an acknowledgment of the common humanity across religious traditions.

The dialogue of action, also known as the dialogue of work, refers to collaboration between Christians and people of other religions in pursuit of common objectives in humanitarian, social, economic and political realms. Natural disasters, epidemics, poverty, or war may bring people together—regardless of their religious identity—in solidarity with those in need. Most religious traditions consider this outreach to those in need as an essential way of translating their beliefs into action, whether the resulting action is described as creating good karma, the practice of compassion, the works of mercy, or the exercise of almsgiving.

The dialogue of theological exchange, also known as the dialogue of experts, refers to the interaction among scholars in relation to the tenets of their respective religious beliefs and practices, seeking to present and explain their own and to learn about and understand the others’. This form of dialogue can be rather sophisticated given the level of expertise at which it is sometimes carried out. Theological dialogue seeks out and acknowledges any theoretical and practical common ground between the religious traditions involved. However, it does not hesitate to explore also their sharp and sometimes irreconcilable differences, particularly at the doctrinal or dogmatic level. The dialogue of theological exchange is expected to safeguard the integrity of the religious traditions involved through a delicate balance of self-affirmation on the one hand, and on the other hand by a conscious eagerness to be inspired by the insights and virtues discovered in the dialogue partner or partners.

The dialogue of the religious experience refers to sharing ways of seeking, encountering, and approaching the divine according to the specificity of each religious tradition. This pertains to different forms of prayer, meditation, and contemplation. While this form of dialogue is certainly possible among the laity, it acquires a heightened character when it takes place among those in various religious traditions who have dedicated themselves to a life consecrated to prayer, particularly in the monastic context.
These four forms of dialogue found expression to varying degrees at the Chicago Parliaments of Religions, and specifically in relation to the Catholic Church. Regarding the dialogue of life, the involvement of the Catholic Church in the 1893 Parliament was obviously a concrete acknowledgement of the non-Catholic other present in America and elsewhere in the world. This was particularly relevant given the centuries-old history of hostility between Catholics and Protestants globally and in the United States. In the 1993 Parliament the Catholic Church portrayed itself as a primary interlocutor in the American interreligious exchange given its prominence in all spheres of society. Both Parliaments became an intentional community for the dialogue of life.

In relation to the dialogue of action, the 1893 Parliament set among its goals “to discover what light Religion has to throw on problems of the current age, such as temperance, labor, education, wealth, poverty… and to foster international peace.” Cardinal Gibbons echoed this mandate in his presentation about the needs of humanity supplied by the Catholic Church.\(^41\) From a Catholic perspective, attention to social issues was relevant, since Pope Leo XIII, just two years before the first Parliament, had addressed the social question in his groundbreaking encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the foundational document of the modern social doctrine of the Catholic Church. In this same spirit, the Centennial Parliament proved a powerful venue for global and development themes, addressing issues such as Aboriginal rights, justice for the poor, peace for the world, and ecological awareness. Each of these themes engaged Catholics at the Parliament. Particularly noticeable were Bishop Samuel Ruiz, leading the indigenous-populated diocese of Chiapas in Mexico, Bishop Willie Romelus, from poverty-stricken Haiti, Father Thomas Kocherry on development in India, and Fr. Thomas Berry on the environment.\(^42\)

Pertaining to the dialogue of theological exchange, in 1893 distinguished scholars of religion attended or sent papers to be read to the Parliament. These included Catholics such as Monsignor D’Harlez of France, an expert in the Zoroastrian religion from the


\(^{42}\) *PWRPC*, 133, 22, 83, 85.
University of Louvain, and Merwin-Marie Snell, secretary of Bishop Keane and president of the Scientific Section.\textsuperscript{43} It has been argued that—given the format of the program as a sequence of lectures—no formal dialogue ever took place. American religious history scholar Martin Marty writes that “instead of dialogue a succession of monologues had occurred.”\textsuperscript{44} However, while Marty is correct about the format adopted by the Parliament program, interaction among the participants did take place and was recorded in Barrows proceedings. Barrows affirms that “the Parliament was not a place for the suppression of opinions but for their frankest utterance, and what made it so supremely successful was mutual tolerance, extraordinary courtesy and unabated goodwill.” Furthermore, Barrows also states that inquiry rooms were set apart by Catholics and Buddhists.\textsuperscript{45} The 1993 Centennial exuded dialogue everywhere, particularly in the many interfaith panels throughout the program. Of special significance was the session organized by Buddhist and Catholic monks of the Monastic Interfaith Dialogue to reflect upon the Buddhist concept of emptiness and the parallel Christian concept of kenosis.\textsuperscript{46} Prior to the event, the international consultation conducted by Küng from Europe and the local consultation conducted by the Council in Chicago on the text of a proposed Declaration on a Global Ethic constituted another form of theological dialogue. Unfortunately, this pre-Parliament dialogue concerning the declaration did not continue into the Parliament, which was a chief reason why many leaders refused to endorse the document.

Regarding the dialogue of religious experience, although there was no Catholic presentation on prayer or spirituality at the 1893 event, perhaps something more relevant


\textsuperscript{45} Barrows, \textit{The World’s Parliament of Religions}, II, 1560, 1559.

\textsuperscript{46} PWRPC, 62.
did take place. The Parliament convened each morning with the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, recited on the first day by Cardinal Gibbons himself as the presider of the inaugural session. But for Catholics, praying together with non-Catholics was regarded as communicatio in sacris, something to be avoided. The 1993 Parliament overflowed with sessions on religious experience. Catholics spoke about spirituality, meditation, and mysticism. Therefore, both Parliaments offered the Catholic Church and the other participants the opportunity to actively engage in all four forms of dialogue.

Despite the different historical circumstances surrounding the two Parliaments of Religions, in each case Parliament organizers could not have afforded to hold the event without the involvement of the Catholic Church. But neither could the Catholic Church afford to be absent from the Parliaments. From the Parliament of Religions’ perspective, no interfaith initiative with global claims would be taken seriously without the presence of the Catholic Church, the largest religious body in the world and one of the most ancient forms of Christianity. From the Catholic Church’s standpoint, the 1893 Parliament provided the Church with an opportunity to step forward center stage in America at a time when its compatibility with American democracy was questioned by some of its own members and by external critics. Regarding the 1993 Parliament, the Church’s own pastoral responsibility to other religions and the world at large compelled it not only to have its voice heard and its message proclaimed but also to enter into dialogue with other religions in the largest interreligious forum in contemporary history.

In spite of the importance of Catholic participation in both Parliaments, the Catholic Church was just one player among many. This was one of the reasons that moved Vatican Apostolic Delegate Francesco Satolli to suggest to the Vatican Catholic withdrawal from such events following the 1893 Parliament. His request was granted and the Pope formally advised that no further Catholic interfaith involvement should be undertaken.

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unless the Church was the organizing body and host. This was precisely what John Paul II did in Assisi and what Cardinal Bernardin tried unsuccessfully to do in Chicago around the centennial: to convene and host. But the Catholic Church could not spark a centennial event. Instead the little religions of Chicago were the ones able to bring the Parliament Centennial idea to fruition. This meant that the Church would neither be the sole organizer nor the only host, but a partner and a co-host among many. Furthermore, the multilateral interfaith experience offered by the centennial Parliament was unique for the Catholic Church, which tends to favor bilateral over multilateral interfaith interaction so as to engage in a more focused and controlled dialogue. Bilateral dialogue unfolds between two centers, while the Parliament experience involved multiple centers. For the Catholic Church this meant framing itself within a context in which it was neither the first nor the last religion. The traditions represented at the Centennial Parliament had either preceded the Catholic Church, and were still alive and vigorous, or had come after it in the millenary course of the history of religions.

Interestingly, the multilateral character of the centennial Parliament was also mirrored in the way the Catholic Church decided to endorse the event. The Church came on board together with other members of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, a remarkable example of ecumenical teamwork for an interreligious cause. The multilateral character of the Parliament was further complexified by the fact that the Catholic Church had to deal not only with the many religious traditions represented at the Council but with the Council itself. An interesting development of some interfaith initiatives and organizations is that they may acquire and develop some of the features of

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its member bodies—including fundraising—becoming almost a religion themselves. The Council’s ways of proceeding also implied that the Catholic Church had less control over the general program or the participation of individual Catholics, some of whom were invited by non-Catholic organizers or simply invited themselves as independent presenters. This made possible the wide spectrum of Catholic voices heard at the Parliament, which no strictly Catholic venue could have afforded to have.

All this meant that the Catholic Church had traveled a long way in the course of the one hundred years separating the Chicago Parliaments of Religions. The Church framed its participation in the 1893 Parliament under the assumption that Catholicism was the only true religion, the classical exclusivist position. After Vatican II acknowledged the true and the good present in other religions, the Church became involved in the 1993 Parliament under the still condescending assumption that it was the best religion, if not the sole possessor of truth, the classical inclusivist position. However, what the Church found, perhaps inadvertently, as a result of its insertion into the Centennial Parliament process was that it had agreed to operate within a truly pluralistic framework. At the 1993 Parliament, the Church stood neither as the only true religion nor as the best religion, but just one religion among many and an equal partner with them in working towards the Parliament objectives. 51

The two Parliaments of Religions were also a public square in which the Catholic Church exposed itself to scrutiny by other religions and society at large. The request of Chicago Methodist minister John Lee to Pope Leo XIII to support religious freedom for Protestants in Catholic Latin America in consistency with the freedom Catholics enjoyed in America is but one of the unintended consequences of such public exposure in 1893. 52

The aboriginal initiative calling upon Pope John Paul II to nullify the Bull Inter Cetera


52 See Lee to Satolli, July 12, 1894, and and Lee to Pope Leo XIII, August 24, 1894, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Nuova Serie, Volume 36, pages. 79 and 64.
which endorsed the right of the European powers to colonize the New World is a similar example from the 1993 Centennial.\footnote{Relazione di Mons. Francesco Gioia in merito alla sua presenza al Parlamento delle Religioni (Chicago, 28.8-4.9.1993). Courtesy of the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City.}

Finally, the global character of the Chicago Parliaments offers insights into Catholic tension between the local and the global. The interpretation of the Centennial Parliament as a local event made Cardinal Bernardin the chief Catholic officer and responsible for Catholic involvement in the event. This also meant that his ecumenical vision and commitment sustained Catholic participation. But beyond its local character, the Centennial Parliament also provided a unique opportunity for an encounter of globalities. If globalness was a criterion for religious validation, then competing global visions displayed by many of the religions represented at the Parliament meant a new framework for dialogue between the global and the global, a space for the world religions to interact.

The global character of the Chicago Parliaments also opened new ways of inquiry about the perennial relation between religion and culture in relation to the Catholic Church. While the 1893 Parliament proved an opportunity for the Church to affirm its compatibility with America, the 1993 Parliament confronted the American Catholic Church with the challenges posed by religious diversity within the context of multiculturalism. This meant a pluralization of the classical binary relation between religion and culture. In the face of this pluralization, a new formula is called for that may allow many religions to relate to many cultures, and allow the Catholic Church to interact in a multi-centered post-modern framework.

But above all, the involvement of the Catholic Church in the Chicago Parliaments of Religions meant for the Catholic Church an opportunity to enact the most basic tenet of its dogma: the kenosis, that is the incarnation of God, the emptying of the divine into the humility of the human condition.\footnote{Philippians 2:6.} Faced with the temptation of attaching itself to

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\footnote{Relazione di Mons. Francesco Gioia in merito alla sua presenza al Parlamento delle Religioni (Chicago, 28.8-4.9.1993). Courtesy of the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City.}

\footnote{Philippians 2:6.}
accidental things, the Catholic Church was summoned by the Chicago Parliaments of Religions to focus on what is essential and truly necessary. Faced with the temptation of exercising its own power to showcase its claims of exclusivity or superiority, the Church was reduced to act as one among many. Faced with the temptation of worshipping itself as an idol competing with the same God it intended to serve, the Catholic Church was reminded that it is not an end in itself, but an instrument at the service of the Kingdom.  

“What remains of the world of deeds is the world of words”

A historiography summary of

the Catholic Church and the Parliaments of Religions

At the time of the 1893 Parliament, Max Müller was working on his monumental “The Sacred Books of the East,” a fifty-volume project designed to make the writings of ancient Asian religions accessible to the English speaking world. When writing about the Parliament, Müller referred to it as “the world of deeds” and he compared the Parliament to his own work in “the world of words,” which he called “a more authoritative parliament” of religions, because “in the end what remains of the world of deeds is the world of words or, as we call it, History.”

These pages are a cartographic attempt to map the historiographical journey during which Catholic involvement in the first Parliament of Religions and its centennial transmigrated from the world of deeds into the world of words.

The 1893 Parliament of Religions

Regrettably, most of the key words concerning the 1893 Parliament are lost. Catholic historian James Cleary, reports that the extant collection of the original records and papers related to the Columbian Exposition and its Auxiliary was destroyed by the Chicago Public Library for lack of storage space. He adds that the personal correspondence of Barrows was also destroyed in a 1923 fire at their family home in California. Only a copy of the Programme has been preserved in the Library of the

1 This is an abbreviated version of my 55-page unpublished essay “The Chicago Parliaments of Religions and the Catholic Church: A Historiographical Journey,” (2012) composed as part of this doctoral research project.
Chicago Historical Society. Because of this, the only primary source left are the Parliament proceedings. These include three acknowledged collections of the Parliament speeches edited by John Barrows (1893), Walter Houghton (1894), and I. Hanson (1894). The first two are considered by Parliament scholar Richard Seager as more authoritative than the third. There are also two other collections of Parliament speeches by Jenkin Lloyd Jones (1893) and C. M. Stevans (1894), surprisingly overlooked by previous Parliament scholars. Among these, Richard Seager stands out as the scholar most versed in the Parliament, one of only three who have written doctoral dissertations on the event and one of only two who have penned a whole book exclusively on the subject (the other is Lancaster). Seager is referred to as “one of the most astute observers

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6 Jenkin Lloyd Jones, editor, A chorus of faith: as heard in the Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, Sept. 10-27, 1893 (Chicago: Unity Publishing Company, 1893); C.M. Stevans, editor, The World's Congress of Religions [microform]: being a complete and concise history of the most inspiring convocation of civilization, wherein was given full expression to the irrefutable evidence establishing the independence of mind and the supremacy of human conscience (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1894).


of the Parliament during the centennial period.”

His scholarly engagement with the Parliament can be traced over a decade, starting with his 1987 doctoral dissertation research at Harvard University. Other significant 1893 Parliament scholars are Clay Lancaster, Eric Ziolkowski, and John Burris.

The participation of the Catholic Church in the first Parliament of Religions has received limited attention in Catholic historiography. Historian James Cleary stands out. His article “Catholic Participation in the World’s Parliament of Religions” (1970) is the most extensive and comprehensive treatment of the subject. Cleary speculates on the importance of the archives of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. Propaganda Fide was the agency for foreign missions through which all the affairs of the Catholic Church in North America were dealt with at the time. Unfortunately for Cleary, when he did his research in the late 1960s, the archives were not open for the period of the 1893 Parliament. Cleary suspected that complaints from conservative Catholics in America regarding Church participation in the Parliament were to be found there.

In my own research forty years after Cleary’s article, I found that specific information about the 1893 Parliament at the Propaganda Fide Archives is minimal, limited to the Minutes of the Meeting of the American Archbishops in which the prelates made the decision that the Catholic Church would be represented in the event and a one-paragraph report on the Parliament in a letter from Archbishop Francesco Satolli to the Prefect of


the Congregation, Cardinal Mieczyslaw Ledóchowski, sent shortly after the event. But the Propaganda Fide Archives do house insightful materials about the Catholic Educational Exhibit and the Columbian Catholic Congress, both related to the Chicago World’s Fair. Included are a letter from New York’s Archbishop Corrigan to Cardinal Ledochowski praising the success of the Catholic Educational Exhibit and the Official Call and Programme of the Columbian Catholic Congress by its main organizer, William Onahan. The Propaganda archives also provide ample evidence of tensions within the American hierarchy, specifically between New York Archbishop Corrigan and Vatican Apostolic Delegate Francesco Satolli, and between Rochester Bishop Bernard McQuaid and St. Paul’s Archbishop John Ireland. These archives also offer materials on the impact that the involvement of the Catholic Church in the Columbian celebrations in Chicago had on the Protestant perception of Catholics as well as the results of that shift in perception, including an appeal from the Methodist ministers of Chicago calling on Pope Leo XIII to intervene on behalf of threatened Protestant minorities in South America. Equally helpful in putting the implications of Catholics mingling with Protestants in Chicago into perspective was archival material on the controversy surrounding Catholic participation in the ceremonies organized in India concerning the crowning of Edward VII as king of England and Emperor of India.13

Although not considered by Cleary, another important Vatican source on the Parliament is the Secret Archives. In addition to the known report of Cardinal Gibbons to Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, a copy of which is in the archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, I discovered limited correspondence between John Henry Barrows and Cardinal Rampolla that included Barrow’s first report on the Parliament planning process. The Secret Archives also contain the minutes of most Annual Conferences of the American Archbishops after the Parliament which, surprisingly, contain no references to the Parliament. But a very important document in the Secret

Archives is a letter in the correspondence between Archbishop Satolli and Cardinal Rampolla asking the Holy See to make a formal pronouncement regarding Catholic participation in any subsequent non-Catholic religious congresses. Satolli’s letter in Italian is filed next to a response by Pope Leo XII in Latin, advising no further involvement of Catholics in such events. The Pope’s letter is almost a word-for-word translation of Satolli’s letter. Satolli’s request arrived in Rome just in time for the Vatican to address another issue about which there is rich documentation in the Secret Archives: the unsuccessful plan to hold a Parliament of Religions in Paris in 1900 and the prospect of Catholic involvement in it, certainly a result of the Chicago initiative.14

Before Cleary’s article, references to the Parliament in Catholic historiography are short and limited primarily to passing mention in the biographies and published correspondence of American prelates involved in the Parliament or opposed to it, and in the histories of the institutions or movements with which they were associated. These include: *The life and letters of Bishop McQuaid* by Federal Zwerlein (1927); *The Catholic University of America, 1887-1896: the rectorship of John J. Keane* (1948) and *The Life of John J. Keane: educator and archbishop*, 1839-1918 (1955) by Patrick Ahern; *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1931* by John Tracy Ellis (1952); *The Life of Archbishop Ireland* by James Moynihan (1953); *The Great Crisis in American Catholic History 1895-1959* by Thomas McAvoy (1957); and *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America* by Robert Cross (1958). References to the Parliament are even more limited in general surveys of the history of the Catholic Church in the United States by John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (1969), and Thomas McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (1969), Catholic historians at the Catholic University of America and the University of Notre Dame respectively.15


Cleary’s article remains the most cited Catholic study of the 1893 Parliament and referenced in: *The Vatican and the Americanist Crisis: Denis J. O’Connell, American Agent in Rome, 1985-1903* (1974) and *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy, 1870-1965* (1985) by Gerald Fogarty; *American Catholics: a history of the Roman Catholic community in the United States* by James Hennesey (1981); *The American Catholic Experience* (1985) and “Catholic Attitudes towards Protestants” (1987) by Jay P. Dolan; *The Catholic University of America, A Centennial History* by C. Joseph Nuesse (1990); and *Catholics in America* by Patrick Carey (2004). Three notable exceptions are Dennys Downey (1981), Dennis McCann (1991), and Angelyn Dries (2002), who wrote papers treating the Parliament at a greater length. However, their works are not close to supplanting Cleary’s article as the most authoritative study on Catholic participation in the 1893 Parliament. A European body of literature, primarily French, touches indirectly on the 1893 Parliament when addressing the Americanist controversy. The most relevant among these sources is Albert Houtin’s *L’américanisme* (1904), which devotes a full

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chapter to the Chicago event. The general historiography of the 1893 Parliament also offers some glimpses of the Catholic participation. See for example the Parliament’s proceedings and the works of the 1893 Parliament scholars.

The 1993 Parliament of Religions

Judging by the literature, the 1993 Parliament caused less scholarly interest than the first one did. The 1993 gathering came late in a world where interfaith initiatives had already developed extensively. Unquestionably, the singularly most important historical research sources on the 1993 Parliament of Religions are to be found in the Archives of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. In sharp contrast with the 1893 Parliament, the centennial organizers were careful to preserve all their records related to the 1993 event. In November 1993, the Council negotiated an archival repository agreement with DePaul University in Chicago, a Roman Catholic school. The resulting archival collection consists of sixty boxes arranged into six different subject areas: publications, administration, biographies, Parliament planning, Parliament presentations, and memorabilia. It is a public treasure for researchers. In addition to the documents gathered since the establishment of the Council in 1988, individuals and organizations, notably the Vedanta Society of Chicago, have contributed document collections that shed additional light on the “pre-history” of the centennial going back to 1982. Particularly

relevant are the detailed notes of Ms. Judith Lawrence, the first secretary of the Council, in which she records her conversations with Professor Martin Marty about previous initiatives to launch a centennial, including those by Cardinal Bernardin, the Archbishop of Chicago. Especially relevant are Boxes 2 and 58. Box 2 contains the improvised newsletter from Parliament of the People entitled Your Voice, which opens a window into the perceptions, feelings, joys and concerns of ‘ordinary’ participants in the Parliament. Box 58 gathers materials produced immediately following the event by some of the participating groups that must be credited as the pioneers and actualizers of the centennial, as well as material from some other minority religions that became strong protagonists of the 1993 Parliament. There are Parliament appraisals by Vedantist, Zoroastrian, Theosophist, and Neo-Pagan and some esoteric journals. Ron Kidd, administrator of the Council in its early stages, also contributed his personal files. Files for the subsequent Parliaments in Cape Town, South Africa (1999), and Barcelona, Spain (2004) have also been added to the Council collection.

The best starting point for understanding the centennial event is its official Program with its record of welcome messages, presidents of the Parliament, co-sponsor organizations, donors, members of the Council’s board, host committees, Assembly of Spiritual Leaders, plenaries, major presentations, seminars and lectures, the academic section (analogous to the scientific section of the first Parliament), and focus sections on the topics of pluralism, science, violence, business, the media, and the arts. Immediately in advance of the Centennial Parliament, the Council also published an educational source book which was widely distributed during the centennial event. Shortly after the Parliament was over, Anthony Judge, a global events expert from the Union of International Associations based in Brussels wrote a technical report about the Parliament, and Vedantist David Nelson wrote a set of reflections, a sort of personal diary of his participation in the 1993 event. In this privately printed edition of over 100 pages, Nelson’s observations capture moments and gestures that would have been missed otherwise.
Closely linked to the centennial Parliament program and as a modest attempt to make up for the lack of official proceedings from the event is an anthology edited by Wayne Teasdale and George Cairns. It brings together essays by twenty-eight contributors who all but one participated in the Parliament. To date, this edited volume is the only book published exclusively on the 1993 Parliament. One year after the Teasdale and Cairns anthology, Carroll Fisher completed a doctoral thesis at the Union Institute and University entitled “Interfaith Dialogue at the 1893 and 1993 Parliaments of the World’s Religions”.

Much remains to be written about the participation of the Catholic Church in the 1993 Parliament. The event offers a window to the multiple levels of engagement and styles of initiatives that developed throughout the century between the two Parliaments regarding the attitude of the Catholic Church towards other religions, the place of the Church in America, and the Church’s relationship to modernity. The Second Vatican Council stands as the most significant Catholic event between the two Parliaments and was the necessary prerequisite for Catholic participation in the 1993 gathering. Contrary to assumptions about a minimal Catholic participation in the 1993 Parliament, even a superficial look at the 1993 program reveals the deep level of lay and clerical Catholic involvement. The Council’s archives constitute the richest source of information to trace the involvement of Catholic DePaul University and the Archdiocese of Chicago in the planning process from the early stages. Fr. Thomas Baima, Cardinal Bernardin’s representative in the Council, also produced a helpful thirty-three page White Paper to preserve the memory of involvement of the Archdiocese of Chicago not only in the Chicago events of 1893 and 1993 but also in subsequent Parliaments in Capetown, and Barcelona. Archbishop

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22 Burris, Exhibiting Religions, 170.
Francesco Gioia, the Vatican delegate to the 1993 Parliament, prepared a follow-up report on the 1993 gathering for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the Vatican. Key parts of this document were made available for this study. Especially revealing is Gioia’s reference and inclusion of a “Declaration of Vision” issued by Native Americans at the Parliament, demanding Pope John Paul II formally revoke the *Inter Cetera* Bull of May 4, 1493 that granted the Spanish monarchs dominion over the New World, an episode not mentioned by any other observer. The 1993 Parliament was also well covered by the *National Catholic Reporter* and other Catholic press outlets.

**Additional literature**

This study of the 1893 and 1993 Parliaments of Religions would not have been possible except for the scholarship of others. Studies about the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, by Hubert Howe Bancroft (1894) and David Bertuca (1996), were helpful in learning about the larger context within which the first Parliament of Religions took place. Very useful as well are sources about Swami Vivekananda, the most celebrated participant in the 1893 Parliament, particularly his biography by Marie Louise Burke (1985). Thomas Babington Macaulay’s *The History of England from the Accession of James II* (1887), Margaret Lisle Shepherd’s *My Life in the Convent* and *Pope Leo’s demand* (1892), and John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism* (1955) shed light on Protestant perception of Catholics, anti-Catholic rhetoric, and American nativism respectively. Concerning the lesser known Parliaments of Religions in Toronto (1895) and Chicago (1933), *The Globe* and *The Catholic Register* of Toronto and Charles Frederick Weller’s *World Fellowship, Addresses and Messages by Leading Spokesmen of All Faiths, Races and Countries* have been essential respectively in rescuing these interfaith initiatives from scholarly oblivion.

Catholic background sources are voluminous and particularly useful to this study. University of Notre Dame’s almost forgotten *The Columbian Jubilee or Four Centuries of Catholicity in America, being a Historical and Biographical Retrospect from the Landing of Christopher Columbus to the Chicago Catholic Congress of 1893*, edited by

As for Church documents related to Catholic interfaith relations, Vatican Delegate to the 1993 Parliament, Francesco Gioia’s *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church* (2006) has no parallel. Other papal documents are currently accessible in several languages on the Vatican website. In this new era of internet access, on-line consultations have been extremely helpful, particularly, the websites of the Catholic Encyclopedia, and the Franciscan and Passionist historical archives.
1893 Parliament Primary Sources


Hanson, J.W., editor. The world's congress of religions: the addresses and papers delivered before the parliament, and an abstract of the congresses held under the auspices of the World's Columbian exposition. Chicago: Webb, 1894.


Stevans, C.M., editor. The World's Congress of Religions [microform]: being a complete and concise history of the most inspiring convocation of civilization, wherein was given full expression to the irrefutable evidence establishing the independence of mind and the supremacy of human conscience. Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1894.
Archivio Segreto Vaticano

(Secret Vatican Archives)

Archivio Vaticano, Segretaria di Stato (Vatican Archives, Secretary of State)

Anno 1896, Rubrica 262, fasc. 4: Congresso mondiale di religioni in Chicago (World’s Congress of religions in Chicago)

Anno 1897, Rubrica 280, fasc. 4: Congressi di religioni (Congresses of religions)

Anno 1900, Rubrica 248, fasc. 1: Congresso di religioni nel 1900 in Parigi (1900 Congress of religions in Paris)

Anno 1903, Rubrica 43, fasc. 1: Mons. J.J. Keane. (Mgr. J. J. Keane)

Archivio della Nunziatura (Gia Delegazione) Apostolica degli Stati Uniti D’America, 1893-1921 (Archive of the Apostolic Nuntiatura (Delegation) of the United States of America 1893-1921)

Posizione 1: Esposizione a Chicago (Chicago Exhibition)


Posizione 34: Incontri annuali degli arcivescovi 1893-1896, 1894-1900 (Annual meetings of the Archbishops 1893-1896, 1894-1900)
Archivio Storico De Propaganda Fide

(Propaganda Fide Historical Archive)

Nuova Serie (New Series, in chronological sequence)

Volume 10
Volume 27
Volume 31
Volume 36
Volume 37
Volume 50
Volume 51
Volume 52
Volume 55
Volume 74
Volume 75
Volume 76
Volume 88
Volume 98
Volume 99
Volume 110
Volume 120
Volume 136
Volume 147
Volume 159
Volume 215
Shepherd, Margaret Lisle. *Pope Leo’s demand: He challenges Americans, and boldly claims Temporal Power. The Great International Roman Catholic Congress to assemble in Chicago, during the World’s Fair to execute his plans.* Philadelphia: Jordan Brothers, 1892.


1993 Parliament Primary Sources


**DePaul University Archives, Chicago, IL**

Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions Collection (ACPWR)

1993 Parliament

1983-1999

Box 1 Newsletters
Box 2 Your Voice
Box 5 The Council
Box 6A Administrative Cabinet
Boxes 6A, 7A Board of Directors
Box 6B Board of Trustees/Board of Advisers
Box 8A Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez Correspondence (1990-1993)
Box 8B Miscellaneous Correspondence (1988-1993)
Boxes 9, 12A General Parliament Correspondence (1988-1995)
Box 14A Executive Committee (1989-1998)
Box 15A Finance Committee (1988-1998)
Box 16 Nominations Committee (1989-1998)
Box 17C Planning Committee (1988-1993)
Box 18A Program Committee (1988-1993)
Boxes 21A, 21B Research Committee Essays
Boxes 26, 27, 28, 29 Co-Sponsor Cover Sheets (1993)
Box 31 Unaccepted Co-Sponsors
Box 32 Host Committee Correspondence and Information (1992-1993)
Boxes 33, 34A, 34B Biographies A-F, G-L, M-Z
Box 35A V.I.P. Database and V.I.P. Assembly Members
Box 35B V.I.P. Contact Lists and Miscellaneous Information
Box 38 Host Committee Program Description Worksheets (1993)
Box 40 Independent Presenters
Box 45 Religious Organizations Files
Boxes 49, 50 Written Parliament Presentations (1993)
Box 57 Photographs
Box 58 Responses to the Parliament
Box 59 Declaration of Global Ethics, Original, signed

Teach’em Audiotapes:
Volume 4, 360 Bede Griffiths, Swami Dayananda – Visionary Guide and Universal Saint
Ron Kidd File

CPWR Archives Articles


Archives of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue


Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs
of the Archdiocese of Chicago


Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley CA

Bede Griffiths Collection
Box 4:15
Folder: Misc. Papers, Parliament of Religions In Memory of Bede Griffiths.
Box 10
Folder: Bede Griffiths Trust Publications.
Box 25
Folder: Correspondence BG to Sr. Pascaline Coff 1975-1983.
Folder: Correspondence BG to Sr. Pascaline 1983-93.

Doctoral Dissertations


Newspapers

The Catholic Register, Toronto

The Chicago Tribune

The Globe, Toronto

The National Catholic Reporter

The New York Times

Church Documents

Vatican Council II

Constitution Lumen Gentium
Constitution Dei Verbum
Constitution Gaudium et Spes,
Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem
Decree Ad Gentes
Declaration Nostra Aetate
Solemn Magisterium


Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Quarto Abeunte Saeculo*, (On the Columbus Quadricentennial), July 16, 1892.


Magisterium of Pope John Paul II


**Documents of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia**

*Lamentabili Sane*, Syllabus Condemning the Errors of the Modernists, July 3, 1907 by the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office.

*Sacrorum antistitum*, Oath against Modernism, September 1, 1910 by the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office.

Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, August 6, 2000 by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.


**Other Documents of the Magisterium**


**Websites**


Claremont School of Theology, http://www.religion-online.org/

Congregation de Notre Dame de Sion, http://www.notredamedesion.org/fr/index.php


North American Interfaith Network (NAIN), http://www.nain.org/AboutUs.html


*The Hindu*, India’s national newspaper

Time Magazine Online, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,746034-1,00.html


Vatican Website, www.vatican.va.


Books and Articles

100 years: *The History of the Church of the Holy Name, the chapel that became a Cathedral and the Story of Catholicism in Chicago*. Chicago: Published by the Cathedral of the Holy Name, 1949.

Adamson, Iain. *Ahmad, The Guided One, A life of the holy founder of the Movement to unite all religions*. Islamabad; Tilford; Surrey: Islam International Publications Ltd, 199?.


Rockaway, Robert A. “The Jews cannot defeat me”: the anti-Jewish campaign of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities, 1995.


Shepherd, Margaret Lisle. My Life in the Convent,: or the marvelous personal experiences of Margaret L. Shepherd (Sister Magdalene Adelaide), consecrated penitent of the Arno’s Court Convent, Bristol, England. Canada & New South Wells, Australia: Margaret L. Shepherd, publisher, 1892.


The Columbian Jubilee or Four Centuries of Catholicity in America, being a Historical and Biographical Retrospect from the Landing of Christopher Columbus to the Chicago Catholic Congress of 1893. Two Volumes. Chicago, J. S. Hyland and Company, 1894.


## Appendix A

### TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 1864</td>
<td>Pope Pius IX issues Syllabus of Errors, which condemns religious indifferentism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 8, 1869</td>
<td>First Vatican Council begins. Council adjourns on October 20, 1870.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 20, 1889</td>
<td>Charles Carroll Bonney, layman of the Church of the New Jerusalem, pens a proposal concerning a Parliament of Religions to be held in the context of Chicago’s World’s Fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15, 1889</td>
<td>A general committee of organization is appointed with Bonney as chairman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 31, 1889</td>
<td>Bonney establishes a General Committee on Religious Congresses and appoints the Rev. John Henry Barrows, a Presbyterian minister and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago, as its chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 30, 1890</td>
<td>The World’s Congress Auxiliary of the World’s Columbian Exposition is formed with Bonney as president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1890 US Census reveals that the Catholic population has dramatically multiplied from being just 25,000 in 1790 and 1,200,000 in 1840 to overwhelmingly become the largest religious denomination in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>June, 1891</td>
<td>Barrows issues a preliminary invitation to the world to take part in the Parliament of Religions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 25, 1892</td>
<td>Barrows writes first report on the interest his invitation generated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 17, 1892</td>
<td>Barrows sends letter with report enclosed to Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, the Vatican Secretary of State, asking for the support of Pope Leo XIII. Apparently, he receives no response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1892</td>
<td>Barrows receives letter of support from Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore in response to a letter Barrows sent him earlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 16, 1892</td>
<td>The American Archbishops, at their III Annual Meeting in New York, appoint Bishop John Keane, Rector of the Catholic University of America, “to make suitable arrangements with those in charge of the so-called Parliament of Religions, for hearing twenty Catholic speakers to be selected by the Rt. Rev. Bishop to expound Catholic doctrine at their meetings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1893</td>
<td>Columbian Exhibition opens in Chicago, including Catholic Educational Exhibit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2, 1893</td>
<td>Catholic Education Day at the Columbian Exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 4, 1893</td>
<td>Columbian Catholic Congress begins in Chicago and meets through September 9, 1893.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
September 11, 1893  The World’s Parliament of Religions is inaugurated in Chicago with Cardinal James Gibbons presiding over the opening ceremony and with Catholic delegates scheduled to speak every single day of the program. The event is considered the birth of the modern, global interfaith movement.

September 12, 1893  Catholic Day at the Parliament with separate full-day program.

September 28, 1893  The World’s Parliament of Religions adjourns.

October 6, 1893  Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Francesco Satolli reports positively, but with reservations, on the Parliament of Religions to Cardinal Miescislaao Ledochowski, the prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in the Vatican.

July 18, 1895  Pan-American Congress on Religion and Education begins in Toronto and meets until Thursday, July 25, 1895.

August 12, 1895  Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Francesco Satolli writes to Cardinal Rampolla asking the Holy See to make a formal and prohibitory pronouncement about Catholic involvement in ecumenical and interfaith congresses.

September 18, 1895  Pope Leo answers to Satolli that while meetings of Catholics with non-Catholics had been prudently tolerated (*ad hunc diem prudenti silentio tolerati sunt*), it would be advisable that Catholics should hold their congresses apart, a letter used to dispel rumors of Vatican approval of plans for a Parliament of Religions to be held in Paris in 1900.
January 22, 1899  
Pope Leo XIII issues Apostolic Letter *Testem Benevolentiae*, in which he condemns Americanism.

October 8, 1902  
Satolli, now a Cardinal based in Rome, writes to Paul Carus, of the Parliament Extension Society, discouraging the latter’s plan of a second Parliament of Religions to be held in the context of the World’s Expo in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904. The Cardinal disapproves of any Catholic involvement and indicates that such an event would lead to skepticism and naturalism.

September 7, 1907  
Pope Pius X issues encyclical letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, condemning Modernism.

June 14, 1910  
Edinburgh Missionary Conference begins and meets through June 23, 1910, formal beginning of the modern, Protestant Christian ecumenical movement.

September 10, 1910  
*Anti-Modernist Oath* is put into effect by the Vatican.

January 6, 1928  
Pope Pius XI issues encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, condemning certain aspects of the early ecumenical movement.

August 27, 1933  
International Convention of the World Fellowship of Faiths, also known as the second Parliament of Religions, begins in Chicago and meets through September 17, 1933 in the context of the Chicago’s Century of Progress World’s Fair, without official Catholic representation. However, prominent lay Catholic Patrick Henry Callahan, a decorated knight of St. Gregory by Pope Pius XI, gave an address.


May 17, 1964  Vatican establishes Secretariat for Non-Christians.

November 21, 1964  *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution about the Church is issued by the Council. This document states that non-Christians and even atheists can be saved if with “no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.”

October 28, 1965  Decree *Nostra Aetate* about the Church and Non-Christian Religions is issued by the Council. This document invites Christians to “acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.”

December 7, 1965  *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution about the Church in the modern world and Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom are issued by the Council. Gaudium et Spes affirms that “Just as it is in the world's interest to acknowledge the Church as an historical reality, and to recognize her good influence, so the Church herself knows how richly she has profited by the history and development of humanity.”

December 8, 1965  Second Vatican Council adjourns.
November 21, 1982  First documented meeting to share ideas for a centennial celebration of the World’s Parliament of Religions takes place at the home of Dr. John Dubocq in Chicago. Swami Sarvechananda is present accompanied by other Vendantists, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim.


1983  Cardinal Bernardin of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Dr. Willard Boyd of the Field Museum write to Dr. Martin Marty of the University of Chicago, telling him of the importance of having a 1993 Parliament for Chicago anyway and asking him to do something. Unsuccessful.

1985  Ammerdown meeting in Bath, England, is convened by the World Congress of Faiths and the Temple of Understanding to seek ways of collaboration between international interfaith organizations.


October 27, 1986  World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi is hosted by Pope John Paul II with leaders of the religions of the world.

1986  Archdiocese of Chicago tries again to launch the Parliament centennial, this time with the Illinois Humanities Council. Unsuccessful.
March 13, 1988

First documented meeting of ad-hoc committee, an output of the tireless leadership of Swami Sarveshananda, that would evolve into the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions. Vedantists, Zoroastrians, and Baha’is stand out. Professor Dennis McCann of DePaul University and Sister Joan McGuire of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago are first Catholics involved in this new and eventually successful initiative.

April, 1988

Ammerdown Conference in Bath, England, is convened by the World Congress of Faiths and the Temple of Understanding to plan commemoration of the centennial of the World’s Parliament of Religions.

July 17, 1988

First Board of Directors of the CPWR is established with Baha’i Charles Nolley as chair and Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna as vice-chair.

December 15, 1988

Board is informed that Swami Sarveshananda will relocate to Boston. Buddhist Ron Kidd volunteers to serve in his place for a few months on a ‘deferred pay’ basis. All Board members present vote in favor.

March 10, 1989

Hans Küng gives lecture “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions” at the Rockefeller chapel of the University of Chicago and calls on those responsible for planning the centenary celebration of the 1893 Parliament of Religions to proclaim a century later “a new ethical consensus,” which will evolve into the document *Towards a Global Ethic, An Initial Declaration*, drafted by Küng.

May 9, 1989

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago “looks with favor on the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions without thereby implying agreement with all of the activities or theological assumptions that
may be forthcoming.” Sister Joan McGuire of the Archdiocese of Chicago is appointed as liaison between the two councils.

June 22, 1989

Archdiocese of Chicago becomes a co-sponsor of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, with the appointments of Fr. Thomas Baima as a candidate for the Board, Sister Joan McGuire as an advisor and Ms. Clarisse Croteau-Chonka as a member of the Program Committee. Other Catholic co-sponsors will follow in the ensuing months: Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, the Focolare Movement, the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, Chicago’s Catholic Theological Union, and the Center for the Study of Values at DePaul University among others.

July 9, 1989

Early pioneer of the centennial idea with Vedantist leanings Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez succeeds Baha’i Charles Nolley as chair of the CPWR. Zoroastrian Rohinton Rivetna is re-elected as vice-chair.

November 4, 1989

Inaugural ceremony to announce the formal planning of the centennial Parliament takes place at the Rockefeller chapel of the University of Chicago.

January 17, 1991

Parliament office closed temporarily due to lack of funds. Despite slow recovery in ensuing months, uncertainty about Parliament success will remain until the very end of the planning process.

September 1, 1991

Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez starts as Executive Director of the Board.
September 15, 1991
Presbyterian David Ramage, president of McCormick Theological Seminary, succeeds Daniel Gómez Ibáñez as Chair of the Board.

May, 1993

August 18-22, 1993
Bangalore Conference "Sharing Visions for the Next Century," Sarva Dharma Sammelana. Organised by the International Interfaith Organizations Coordinating Committee in a unique first global collaboration with four of the main western interfaith organisations: WCF, IARF, IIC and WCRP gathering of 600 people actively engaged in inter-faith work in 28 countries.

August 28, 1993
The Parliament of the World’s Religions begins in Chicago, the most diverse religious celebration in history, with strong Catholic participation throughout the event. Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago presides the Catholic delegation in the opening ceremony.

August 31, 1993
Address by Cardinal Bernardin on Euthanasia, a development of the Cardinal’s proposal of a “Consistent Ethic of Life.”

Memorial for Dom Bede Griffiths of the Shantivanam ashram in India takes place in the context of the Parliament. Fr. Griffiths died three months earlier.

Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago withdraws from the Parliament in protest of “pseudo-religious pagan groups that profess no belief in a God or a Supreme Being.”
September 1, 1993  Address by Archbishop Francesco Gioia on the Catholic Church’s Theology of the Religions.

September 2, 1993  Four Jewish organizations withdraw from the Parliament due to inclusion in the program of controversial Minister Louis Farrakhan.

September 4, 1993  Buddhist-Christian Monastic Dialogue session organized by the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue takes place in the context of the Parliament with the participation of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama suggests ongoing meetings between Buddhist and Catholic monks beyond the Parliament, which leads to encounters at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky.

September 5, 1993  Document *Towards a Global Ethic, An Initial Declaration*, is endorsed by a large number of participants in the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in the context of the Parliament.

Parliament of the World’s Religions adjourns with Cardinal Bernardin among officials on the stage.

July 16, 1996  Gethsemani Encounter I organized by the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.


August 6, 2000  Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican issues Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Church.

January 24, 2002  Pope John Paul II hosts second Assisi gathering, after September 11 attacks

April 13-18, 2002  Gethsemani Encounter II organized by the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.


December 3-9, 2009  Parliament of the World’s Religions meets in Melbourne, Australia, with Catholic participation. Theme: Make a World of Difference: Hearing each other, Healing the Earth.

October 27, 2011  Pope Benedict XVI hosts World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi to commemorate the XXV anniversary of first Assisi gathering.
Parliament of the World’s Religions will take place in Brussels, Belgium.
Appendix B
CATHOLICS IN CHICAGO’S 1893 PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS PROGRAM

Tuesday, September 12  Day’s Theme: Existence and Attributes of God

“Rational Demonstrations of the Being of God” by Fr. Augustine F. Hewitt.

Fr. Hewitt (1820-1897) was a former Rector of the Paulist College in Washington, DC, and, at the time of the Parliament, he was the second superior general in New York, succeeding in this post the founder of the community, Fr. Isaac Hecker. Born to Congregationalist parents, Hewitt became an Episcopalian and eventually converted to Catholicism. Once a Catholic, he became a priest of the Redemptorist congregation and a founding member of the Paulists when they split from the Redemptorists. His paper was read by Paulist Fr. Walter Elliott.

Wednesday, September 13  Day’s Theme: Nature of Man

“Man from a Christian Point of View” by Fr. Thomas Byrne

Fr. Thomas Byrne (1841-1923) was the President of St. Mary’s Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was appointed the fifth Bishop of Nashville, Tennessee, eight months after the Parliament.

“The Supreme End and Office of Religion” by Father Walter Elliott.

Fr. Walter Elliott (1842-1928) was a Paulist missionary to American non-Catholics and two years prior to the Parliament published a biography of the Paulist founder, Fr. Hecker, a book that would eventually be at the center of the Americanist controversy. Fr. Elliott’s topic corresponded to the theme of the following day, when his lecture was originally scheduled. However, for some reason it was rescheduled for this day.

Thursday, September 14       Day’s Theme: Necessity of Religion


Cardinal James Gibbons (1834-1921) was the Archbishop of Baltimore. He was the most prominent and among the most influential Catholic leaders in the United States at the time of the 1893 Parliament. He was elevated to the rank of cardinal one year after the death of his only predecessor holding that ecclesiastical dignity in the United States, John Cardinal McCloskey from New York. Gibbons exercised his leadership of the Catholic Church during very controversial times inside the Church concerning the relation between Catholic identity and American citizenship. Ellis, Gibbons’ biographer, states that the Cardinal was not feeling well, so the address was read by Bishop Keane.

Friday, September 15       Day’s Theme: Systems of Religions


Msgr. Charles de Harlez (1832-1899) was a Belgian Orientalist of repute in European academic circles and the Rector of the Justus Lipsius College at the Catholic University of Louvain. He was one of several European scholars of comparative religion that sent addresses to be read at the Parliament. Others included Max Müller, J. Estlin Carpenter, Albert and Jean Réville, and C.P. Tiele. De Harlez’s paper was read by Fr. Daniel Riordan, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Bishop Keane’s acquaintance with de Harlez probably dates from Keane’s visit to Catholic universities in Europe after his appointment as rector of the Catholic University of America.

Saturday, September 16       Day’s Theme: Sacred Scriptures of the World

Msgr. Robert Seton (1839-1927) was the Rector of St. Joseph’s Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, and a professor at Seton Hall College. He carried with him the honor of being the grandson of Elizabeth Seton, who would become the first American canonized saint, a convert to Catholicism from the Episcopal Church. He eventually relocated to Rome and was made the Archbishop of Heliopolis, a virtual diocese, in recognition of his lifetime service to the Church.

Sunday, September 17  Day’s Theme: Religion in Social and Married Life

“The Catholic Church and the Marriage Bond” by Professor Martin J. Wade

Professor Martin Wade (1861-1931), an Iowa Lawyer and lecturer at the University of Iowa College of Law, was the first lay Catholic to address the Parliament. He eventually became a one-term Democratic Party representative in Congress.

“The Religious Training of Children” by Brother Azarias Mullany, FSC.

Brother Azarias Mullany (1847-1893) spent thirty years as a member of the religious congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and died just three weeks before the Parliament was convened. His paper was read by his biological brother John Mullany, a member of the same religious congregation. He had been expected to present another paper at the Catholic Congress the week before. Another member from this educational order, Brother Maurelian, was in charge of the Catholic Educational Exhibit at the Exposition’s grounds.

Monday, September 18  Day’s Theme: Great Teachers of Religion

“The Incarnation Idea in History and in Jesus Christ” by Bishop John Keane.

Bishop John Keane (1839-1918) was the Rector of the Catholic University of America. Before and after his rectorship he served as the Bishop of Richmond and as the Archbishop of Dubuque respectively. This talk was originally assigned to Fr. Dr. Carsartelli, the President of St. Bede’s College in Manchester, England, who would eventually become the first Italian Bishop of Salford and Manchester.

Tuesday, September 19  Day’s Theme: Religion, Art, and Science

“Man in the Light of Science and Religion” by Professor Thomas Dwight.
Dr. Thomas Dwight (1843-1911) was the Parkman Professor of Anatomy at Harvard Medical School. A convert to Catholicism at the age of 13, he was the second lay Catholic whose ideas were presented to the Parliament. His paper was read by Bishop Keane.

**Wednesday, September 20**

**Day’s Theme: Working Forces of Religion**

*“The Redemption of Sinful Man through Jesus Christ” by Father Daniel Kennedy, O.P.*

Fr. Kennedy was a Dominican Friar from St. Joseph College in Ohio. This paper was originally assigned by Keane to another Dominican Friar, A. V. Higgins from New Haven, Connecticut.

*“The Basis of Right, Duty, and Law,” by Fr. Thomas Bouquillon.*

Fr. Bouquillon was a Professor at the Catholic University of America. This lecture was cancelled.

**Thursday, September 21**

**Day’s Theme: Religion and Social Problems**

*“The Relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the Poor and the Destitute” by the Honorable Charles Donnelly.*

Mr. Donnelly was a known philanthropist and President of the Board of the House of the Good Shepherd in Boston (Roxbury), a refuge for the reformation of “fallen” women and girls. He was the third layman representing the Catholic Church at the Parliament. His paper was read by Bishop Keane.

*“Religion and Labor” by Fr. James M. Cleary.*

Fr. James Cleary (1849-1933) was a close friend of Archbishop Ireland and, like Ireland, a champion of temperance. He was the pastor of the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Minneapolis. Eventually he was named a monsignor and the founder and pastor of the Church of the Incarnation in Minneapolis.

*“The Child Waifs of our Great Cities” by Msgr. Gadd from Manchester, England (Cancelled).*
Friday, September 22  Day’s Theme: Civil Society

“The Catholic Church and the Negro Race” by Fr. John Slattery, CSJ.

Fr. John Slattery was the founder and rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Baltimore, MD, the house of formation of the religious congregation of the same name devoted to the pastoral care of Blacks in the United States, a cause of which he is considered by some a “foremost champion” and a prophet within the Catholic Church. He was an outspoken opponent of “what he called the ‘uncatholic’ opposition to the ordination of Black men to the priesthood.” Fr. Slattery had also delivered a lecture the previous week in the Catholic Congress.

“The Sacredness of Civil Authority and Law” by Archbishop John Ireland.

John Ireland (1838-1918) was the Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnessota. Ireland was an influential advocate for the compatibility of the Catholic faith and the American spirit of freedom, democracy and social change. Surprisingly, the plans of this lecture changed and he never formally addressed the Parliament as part of the general program. His only formal address at the Parliament took place on Catholic Day.

Saturday, September 23  Day’s Theme: Love of Humanity

“A Catholic View of Arbitration instead of War” by the Honorable Thomas J. Semmes.

Dr. Thomas Semmes (1824-1899) was a Louisiana lawyer and a politician. He was omitted on James Cleary’s list.

Sunday, September 24  Day’s Theme: Christianity and American Civilization

“The Relation of Christianity to America” by Fr. Thomas O’Gorman.

Fr. Thomas O’Gorman (1843-1921) was professor of ecclesiastical history at the Catholic University in Washington, DC, after having experimented with the Paulists for four years and served as the first rector of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, established by his lifelong friend Archbishop Ireland in St. Paul, Minnesota. Two and a half years after the
Monday, September 25  
Day’s Theme: Interdenominational Comity


Fr. Fidelis Stone (1840-1921) would have been the only Catholic representative at the Parliament from South America. The son of the Dean of the Episcopal School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, educated at Harvard and Göttingen in Germany, and a married Episcopal priest with two daughters, Stone converted to Catholicism soon after his wife died. He joined the Paulist Fathers after entrusting the care of his daughters to the Sisters of Mercy. He eventually left the Paulists and entered the Congregation of the Passionists, where he played a key role in establishing that religious community in Argentina. Fr. Stone was a remarkable orator. He probably impressed Keane when he spoke at the foundation ceremony of the Catholic University of America. It was certainly a loss for the Parliament not to have counted on his contribution. Only day on which there was not a Catholic address.

Tuesday, September 26  
Day’s Theme: Attitude of Christianity to other religions

“Primitive and Prospective Religious Union of the Human Family” by Fr. John Gmeiner.

Fr. John Gmeiner (1847-1913) was the pastor of St. Peter’s Church, the oldest church in the state of Minnesota. He was also a professor in St. Francis Seminary near Milwaukee and the author of several works, particularly “Modern Scientific Views and Christian Doctrines Compared.”

Wednesday, September 27  
Day’s Theme: the Parliament itself

Catholic Day at the 1893 Parliament of Religions

September 12, 1893

Morning session

“The Catholic Idea of Dogmatic Truth,” by Fr. William Byrne (1832-1912), the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Boston, also known as the second Founder of Mount Saint Mary’s College in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

“The Catholic Idea of Worship and Grace,” originally assigned to absentee Fr. Fidelis Kent Stone, who was replaced by Fr. Thomas O’Gorman.

“The Catholic Idea of Holiness and Perfection,” by Fr. Thomas Sherman (1856-1933), from St. Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, and the only Jesuit involved in the 1893 Parliament. Sherman’s participation is particularly significant because Jesuits from France and Italy proved harshly critical of the Parliament and of the Catholic involvement in it. As for Fr. Sherman, the son of prominent American General William Tecumseh Sherman and a notable orator, in his mid-fifties he had a mental breakdown and distanced himself from the Jesuit Order but asked to renew his vows prior to his death at the age of seventy-seven.

Afternoon session

“Jesus Christ, the Founder of Truth, Grace, and Holiness,” by Bishop Keane.

“The Church, the Organ of Jesus Christ for the Dispensation of Truth, Grace, and Holiness,” by Bishop John Watterson of Columbus, Ohio. Bishop Watterson’s family was originally Episcopalian until his grandfather converted to Catholicism.

Evening session

“The Church and the Doctrinal Development of the same,” by Archbishop Placide Chapelle from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Four years after the Parliament, Archbishop Chapelle was transferred from Santa Fe to New Orleans and eventually was appointed Apostolic Delegate for Cuba and Puerto Rico and extraordinary envoy to the Philippines.

“Fitness of the Catholic Religion for the Actualities of Modern Life,” by Archbishop Ireland, in his only formal address at the Parliament.

“The Mission of the Church to All the Races of Mankind,” by Archbishop Redwood from New Zealand, which Keane had originally assigned to Cardinal Moran from Sydney. This suggests that Redwood came in his place.
Appendix C

CATHOLIC PARTICIPATION IN

THE 1993 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS

Catholic President of the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President Emeritus, Notre Dame University. Active in the cause of world peace since retirement.

1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions Catholic Co-Sponsors

Archdiocese of Chicago
Call to Action, Chicago
Catholic Theological Union, Chicago
Center for the Study of Values, DePaul University, Chicago
Focolare Movement, Chicago
Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, Collegeville, Minnesota
Monastic Inter-religious Dialogue, Saint Joseph, Minnesota/Lisle, Illinois
National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, St. Louis, Missouri


2 One Catholic out of 25 Presidents

3 Twelve Catholic institutions out of 198 Co-Sponsors
Saint Benedict Center Interfaith Dialogue Group, Madison, Wisconsin
Saint Isidore’s Roman Catholic Church, Bloomingdale, Illinois
Saint John De La Salle Roman Catholic Parish, Chicago
The Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, New York City, New York

1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions Catholic Donors
Archdiocese of Chicago
Most Reverend Plácido Rodríguez, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions
Catholic Members of the Board of Trustees, 1992-1993
Mr. Jim Kenney, Vice-Chair, Executive Director, Common Ground, Chicago
Fr. Thomas Baima, Director, Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Archdiocese of Chicago
Most Reverend Plácido Rodríguez, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Catholic Trustees-Elect
Dr. Jeffrey Carlson, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago
Br. Wayne Teasdale, Christian sannyasi in the lineage of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Catholic Former Trustees
Dr. Dennis McCann, Professor of Ethics at DePaul University, Chicago
Catholic Office Volunteer

Br. Ted Funk, Xaverian brother

Catholics in the Plenary Sessions

Saturday, August 28

Opening Plenary

Mayor Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, Honorary Chairperson

Introduction

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago

Invocation

Interfaith Understanding

Dr. Robert Müller, Chancellor for the United Nations University for Peace; honorary chair, Congress of the Spirit for the Americas

Address: Interfaith Harmony and Understanding

Burton Pretty On Top, Crow Nation; spiritual leader and pipe carrier

Respondent

Sunday, August 29

What Shall We Do?

Most Reverend Samuel Ruiz García, Bishop of Chiapas, Mexico

Response

Visions of Paradise and Possibility

Fr. Thomas Baima, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions

Reader
Monday, August 30

Voices of the Dispossessed

Most Rev. Willie Romelus, Bishop, Diocese of Jérémie in Haiti

Personal Story and Testimony

Fr. Thomas Kocherry, Redemptorist priest, President of the National Fish Workers Federation in India, bringing all fish workers along the coastline of India together and organizing them against the big mechanized trawlers that are monopolizing the waters, and others

Personal Story and Testimony

Fr. Yvon Masaac, parish of Fermathe, Haiti

A song of Haiti (Creole)

Voices of Spirit and Tradition

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID

Passage

Russill Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths, composer, musician and vocalist, and Asha Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Musical Performance

From Vision to Action

Brian Muldoon, attorney involved in conflict resolution work through the Dearborn Institute

Introduction of the Parliament of the People

Treasure Map of the Parliament Program

Tuesday, August 31

The Inner Life

Jim Kenney, Co-founder and Executive Director, Common Ground interfaith study center

Introduction
Russill Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths, composer, musician and vocalist

Musical accompaniment

Friday, September 3

The Next Generation

Catholic participation from Benet Academy and other schools

Saturday, September 4

Closing Plenary


Catholics in Major Presentations

Tuesday, August 31

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID, among others

An Introduction to Joseph Campbell

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, senior prelate among US Catholic Bishops

Euthanasia

Helen Alvare, Director of Planning and Information of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Human Population and Women

Dr. Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany

Reflections on the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions

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4 Catholics were engaged as presenters in 18 out of 175 Major Presentations; in 13 as sole presenters; in 5 as co-presenters with non-Catholics.
Fr. John Martin Kuvarapu, from Fr. Bede Griffith’s Saccidananda Ashram, India

Fr. Thomas Matus, Camaldolese Monk

Professor Raimundo Panikkar, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara

Sr. Pascaline Coff, O.S.B. PhD, Founder and Director of Osage Monastery in Sand Springs, Oklahoma

Fr. John Killian, priest of the Diocese of Buffalo, Attica, NY.

Russill Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths, composer, musician and vocalist

Asha Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Roland Ropers, Oblate of the Order of St. Benedict and friend of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Br. Wayne Teasdale, Christian sannyasi in the lineage of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Father Bruno Barnhardt, Camaldolese monk, member of MID

And others

Bede Griffiths – Swami Dayananda- Visionary Guide and Universal Saint

Bishop Willie Romelus, Diocese of Jérémie in Haiti

The Role and Responsibility of the Church in Haiti

Wednesday, September 1

Prof. Ewart Cousins, Professor of Theology, Fordham University; General Editor of the twenty-five volume series, World Spirituality; former consultant to the Vatican Secretariat on Inter-Religious Dialogue

The Christ of the Twenty-First Century

Most Rev. Francesco Gioa, Delegate, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, former Archbishop of Camerino, San Severino Marche

The Catholic Church’s Theology of Religions

Rev. Dr. Enzo Maria Fondi, one of the originators of the Focolare Movement in Italy and in the former German Democratic Republic; now a central director of the movement

For a United Word: An Experience of 50 Years
John Carr, Secretary for Social Development and World Peace of the United States Catholic Conference

100 Years of Social and Economic Theology

Thursday, September 2

Thomas Berry, historian of religions and writer with special concern for the foundation of cultures in their relations with the natural world

The Cosmology of Religions

Rev. Dr. Cesar A. Davila, founder and president of the Yoga and Christianity Movement in the Americas

East and West in a Spiritual Embrace

Friday, September 3

Burton Pretty On Top, Crow Nation; spiritual leader and pipe carrier, among others

Native American Holy Land, Sacred Sites, Religious Freedom

Sister Pascalone Coff, O.S.B. PhD, Founder and Director of Osage Monastery in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, among others

Spirituality and Healing

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID, among others

The Great Circle Dance: Religions and the Religions

Dr. Henry Charles, Assistant Professor, St. Louis University (Department of Theological Studies)

Perspectives for a Post-Colonial Caribbean Church

Jim Kenney, Co-founder and Executive Director, Common Ground interfaith study center

Convergence: The Sacred Wheel

Saturday, September 4

Fr. Julian von Duerbeck, Benedictine monk of St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, IL; member of MID

Br. Wayne Teasdale, Christian sannyasi (monk, renunciate) in the lineage of Fr. Bede Griffiths, member of MID
Sr. Joanna Becker, Benedictine nun at St. Benedict’s Convent, St. Joseph, MN, member of MID

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID

Dr. Patrick Henry, Executive Director, Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegeville, MN

Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, Former Abbot of St. Joseph’s Abbey, Spencer, MA; Former Chair, North American Board East-West Dialogue; absent

Fr. James Connor, OCSO, Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky, member of MID and editor of its publication, *Bulletin*

Among others, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Buddhist-Christian Monastic Dialogue: Sunyata and Kenosis – the Universal Arising of Compassion in the Spiritual Journey

**Catholics in Seminars & Lectures**

**Tuesday, August 31**

Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, historian of religions (Confucianism in Japan)

World Views and Ecology

Sister Charlene Altemose, Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart, Fulbright Scholar in India

Christian Reflections on the Bhagavat-Gita

Mr. Francis P. Hannigan, Director of the Family Ministries Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago

Putting Children and Families First: The Tradition Continues

Virginia Ann Froehle, Sister of Mercy and author

Praying with Feminine Images of God

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5 Catholics were engaged as presenters in 69 out of 454 Seminars and Lectures; in 41 as sole presenters; in 28 as co-presenters with non-Catholics.
Dr. Elizabeth Ferrero, St. Thomas University, Miami, among others

Global Stewardship: Consumption, Population and Technology Issues.
Leadership

Rev. Michael McGarry, priest of the Congregation of Saint Paul and Rector, St. Paul College, Washington, DC. Member of NADEO

What do Christians and Jews have to say to Each Other?

Richard J. Payne, editor, publisher, conceived and developed the 75-volume *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, the 25-volume *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, and the forthcoming 60-volume *The Classics of Eastern Spirituality*; Executive Director, the Arcadian Institute, Rockport, MA

Prof. Ewart Cousins, Professor of Theology, Fordham University; General Editor of the twenty-five volume series, World Spirituality; former consultant to the Vatican Secretariat on Inter-Religious Dialogue

The God Who is Love and the Personalist Traditions of Spirituality

Jim Kenney, Co-founder and Executive Director, Common Ground interfaith study center, and Rabbi Herbert Bronstein

Mystic Goal-lessness: Where the Traditions Meet

Burton Pretty On Top, Crow Nation; spiritual leader and pipe carrier, among others

The Strength of the Native American Extended Family Network

Elizabeth Espersen, Executive Director, Thanks-Giving Square, Dallas, Texas, national and international programs; Co-Chair of North American Interfaith Network

Dr. Robert Muller, Chancellor for the United Nations University for Peace; honorary chair, Congress of the Spirit for the Americas

Congress for the Spirit for the Americas: A Contribution to a New Spiritual World Order

Fr. Thomas Baima, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions

Techniques of Meditation

Fr. Albert Fritsch, SJ, Director of Earth Healing

Earth Healing as a component of Agri-Spirituality
David Toolan, SJ, associate editor of AMERICA magazine

A Beneficial Conflict: Science vs. Christianity in Western Culture

Burton Pretty On Top, Crow Nation; spiritual leader and pipe carrier, among others

500 Years of Survival – All Treaties Were Broken, and the Spirituality Survives

Fr. David Tracy, Professor at the University of Chicago

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID, among others

Vocabulary for the 21st Century

Sister Miriam Brown, OP, Executive Director, Churches’ Center for Land and People, an ecumenical organization that brings together individuals, churches, and organizations in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois, around concerns for ethics, renewal, stewardship, and ministry

Fr. Richard Ament, Rural pastor, team of five parishes, among others

Rural Spirituality: Sustaining the Land, Sharing the Spirit

Wednesday, September 1

Albert LaChance, husband, father, poet, environmentalist, therapist, lecturer; co-founder with his wife, Carol, of Greenspirit Center in New Hampshire; author of Greenspirit: Twelve Step in Ecological Spirituality, a book highly recommended by Thomas Berry as a practical extension of his own work

Greenspirit: A Marriage of Ecology and Multi-Faith Spirituality

F. Byron (Ron) Nahser, President and CEO, Frank C. Nahser, Inc. B.A., Notre Dame University, M.A., Mundelein College, PhD, De Paul University. And Buddhist priest

Steve Kizan Beck

Contemplative Dwelling II: Alternative Business Enterprise, Universally Affordable Dwelling, Contemplative Practice and Planetary Harmony

Carolyn Ford, Peace and Justice Director at St. Isidore Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Joliet, and Canadian Peter H. Ayroyd

The Road from Rio: An Ecological and Spiritual Perspective

Suzanne Zuercher, OSB, licensed psychologist, author on two books on the enneagram, former co-director of Institute of Spiritual Leadership at Loyola University

Thomas Merton and the Enneagram
Thomas Kocherry, Redemptorist priest, President of the National Fish Workers Federation in India, bringing all fish workers along the coastline of India together and organizing them against the big mechanized trawlers that are monopolizing the waters, and others

In the Wake of Freedom: Human Rights and Development in India

Dr. William French, Professor of Theology, Loyola University, Chicago

Dr. John Pawlikowski, OSM, Professor of Social Ethics, Catholic Theological Union

And others

Religion and Peacemaking: Regarding the Other – Narratives of Compassion

Rev. Peter Dougherty, priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, founder of Covenant for Peace, a faith-based peace community that focuses on the dangers of the nuclear arms race

Stories of Faith-Based Social Action in 1993

Dr. John Kaserow, Maryknoll priest, Professor of Mission, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

The Critical Issues – A Multi Media View

Fr. Julian von Duerbeck, OSB, Benedictine Monk of St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Il, and Rabbi Herbert Bronstein

Workshop on Comparative Liturgy: Session I

Fr. Thomas Kane, Paulist priest, Professor of Theology at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, MA

The Inculturation of Christianity in Africa

Elizabeth Ferrero, St. Thomas University, Miami, among others

Global Stewardship: Consumption, Population and Technology Issues. Grassroots

Mary Southard, CSJ, Sister of St. Joseph of La Grange, co-founder and co-director of SpiritEarth, Center for the Sacred Universe, New England

Endangered Earth/Sacred Earth: Challenge to World Religions
Robert Müller, Chancellor, Universidad para la Paz –Costa Rica; author, *New Genesis, Shaping a Global Spirituality*, among others

**An Invitation to Auroville: The City of Human Unity Emerging in India**

Dr. John Renard, Professor of Theology, St. Louis University; member of NADEO

And others

**What do Christians and Muslims have to say to each other?**

Dr. John Kaserow, Maryknoll priest, Professor of Mission, catholic Theological Union, Chicago

**When the Indigenous Traditions of the World Come Here**

Thomas Berry, historian of religions and writer with special concern for the foundation of cultures in their relations with the natural world, and Rev. Finley Shaef

**Ritual in the Ecological Age**

Regina Sara Ryan, MA, former Catholic nun, coordinator of the First Conference on Crazy Wisdom and Divine Madness in 1992

**The New Family: Non-Monastic Religious/Spiritual Community**

Dr. Daniel Martin, Roman Catholic priest. Founder/Director, International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth, and others

**The Significance of an Earth Charter**

Hanne Marstrad Strong, President Manitou Foundation, originally from Denmark; a Lutheran raised as a Roman Catholic

**Major Ecumenical Community in North America**

Rev. Gilbert G. Hardy, Cistercian Monk, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dallas

**Monastic Quest and Interreligious Dialogue**

Dr. William French, Professor of Theology, Loyola University, Chicago, and others

**Religion and Peace Making: Conflicting Loyalties and the Common Good**
Dr. Catherine Wessinger, Religious Studies scholar associated with Loyola University, New Orleans

Women’s Religious Leadership in America

Thursday, September 2

Dr. Daniel Martin, Roman Catholic priest. Founder/Director, International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth, and others

The Earth Charter as a Tool for Transformation

Elizabeth Espersen, Executive Director, Thanks-Giving Square, Dallas, Texas, national and international programs; Co-Chair of North American Interfaith Network, and Zoroastrian Dr. Jamsheed Mavalwala

A Look at NAIN, the North American Interfaith Network

Br. Wayne Teasdale, Christian sannyasi in the lineage of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Rev. Paul Manship, Director Hispanic Youth Ministry, R.C. Diocese of Springfield, MA

Russill Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths, composer, musician and vocalist

Asha Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths

Father Bruno Barnhardt, Camaldolese monk, member of MID

And others

Towards a Civilization with a Heart

Charles Strain, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University, and John Lawlor, ordained Dharma teacher in the lineage of the Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh

Catholic Social Teaching: What we have to learn from other religions

Sister Margaret Boyle, Sister of Our Lady of Zion, Chair of the DuPage Interfaith Resource Network, former member of Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, and others

The Interfaith Frontier: Suburbia USA

Carolyn Ford, Peace and Justice Director at St. Isidore Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Joliet

Ecofeminism and the Return of the Female Principle
Krystyna Zambrzycki, American-European Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and Dr. Byron Sherwin, Vice President and Professor at Chicago’s Spertus College of Judaica

Jews and Poles: An Effective Model for Interreligious and Interethnic Dialogue

Priore Margaret Mary Funk, OSB, Superior of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, member of Contemplative Outreach, member of Board of Directors of MID

Contemplative Prayer in Catholicism

Dr. Dennis McCann, Professor of Ethics at DePaul University, Chicago

Business Ethics

James Kavanaugh, PhD, former Catholic priest, poet and author

The Journey from Fanaticism and Fundamentalism to Freedom

Krystyna Zambrzycki, American-European Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Office of Ethnic Ministries

Sheila Adams, African American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Sr. Dominga Zapata, Society of Helpers, Hispanic and Native American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Teresita Nuval, Asian American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Popular Religiosity in Chicago

Edwina Gateley, Catholic lay minister; founder, Volunteer Missionary Movement, which has sent over 1000 men and women to serve in developing countries, and Genesis House, which serves women in prostitution

The World’s Oldest Oppression – Women in Prostitution

Jo-Ellen Karstens – member of the Focolare Movement

Mini-Cities Throughout the World: Models for a New Society

Mary A. Hallan, director of Respect Life Activities for the Archdiocese of Chicago

Human Life at the Margin – Women and Feminine Dignity
Friday, September 3

Ms. Pat Smuck, Catholic laywoman; member, National Council of Catholic women

Ecology as a Woman’s Concern

Dr. Daniel Martin, Roman Catholic priest. Founder/Director, International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth

Reconecting with the Divine: In Your Self, In All Those You Meet Today, In All Creation: Part III

Donald Mitchell, Professor of comparative philosophy, Purdue University

What Do Christians and Buddhists Have to Sat to Each Other?

Fr. Julian von Duerbeck, OSB, Benedictine Monk of St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Il

Workshop on Comparative Liturgy: Session III

Professor Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany; Dr. Mahmous Ayoub, Dr. Hussein Morsi, and Rev. Jack Cory

Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Fr. Roy Drake, SJ, Expert on drug and alcohol abuse, and Robert Serafini

Gobind Sadan USA: Demonstrating Interfaith Commitment, From Shared Worship to Shared Service

Fr. Thomas Ryan, Paulist priest, Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal, Canada

Riches from Other Faiths

Mary-Anne Langton, Co-Director of Office of Persons with Disabilities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford

Claire Langton, the mother of a young woman with cerebral palsy, and others

Restoring the Shattered Community for People with Disabilities

Regina Sara Ryan, former Catholic nun

Crazy Wisdom: A Necessity of Our Times
Rev. Louis Cameli, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the Midwest Assc. Of Spiritual Directors

Spirituality by Means of Autobiography

Fr. David Ryan, Archdiocesan Director of Catholic Youth Office

Report from World Youth Day

Eleanor Rae, PhD in Theology, Fordham University, founder and director of Center for Women, the Earth, and the Divine, and others

Women, the Earth, and the World’s Religions

Dr. Otis Lawrence, Board of Governor’s State University Degree program

Fr. Oliver Jennings, Pastor of St. John De LaSalle Church

Sheila Adams, Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Ethnic Ministries

Rayetta Holman, Sister of Archbishop Lyke

Doris Fileds, Sister of Archbishop Like

Guide Me, Lead Me: Section One (based on work of Chicago’s Archbishop James Patterson Lyke on strengthening the African American family)

Dr. Otis Lawrence, Board of Governor’s State University Degree program

Fr. Oliver Jennings, Pastor of St. John De LaSalle Church

Sheila Adams, Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Ethnic Ministries

Rayetta Holman, Sister of Archbishop Lyke

Doris Fileds, Sister of Archbishop Like

Guide Me, Lead Me: Section Two (based on work of Chicago’s Archbishop James Patterson Lyke on strengthening the African American family)

Dr. William French, Professor of Theology, Loyola University, Chicago

Native American and Medieval Christian Views of the Community of Creation: Black Elk, Thomas Aquinas, and St. Francis Speak

Fr. Richard Chilson, Paulist priest and pastor of Holy Spirit parish in Berkeley, California

The Practices of Other Religions and Christian Spirituality
Catholics in The Academy Section

Thursday, September 2

Dr. Teresa Albuquerque, Fellow of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Member of the Church History Association of India, member of the Asiatic Society of Bombay

The Indian Impact on Christianity

Thomas A. Shannon, Paris Fletcher Distinguished Professor of the Humanities, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA

Roman Catholicism and Genetic Engineering

Mary Oates, Professor of Economics, Regis College

The Evolution of Catholic Philanthropy in America

Friday, September 3

Michael Stoeber, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and Religious Education, Catholic University of America

Theo-Monistic Mysticism and Religious Pluralism

---

6 Catholics were engaged as sole presenters in 4 out of 53 programs in The Academy section.
Catholics in the Conference on Pluralism

Identity, Conflict and Globality

Tuesday, August 31

Professor Raimundo Panikkar, Doctorates in Chemistry, Philosophy, and Theology; Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara. Panikkar’s self-identification is catholic-Hindu-Buddhist

Thematic Presentation: Religious Identity

Leo Lefebure, Professor, University of St. Mary on the Lake (moderator) and others

Working Session: Religious Identity

Rev. Jay Jung, CM, and panelists

Workshop: Vincentians/Daughters of Charity

Wednesday, September 1

Most Reverend Samuel Ruiz, Archbishop of Chiapas, Mexico

Thematic Presentation: Religious Conflict

Kay A. Read, Professor, DePaul University (moderator) and others

Working Session: Religious Conflict

Thursday, September 2

Paul Knitter, Professor of Theology, Xavier University, and others

Working Session: Globality

James Yellowbank, Winnebago treaty rights activist, Native American Community Leader, director of the Aniwim Center for Native American Catholics of Chicago

Workshop: The Indian Treaty Rights Committee

---

7 Catholics were engaged as presenters in 9 out of 15 programs in the Conference on Pluralism; in 5 as sole presenters; in 4 as co-presenters or moderators.
Friday, September 3

Jeffrey Carlson, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago (moderator) and Harvey Cox, Arvind Sharma, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Tu Wei-Ming, and Masao Abe

Panel: “Our Religions” in a Religiously Plural World

Robert J. Schreiter, Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Catholic Theological Union; and Jeffrey Carlson, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago

Summation/Call to Action

Catholics in the Science Symposium

Cosmic Beginnings, Human Ends

Friday, September 3

Professor Raimundo Panikkar, Doctorates in Chemistry, Philosophy, and Theology Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara (panelist)

The Emerging Convergences in Religious Consciousness and their Confrontation with International Technology

Mary Hunt, PhD, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California; Co-Director, Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER); member of the Board, National Association for Science, Technology, and Society (NASTS) where she represents the religious community

Crucial Conversations: Theology, Feminism, and Science

---

8 Catholics were engaged as presenters in 2 out of 11 programs in the Science Symposium; in 1 as sole presenters; in 1 as panelists.
Catholics in Religion and Violence Symposium

Tuesday, August 31

William Vendley, Secretary General, World Conference on Religion and Peace/International; former Dean, Doctor of Ministry and Master of Arts in Theology programs and Professor of Theology, Roman Catholic Major Seminary, Long Island

The Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking

Friday, September 3

William Vendley, Secretary General, World Conference on Religion and Peace/International; former Dean, Doctor of Ministry and Master of Arts in Theology programs and Professor of Theology, Roman Catholic Major Seminary, Long Island, among others

Visions for Unity Beyond Religious Conflict

Catholics in the Business Symposium

Ethics, Values and Spirituality in the Workplace

Wednesday, September 1

Professor Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany; and others

The Impact of the World’s Religions on the Ethics of Business in a Global Economy

9 Catholics were engaged presenters in 2 out of 16 programs in the Religion and Violence Symposium; in 1 as sole presenters; in 1 as co-presenters.

10 Catholics co-presented in 1 out of 12 programs in the Business Symposium.
Catholics in The Media Panels

New paradigms for Media in the 21st Century¹¹

Friday, September 3

David Toolan, SJ, associate editor of AMERICA magazine, and others

Print and Broadcast Media

Catholics in Performance Series¹²

Friday, September 3

Elizabeth-Ann Vanek -D. Min.; University Ministry and Department of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago, and others

A Celebration of Poetry

Br. Joseph Kilikevice, OP, Dominican Friar and member of the mentor Teacher Guild of the Dances of Universal Peace

Dances of Universal Peace

Carolyn Ford, Peace and Justice Director at St. Isidore Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Joliet

Sacred Chant: East and West

Rev. Paul Manship, Director Hispanic Youth Ministry, R.C. Diocese of Springfield, MA; and Magdalena Gomez

Sacred Visions

¹¹ Catholics co-presented in 1 out of 2 programs in The Media Panels.

¹² Catholics participated in 3 out of 47 programs in the Performance series; in 2 as sole presenters; in one as co-presenters.
Catholics in the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

Rev. Thomas Baima, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions.

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago.

Rev. Thomas Berry, priest of the Congregation of the Passion, Director of the Riverside Center for Religious Research in New York and professor of Religious Studies at Fordham University. Fr. Berry is considered a pioneer in the field of spiritual ecology.

Fr. Pierre-Francois de Bethune, OSB, Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique

Monastere St Andre de Clerlande, Belgium. Played major role in setting up the Pope’s meeting of religious leaders in Assisi, 1986.

Dr. John Borelli, Interfaith and Ecumenical secretary of the Conference of Catholic Bishops, consultor of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Rev. Dr. Henry Charles, St Theresa’s Roman Catholic Church, Barataria, Trinidad and Tobago, Assistant professor, St. Louis University (Department of Theological Studies).

Sister Joan M. Chatfield, Diocese of Honolulu, Maryknoll Mission sister and Director of Institute of Religion and Change in Honolulu. She is the Chair of the Faiths in the World Committee of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers.

Rev. Monsignor John Egan, Priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and assistant to the President of DePaul University. He is considered a tireless agent for change in race relations, civil rights and urban affairs for 50 years.


Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, President Emeritus, Notre Dame University. Active in the cause of world peace since retirement.

Abbot Timothy Kelly, OCSO, Gethsemane Abbey, Kentucky.

Mr. Jim Kenney, Vice-Chair, Executive Director, Common Ground, Chicago.

Dr. Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany.
Dolores Leaky, Executive Director of Secretariat for Laity, Women and Youth of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sister Joan Monica McGuire, Dominican sister of the Congregation of Saint Catherine, KY, Vice President for Ministry of her congregation. Former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago.


Dr. Robert Muller, Chancellor Emeritus, University for Peace/Universidad de la Paz, Costa Rica, Former Assistant Secretary General, United Nations, writer, peace activist, recipient of the 1989 UNESCO Peace Education Prize.

Rev. Albert Nambiaparambil, CMI, Commission for Ecumenism & Dialogue, Secretary, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India. Secretary of World Fellowship of Interreligious Councils.

Dr. Raimon Panikkar, Internationally known in interfaith dialogue.

Fr. M. Basil Pennington, OSB, Well-known Benedictine monk. Author of books on centering prayer. Member of Board of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.

Address North American Board of East-West Dialogue, St. Joseph Abbey, Spencer, MA.

The Very Rev. John Richardson, CM, President of DePaul University.


Most Rev. Willy Romelus, Bishop of the Diocese of Jeremie, Haiti.

Most Rev. Samuel Ruiz Garcia, Bishop of Chiapas, Mexico.

Dorothy Savage, Ministries in Christian Education, National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk and member of the Board of Monastic Inter-religious Dialogue. Widely known for his writings and teachings on contemplation and prayer. Sometimes called the spiritual heir of Thomas Merton, his work relates the contemplative life to the critical issues of the world. Active in Buddhist Christian Dialogue.

Brother Wayne Teasdale, Christian Sanyasi in the lineage of Bede Griffiths.

William Vendly, Interim Secretary, World Conference of Religion and Peace.
Catholics who signed the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic

Rev. Thomas Baima, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions.

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago.

Fr. Pierre-Francois de Bethune, OSB, Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique

Monastere St Andre de Clerlande, Belgium. Played major role in setting up the Pope’s meeting of religious leaders in Assisi, 1986.

Sister Joan M. Chatfield, Diocese of Honolulu, Maryknoll Mission sister and Director of Institute of Religion and Change in Honolulu. She is the Chair of the Faiths in the World Committee of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers.

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Abbot Timothy Kelly, OCSO, Gethsemane Abbey, Kentucky.

Mr. Jim Kenney, Vice-Chair, Executive Director, Common Ground, Chicago

Dr. Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany.

Dolores Leaky, Executive Director of Secretariat for Laity, Women and Youth of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sister Joan Monica McGuire, Dominican sister of the Congregation of Saint Catherine, KY, Vice President for Ministry of her congregation. Former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago.


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Brother Wayne Teasdale, Christian Sanyasi in the lineage of Bede Griffiths.

Other Prominent Catholic Attendees

Sister Mary Ellen Coombe, Member of the Sisters of Sion, associate director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs Archdiocese of Chicago, joint staff appointment with the American Jewish Committee.

Rev. Daniel Coughlin, Priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House.

Archbishop Angelo Fernandez, New Delhi, Emeritus from Delhi. International President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

John Grim, Assistant Professor of Religion, Bucknell University and author of a book on Native American shamanism, President of American Theilard Association.


Rev. Elwood Kieser, CSP, Pastor of Saint Paul the Apostle Parish in Los Angeles, CA. Director of the religious film Romero and the upcoming film on Dorothy Day.

Rev. Dr. Ellias D. Mallon, Graymoor, member exec comm. Temple of understanding.

Rev. Daniel Montalbano, STL, Pastor of Resurrection Parish, Associate Director of Ecumenical and Interrligious Dialogue, Archdiocese of Chicago.

Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston. Proposed as invitee by Women of Faith.

Rev. John Shea, STD, priest of ArchChicago and professor of systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and author of many books on spirituality.

Appendix D

ALPHABETIC GENDER BREAKDOWN
OF 1993 CATHOLIC PARTICIPANTS

Women

Sheila Adams, African American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Ethnic Ministries (P)

Dr. Teresa Albuquerque, Fellow of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Member of the Church History Association of India, member of the Asiatic Society of Bombay (P)

Sister Charlene Altemose, Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart, Fullbright Scholar in India (P)

Helen Alvare, Director of Planning and Information of the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (P)

Sr. Joanna Becker, Benedictine nun at St. Benedict’s Convent, St. Joseph, MN, member of MID (P)

Sister Margaret Boyle, Sister of Our Lady of Zion, Chair of the DuPage Interfaith Resource Network, former member of Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews (P)

Sister Miriam Brown, OP, Executive Director, Churches’ Center for Land and People, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois (P)

Sister Joan M. Chatfield, Diocese of Honolulu, Maryknoll Mission sister and Director of Institute of Religion and Change in Honolulu. Chair of the Faiths in the World Committee of the National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers

Sr. Pascaline Coff, O.S.B. PhD, Founder and Director of Osage Monastery in Sand Springs, Oklahoma (P)

Sister Mary Ellen Coombe, Member of the Sisters of Sion, associate director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs Archdiocese of Chicago, joint staff appointment with the American Jewish Committee.

