

similarly, portray God as a huge being who binds all humans by golden chains (WOR, 7), omitting the connection of this image to ancient Israelite enslavement. Forrest Gump's God is simply a huge being to whom prayers for shrimp are to be addressed, whose praises are sung by choir members in a generic church, and whose presence is most clearly manifested by an unexpected storm.

The three examples likewise all reflect a trend in American culture towards speaking of "prayer" as rooted in feeling, rather than being linked to scriptures reflecting the particular history of Israel & the community of early Jewish Christians (see also NHLR 32). Although Cartwright mentions being "engaged in regular reading of the Testament," his descriptions of prayer place more emphasis on generic weeping, prostration, & earnest repentance (WOR 492-3). Similarly, while the theme of enslavement in "gold chains" is vaguely reminiscent of the Israelites bondage to Yahweh, and the raging storm faced by Forrest and Dan is reminiscent of descriptions of God's fury in the Hebrew Bible, prayer in these contexts is described primarily as earnestness & dedication only peripherally linked to Jewish & Christian scriptures. Undoubtedly these trends reflect the dominance of radical Protestant reform movements in North America, which emphasized pluralism and viewed older church institutions with suspicion (see also NHLR, 76-77, 83-84).

effect the conversion of large numbers of people he has never met in camp-meetings lasting hours and days at a time (493). Like Forrest joining the local church choir, and Barrows with his fellow organizers inviting religious specialists from all over the globe, Cartwright is drawn into the sermon, bible reading, and communal prayer gatherings of the mid-nineteenth century revival movements thriving around him. While Cartwright is perhaps less personally innovative than Forrest or the Parliament's organizers, it is clear from his account that nineteenth century American religious movements were freely adapting traditional Christian practices in radically new ways, whether through involvement of huge crowds (493-94) or in the unusual types of involuntary bodily motions (e.g., "jerks") not only allowed but encouraged as expressions of spirit (495-97).

Considering the similarities and contrasts of these strikingly different examples, then, illustrates clearly the process of ongoing revival that allows religious traditions to adapt to different needs and contexts. Identifying the basic features of such revivals suggests that examples might be easily found in non-Christian religious traditions as well. With regards Christian traditions in particular, however, it is significant to note that all three accounts, which show religious life being both perpetuated and transformed through revival, reflect much older trends in Christian thought and practice. In his description of the "Yahweh, the God of Israel," for example, Andrew Walls stresses that this deity is defined to a significant extent by his intervention in Jewish & Christian history; but notes that over the centuries, "the living God of the Hebrews...came to be interpreted in terms derived from the Greek philosophical tradition," and that "the mind of all European forms of Christianity has been deeply affected by this" (NHLR, 107). The nineteenth & twentieth century American examples surveyed in this paper, then, simply illustrate uniquely American extensions of this trend towards disconnecting the term "God" from its Christian roots. Cartwright's account never mentions Israel or earlier Jewish history, focusing instead on the proliferation of churches where "hundreds fell prostrate under the mighty power of God" (WOR, 493-4). Barrows' words,

"universalist fulfillment theology" was the overall position of most who attended (7-9). The cross-cultural revival of interest in religious life in 1893 Chicago, in other words, was primarily an expansion of Christian ideology to include other faiths, which most likely forged new alliances between Christians even as it introduced them to a few non-Christians.

Once again it is important to note the differences between Forrest Gump and the World Parliament, especially with regard to personalities and speaking styles, as a way of clarifying more precisely their similar features. Forrest wants primarily to honor his promise to his dead friend, speaking simply and straightforwardly of that goal; he thinks of God quite literally as the agent of the storm. Barrows and his colleagues, on the other hand, compose formal speeches full of lofty metaphors, intended to communicate across religious traditions the vastness of "human brotherhood" (7). Most likely the Parliament did involve more spontaneous conversations, but these would like have been relatively formal, involving as they did virtual strangers from completely different cultures. Eck clearly appreciates the visionaries who planned the Parliament, but also clearly highlights their narrow-mindedness: she closes her description by mentioning several glaring omissions among those who attended, such as the embarrassingly small percentage of women, the near absence of African Americans, and the total absence & even lack of acknowledgement of Native American traditions (10-11). Yet Barrows and other planners of the Chicago Parliament share with Forrest a traditional Christian sense that God's love is universal. Both cases illustrate revival of trust in such a supreme God that applies old notions to new circumstances, thus resulting in new alliances between old friends and new acquaintances.

Cartwright's even earlier and more traditional account of Christian revivals nevertheless exhibits the same features. Suddenly struck by an intense fear of death at the turn of the same century, Cartwright seeks a new life through praying with his mother and "regular reading of the Testament" which he had grown up with but apparently never heeded (491-2); and is later drawn to

Forrest seeks to revive the memory of his friendship with his war-buddy Buba; this leads him into the completely new enterprise of shrimp fishing, and then brings him back together with Dan and also subsequently to a new church community. The 1893 “World Parliament of Religions” involved revival on a much larger scale, and of a very different type. Eck makes clear that its organizers sought to strengthen their own Christian outlooks, but in doing so they reached far beyond the religious forms familiar to them. Eck begins by describing her own visit to a Jain temple in Boston that is housed in a Swedish Lutheran Church, originally built by Eck's own denomination, allowing her to note that the American past long dominated primarily by Christian forms has now given way to a startling array of foreign traditions (4). Eck stresses, similarly, that the social reality in which we live could hardly have been imagined by those who attended the Parliament, whose staged show of diversity she contrasts with the actual diversity found in the Chicago metropolitan area today (4-5). Yet she clearly also wants the reader to appreciate that, in the late nineteenth, the idea of a Parliament drawing together different religions was a radical idea.

In telling the story of the Parliament itself, she notes first the presence of religious leaders who objected to and did not attend the conference (6), and then depicts its opening ceremony:

When the Parliament opened, a replica of the Liberty Bell tolled ten times, once for each of the great religions represented....the president of the Parliament...began his address, “Worshippers of God and Lovers of Man, let us rejoice that we have lived to see this glorious day!”...John Henry Barrows then welcomed the delegates and confessed, “When, a few days ago, I met for the first time the delegates who have come to us from Japan, and shortly after the delegates who have come to us from India, I felt that the arms of Human brotherhood had reached almost around the globe....what gives us the most hope and happiness today is our confidence that ‘the whole round world is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God’ ...devout men of all faiths may speak for themselves without hindrance, without criticism, and without compromise, and tell what they believe and why they believe it.” And so they did. (6-7)

This opening ceremony uses old symbols in a new way: the liberty bell replica tolls once for each of the world religions represented, and Barrows paints a picture of huge (perhaps divine) arms bringing them all together. Eck goes on to sample key speakers representing the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim traditions, emphasizing their bold tone; but notes that a decidedly Christian

stark contrast to the more open-ended approach of the 1893 World Parliament's organizers. Despite these differences, though, all three stories depict individuals seeking to revive their past in a new way, leading them to reconnect with both old and new acquaintances, and thus vividly illustrating the way that religious revivals both perpetuate and transform earlier traditions.

Towards the middle of the movie following Forrest's life, after returning from Vietnam and unexpectedly meeting his childhood friend Jenny at a peace rally in Washington, Forrest buys a shrimp boat in honor of his lost war-buddy Bubba, who had expressed hopes of starting a shrimp fishing business. He invites his former lieutenant Dan to be his first mate; though still bitter at having lost his legs in the war, Dan agrees to come on deck. The following scenes depict Forrest and Lieutenant Dan struggling to find shrimp:

Forrest & Dan repeatedly pull up garbage (old shoes, plastic bags, a toilet seat, etc.) in their nets, with no sight of shrimp. After Dan suggests sarcastically that "maybe [Forrest] should pray for shrimp," the next scene shows Forrest singing with a church choir, with Dan sitting in the back with his liquor bottle, as Forrest's voice describes the scene and notes that "...I think he left the prayin' up to me." The next shot once again shows Forrest and Dan on their boat dumping garbage from their net, and Dan asks "where is this God of yours?" Forrest's voice-over notes, "It's interesting Lieutenant Dan said that, because right then, God showed up." The subsequent scene shows the two in the midst of a raging storm, with Forrest steering and Dan up on the mast of the ship yelling and raising his middle finger as if cursing the agent of the storm.

These scenes are followed by a news segment revealing that Forrest and Dan end up being the only surviving shrimp boat and therefore get rich catching all the shrimp. A few scenes later, Dan thanks Forrest for saving his life in the war, something he had never done, and Forrest notes "he never exactly said this, but I got the feeling that Lieutenant Dan had made his peace with God." The rest of the film depicts similarly fantastic occasions of Forrest persevering in whatever endeavors he decides to pursue. Forrest's elementary school phrasing and vocabulary, coupled with his persistence, both seem to reflect the filmmakers' intention to highlight Forrest's simple-minded dedication throughout the film, especially in contrast to other key characters such as Dan and Jenny.

The Same Thing Only Different

Religious traditions are not static entities, but fluid networks of practices, ideas, & relationships that change over time. Periodic revivals of such traditions allow them to adapt to create new patterns of behavior, in such a way as to build or enhance their trust in an ultimate, unseen power. In undertaking this task of restructuring behavior, individuals typically draw on the collection of religious practices, ideas, & social structures that is already being preserved and transmitted by the religious communities they live in. In this paper I will review three strikingly different examples of Christian revival in nineteenth & twentieth century American culture, drawing examples from the contemporary movie "Forrest Gump;" Diana Eck's account of the "World's Parliament of Religions" convened in Chicago in conjunction with the 1893 World's Fair; and Peter Cartwright's autobiographical account of religious revivals and frontier preaching in early eighteenth century Kentucky. In relation to all three examples, I will argue that individuals seeking trust in some unknown power both *perpetuate* and *transform* the collective traditions that they inherit.

The movie 'Forrest Gump' tells the story of a simple-minded yet extraordinarily sincere young man who, despite his limited intellectual capacities and the ridicule continually directed at him by others, always perseveres and does the right thing. Diana Eck's essay provides a snapshot of attitudes towards the world's many religious traditions at the end of the previous century. Cartwright, finally, focuses on personal accounts of religious conversion in America several generations before the World Parliament, and far to the south of urban Chicago. The experiences recounted in these three sources could hardly be more different. The plot of "Forest Gump" is fiction, emphasizing the fantastic dedication of a single individual over the course of a whole lifetime; while Eck reconstructs a moment in history which she suggests is both related to and starkly different from our own present-day wrestling with religious diversity (4-5). Cartwright's commitment to reviving Christian tradition focuses on the need to convert and reform others, in

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Sample Comparative Paper #2c

Outline

[COMMENTARY: if you submit a paper that combines and integrates the various elements of the paper, you may wish (but are NOT REQUIRED) to submit an outline instead of filling out the usual checklist. The outline below numbers and lists, for each paragraph, a brief label indicating the function of that paragraph; and a single sentence statement of that paragraph's focus. □ This order of this outline reflects the particular arrangement of paragraphs in this sample; your own paper may proceed in a different order. □ compare with 3(b): non-integrated version)]

1. Introduction: religious revival involves both *perpetuating* and *transforming* collective traditions inherited from surrounding communities, as illustrated in the three Christian examples of this paper.
2. Overview of sources: fiction focused on one hero's life vs. reconstructions of historical moments; yet all seek revival of past, leading to reconnecting with old & new acquaintances
3. Selective summary of "Forrest Gump:" "praying for shrimp" & subsequent storm reveals filmmaker's emphasis on Forrest's simple-minded dedication in contrast to other characters
4. Transition & first part of "Frontiers of Encounter:" Parliament involves larger scale, different type of revival compared to film, with Eck's lead-in to describing the event stressing the limited religious diversity of 1893 Chicago to the widespread diversity of contemporary times.
5. Parliament's opening: ceremony uses old symbols (liberty bell, "arms of human brotherhood") in a new way, suggesting expansion of Christian ideology to include other faiths.
5. Extended comparison of personalities & speaking styles: Forrest simple and focused while Parliament speeches lofty, formal, and somewhat narrow-minded; yet both illustrate revival of trust in God that applies old notions to new circumstances.
5. Comparison to Cartwright's "Frontier Preacher:" less personal innovation than Forrest or Parliament, yet also radically new adaptation of Christian practices (e.g., huge crowds & "jerks")
6. Wider connections to Christian tradition I: examples reflect older trends in use of term "God."
7. Wider connections II: examples also reflect American trend in regarding "prayer" primarily as a matter of feeling, vs. grounded in Jewish & Christian scripture, most likely due to influence of radical Protestant reform movements in North America.