

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 (as discussed in class with regards to the term "Reformation") emphasized pluralism and viewed older church institutions with suspicion (see also NHLR, 76-77, 83-84).

Considering the similarities and contrasts of these strikingly different examples, finally, illustrates clearly the process of ongoing revival that allows religious traditions to adapt to different needs and contexts. At the heart of each story are individuals working to restructure their daily activities, creating 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, all of them draw on the collection of religious practices & ideas that is being preserved and transmitted by the religious communities they live in. Forrest Gump joins the local church choir; Barrows & his fellow organizers invite religious specialists from all over the globe; and Cartwright is drawn into the sermon, bible reading, & communal prayer gatherings of the mid-nineteenth century revival movements thriving around him. In all three examples of religious revival, then, individuals seeking trust in some unknown power both *perpetuate* and *transform* the collective traditions that they inherit.

(b) The three accounts described above, each nearly a century apart, all illustrate uniquely American inclinations to use of the term “God” in ways that further disconnect it from the particulars of its Christian & Jewish roots. Admittedly such disconnection is not entirely new: 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). Alan Unterman, in his description of Moses Maimonides’ medieval Jewish description of God, notes the connection of this deity to Israel’s history (NHLR 23) but also an emphasis on his incorporeal and unitary nature which reflects the influence of Greek philosophy (NHLR 22). The nineteenth & twentieth century examples in question go significantly further, however: 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, 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

brotherhood" (7). Most likely the Parliament did involve more spontaneous conversations between the participants, but Eck's overview suggests these would also have been relatively formal, involving virtual strangers from completely different cultures. A further contrast is found in Peter Cartwright's autobiographical account of religious revivals and frontier preaching in early eighteenth century Kentucky (490-99), which focuses on personal accounts of religious conversion in America several generations before the World Parliament, and far to the south of urban Chicago. Cartwright, like Forrest, manifests straightforward personal commitment to his religious practice, but with a focus on the need to convert and reform others that also contrasts with the viewpoint of the 1893 World Parliament's organizers.

Interestingly, however, the film scene and two readings all portray individuals seeking to revive their past in a new way, leading them to reconnect with to both old & new acquaintances. Forrest seeks to revive the memory of his friendship with his war-buddy Buba, although 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. A century earlier Barrows and other planners of the Chicago Parliament, inspired by the traditional notion that God's love is universal, bring together many who seek to communicate across faiths. The opening ceremony for this gathering casts old symbols in a new light: 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 (6-7). Cartwright, suddenly struck by an intense fear of death at the turn of the same century, 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 effect the conversion of large numbers of people he has never met in camp-meetings lasting hours and days at a time (493).

attended: 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). Through all of these details Eck stresses not only that our contemporary attitudes towards religious diversity originated several generations ago; but also that the social reality in which we live could hardly have been imagined by those early explorers of the world's religions. She seems appreciative, furthermore, of the visionaries who planned the 1893 World's Parliament, but also clearly highlights their narrowmindedness, as if to suggest that we be alert to the possibility of our own limited visions.

### Comparison

[COMMENTARY: As with the sample paper for Unit 1, this comparison draws on the film & reading presented above. The required division of comparison into (a) particular and (b) wider types for units 2 & 3, however, means that the **first part** (a) references a **second reading must be from WOR** (i.e., the Cartwright essay from ch.11 — but note you could also use something from the coursepack); while the **second part** (b) relates the film & readings to the *notions of “God” and “prayer”* as **described in NHLR**, ch.1 & 2. This reference to two separate chapters in the wider comparison (b) is necessary in this sample since it addresses generic notions of religion in America, which have been significantly shaped by both Jewish & Christian traditions; your **own paper will draw on only one chapter of NHLR.**]

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(a) Though both are narratives, “Forrest Gump” and Eck's essay differ greatly in style. 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). The personalities and speaking styles involved contrast even more starkly. Forrest wants primarily to honor his promise to his dead friend, speaking simply and straightforwardly of that goal, and taking Dan's sarcastic suggestion about prayer literally; 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

provides, as you are required to do in all your own papers, **specific page numbers not only for quotations but also for all paraphrased descriptions** of the essay's content. As with the film summary, the closure provided by the final two sentences both comments on the author's perspective and restates the theme highlighted in the second sentence of the summary, though your own summary need only address one of these.]