Elizabeth Espersen, Executive Director, Thanks-Giving Square, Dallas, Texas, national and international programs; Co-Chair of North American Interfaith Network (P)
Dr. Elizabeth Ferrero, St. Thomas University, Miami (P)

Doris Fields, Sister of Archbishop Like (P)

Carolyn Ford, Peace and Justice Director at St. Isidore Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Joliet (P)

Virginia Ann Froehle, Sister of Mercy and author (P)

Prioress Margaret Mary Funk, OSB, Superior of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, member of Contemplative Outreach, member of Board of Directors of MID (P)

Edwina Gateley, Catholic lay minister; founder, Volunteer Missionary Movement, which has sent over 1000 men and women to serve in developing countries, and Genesis House, which serves women in prostitution (P)

Mary A. Hallan, director of Respect Life Activities for the Archdiocese of Chicago (P)

Rayetta Holman, Sister of Archbishop Lyke (P)

Mary Hunt, PhD, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California; Co-Director, Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER); member of the Board, National Association for Science, Technology, and Society (NASTS) where she represents the religious community (P)

Jo-Ellen Karstens –member of the Focolare Movement (P)

Claire Langton, the mother of a young woman with cerebral palsy (P)

Mary-Anne Langton, Co-Director of Office of Persons with Disabilities of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford (P)

Dolores Leaky, Executive Director of Secretariat for Laity, Women and Youth of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Hanne Marstrand Strong, President Manitou Foundation, originally from Denmark; a Lutheran raised as a Roman Catholic (P)

Sister Joan Monica McGuire, Dominican sister of the Congregation of Saint Catherine, KY, Vice President for Ministry of her congregation. Former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Teresita Nuval, Asian American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago (P)

Mary Oates, Professor of Economics, Regis College (P)

Asha Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths (P)
Eleanor Rae, PhD in Theology, Fordham University, founder and director of Center for Women, the Earth, and the Divine, and others (P)

Kay A. Read, Professor, DePaul University (P)

Dr. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston

Regina Sara Ryan, MA, former Catholic nun, coordinator of the First Conference on Crazy Wisdom and Divine Madness in 1992 (P)

Dorothy Savage, Ministries in Christian Education, National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Ms. Pat Smuck, Catholic laywoman; member, National Council of Catholic women (P)

Mary Southard, CSJ, Sister of St. Joseph of La Grange, co-founder and co-director of SpiritEarth, Center for the Sacred Universe, New England (P)

Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, historian of religions (Confucianism in Japan) (P)

Elizabeth-Ann Vanek -D. Min.; University Ministry and Department of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago (P)

Dr. Catherine Wessinger, Religious Studies scholar associated with Loyola University, New Orleans (P)

Krystyna Zambrzycki, American-European Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago (P)

Sr. Dominga Zapata, Society of Helpers, Hispanic and Native American Consultant of the Archdiocese of Chicago (P)

Sister Suzanne Zuercher, OSB, licensed psychologist, author on two books on the enneagram, former co-director of Institute of Spiritual Leadership at Loyola University. Proposed as invitee by Women of Faith (P)

42 women

13 women religious

13 women scholars

36 in the program as presenters (P)

14 from Chicago

26 from elsewhere in the USA

2 from India
Men

Fr. Richard Ament, Rural pastor, team of five parishes (P)

Fr. Thomas Baima, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions (P)

Father Bruno Barnhardt, Camaldolese monk, member of MID (P)

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago (P)

Thomas Berry, historian of religions and writer with special concern for the foundation of cultures in their relations with the natural world (P)

Fr. Pierre-Francois de Bethune, OSB, Dialogue Interreligieux Monastique

Monastere St Andre de Clerlande, Belgium. Played major role in setting up the Pope’s meeting of religious leaders in Assisi, 1986

Dr. John Borelli, Interfaith and Ecumenical secretary of the Conference of Catholic Bishops, consultor of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Rev. Louis Cameli, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the Midwest Assc. Of Spiritual Directors (P)

Dr. Jeffrey Carlson, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University, Chicago (P)

John Carr, Secretary for Social Development and World Peace of the United States Catholic Conference (P)

Rev. Dr. Henry Charles, St Theresa’s Roman Catholic Church, Barataria, Trinidad and Tobago, Assistant professor, St. Louis University, Department of Theological Studies (P)

Fr. Richard Chilson, Paulist priest and pastor of Holy Spirit parish in Berkeley, California (P)

Fr. James Connor, OCSO, Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky, member of MID and editor of its publication, Bulletin (P)

Rev. Daniel Coughlin, Priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House

Prof. Ewart Cousins, Professor of Theology, Fordham University; General Editor of the twenty-five volume series, World Spirituality; former consultant to the Vatican Secretariat on Inter-Religious Dialogue (P)

Mayor Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, Honorary Chairperson (P)
Rev. Dr. César A. Dávila, founder and president of the Yoga and Christianity Movement in the Americas (P)

Rev. Peter Dougherty, priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, founder of Covenant for Peace, a faith-based peace community that focuses on the dangers of the nuclear arms race (P)

Fr. Roy Drake, SJ, Expert on drug and alcohol abuse (P)

Fr. Julian von Duerbeck, Benedictine monk of St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, IL; member of MID (P)

Rev. Monsignor John Egan, Priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and assistant to the President of DePaul University. He is considered a tireless agent for change in race relations, civil rights and urban affairs for 50 years

Archbishop Angelo Fernandez, New Delhi, Emeritus from Delhi. International President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace

Rev. Dr. Enzo Maria Fondi, one of the originators of the Focolare Movement in Italy and in the former German Democratic Republic; now a central director of the movement (P)

Dr. William French, Professor of Theology, Loyola University, Chicago (P)

Fr. Albert Fritsch, SJ, Director of Earth Healing (P)

Br. Ted Funk, Xaverian brother


Most Rev. Francesco Gioa, Delegate, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, former Archbishop of Camerino, San Severino Marche (P)

John Grim, Assistant Professor of Religion, Bucknell University and author of a book on Native American shamanism, President of American Teilhard Association

Rev. Albert Hallin, Priest of the Diocese of Peoria, Pastor of Saint Columba Parish and Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenism

Mr. Francis P. Hannigan, Director of the Family Ministries Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago (P)

Rev. Gilbert G. Hardy, Cistercian Monk, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dallas (P)

Dr. Patrick Henry, Executive Director, Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research in Collegeville, MN
Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, President Emeritus, Notre Dame University. Active in the cause of world peace since retirement

Fr. Oliver Jennings, Pastor of St. John De LaSalle Church

Rev. Jay Jung, CM (P)

Fr. Thomas Kane, Paulist priest, Professor of Theology at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, MA (P)

Dr. John Kaserow, Maryknoll priest, Professor of Mission, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago (P)

James Kavanaugh, PhD, former Catholic priest, poet and author (P)

Abbot Timothy Kelly, OCSO, Gethsemane Abbey, Kentucky.

Mr. Jim Kenney, Vice-Chair, Executive Director, Common Ground, Chicago (P)

Rev. Elwood Kieser, CSP, Pastor of Saint Paul the Apostle Parish in Los Angeles, CA. Director of the religious film Romero and the upcoming film on Dorothy Day

Br. Joseph Kilikevice, OP, Dominican Friar and member of the mentor Teacher Guild of the Dances of Universal Peace (P)

Fr. John Killian, priest of the Diocese of Buffalo, Attica, NY.

Paul Knitter, Professor of Theology, Xavier University (P)

Fr. Thomas Kocherry, Redemptorist priest, President of the National Fish Workers Federation in India, bringing all fish workers along the coastline of India together and organizing them against the big mechanized trawlers that are monopolizing the waters (P)

Dr. Hans Küng, Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Tübingen University in Germany (P)

Albert LaChance, husband, father, poet, environmentalist, therapist, lecturer; co-founder with his wife, Carol, of Greenspirit Center in New Hampshire; author of *Greenspirit: Twelve Step in Ecological Spirituality*, a book highly recommended by Thomas Berry as a practical extension of his own work (P)

Dr. Otis Lawrence, Board of Governor’s State University Degree program (P)

Leo Lefebure, Professor, University of St. Mary on the Lake (P)

Rev. Dr. Ellias D. Mallon, Graymoor, member exec comm. Temple of understanding

Dr. Daniel Martin, Roman Catholic priest. Founder/Director, International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth (P)
Fr. Yvon Masaac, parish of Fermathe, Haiti (P)

Fr. Thomas Matus, Camaldolese Monk (P)

Dr. Dennis McCann, Professor of Ethics at DePaul University, Chicago (P)

Rev. Michael McGarry, priest of the Congregation of Saint Paul and Rector, St. Paul College, Washington, DC. Member of NADEO (P)

Donald Mitchell, Professor of comparative philosophy, Purdue University

Thomas A. Shannon, Paris Fletcher Distinguished Professor of the Humanities, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA (P)

Rev. Maximilian Mizzi, Sacro Convento Di San Francesco, Delegate General for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Conventual Franciscans, Frati Minori Conventuali, Assisi

Rev. Daniel Montalbano, STL, Pastor of Resurrection Parish, Associate Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue, Archdiocese of Chicago

Brian Muldoon, attorney involved in conflict resolution work through the Dearborn Institute (P)

Dr. Robert Müller, Chancellor Emeritus, University for Peace/Universidad de la Paz, Costa Rica, Former Assistant Secretary General, United Nations, writer, peace activist, recipient of the 1989 UNESCO Peace Education Prize (P)

F. Byron (Ron) Nahser, President and CEO, Frank C. Nahser, Inc. B.A., Notre Dame University, M.A., Mundelein College, PhD, De Paul University (P)

Rev. Albert Nambiaparambil, CMI, Commission for Ecumenism & Dialogue, Secretary, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India. Secretary of World Fellowship of Interreligious Councils

Professor Raimundo Panikkar, Doctorates in Chemistry, Philosophy, and Theology; Professor Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara. Panikkar’s self-identification is Catholic-Hindu-Buddhist (P)

Russill Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths, composer, musician and vocalist, and Asha Paul D’Silva, Disciple of Fr. Bede Griffiths (P)

Richard J. Payne, editor, publisher, conceived and developed the 75-volume The Classics of Western Spirituality, the 25-volume World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, and the forthcoming 60-volume The Classics of Eastern Spirituality; Executive Director, the Arcadian Institute, Rockport, MA (P)
Fr. M. Basil Pennington, OSB, Author of books on centering prayer. Member of Board of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, St. Joseph Abbey, Spencer, MA

Burton Pretty On Top, Crow Nation; spiritual leader and pipe carrier (P)

Dr. John Renard, Professor of Theology, St. Louis University; member of NADEO (P)

The Very Rev. John Richardson, CM, President of DePaul University

Most Reverend Plácido Rodríguez, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago

Bishop Willie Romelus, Diocese of Jérémie in Haiti (P)

Roland Ropers, Oblate of the Order of St. Benedict and friend of Fr. Bede Griffiths (P)

Most Reverend Samuel Ruiz García, Bishop of Chiapas, Mexico (P)

Fr. David Ryan, Archdiocesan Director of Catholic Youth Office (P)

Fr. Thomas Ryan, Paulist priest, Director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism in Montreal, Canada (P)

Robert J. Schreiter, Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Catholic Theological Union (P)

Rev. John Shea, STD, priest of ArchChicago and professor of systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and author of many books on spirituality


Michael Stoeber, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and Religious Education, Catholic University of America (P)

David Steindl-Rast, OSB, Benedictine monk, advisor to MID (P)

Charles Strain, Professor of Religious Studies, DePaul University (P)

Br. Wayne Teasdale, Christian sannyasi in the lineage of Fr. Bede Griffiths (P)

David Toolan, SJ, associate editor of AMERICA magazine (P)

Fr. David Tracy, Professor at the University of Chicago (P)

William Vendley, Secretary General, World Conference on Religion and Peace/International; former Dean, Doctor of Ministry and Master of Arts in Theology programs and Professor of Theology, Roman Catholic Major Seminary, Long Island (P)

James Yellowbank, Winnebago treaty rights activist, Native American Community Leader, director of the Aniwim Center for Native American Catholics of Chicago (P)
87 men
29 lay
04 religious brothers
10 monks
27 religious priests
21 diocesan priests
04 bishops
03 archbishops
01 cardinal
29 scholars
63 in the program as presenters (P)
28 from Chicago
41 from elsewhere in the USA
18 from other countries (India, Italy, Belgium, Ecuador, Haiti, Trinidad and Mexico)