

Humans and nature

[Religion](#), [God](#)



How Religious Belief Connects with Humans And Nature ?? Humans' relationship towards nature is complicated. Phyllis Tribble, a well known scholar, mentions in her paper *A Tempest in a Text : Ecological Soundings in the Book of Jonah* that " Theological language is ecological language" (Tribble 189). It suggests that widespread religion has a reflection on the relationship between humans' belief and nature. Besides, the two main characters, Ahab and Jonah, from the movie *Moby Dick* and the religious book *The book of Jonah*, their different views of God are shown in their opposite actions towards nature. ? In the movie *Moby Dick*, Ahab, the captain, is the emblem of the pioneers leading in the exploration of the great nature. He challenges the mysterious nature fearlessly. Rather than praying to God for help when he encounters confronted and unexpected difficulties, he believes that he can overcome all those difficulties by himself and never ceases his expedition. In the movie, *Pequod*, the whaling ship, is caught in a terrible storm. The sails should be put down for slowing ship's speed in a storm. Starbuck, one of crew member, wants to furl a sail, but Ahab refuses.

Ahab asks all of his sailors to hold sails tightly. When Starbuck tries to furl down sails, Ahab threatens Starbuck to stop by using an arrow. Ahab steadfastly continues battling with the nature to the end until finally his ship survives in bad weather. " Ahab called that Typhoon's bluff; stood toe to toe with it and punched away till it hollared ' quits'! " (Bradbury 158). Through the whole battle with the storm, Ahab even mocks at what he encounters. " Oh, how the gods enjoy playing with us. What's the point of the game, I wonder?

Sometimes I'm on the very edge of knowing-and then they toss me back in the box" (Bradbury 158). In Ahab's mind, he is fighting against God, and choosing to put his own will above faith. Ahab believes himself above the natural world, and almost a god. This belief lends him power and majesty that make him battle with nature. ?? In the movie, Ahab's persistence on chasing the white whale makes him act like a hero, however, his vengeance of whale also makes him overstep on the boundary of nature which leads him to the death.

To Captain Ahab, the whale symbolizes the evil in the universe: " He is part of this wicked game that runs man from the cradle and bullies him into the grave, Moby Dick is evil ten times over, in a world where evil is common as sea-water" (Bradbury 90). So it is Ahab's destiny to get rid of it. In the last part of scenes, Ahab has no chance of killing Moby Dick, yet he engages in his suicide plan to stab at the whale: " To the last I grapple with thee! from hell's heart I stab at thee! ; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee, though damned whale! Thus! I give up my spear! (BRADBURY 174). His plan to kill Moby Dick seals the tragic fate for himself and the crew of the Pequod. In the end the whale represents both noble peace and terrifying death. Besides, in the book, Ahab sees the graves of other sailors died in killing whales, and he gets predictions about his death from Fedallah. Those things not just happen accidentally to Ahab. In fact, it's the fate already made by God try to stop Ahab's actions of killing the whale. The whale is the combination of contradictions, a symbol of the universe's wide and mystery of God's boundless divine power, fate. ? God controls what we would consider " fate" in the casting of the fortune. In The Book of Jonah, Jonah

opposes to God's will and flees away which results in a storm created by the God in his journey. Jonah gets on a ship to Tarshish, and he encounters the storm: "The Lord, however, hurled such furious winds toward the sea that a powerful storm raged upon it; the ship expected itself to crack up" (1: 4). The storm is so powerful that all the sailors start to pray to the God for help. and the Lord, God of Heaven, I worship-he who made the sea, and the dry land as well" (1" 10). Even though Jonah runs away from the Lord and has no thought for the spiritual condition of his shipmates; his life still brought them closer to God. However, the storm just gets worse. Jonah tells sailors in order to worship God, they can calm the sea by throwing him into the sea. "If you lift me and cast me overboard, the sea will calm its raging against you, for I personally acknowledge that this massive tempest raging against you is on my own account" (1: 12).

Jonah has no doubt that his rebellion against God is the cause of the storm that threatened to sink the ship they are sailing upon. Hence, humans fear of unexpected natural power and then pray to God for help. ?? Contrary to how the white whale drives Ahab crazy which result in Ahab's death with the whale, the whale in The Book of Jonah changes Jonah's attitudes toward God and saves him from his sin. God does not put Jonah into death immediately, instead, he sends out a fish. "The Lord directed a large fish to swallow Jonah.

Jonah remained in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (2: 1). Jonah is helpless in the fish's belly and starts to repent and pray to God : "In my trouble, I appeal to the Lord; he answers me... as for me, voicing gratitude, I shall offer you sacrifices; I shall fulfill all that I vow" (2: 10). By

singing the thanksgiving song, Jonah starts to be thankful to God and he realizes that he is still connecting with God. God as a merciful and generous figure in The Book of Jonah, he saves Jonah from the fish. The Lord spoke to the fish and made it vomit Jonah upon dry land” (2: 11). From an ecological point of view, Phyllis Trible claims in her book “ If the verb ‘ swallow’ suggest that fish is a hostile environment for Jonah, the verb ‘ vomit’ suggests that the fish is a hostile environment for the fish... In a bulimic exercise the animal of the sea rejects human fodder” (Trible 190). This ecological danger recalls Jonah’s inner instincts to God: “ Yet God brought up his life from the Pit, and to this God he rendered thanks” (Trible 190).

In other words, The whale as well as considered to be “ hostile environment”, represents the nature power that given by God. It suggests that humans should always keep their faith to the God, thus, God can rescue humans from the danger and forgive their sins. ?? When humans are building the relationship with nature, if they are going against nature they cannot get the results they want, instead, if they working along with nature which can actually leads to peace. In the movies, even if Ahab orders his crew to chase Moby Dick again and again, the white whale does not surrender but appears to counterattack.

It attacks the boats, wrecks the whaling ship and brings much pain to human beings. God’s power and embodiment of justice are shown through nature. God warns human beings that if they still destroy nature unshakably, they will be buried by divine nature eventually. It is difficult for human beings relying on our own insufficient power to win the battle between nature and them. In contrast, Jonah suppose to preach God’s will to Nineveh, however,

he is from the country which is defeated by Niveh, thus he is reluctant to deliver God's message.

God puts Jonah into hostile environment and wants Jonah to learn about tolerance through Jonah's repent. Jonah realizes his sin and start to believe God again which results in later God saves his life. His confession to God adequately proves that his humans' tolerance has persuaded him to give up his enmity. Human beings can get along well with nature and they can keep a harmonious relationship with nature. However, keeping the harmonious relationship must be based on human beings'tolerance to nature.