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In the essay "Frontiers of Experience," Diana Eck recounts the events of the World's Parliament of Religions convened in Chicago in conjunction with the 1893 World's Fair. Through this description she provides a snapshot of attitudes towards the world's many religious traditions at the end of the previous century, implicitly connecting and contrasting this snapshot to the actual presence of numerous foreign faiths in America today. She opens by telling of her visit to a Jain temple in Boston that is housed in a Swedish Lutheran Church, originally built by Eck's own denomination; the contrast of cut-crystal chandeliers and fine marble images of Jain saints provides a clear reminder that the American past long dominated primarily by Christian forms has now given way to a startling array of foreign traditions (4). She also points out the striking contrast between the staged showing of diversity at the 1893 Parliament and the actual diversity found in the Chicago metropolitan area today (4-5). Noting first the presence of religious leaders who objected to and did not attend the conference (6), she 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)

Eck goes on to sample key speakers from the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim traditions, emphasizing their bold tone, and noting too that a "universalist fulfillment theology" was the overall position of most who attended (7-9). She closes by mentioning several glaring omissions among those who

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 the fact that he persists in attaining a goal planted in his mind years earlier by a long-dead friend, both seem to reflect the filmmakers' clear though light-hearted intention to highlight Forrest's simple-minded dedication throughout the film. This is in contrast to the portrayal of other key characters such as Dan and Jenny, who wander from one situation to another without such persistence, either cynically cursing their luck (as does Dan until just after the above scene) or simply unable to translate into action their various plans for self-improvement (Jenny).

## Representation of Reading

[COMMENTARY: Note that the primary quotation below is about **four or five sentences long** and deals explicitly in a *focused way with a single idea*. Alternatively you may wish to draw together into a single unit **two or three shorter quotations from within the same segment** of the reading (usually a two or three page range maximum) which are all by the same author and all address a similar issue of interest to you. In selecting your passage(s), avoid focusing on general introductory or concluding remarks; rather *pick out specific details or events that concretely illustrate some point or theme*, to give a vivid sense of what its central sections are about. (See FAQ #20-23 for correct formatting & citation, which will also be reviewed in class.) Note that the selective summary below

NOTE: As for the Unit 1 papers, a completed checklist form must be stapled to the front of the paper. The checklist reminds you to make sure you have done all the required preparation and included all the required elements in the paper; & guides me in locating those elements in what you have written, and makes it easier for me to point out if you have left out or forgotten to do anything.

3/31/05  
HRS 140  
Prof. Dubois  
2014 words  
[note: **NO NAME**  
on 1<sup>st</sup> page]

Sample Comparative Paper #2  
(compare with other samples 3(b): with introductory paragraph & 3(c): integrated version)

### Representation of Film

[COMMENTARY: I strongly advise that (for the first paper at least) you **single-space & offset the description of your chosen scene** from the main body of your description as if it were a quote from a reading (see FAQ #22 for correct formatting, to be reviewed in class). At this stage of the description, focus on *what you actually saw and heard* (e.g., “The next scene shows Forrest singing enthusiastically with a group of African-Americans dressed in choir robes”) rather than noting general moods or judgments (e.g., “Forrest stupidly takes his friend's idea literally, joining a church and singing with a bunch of mindlessly smiling choir members”). In deciding what details are relevant to mention in leading up to and following up on your scene(s), avoid including details that have no bearing on the scene(s) in question. Finally, note that in this case the **closure** provided--i.e., the last two sentences--includes *both a description of the filmmaker's perspective* (addressing issues related to emotional tone, implied approval/disapproval, and subtle emphases of one viewpoint over another) and a *restatement of the themes* put forth in the opening synopsis (i.e., Forrest's persistence ability to do the right thing); your **own closure need only address one or another of these.**]

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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 seems to be in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing. Towards the middle of the movie, 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 shrimping 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: