

ABSTRACT
JONAH'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS
SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CHANGE

By
Daphne Mathebula

Supervisor: Prof. JH Coetzee
Department: Biblical and Religious Studies
Degree: Magister Artium

The problem addressed by the research is that Christians seem to be more threatened by socio-religious change than other members of society. This has resulted in believers following the world in most instances instead of leading. Since some of the changes have socio-religious origins and/or implication, the situation may be rectified if the Church in the new South Africa will accept responsibility and commit itself to using every opportunity effectively by anticipating, initiating and managing change. Thus the task of this research is to understand from the book of Jonah, what the attitude of believers today should be towards socio-religious change.

Analysis of the Book of Jonah by means of the socio-rhetorical approach of VK Robbins (1996) is employed. The aspects that were investigated were Social and Cultural Texture, Inner Texture and Sacred Texture. Particularism and universalism were respectively identified as the dominant and counter-culture of Israel in the post-exilic era. The most basic social and cultural value influencing these cultures was honor while the religious attitudes towards life included conversionism, introversionism, revolutionism and thaumaturgicalism.

A pattern of Challenge-Response Contest was discovered through the progressive texture of Inner Texture. This contest mainly reflects Jonah's preoccupation with his honor in the face of a change required by God. By exploring the Sacred Texture, God and Jonah are characterized to disclose their attitudes particularly as they relate to socio-religious change. The present day socio-religious situation in South Africa was also analyzed on the basis of the relevant literature.

Jonah is characterized by inconsistency due to his preoccupation with his honor.

He became disobedient to God, insensitive, indifferent and irresponsible. On the other hand, God is portrayed as being involved in all of life and even initiating, undertaking and enforcing a socio-religious change He wants to implement through the person He chooses. In implementing a change, He deals with our own lives, attitudes and conduct.

Jonah's honor compares to the human rights in our day, in the new South Africa. The Scriptural understanding of human rights implies a three-legged pot consisting of human dignity, human equality and human responsibility. Due to misconceptions and insufficient understanding of this concept the pursuit for human rights has often resulted in an increasing loss and damage to life and property. I, therefore, propose that believers take responsibility to help the general populace bring the balance, to broaden and deepen their understanding of human rights by first allowing God to deal with their individual lives, attitudes and conduct. They should anticipate change by seeking to progressively understand God; initiate it by developing a Christlike attitude of acceptance towards outgroups without condoning sin; and manage it by example in tolerance, by openness to learn from unbelievers and by being constant in prayer and hope in God.

God's intention that a socio-religious change should always be to the benefit of those involved in it (the self and the other) and in relationship with God is a reality that can only be achieved as we follow his directives. The world could be a better place if the church would wake up and care for the "sleeping world" as God leads and guides.

OPSOMMING

JONA SE HOUDING TENOOR SOSIO-GODSDIENSTIGE VERANDERING

Deur: Daphne Mathebula

Studieleier: Prof JH Coetzee
Departement: Bybel- en Godsdienkunde
Graad: Magister Artium

Die probleem wat in hierdie navorsing ondersoek word is dat Christene blykbaar meer vrees vir sosio-godsdienstige verandering het as ander lede van die gemeenskap. Die gevolg is dat gelowiges, in plaas van leiding te neem, dikwels eerder die wêreld navolg. Hierdie situasie kan reggestel word indien die kerk in die Nuwe Suid-Afrika verantwoordelikheid sal aanvaar en sigself daartoe sal verbind om hierdie geleentheid effektief te benut deur sosio-godsdienstige verandering vooruit te loop, dit te inisieer en dit uiteindelik te bestuur. Die boek Jona word ondersoek om agter te kom wat hedendaagse gelowiges se houding jeens sosio-godsdienstige verandering behoort te wees.

VK Robbins (1996) se Sosio-Retoriese metode word in die ondersoek gebruik. Aandag word veral aan die Sosiale en Kulturele Tekstuur, die Intra-tekstuur en die Geestelike Tekstuur gegee. Partikularisme en universalisme is onderskeidelik geïdentifiseer as die dominante en alternatiewe kulture van Israel in die pre-eksiliese tydperk. Die mees basiese sosiale en kulturele waarde wat hierdie kulture beïnvloed het, was "eer", terwyl die godsdienstige houdings teenoor die lewe konversionisme, introversionisme, rewolusionisme en die wonderaspek insluit.

'n Progressiewe patroon van uitdaag-en-reageer is in die Intra-struktuur van die boek ontdek. Hierdie stryd reflekteer veral Jona se vooropgesteldheid met sy eer wanneer hy met verandering gekonfronteer word. 'n Ontleding van die Geestelike Tekstuur het die karakterisering van God en Jona blootgelê, veral ten opsigte van hulle houding ten opsigte van sosio-godsdienstige verandering. Die hedendaagse sosio-godsdienstige situasie in Suid-Afrika is ook geanaliseer met behulp van relevante literatuur.

Jona se karakter vertoon wispelturigheid as gevolg van die vooropgesteldheid van sy eie eer. Sy ongehoorsaamheid teenoor God het gelei tot onsensitiviteit, onverskilligheid en onverantwoordelikheid. Daarteenoor word God geskets as

betrokke by alle lewensterreine en die een wat sosio-godsdienstige verandering inisieer, onderneem en deurvoer. Hiervoor gebruik Hy die persoon wat Hy kies. Deur verandering te implementeer beïnvloed Hy ons lewens, houdings en optrede.

Jona se eer word met menseregte in vandag se terme vergelyk. Skrifgegronde menseregte kan as 'n driepootpot voorgestel word met menswaardigheid, menslike gelykheid en menslike verantwoordelikheid as die drie pote. Omdat menseregte onvoldoende en dikwels verkeerd verstaan word, lei die najaag daarvan dikwels tot 'n toename in lewens- en eiendomsverlies. Daarom stel ek dit dat die kerk die algemene publiek moet lei om balans te bring, 'n breër en dieper verstaan van menseregte te ontwikkel en God in die eerste plek toe te laat om individue se lewens, houdings en optrede ten goede te verander. Die wyse waarop dit moet geskied is deur verandering vooruit te loop deur 'n progressiewe kennis van God se wil; deur verandering te inisieer deur soos Christus buitengroep te aanvaar; deur verandering te bestuur deur voorbeeld, openheid om selfs van ongelowiges te leer en volgehoue gebed en hoop op God.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks be to God who gives us of all his graces through Jesus Christ our Lord. I thank Him for the loving people that surrounded me throughout this project.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to:

My supervisor, **Professor JH Coetzee**, for consistently showing his faith in me, his prayers, patient guidance, support, encouragement and wisdom through this whole endeavor.

My loving husband and best friend, **Caleb**, for his steadfast love, patient support and encouragement.

Our beloved children, **Nkati** and **Amiel**, for their love and understanding during the time of my writing this script.

My colleagues, **Emma Feters** and **Kay Williams**, for editing the manuscript.

The Nazarene Theological College students, faculty and staff for their consistent encouragement, prayers and patient endurance in all inconveniences incurred while I was writing this script.

My extended family, including different concerned members of our church, here and abroad, for all of your prayers and encouragement.

My loving Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, for giving me strength, wisdom, courage and perseverance. I can truly say, Ebenezer – thus far has the Lord helped me!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	Page
Abstract -----	(ii)
Opsomming -----	(iv)
Acknowledgements -----	(vi)
Table of Contents -----	(vii)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION -----	1
1.1 THE PROBLEM -----	1
1.1.1 Believers and Change -----	1
1.2 TOWARDS SOME UNDERSTANDING OF CHANGE -----	2
1.3 WHAT THE CHALLENGE-RESPONSE CONTEST IS -----	4
1.4 HYPOTHESIS -----	5
1.5 METHODOLOGY -----	5
1.6 THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH FOR THE RESEARCH -----	6
CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT LITERATURE -----	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION -----	8
2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF JONAH AS NARRATIVE -----	8
2.3 THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE -----	9
2.4 BACKGROUND AND INTERPRETATION -----	9
CHAPTER 3: THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE -----	10
3.1 INTRODUCTION -----	10
3.2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE ISRAELITE SOCIETY -----	10

3.2.1.1	Stages -----	10
3.2.1.2	Values and Development -----	11
3.3	FINAL CULTURAL CATEGORIES -----	13
3.4	COMMON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOPICS -----	14
3.5	SPECIFIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOPICS -----	16

CHAPTER 4: THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS
THE INNER TEXTURE ----- 18

4.1	INTRODUCTION -----	18
4.2	EPISODE 1: THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CONFRONTATION CREATED -----	19
4.2.1	Jonah Disobeys God -----	19
4.2.2	Jonah Honored as the Man of God -----	21
4.3	GOD VS JONAH IN A PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP -----	23
4.4	SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE CONTEST -----	25
4.5	EPISODE 2: INTENSIFYING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR CONFRONTATION -----	25
4.5.1	Jonah Obeys God – Nineveh Spared -----	25
4.6	EPISODE 3: THE ACTUAL CONFRONTATION -----	27
4.6.1	Jonah Angry with God -----	27
4.6.2	Jonah Awaits the Destruction of Nineveh -----	27
4.6.3	God Provides for Jonah -----	28
4.6.4	God Confronts Jonah -----	28
4.6.5	God’s Final Challenge to Jonah -----	29
4.6.6	Conclusion -----	30

CHAPTER 5: THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS
THE SACRED TEXTURE ----- 32

5.1	INTRODUCTION -----	32
5.2	ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERIZATION OF GOD -----	32
5.2.1	The God Who Initiates Change Where and	

When Necessary -----	32
5.2.2 The God Who Pursues His Chosen Man -----	33
5.2.3 The God of Compassion -----	34
5.2.4 The God of Hope -----	36
5.2.5 Conclusion -----	36
5.3 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERIZATION OF	
JONAH AS A HOLY PERSON -----	37
5.3.1 The Man Who Refused to Work with the Lord -----	37
5.3.2 The Man of Determined Persistence -----	38
5.3.3 The Inconsistent Man -----	39
5.3.4 The Man with Emotions -----	40
5.3.5 Conclusion -----	41
CHAPTER 6: GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS	
TO MANAGE CHANGE -----	42
6.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE IN THE BOOK OF JONAH -----	42
6.1.1 Deductions from God and Change -----	43
6.1.2 Deductions from Jonah and Change -----	44
6.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT DAY SOCIETY -----	44
6.2.1 The Church in Relation to the Analysis of Society -----	49
6.2.2 The Church, as I Experienced it in Soweto -----	50
6.2.3 Conclusion -----	53
6.3 HUMAN RIGHTS – THE CHANGING VALUE SYSTEM -----	54
6.3.1 Enhancing Human Rights through Anticipation -----	55
6.3.2 Enhancing Human Rights through Initiative -----	56
6.3.2.1 The Religious Ingroup and Outgroup -----	57
6.3.2.2 The Affluent Ingroup and Outgroup -----	58
6.3.2.3 Children -----	59
6.3.2.4 Femininity and Masculinity -----	61
6.3.3 Enhancing Human Rights through Management -----	63
6.3.3.1 Management by Setting an Example -----	63

6.3.3.2 Management through Openness to Learn -----	64
6.3.3.3 Management through Prayer and Hope -----	65
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION -----	65
BIBLIOGRAPHY -----	69



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM

Change is a threatening reality facing every society and that it is generally met with resistance is clearly demonstrated throughout the history of mankind. The threatening effect of change, especially social change, seems to be more so among Christians or in the Church as it affects or challenges values while the source or agent is usually regarded as being secular as opposed to sacred. There are different reasons why people resist change, however for believers these are complicated, among other things, by their sense of responsibility as custodians of social values and by their theological perspectives resulting in general fear of change. It is my belief that this is not what God had intended for the Church. Christians ought to take hold of social change by the horns. I agree with John Stott (1986:5) that the Church is God's instrument for social change for it is only through it that He can reform (and transform) the social structures. With this understanding, I want to submit that the developing value systems of the country, especially with regard to human rights, can be molded according to God's will if the church in the new South Africa will accept responsibility and use this opportunity.

1.1.1 Believers and Change

The tragedy about social change is that it seems as if the closer the people claim to be to God the more rigid and resistive to change they become. This is attested to by Janosik (1979:95) in his observation of sects. He says that ideological purity is stressed by heavy emphasis on one particular issue or custom that is usually more local than national at the outset of an organization. The greater the commitment to an ideological purity, the lower the level of organized political *or social* activity. This automatically leads to isolation and separatism.

This is evident among the Israelites who by emphasizing their election by Yahweh, regarded themselves as the privileged and excluded themselves from other nations although they were supposed to serve as priests to them (Ex. 28:14b). That is why Jonah blatantly refused to minister to the Ninevites. For, as Fretheim (1977:19) suggests, Jonah

fled because of a certain belief, an issue of contention between him and God. Although according to his confession he seemed to understand who God was (1:10; 4:2), he could not comprehend the bestowal of God's grace on the wicked Ninevites.

That this attitude was a challenge even to the New Testament Church is evident in that the apostle Peter had to receive a special vision from God to change his perception of the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16; 17-11:18; 15:7-11). The history of the Church through the ages is also marred by incidents of religious resistance in the form of excommunications and persecutions. The excommunication of Martin Luther is a good example of the Church's being afraid to change even when the change may have been genuine (Dowley 1977:376).

1.1.2 Towards Some Understanding of Change

When talking about change in society, Alvin Toffler (quoted by Esterhuysen 1996:1) says that "change is the only constant". Esterhuysen's definition of change is helpful for this research. He maintains that change is a "process which is not negative, threatening or destructive; but on the contrary - depending on the context and objectives - a condition of renewal and progress". This definition emphasizes the "strategic relevance of change" which encourages that change should be anticipated, initiated and managed. It indicates that change demands to be understood (Esterhuysen 1996:1).

Change affects society in different degrees and at different levels. How it comes about is one of the sociologists' pertinent questions. It is a "phenomenon which is both necessary (cannot be ignored) and sufficient to produce a predictable effect" (Horton & Hunt 1980:454). It is a process which may be evolutionary or imposed and comes about through an individual referred to as the change agent or a group, social movement (Horton & Hunt 1980:451). Can we say that change is initiated by God or is it a social process? One of the most important built-in elements of any aspect of life is growth or development. This element in itself implies some kind of change. The concept of change cannot be eliminated from development without distorting it. Since God is the ultimate source of life, and He can work his will in any and every change, we can attribute most change to Him - with "most" being the operative word. God in his sovereign will does initiate some changes like the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (Ex. 3:7-10; 6:6-8);

while He can also sanction changes initiated by man as in the introduction of the monarchy in Israel (1 Sam. 8:7-9,22a). Grider (1994:118) maintains that since creation, God has been involved in a series of changes "taking history to a somewhere and to a somewhen". Those changes involve both God and man working together.

It is from the relationship between God, man and change that the concept of a socio-religious change emerges. Socio-religious change refers to that change in society affecting some social values while it stems from or is directly linked to religious or theological perspective; or a change in some religious values stemming from other social institutions not directly controlled or influenced by religion. Since religion is central to virtually every culture, it is understandable that it will greatly affect the determination of some of the social values with its definition of man's relationship with the supernatural and the sacred (Marcionis 1997:487). The Protestant work ethic from Calvin which eventually resulted in industrialization is a good example (Marcionis 1997:489). Also, since Israel's social and religious life was highly integrated, it is difficult to think about change in each segment without the other; actually, it is impossible to separate the two (Stott 1986:11). This is clearly demonstrated by the book of Jonah because his failure to fulfill the commission was due to his theological perspective which affected his social values (specifically his perception of honor), an issue highlighted by the author's use of this story to change the mind-set of the post-exilic Israel. It is therefore a challenge for me to try and understand, from the book of Jonah, what should be the attitude of the believers towards socio-religious change today.

Therefore, the problem can be summarized as follows:

- In spite of being God's intended instrument for socio-religious change, Christians seem to be more threatened by it than other members of society. As a result of this, believers find themselves following the world in most instances instead of leading.
- Basically, the threat in change is due to lack of understanding and/or misconceptions about change and, especially as it relates to God.
- This research is even more important for Christians in South Africa in order to influence the developing value systems of the country, especially with regard to human rights, according to God's will. This can only be possible if the Church in the new South Africa will accept responsibility and commit itself to using this

opportunity effectively.

- It is therefore a challenge for me to try and understand, from the book of Jonah, what the attitude of believers towards socio-religious change should be today. This task will be approached by following the Challenge-Response Contest in the Book of Jonah.

1.2 WHAT THE CHALLENGE-RESPONSE CONTEST IS ABOUT

Robbins (1996:60-61) lists challenge-response as one of the social and cultural values that influenced the Mediterranean peoples. It is a sort of constant tug of war consisting of the challenger, the message (in word, deed or both) and the response by the receiver. There are three steps involved:

The challenge: "a claim to enter the social space of another" (Robbins 1996:61). It is a threat to one's reputation which in the world of limited good is imperative to protect. It may be positive as in a sincere request for help or negative as in an insult.

Perception of the message: the message is looked upon by the recipient "from the viewpoint of its potential to dishonor his self-esteem, his self-worth" (Robbins 1996:61). Therefore proper evaluation and judgement of the challenge will guarantee the response necessary to maintain one's honor.

Reaction to the message: it involves "the receiver's behavior that enables the public to pass a verdict" (Robbins 1996:61) and subsequently grant or dispossess one of honor. Lack of response to the challenge is a sign of failure to defend one's honor and thus results in its loss to the challenger. It is imperative for one to maintain honor and all attempts should be made to restore it once it is lost. An attempt to restore honor, even if one fails, is more important than just letting it go. This attempt is referred to as 'satisfaction' (Malina 1993:53).

For us to understand the importance of this contest to life in the Mediterranean world we have to realize that "every social interaction comes to be perceived as an *affair of honor, a contest or game of honor*, in which players are faced with wins, ties, and losses" and, that "every social interaction that takes place outside one's family or *outside one's circle of friends* is perceived as a challenge to honor, a mutual attempt to acquire honor from one's social equal" (Robbins 1996:61) (*emphasis mine*). Since this approach is basically

about honor and reputation, is it possible then that Jonah's struggle with God was about his honor as perceived by himself and the audience? An analysis of the "tug of war" between Jonah and God will help account for some of Jonah's extreme reactions towards God and people.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

My hypothesis then is as follows: Seeing that it is evident that people are reluctant towards socio-religious change, I submit that:

- Understanding the challenge-response interaction between God and Jonah within the socio-religious context of the book of Jonah will help the church to understand God's will in the socio-religious context of the present day South Africa in order to anticipate, initiate and manage socio-religious change effectively.
- Vital to this process of understanding is the role that honor (in our situation, human rights) might play in causing the reluctance to change or the enhancement of change.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

An analysis of the Book of Jonah will be done by means of the socio-rhetorical approach of VK Robbins (1996). The following aspects will be dealt with:

- Social and Cultural Texture is examined to disclose some of the significant aspects of the society and culture of the audience of Jonah: the dominant culture and counterculture, social and cultural values that could have influenced them and their religious attitudes towards life.
- Inner Texture: an outline of a Challenge-Response Contest based on the observations from the Progressive Texture, which analyzes the progression of people, object/s and their actions, is developed.
- By exploring the Sacred Texture, God and Jonah are characterized in an attempt to discover their attitudes, particularly as they relate to socio-religious change.

It is also vital for this study to analyze the present day socio-religious situation in South Africa in order to bridge the gap between the time the Book of Jonah was written and our present day situation. This I will accomplish by relying on existing literature dealing with these matters (see Chapter 2 for a brief survey of the literature).

Hopefully this approach will help us discover helpful attitudes towards change and provide directives that could be followed by the Church to effectively handle social changes.

1.5 THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH FOR THE RESEARCH

We may start by asking the question, why the book of Jonah? I chose the book of Jonah because it is a book about the prophet Jonah, a symbol and an agent, (or borrowing from Brueggemann's terminology, a destabilizing presence) of religious and therefore of social change in Israel, rather than the prophetic utterances like other prophetic books. My view of this book is similar to Brueggeman's towards Elijah's narratives. He maintains that the challenge of these texts is not for us to be like Elijah (*Jonah*), but to allow them to continue with their "voice of destabilization in a tightly ordered system" for that is their "primary and original function" (1994:227). The book is therefore a protest literature against some undesirable social attitude. The figure of the prophet Jonah is used to bring the message across.

I have chosen the prophet Jonah because of the view that he was nationalistic due to his prophecy as recorded in 2 Kings 14:25 (Day 1990:46; Fretheim 1977:30; Day 1990:44; Good 1981:41). As a nationalistic prophet, he would be more sympathetic with Israel as opposed to foreign nations especially if they were as oppressive and harsh as Nineveh was. He would therefore be an ideal figure any genuine Judean would identify with as Jonah embodies their ideological purity and honor. On the other hand, Nineveh represented the worst enemy to Israel because of the Assyrian cruelty and oppression. In the mind of Jonah and the post-exilic Jew, these two could not equally share God's grace. In their judgement, Israel deserved better than the wicked Nineveh. They would agree with Jonah that if Israel had suffered God's judgement as did the prophet himself, then, in pursuit of justice Nineveh could not be spared. At least the book can thus be regarded as a didactic story intended to satirize separatism and promote universalism through God's perspective of honor. It not only ruffles the audience's (readers) nests, but it does so systematically.

One of the advantages of this narrative in effecting a paradigm shift is that it is so extreme that the Israelites (also present religious readers) would identify with Jonah

(Fretheim 1977:30-34). To this is added the literary device of asking questions which are intended to encourage self-identification by involving the audience. I want to propose that these questions are used at strategic points in the Challenge-Response Contest. This literary device reaches its climax as the book closes with a question asked by God, which in a sense proclaims his sovereignty and grace towards all peoples.

The book also teaches that God should not be confined to finite comprehension and believers must therefore be open to changes in their relationship with God as they increase their knowledge of Him, which in turn will affect their social values and vice-versa. God violates pragmatic reason (Brueggeman 1996:237). Mather (quoted by Sasson 1990:334) observes that the narrator "is reacting not against an issue specific to Israel's past but against a predicament endemic to monotheistic beliefs". In this way the book is helpful in correcting some misconceptions pertaining to monotheistic religions through all ages. Although the text opens itself up to a lot of inferences about the specific change addressed (as shown by much disagreement among scholars), it is clear that it demands a paradigm shift in attitudes towards God and therefore to one another.

The research will subsequently consider the following: a review of the relevant literature, briefly indicating how it helped in this research; an analysis of the Israelite society for some understanding of the background of Jonah; an analysis of the Book of Jonah through Challenge-Response Contest and characterization of the leading characters; and from these draw guidelines to help Christians manage change after a brief analysis of the current society of South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF SURVEY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

After consulting a variety of literature relating to the Book of Jonah and the subject at hand, without disregarding the impact made by all on my thinking, I chose only a few for this chapter. These have affected this research to a greater extent. I group them as those that helped with the understanding and analysis of the Book of Jonah as a narrative, those that provided the sociological perspective and those that gave insights to its background and interpretation. This is an oversimplified classification since there is a lot of overlapping.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF JONAH AS A NARRATIVE

Bar-Efrat's (1989) *Narrative Art in the Bible* was instrumental in giving insights into literary techniques (irony, exaggeration, deliberation, etc.) used in the Bible especially with regard to characterization. To this, he added the significance of speech, actions/decisions and the minor characters in the determination of the major. While he is referring to these techniques, the following apply them effectively to the Book of Jonah. Amongst them are Hauser (1985) in his article *Jonah in Pursuit of the Dove* and Good (1981) in *Irony in the Old Testament* and Fretheim (1977) in *The Message of Jonah*.

Robbins' (1996) approach *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* has been used extensively to analyze the sociological background and the text to the Book of Jonah. The approach was attractive to me in that it looked at the Scriptures from both a rhetorical and a sociological point of view and seemed fitting to my title. Analysis of the progressive texture of the Inner Texture helped me identify some of the significant decisions and activities of the leading and minor characters thus I could realize patterns applicable to a challenge-response contest. The Sacred Texture with its categories provided much needed guidance in characterizing all the characters, especially Jonah and God. Characterization of the minor characters provided the contrast needed to highlight the attitudes of the major characters. The different categories in the Social and Cultural Texture forced me to personally evaluate Jonah's society and identify the significant cultures, social values and religious outlook.

Although exploring Scriptures in this manner was appealing, it was also a great challenge in that I felt like the approach was more demanding for an Old Testament text, which provides little information about its context.

2.2 THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Horton and Hunt's (1980) book on *Sociology* together with Marcionis' provided a general sociological analysis of change and religion. They laid the foundation to other sociological readings. Esterhuysen (1996) gave an excellent definition of change, which provides general directives as to how Christians can effectively handle change today. Yet, it was Malina (1993) in *The New Testament World Insights from Cultural Anthropology* and Wright (1990) in *God's People in God's Land* who gave important insights into the culture and practices of the peoples of the Mediterranean world.

The following literature provided the historical and the sociological background information of Israel and of South Africa: Bright (1962) in *History of Hebrew Religion*, Morgenstern (1962) in *Social and Economic Development of Israel*, Kinloch (1972) in *The Sociological Study of South Africa: An Introduction*, and Prinsloo (1998) in *Social Change in South Africa: Opportunity or Crisis*.

2.3 BACKGROUND AND INTERPRETATION

A host of commentaries and articles belong to this section although I will mention only the following few: Sasson (1990) – *The Anchor Bible: Jonah*; Limburg – *Jonah: A Commentary*; Tribble (1994) – *Rhetorical Critics, Context, method and the Book of Jonah*; Wolff (1986) – *Obadiah and Jonah*; Day (1990) – *Problems in the Interpretation of Jonah* and Neil (1962) – *The Book of Jonah*.

CHAPTER 3

THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS

The Social and Cultural Texture

3.1 INTRODUCTION

"The people of Israel, dwelling in Palestine, experienced a long and complex social and economic development, extending through several stages of cultural evolution" (Morgenstern 1962:766). To which of these periods can one assign the book of Jonah? Sasson (1990:27) highlights the problem with this book when he comments that knowledge of the period in which a book was written should help clarify the text; or the text should shed some light about the period of its writing. The book of Jonah does neither - at least not directly. There is a general agreement that it was written in the post-exilic era around the fourth century B.C. (Bright 1981:431; Fretheim 1977:35; Day 1990:47). This date is based on the fact that the language used is more characteristic of this period. Also the world of thought of this book is similar to other literature of this period. Thus more consideration will be given to the post-exilic stage of social development. A macro analysis of this society through stages is subsequently discussed on the basis of the interesting insights given by Morgenstern (1962:766-770) in his article on the Social and Economic Development of Israel.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE ISRAELITE SOCIETY

3.2.1 Stages

Israel started off as a simple nomadic society with its social stratum consisting of the family, the clan and the tribe. It then became agricultural as there was fair settlement and integration of tribes in Palestine, however loosely. It was fear of domination by the Philistines that drove the Israelites to seek closer, effective and stable organization as a nation, thus the beginning of the monarchy. The monarchy, under the leadership of David, ushered in the international-commercial stage. This stage continued until the overthrow of the North by the Assyrians (754 BC) and the deportation of the South by the Babylonians (586 BC).

3.2.2 Values and Development

Strong social values characterized the nomadic stage. The two social values that I want to mention are conformity to ancient customs and tradition in rendering judgment and enforcement of judgment by public opinion within the clan. Religion was the main institution. Israel's relationship with God was understood to be based on her election by Yahweh and her covenant with Him (Bright 1981:561).

During the agricultural stage the Israelites gradually absorbed the Canaanite way of life, including their religion, thus breaking their covenant with Yahweh (Bright 1962:564). "The impulse to intertribal federation gradually weakened" (Morgenstern 1962:767). There was a steady expansion of life and culture, growing prosperity and trade, a sense of security and that they belonged to the land.

In spite of the relative peace achieved in Palestine enhancing trade with foreigners at the beginning of the monarchy, there was general moral decline. The outcome of the situation was the oppression and enslavement of the poor by the rich, breaking their covenant with Yahweh. This ultimately led to the overthrow and deportation of the North and South respectively. It was the worst punishment and humiliation for a nation that had been exalted so much by Yahweh.

The prophet Jonah, identified as the son of Amittai (Jonah 1:1; 2 Kings 14:25), lived during the monarchy in the reign of Jeroboam II in Israel. He successfully prophesied about Israel's victory and restoration of land and thus gained himself a reputation as a nationalistic prophet. This explains why he would struggle with the commission to preach to Nineveh since it was Israel's cruel oppressor and would-be ultimate destroyer. It is believed that the prophet initially told the story which was passed on. However it was passed on is not the issue here for we are concerned about the Book as it stands today in the canon and its purpose to the initial hearers and to us. The author of the Book of Jonah uses this prophetic figure and his story to portray and challenge the exclusivistic and nationalistic mindset of his post-exilic contemporaries (Fretheim 1977:29; Sasson 1990:236).

The main problem for the exiles was "how to resist assimilation and preserve identity in a foreign land, amid strange people and under the compulsions of a variant and superior culture" (Morgenstern 1962:769). This concern led to the development of

separatism and particularism versus universalism as a means of survival.

These attitudes emerged through Jewish interest in judgment prophecy including Deutero-Isaiah. From these messages they came to the realization of the absolute unity and universal character and authority of Yahweh, his relationship to them as a nation and to the world in general. Their election as an agent of God was emphasized with the resultant devotional piety and a desire for a good conduct of life (Bright 1962:596). The distinctive characteristic of Israel during this era was the tremendous concern to keep the law (Bright 1981:430). The response to the prophetic message issued in two parties - the nationalists and the universalists. The nationalists hoped for regained Jewish political independence with a permanent Davidic monarchy over the whole world; while the universalists upheld Israel's election as an agent of God's salvation for all mankind. The universalists' view was to change the Israelite perspective from a nation to a people whose sole and true king was God and the chief priest his representative - the community of God.

It was these attitudes that the exiles returning from Babylon brought with them into the post exilic stage of the Israelite society. In discussing features in the theology of early Judaism, Bright (1981:442-446) notes that there were particularistic tendencies which were the ideal of the holy people, and universalistic tendencies seen in the concern for the salvation of the Gentiles resulting in a state of tension. Unfortunately it is this kind of tension that influences people to be reluctant to change as they engage each other in win-lose situations.

The processes of psychological concepts of ingroups and outgroups shed some light on this tension. The ingroup is maintained by, among other things, some ideology, peculiar identity, power of conformity and obedience. Force (mental/spiritual/physical) and/or violence may be used to punish outgroup members threatening the ingroup (Louw & Edwards 1997:760). All these measures are antagonistic to change.

Particularistic tendencies had more support from leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah who became involved in the re-establishment of the Jews, the temple and the city wall. It is noted that while Ezra subscribed to the doctrine of the universalists, he emphasized exclusive and not inclusive Jewish peoplehood. This attitude was appealing to the golah (diaspora) Jews who turned sectarian in the second temple period (Blenkinsopp 1988:69).

Thus the Jews drew apart from the Gentiles, looking down upon them and wishing to have as few dealings with them as possible (Bright 1962:569).

While there is reasonable consensus among scholars that the Book of Jonah was written in the post-exilic era, this consensus is lacking as to whether it was written in reaction to the Ezra-Nehemiah period. The main argument being that Jonah addresses none of the issues plaguing Ezra and Nehemiah (Fretheim 1977:35; Sasson 1990:25; Neil 1962:964). Personally, I think that it is appropriate to remember what Mather (quoted by Sasson 1990:334) said about the narrator not reacting "against an issue specific to Israel's past but against a predicament endemic to monotheistic beliefs".

This overview shows that Israel suffered much under foreign nations due to negligence of the covenant and was almost destroyed completely. Israelites almost lost their identity and honor had not their national pride been rekindled (Bright 1981:444). Given another chance, the Israelites went to extremes striving to maintain their identity. It is against this brief background that we should see what influenced Jonah's actions and his audience. Based on Malina's (1993:25) assumption that there are core elements in every culture that take up to a thousand generations to change, I will follow some of Robbins' (1996) principles in social and cultural texture to analyze the society of the book of Jonah.

3.3 FINAL CULTURAL CATEGORIES

What could have been the culture/s that informed Jonah's audience? The impression one gets in reading the book of Jonah is better stated by Sasson (1990:24), who maintains that it may be illustrating the universalism adopted within Israel. Assuming that the book illustrates universalism and is challenging the Israelites to adopt it, we may conclude that the dominant culture of post-exilic Israel was separatism and particularism. Jonah's blatant refusal to go to Nineveh is used by the author as a reflection of this attitude. He was indifferent and showed no concern about the predicament of the Ninevites and of the sailors (1:3,5c). He would rather have had the Ninevites destroyed and yet the vine provided by God spared for his own sake (4:1,3,10,11). Jonah's actions were decisive and determined. He wanted no dealings with the Ninevites! And yet, as Fretheim (1977:22) points out, Jonah's attitude would have been different if it were Jews involved

in the same predicament as the Ninevites. The particularistic audience may have cheered Jonah here in spite of the threat of God's possible response against the disobedient prophet. The fact that their destruction as a nation was directly related to mingling with the Canaanites would encourage the pious postexilic Jews to be overly cautious of any dealings with the Gentiles. In addition to this, it may be well to remember the lurking hatred for the Ninevites due to their ill-treatment of the Israelites.

I see universalism then, as the counterculture which "rejects *explicit* and *mutable* characteristics of the dominant or sub-culture rhetoric to which it responds" (Roberts quoted by Robbins 1996:65). A counterculture expresses a constructive image of a better way of life that will evoke voluntary reform by the dominant culture (Robbins 1996:66). At least one of the constructive images the author is portraying is that the God of Israel is also interested in the salvation of other nations, no matter how wicked they may be, and He wants to use his people, Israel, to bring this about (Jonah 1:1,2,4,17; 2:10; 3:1; 4). This image further indicates the unpredictability of God towards this end - salvation of peoples. Limburg's (1993:104-113) discussion on the use of the Book of Jonah in Judaism as Midrash, indicates that one of these uses was to discourage disobedience to avoid what happened to the prophet and to learn true repentance from the Ninevites. This is an indication that in spite of the tension existing between particularism and universalism, the Jewish society was more inclined to the former and thus the latter had to be encouraged, though with caution.

These two then, were the main cultures that determined how the audience of Jonah presented themselves to themselves and to others in words or in deeds. But within these cultures, what social and cultural values influenced the Jonah audience?

3.4 COMMON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOPICS

The emphasis on the democracy and opinion of the clan in the nomadic stage could have been the foundation, at least among the Israelites, for the values of honor and shame which Malina (1993:55) maintains to be of core concern for human behavior in the Mediterranean world. This could have been one of the reasons for Jonah's behavior. Other social values important to Israel, and possibly of major concern, are dyadic personalities and reciprocity (Robbins 1996: 58,63,64).

While we are aware of Jonah's frustration with the justice of God (Hauser 1985:31), we still wonder how valid and genuine is his reaction towards this cause. His willingness to die, expressed in different ways (1:5c, 15; 2; 4:3,8b, 9b), especially with regards to the vine indicates the extent to which his self-interest(s) is at stake (Wolff 1986:172). This is further confirmed by God's kind persuasion of the prophet to examine himself (4:4,9), which was probably his intention from the beginning, while the Ninevites served as an occasion for this purpose. I want to submit that that interest was "self-pity" (Wolff 1986:172) at the possible loss of his honor since it was the essential ingredient of every social interaction especially with outsiders. The book is intended to show the prophet's struggle for his honor as implied by his reason for fleeing (Jonah 4:2ff) and thus challenge the audience to a perspective that is healthy and godly about honor.

Jonah as a prophet had ascribed honor, which also meant that he carried the responsibility of protecting communal honor in all his interactions especially with outsiders. The prophet Jonah of the eighth century had predicted victory and regaining of land by Jeroboam II with much success (2 Kings 14:25). Probably, by now, Israel's hope for the destruction of their greatest enemy, Nineveh, was high which meant a great opportunity for the prophet. And so, being a dyadic personality and with his understanding of God's compassionate nature, how could he risk that honor? Sasson (1981:332) assesses the situation well when he says that Jonah was not angry because Nineveh was spared but "aggrieved because God has played him a part time prophet" which is indicative of the issue at stake being more personal.

The post exilic Jews could relate to that. Due to the scope and length of this research, I will not be able to give much detail on this matter. The discussions of Malina (1993:28-55) and Robbins (1996:54-71) on honor and shame help us appreciate these concepts according to the perceptions of the post-exilic Jews. Some of these issues will be dealt with in the analysis of the text.

Jonah's struggle was also tied to his personal honor, because as a dyadic personality his actions depended on the opinion of his people (Robbins 1996:58-59). In the context of honor and dyadic relationships, one has to constantly think about their actions in the light of what is ideally acknowledged and then examine them according to societal norms and oughts. It is therefore not surprising that the prophet would rather die than lose his honor

(Jonah 4:3,8b, 9b). Through this contest, the prophet has to discover true honor as perceived by God - it is a free gift from God (Jonah 4:10). The author, in using the story of Jonah, is challenging his contemporaries with an issue that we see persisting through the times of the New Testament as to whether true honor comes from God or man.

Another issue that could have influenced Jonah was Israel's life-long question about good and evil. This issue may be considered in the light of the rule of reciprocity, which is followed in the distribution of goods. All that justice requires is that God punishes the wicked Ninevites. Offering them life is not fair. Why did it seem like evil-doers not only prospered "but when they put God to the test they escaped" (Golka 1988:119)? That seems to have been Jonah's fear, thus he fled from the Lord (Jonah 4:1-2). Yet in spite of their struggle with this issue as shown by the literature of the day, e.g., Habbakuk, Malachi, the post-exilic Jews at least learned that God can only be moved by true repentance (Limburg 1993:111-112).

These values that were so deeply engrained in Israel promoted and encouraged exclusivism as they placed more emphasis on the ingroup and increased animosity towards outgroups. The next question we may ask about this audience, is how it responded to its world religiously.

3.5 SPECIFIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TOPICS

There are at least four Specific Social Topics reflected in this book. The author, a universalist, seems to be reflecting a conversionist's response (Jonah 1:1,2,4,17; 2:10; 3:1; 4) with God persistently pursuing Jonah until his mission to the Ninevites is accomplished. Thereafter the prophet is pursued to adopt God's perspective in his dealings with humanity. The universalists of this era could easily identify with this response for it expresses their aspirations.

On the other hand, we see Jonah with a partial introversionist response which makes him shun the mission to Nineveh (Jonah 1:3,5c; 4:1,3,10,11). I say partial because, though Jonah could subscribe to the goals of an introversionist (a separated community preoccupied with its holiness and means of insulation from the wider society [Robbins 1996:55]), he understood God's power to redeem even the most wicked but could not accept its practicality due to his demand for justice in his own terms (Fretheim 1977:23).

We can almost hear Jonah silently praying and pleading with God for an alternative - one that makes him a revolutionist. As a revolutionist (Robbins 1996:55), Jonah did not want the Ninevites to be changed in the sense a conversionist would. He wanted and almost demanded that God (supernatural powers) destroy them (4:1,5).

The fourth religious response reflected in the book of Jonah - thaumaturgical - "focuses on the individual's concern for relief from present and specific ills by special dispensations" (Robbins 1996:55). At different times and in different situations in this book people requested supernatural help. The sailors cried out to their gods (Jonah 1:5-16); as did Jonah in the belly of the fish (Jonah 2); the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-9); and lastly, Jonah again after the sparing of the Ninevites (Jonah 4). God's responses to the first three are definite and salvific making the end clear to the reader. The response to Jonah's last petition is indirect and it ends in a question. This response carries an element of hope with it - God will always respond to his people although it may not be in the ways they want, as shown by the prophet's situation.

In conclusion, the above shows that Israel's society moved from the nomadic through agricultural, monarchial, exilic and into the post-exilic stage. They gradually deteriorated morally due to the increasing Canaanite influence resulting in destruction and captivity. While in exile, the challenge they faced was to preserve and maintain their identity in a foreign land. Therefore, the picture of the audience we have is of a godly nation that has learned lessons it will never forget from its suffering at the hands of ungodly foreigners. Unfortunately in its endeavor to rebuild itself and maintain its peculiar identity, it has gone to the extreme of a particularistic culture countered by universalism. These are influenced by the values of honor and shame, dyadic personalities, reciprocity and the question of evil and good. The Book of Jonah reflects different religious outlooks to the world - conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist and thaumaturgical. God as a character, the author and the minority of the audience, reflect the conversionist outlook. God's revolutionist outlook is changed by the repentance of the Ninevites. Jonah and the majority of the audience subscribe to introversionist and revolutionist outlooks. Yet, Jonah, the author and the audience share the thaumaturgical view. It is with this image that we now approach the text of Jonah in more detail.

CHAPTER 4

THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS

The Inner Texture

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following observations were made from an analytical study of the progression of people, object/s and their actions based on the New International Version of the Bible. This progression of events and actions shows that all activity is decisive, deliberate and centered around Jonah in a definite pattern of alternation and progression. Every action, even Jonah's passivity, is deliberate and calculated - better seen as "movement and countermovement" (Magonet 1983:29) although along different lines of approach. A closer look at the progression gives the impression that the author is intentionally using this pattern to present his message in a challenge-response (riposte) contest to his audience. Through entertainment, the author hopes to enhance identification with the protagonist and maximize participation while elucidating the problem (Wolff 1986:97). He presents the contest in three episodes which increase in intensity until the climax is reached in chapter 4. I propose the following outline for the Book of Jonah according to the Challenge-Response Contest:

Outline of Jonah According to the Challenge-Response Contest

Episode 1	1:1 – 16	An Opportunity for Confrontation Created
God vs Jonah 1:1 – 6: <i>Jonah</i>	1 – 2	God's Challenge – the call
<i>disobeys God</i>	3	Jonah's Response – disobedience
	4	God's Counteraction – the storm
	5,6	Jonah's Response – went to sleep
Sailors vs Jonah 1:6 – 16:	6 – 8	Sailors' Challenge – captain, lots, questions
<i>Jonah honored as a</i>	9	Jonah's Response – confession
<i>man of God</i>	10 – 11	Sailors' Counteraction – seek solution
	* 12	Jonah's Response/Challenge – to be overthrown
	*13 – 16	Sailors' Response – obedience, worship
Episode 2	3:1 – 10	Intensifying Circumstances for Confrontation
God vs Jonah: <i>Jonah obeys</i>	1 – 2	God's Challenge – the call again

<i>God</i>	3 – 4	Jonah's Response – obedience
Nineveh vs Jonah: <i>Nineveh</i>	*5 – 9	Ninevite Response/Challenge – repentance
<i>Spared</i>	*10	God's Response – sparing Nineveh
Episode 3	3:10 – 4:10	Actual Confrontation
i) God vs Jonah: <i>Jonah</i>	3:10	God's Challenge – sparing Nineveh
<i>Angry with God</i>	4:1 – 3	Jonah's Response – confession, request for death
ii) God vs Jonah: <i>He Waits</i>	4	God questions Jonah's anger towards Him
<i>For Destruction of Nineveh</i>	5	Jonah's Response – awaits destruction of Nineveh
iii) God vs Jonah: <i>God's</i>	6 – 8a	God's Challenge – provides/destroys the vine
<i>Power to Provide & Destroy</i>	8b	Jonah's Response – requests death
iv) God vs Jonah: <i>God</i>	9a	God's Challenges Jonah's anger about the vine
<i>Confront Jonah Directly</i>	9b	Jonah's Response – anger, requests death
v) God vs Jonah: <i>Jonah's Problem Exposed</i>	10	God's Challenge – Jonah's pity for the vine vs God's pity for Nineveh
		No Response from Jonah

* contests between Jonah and other characters besides God.

4.2 EPISODE 1: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONFRONTATION CREATED

4.2.1 God vs Jonah (1:1-6) - Jonah Disobeys God

Jonah 1:1,2 states that the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai commanding him to go to Nineveh and preach against it. The command is, as Brueggemann (1994:228) describes the word that came to Elijah, abrupt, unaccommodating and unexplained but compulsive. The intention of the command is clearly for Jonah to cross the geographical boundary and preach to the Ninevites. This physical crossing is symbolic of the spiritual, mental and social crossing God is requiring of Jonah and of Israel. The word sends the prophet outside of his people, normal traffic pattern and system. "The word does not leave one at rest in a safe system but drives one outside to the other place where God dwells" (Brueggemann 1994:229). God dwells in Nineveh too.

Benson (1972:77), when commenting on this verse, says that while it is not clear

with the other prophets like Obadiah and Nahum whether they had to arise and go to particular regions, with Jonah it is imperative. This command clearly demonstrates that God can and does initiate change when and where necessary like He did in the case of Abraham (Gen.12:1-3) and Moses (Ex.3:7-22).

The prophet's reaction shows that he definitely perceived this commission as a challenge in accordance with his mindset about social interactions especially with outsiders. In defiance, he rose up to go in the opposite direction, Tarshish, to flee from the Lord (1:3). The language used to describe Jonah's response indicates an intentional deviation from the typical. Tribble (1994:128) maintains that the reader is alerted to this by the "numerous grammatical and verbal changes" indicating discontinuity between God's command and Jonah's actions. Price and Nida (1978:8) see the conjunction 'however' or 'but' being indicative of this contrast. Jonah's response would be acceptable to post-exilic Israel because theologically, they could not understand how their just covenant God, who has just destroyed Israel for 'minor offences', would want to offer life to the wicked Ninevites who were responsible for the destruction of His people.

In response to Jonah's intentional disobedience to his command, God deliberately responds by raising a violent storm which causes the ship to threaten to break (1:4); and the sailors to get frightened and call upon their gods (1:5). It is important to note that this is in response to Jonah's unexpected action (unanticipated by the reader and unknown to the sailors).

Jonah is reported as having gone down to sleep in the deck below (1:5c). While the text is not clear as to whether he was already aware of the storm before he slept, it is amazing that he could continue sleeping in such commotion where even the ship threatened to break (4b). He went to sleep not as one who is fearful or whose conscience is disturbed (Fretheim 1977:84). He was in such deep sleep that it cannot be assessed whether he heard the captain's call to pray (Sasson 1990:105). This indicates Jonah's defiance and determination not to go to Nineveh. Jonah's atypical, indifferent manner towards the call and the storm is further contrasted to the immediate but typical response of the sailors to the latter - they were afraid, called to their gods and threw cargo into the sea (1:5a,b) in an attempt to appease the gods (Fretheim 1977:88). They were sensitive to the state of acute danger (Wolff 1986:111). The reader today may ask, what man is this

that is not moved by such terrifying conditions? The original audience of the Book of Jonah would say that it is a man of honor who is determined to protect that honor even up to 'death'.

Wolff (1986:113) sees the idea of death in Jonah's sleep in that his sleep resembled stupor "which can be a preliminary stage of death". Thus it can be assumed that the seed of a death-wish, although dominant in the last chapter may have had its roots even from the beginning. Thus this episode ends with Jonah implicitly 'dying' for his reputation. This response raises the question as to whether Jonah is a man of God if he can be so disobedient.

4.2.2 Sailors vs Jonah (1:7-16) – Jonah Honored as the Man of God

The author seems to be using this section as an establishment and a confirmation to the audience/reader of the common ground for Jonah's status of faith. It is a response to the question, 'since Jonah is disobedient to God, is he truly a prophet or a man of God?' The contest between God and Jonah is withheld for a brief moment to address the question at hand through a contest with the sailors.

When the captain fails to get Jonah to pray (1:6), the sailors resort to casting lots to find the responsible culprit (1:7). The lot falls on Jonah, probably as they had suspected judging from his strange behavior. This is followed by a series of personal questions to Jonah (1:8). These moves by the sailors present a challenge to Jonah which he takes well by confessing his nationality, his God and his 'sin' (1:9,10b). In this way Jonah maintained his honor and integrity. Although there is speculation about the sincerity of this confession, I agree with Fretheim (1977:31,85) that there is no reason to believe otherwise. He argues that probably Jonah's response "here is no different from any other person of faith, confessing the faith in a context surrounded by disobedient actions of one kind or another" (Fretheim 1977:85). Jonah does believe in God and thus God is not pursuing him as an unbeliever but as a disobedient prophet. It should also be noted that through this confession (his first speech in the story) Jonah introduced the sailors to the God of the Hebrews.

This response terrified the sailors who were struggling (1:11) with the prospect of the prophet's disobedience of such a great God (Price & Nida 1978:22-23). As did God, in

1:4a, they in response presented a challenge to Jonah by asking him what they should do to him in order to calm the storm for them (1:12). It seems like their question was intended to challenge Jonah to take responsibility and do something. This question seems to be asked with tongue in cheek (or at least used thus by the author) since Jonah has just upheld his integrity (1:9). As a man of honor and integrity will he be socially responsible for his actions and rescue others? While today's reader wonders how could a man of God be so insensitive to the plight of other human beings (Good 1981:45; Hauser 1985:23; Sasson 1990:127), the audience of Jonah had no objections because in the world of limited goods where the principle of reciprocity was significant, "an outsider was fair game for clever dealing in an exchange" (Robbins 1996:63). This comes out clearly in Sasson's (1990:124) comment on 1:12 that, "in assuring them in this manner that he is fully alert to their dilemma, Jonah is also *subtly* urging them to follow his advice if they expect to survive the stormy seas" (emphasis mine).

The sailors are forced to do something if they want to escape death since Jonah's attitude has thus far been negligent of living. He had done nothing to secure his deliverance or that of the sailors (Hauser 1985:23). They, being more socially responsible than Jonah, try to avoid throwing him overboard (1:13a) but failed "for the sea grew even wilder" (1:13b). In resignation they pray (1:14) to "the Lord of Jonah" (Price & Nida 1978:26) for their protection before throwing him overboard (1:15). To their surprise "the raging sea grew calm" and they worshipped the Lord (1:16). They had come to the full realization of His greatness as YAHWEH God of the Hebrews (Limburg 1993:45; Sasson 1990:138)! Probably at this event the sailors also proclaimed this was truly a man of God (whatever his end was to be) because he had spoken and it happened as he had said!! Getting back to the audience, we can almost hear them cheering and applauding Jonah's bravery for he boldly defended his honor even when it meant death.

They could leave the meeting place, the show is over. But, the author keeps them suspended by mentioning that "the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he was inside the fish three days and three nights" (1:17). What now? There is a break in the contest as the author takes the audience/reader to the belly of the fish.

4.3 GOD VS JONAH IN A PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

I have not included Jonah chapter two in the structure above for it presents a different situation altogether. The last episode in the tug of war ended with the 'dead' or 'dying' Jonah. Chapter two informs the audience/reader of Jonah's first-hand experience with death. In the face of death the prophet appealed to his formal dyadic contract with God in which they relate as patron-client. In this relationship the patron provides things that are not normally available or are badly needed by the client (Robbins 1996:60) like life in the face of death.

Once in the belly of the fish Jonah offers a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the deliverance of the Lord. He expresses his fear of death and trust in the Lord as he reminisces about his experience in the depth of the sea. The prayer is basically Jonah's direct speech to the Lord. This is indicated by the use of first person singular (I called ... threatened me ... 2:2,5a) and the second person singular for the Lord (you listened ... your waves and breakers... 2:2b, 3b). How amazing that he would still look up to Him for salvation when threatened by the sea remembering from chapter one that the Lord targeted Jonah through the storm on the sea. Yet what an expression of hope! This prayer also indicates that Jonah saw this experience in the sea as being a decisive confrontation from the Lord (You hurled me into the deep, ... all your waves and breakers swept over me ... 2:3).

He portrays his desperate situation in dramatic exaggerations repeated and stated in different ways to help the reader imagine and feel his suffocation. He is calling from the "depths of the grave" (2:2b), after he has been hurled "into the very heart of the seas" (2:3a). The sea with its waves and sea plants attacked him on his way to the roots of the mountains where the earth barred him in forever (2:5,6a). No wonder he called unto the Lord. What a contrast between Jonah and the sailors who showed their desperation right from the beginning of the storm (1:4,5)! The sailors had to lose their cargo to the sea, now Jonah is about to lose his life to it. What a price to pay for disobedience!

While Jonah stated his predicament in a number of sentences (2:2-6a, 8a), his initiative to call unto the Lord is mentioned three times (I called to the Lord ... I called for help... I remembered the Lord... 2:2a,b,7); and the Lord's intervention also three times (he answered me ... you listened to my cry ... you brought my life up from the pit...

2:2a,b,6b). Jonah's belief is confirmed by his hope in God for salvation. The first is expressed in verse 4 when he was still struggling with the waves. This seems to be the turning point of his life when he came to the realization of being banished from God's sight. This realization terrified him and at the same time inspired his hope in the salvation of the Lord and thus his determination and confidence to "look again towards your holy temple" (2:4). In commenting about the 'yet' in this verse, Price & Nida (1978:41) maintain that it "relates to the difference between a positive and a negative assessment of the possibility of the worshipper ever recovering from his present disaster". Jonah's hope is also expressed in thanksgiving through the promises he made (But I ... will sacrifice to you ... What I have vowed I will make good... 2:9) after he was rescued by the fish (2:6b). Hauser (1985:25) reminds us that Sheol was the point of greatest threat and the fish the means of deliverance. Yet, as van Heerden (1992:392) observes the incongruity of the situation, how can one in the belly of a fish think of activities the context of which is so far from his reach? He indicates that this is a reflection of Jonah's being unattached to the reality of the situation. In elaborating on this, he refers to Ackerman's (1981:216-217) argument that the use of puns in this prayer are actually points of "major dissonances between Jonah's perception of reality and that of his narrative world" (van Heerden 1992:393).

In the light of all these, Jonah's prayer truly consists of "an alternating blend of cries of distress and expressions of a determined faith" (Price & Nida 1978:41). Yet it lacks repentance which makes one wonder about all the piety expressed.

In my opinion, verse 8 is the most significant part of this prayer as he refers to those who cling to worthless idols forfeiting the grace that could be theirs. It is the climax of the prophet's self-imposed piety reflected in this psalm indicating a subtle reference to judgment against himself (Trible 1994:172). The author is here imparting a truth through Jonah that the prophet himself is not even aware of its implications. Apart from being spared from the sea ordeal and being instrumental in the salvation of the Ninevites, how much more could God have achieved through him or his audience (not forgetting his ministry to Israel)! The implications to the current reader will be discussed later (Chapter 4).

Once again, God, "the patron benefactor of all" (Robbins 1996:60) provided for his

servant Jonah's safety through a great fish which vomited him on to dry land (2:10). There is suspense in the air as everybody wonders what is going to happen next.

4.4 SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE CONTEST

Surprise, surprise! The contest starts all over again! The difference being that all the characters in this chapter act deliberately and positively (as expected or anticipated) in their roles once events are set in motion. The word of the Lord came and again sent Jonah to Nineveh (3:1-2). What will Jonah's response be? He obeyed and went to preach to Nineveh (3:3,4). On the surface Jonah fulfilled his obligation as a loyal client should in gratitude for the bountiful gifts of the patron.

I think the clue that the contest continues is found first in the additional statement to the original commission, "proclaim to it the message I give you" (3:2) which is intended to stress "divine authority over Jonah" (Trible 1994:176). This raises suspicions of the audience/reader about Jonah's next move. Secondly, while Jonah's disobedience in chapter one is implied, his obedience is stated in unquestionable terms, "Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord" (3:3). This declaration is followed by a series of imperatives describing Jonah's deliberate action towards the Ninevites as he obeyed the Lord (Jonah... went; ... started into the city ... and he proclaimed... 3:3,4). What a change! Yet one cannot but wonder if Jonah obeyed whole-heartedly or reluctantly due to fear of what might happen to him (Fretheim 1977:110; Good 1981:47). Actually Trible (1994:177) concludes that from the syntax, Jonah's "total obedience is not assured". All we know is that his conflict with regard to the Ninevites is not yet resolved. Thus the stage is ready for the contest.

4.5 EPISODE 2: INTENSIFYING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR CONFRONTATION

4.5.1 God vs Jonah (3:1-10) – Jonah Obeys God and Nineveh is Spared

The Lord once more takes the initiative and repeats the commission for Jonah to go to Nineveh (3:1,2) with the specific addition to proclaim the message he has been given. Jonah accepts the challenge and goes to Nineveh (3:3,4). In the preceding paragraph, I questioned Jonah's sincerity. This suspicion is further increased by the actual message delivered, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed" (3:4). It seems like Jonah

delivered his message in such a way that it would "make it almost impossible for people to respond positively" (Fretheim 1977:108). It gives no direction to the listener about its source and the reason why in accordance to other prophetic messages about judgment (Micah 1:3ff; Amos). Did the prophet proclaim the statement only once or did he repeat it several times? It surely is an unusual message. It seems like Jonah merely went just for the record. In his reluctance he showed no concern for the Ninevites (Price & Nida 1978:54; Hauser 1985:32).

Yet he had so much success in his mission! In disobedience Jonah served himself and wrecked lives, but in obedience, however half-hearted, he served others and spared lives. The Ninevites responded overwhelmingly. They believed God (although Jonah did not mention God) and declared a fast (3:5) which was reinforced by the king's proclamation and demand for repentance by all - people and animals (3:7-8). This response is significant when seen in the light of the greatness of Nineveh which is mentioned repeatedly (1:2; 3:1,3b) and the little effort put in by Jonah. He had such an impact on them that he did not have to go all the way through the city for the message was passed on right up to the king. It is interesting to note the author's use of "the Lord" (Yahweh) and "God" (Elohim) in this chapter. The former is used in relation to Jonah as the word came to him and as he obeyed it while the latter is used four times in reference to the Ninevites. In his comment about this, Day (1990:43), points out that the distinction is intended to show God's relationship to Jonah as being distinctively the God of the Jews (Yahweh) while the universal name (Elohim) is employed for his relationship with the Ninevites. He says that it is because they were only required to repent morally and not converted to Judaism.

The Ninevite king expressed profound hope in God in the midst of a desperate situation, "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish" (3:9). The operative word being 'yet' (see comment on 2:4 above). What an illustration for Jonah/Israel! They have listened to so many eloquent prophets and yet none of them had seen such repentance. What is God going to do now?

In response God saw what they did, and true to his nature, had compassion on them and did not bring the destruction he had threatened (3:10). He did to the Ninevites as he

did to Jonah - saved them from eternal death by His grace!! All eyes now turn towards Jonah. What is he going to do now?

4.6 EPISODE 3: GOD VS JONAH - THE ACTUAL CONFRONTATION

4.6.1 God vs Jonah (3:10-4:3) – Jonah is Angry with God

While the Ninevites' response to Jonah's message demanded a reaction from God (3:10), His positive reaction marked the beginning of the third episode with a series of challenges which are more personal, direct and increasing in intensity as Jonah's problem is elucidated. It may be that the author, or God, manipulated the Ninevites' response in order to create an opportunity to confront Jonah in a more direct manner. Whatever the case may be, Jonah is faced with the challenge: God has shown mercy to Nineveh and spared the city.

For the first time Jonah is portrayed as confrontational, assertive and expressive! His reaction is anger (4:1) expressed in the strongest word 'evil' (Trible 1994:197; Wolff 1986:165). The evil that was attributed to Nineveh in chapter one is now burning in Jonah. He prays to God in his anger (4:2). Instead of expressing his anger to God he refers to Israel's song of praise as reason for his flight instead of going to Nineveh. He then requests to die rather than live with an unpredictable God (Wolff 1986:168). Jonah seems to be struggling with more than just the justice and indiscriminate grace of God. Sasson (1990:296) argues why should we expect Jonah to vent his rage on himself if justice and mercy bestowed to Nineveh were the only issues involved. He suggests that Jonah wanted to show God's responsibility to him as a prophet (Sasson 1990:297). This means that the issue is more personal than we think. Thus God's next challenge.

4.6.2 God vs Jonah (4:4-5) – Jonah Awaits the Destruction of Nineveh

This time God confronts him with a direct though not yet specific question: "Have you any right to be angry?" (4:4). The Lord, sympathizing with Jonah's despair patiently tries to get the prophet to examine himself (Sasson 1990:287; Wolff 1986:169). Jonah ignores the question. Without a word, in defiance, Jonah goes outside the city to wait for its destruction (4:5) as if to tell God "We shall see whether my anger is justifiable or not" (Wolff 1986:169)! One can only speculate about what he expected. All we see is that he

demands that God negate his compassion and somehow destroy the Ninevites. This can only be a demand from a man desperate for his reputation. If not his death then Nineveh's destruction. What is God going to do with Jonah now?

4.6.3 God vs Jonah (4:7-8) – God Provides for Jonah

God changes strategy to take Jonah's eyes off of Nineveh in order to get his full attention and help him deal with his problem. Also, as if to remind Jonah of His patron benevolence, He provided the miraculous vine to give him shade (4:6). Jonah was exceedingly happy! Probably because he thought that after all God still cared for him deeply (Sasson 1990:316). The strength of the language used compares to that of 4:1 where he was exceedingly angry. We will do well to note that the source of this ecstasy is Jonah's physical well-being (Wolff 1986:171). Yet his joy was short-lived because the Lord provided a worm to destroy the plant and the scorching wind that caused Jonah to grow faint (4:7-8a). The well-being of Jonah is drastically affected by God (Sasson 1990:316). Jonah expressed his desire to die rather than to live (4:8b). The same response he had towards the sparing of the Ninevites or so it seemed!! The change of emotions around the vine and his well-being is a further indication that his problem is about himself. "So the Creator's purposeful game has taken him back precisely to the point of his accusation" (Wolff 1986:172).

4.6.4 God vs Jonah (4:9) – God Confronts Jonah

Thus once again God poses his question with more directness, using the vine instead of Nineveh to encourage some objectivity from Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" (4:9a). Whatever answer Jonah would give would be equally applicable to the Ninevites. Jonah responds with an adamant expression of his readiness to die (4:9b). A response which is a reflection that Jonah's unwillingness was deeply rooted in self-pity (Wolff 1986:172). To this I would add that it was self-pity with regard to his reputation which was the main asset of his well-being. Sasson (1990:297) indirectly alludes to this in his comment about Jonah's death requests, that the prophet is forcing God to acknowledge the importance of the *dignity* of an individual (emphasis mine).

4.6.5 God vs Jonah (4:10-11) – God's Final Challenge to Jonah

The climax of the contest questions Jonah's right to have pity on the vine he did not work for (4:10) while expecting God not to exercise the same right over his creation, the Ninevites (4:11). Jonah is actually capable of compassion! For pity, the narrator uses the Hebrew word that would make Jonah grieve pityingly for the vine as one would for another human being (Wolff 1986:173). Jonah's values are distorted! We have already established that Jonah's problem is about himself and his emotions, anger and joy, all self-serving. His compassion is also self-serving. He is grieving pityingly for the vine because "he is simply missing his own comfort, just as, earlier, it was not because of Nineveh that he suffered; it was because of his own theological prestige" (Wolff 1986:173). The vine triggered his self-pity just as Nineveh did his theological pride. I want to submit that the real object of Jonah's self-pity is his reputation.

Through this approach we have seen how Jonah has been flaunting his honor and showing his determination to die for it ([hinted at 1:5] 1:12,15; 4:3,8a,9a). He expresses the same willingness with regard to the vine (4:8b). God then uses the analogy of the vine (a minor premise) to remind Jonah that just as much as it was a free gift from Him so it is with the prophet's honor, for He alone is its Source (Ps 8:5,6; 62:7-8; 71:21; Eccl. 6:2). Not only is honor a gift from God but it is also a small matter that can be given or taken as it pleases Him, a point well expressed by the sailors (1:14).

The closing question (4:11) is an intensified assertion calling for reflection and agreement (Wolff 1986:174). Therefore, on the major premise, if Jonah/audience clung so much to what has been a free gift to them, how much more should God care for that which He has toiled for in creation. But the real question is, Does Jonah have any right to hold on to his honor? The answer is "no" if he is going to be an effective tool for God. Wolff (1986:176) argues that the narrator staged a mock theological battle to camouflage the prophet's real problem, self-assertion. He maintains that his need for self-assertion clutched at a rigid theology and made "it impossible for him to follow the divine modulations and transformations" (Wolff 1986:176). This reminds us of the statement made earlier about those clinging to idols forfeiting the grace that could be theirs (2:8). Jonah is clinging to his honor at the expense of the transformation intended by God through him.

That is why I see the challenge facing Jonah being to change his perspective on honor. This is an absolute necessity for the success of universalism. In God's perception "Man's honor must be employed in the maintenance of wholeness within the life of the community" (Harrelson 1962:639); and that community includes all the nations of the world.

Jonah's lack of response to this rhetoric question (4:11), though intended by the narrator to remain a challenge to the audience/reader, in the challenge-response contest is a sign of defeat. We may then assume that Jonah agreed to it, or at least to reflecting on it.

4.6.6 Conclusion

This approach shows that within God's concern for Nineveh is enveloped a greater concern for Jonah/Israel whose reluctance to change is the theme of the book. He presents Himself as the One who initiates change because of His displeasure (anger) towards wickedness (Nineveh) and disobedience (Jonah). He shows his persistence to implement the change in Nineveh in that after rescuing Jonah from death He recommissions him.

God's providence to the prophet is seen in that He honors him through his word to the sailors although we are not told whether He is the source or not of Jonah's solution (1:12). He is the One who provides for and saves those who call unto Him, even the disobedient prophet, showing that He is capable of change due to compassion. He gently persuades Jonah towards change by forcing him to look at himself. He did this by literally ruffling the prophet's nest so Jonah's real problem spilt out and they could talk about it objectively. It becomes clear that Jonah's struggle is about self-pity with regards to his honor.

But, true to the confession about Him - "slow to anger and abounding in love" (4:2), God has now reached the climax of his gentle probing. This is an attempt to get the prophet to see God's perspective of honor instead of death which seemed to be his only alternative. Using the analogy of the vine he moves from the minor (vine/honor) to the major (Nineveh) premise to convince the prophet at least to reflect differently.

On the other hand, Jonah is portrayed as a disobedient prophet who is indifferent and

insensitive to the plight of the Ninevites, the sailors and his own acute danger. His inactivity is contrasted to the responsiveness of the sea, the pagan sailors, the Ninevites and their animals. His desire to die rather than fulfill this mission is first hinted at in the narration of his sleep. This raises questions about his being a prophet.

God honors his word and proves to the sailors that he is truly his man however disobedient, indifferent and insensitive to the plight of others. The sailors end up adopting his God. Jonah is a product of his society and is therefore determined to maintain his honor up to death.

In spite of his disobedience, in the face of death Jonah cries unto the Lord who saves him. He expresses his gratitude to God for salvation when there was no hope. He shows his reliance on the grace of God for himself, his hope in God and thanksgiving. There is a subtle reference to his judgment against himself. He makes promises to sacrifice and fulfill his vows. Yet, in spite of his piety, Jonah shows no signs of repentance which means that he sees nothing wrong with his disobedience. This could be a sign of his persistent determination to defend himself however subtly.

When recommissioned after the rescue, Jonah obeys however reluctantly (determination to have his way). The Ninevites repent overwhelmingly and God relents from sending destruction. Jonah is very upset because of the compassion shown Nineveh. Yet one wonders if that is truly the object of his anger for how could this make him seek his own death. The only logical conclusion is that Jonah's problem is more personal than he may want to admit. Confronted by God about his anger he displays an attitude bent on destruction as he demands that Nineveh be destroyed. Jonah's indifference and insensitivity to life is increasingly exposed.

He is exceedingly happy for blessings regarding his well-being, an emotion which disappears as soon as his comfort is negatively affected. Amazingly, his response to personal discomfort is similar to the one he had at the sparing of the Ninevites: he'd rather die. This is further indication that his concern is truly personal and it accounts for his indifference to the plight of life (the Ninevites, the sailors and his own).

The prophet finds himself in a tight spot as God's probing becomes more direct and specific. He now resorts to his usual plea, death to life. It is this adamant insistence to die that reveals his self-pity, which I suggest is about his honor, as his basic problem.

Jonah's insistence on death or destruction is true to Maxwell's (1993:58) observation that "many organizations and people will choose to die before they will choose to change".

CHAPTER 5
THE BOOK OF JONAH: AN ANALYSIS
The Sacred Texture

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The book of Jonah is mostly known because of the disobedience of the prophet and the fish that swallowed him. I think that this view of the book deprives the reader of some of the significant aspects of the narrative and some underlying factors that should impact the readers. Characterization of both God and Jonah (in contrast to the sailors and the Ninevites) with the help of Robbins' (1996:91-99) approach to the analysis of sacred texture provides interesting insights into the book.

The sacred texture of a text is about the "relation between human life and the divine" (Robbins 1996:91). It is about how a text reflects on a deity, holy people, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERIZATION OF GOD

The God of the book of Jonah resists confinement by all means. Explicitly, he is directly involved in human life, sensitive and responsive. Through different activities and interactions with all other characters involved, God is portrayed as the One who is in control. He initiates, manages and controls change in response to human need, takes time to deal with ungodly attitudes in his people and yet leaves the ultimate decision to change with them. Implicitly, He is revealed as the underlying power behind every activity. His actions are sometimes paradoxical - He does things that seem contradictory to human thinking and expectations.

5.2.1 The God Who Initiates Change Where and When Necessary

As we begin our discussion about God and change, I think it is important to briefly comment on the immutability of God because, a question may be raised as to how change is consistent with the immutable God. I find Grider's (1994:118-120) approach to this

issue helpful. He says that although the concept of immutability as an attribute of God has been held through the ages since it was first taught by Aristotle, it unfortunately led to misconceptions about Him. He maintains that this teaching is unscriptural because since creation God has had to change continually to relate meaningfully to the world he created. This change culminated in the coming of Jesus Christ in the human form. Therefore, in as far as God's relationship with nature and his people, He is capable of change because He is not impersonal. He is actually at work taking history to "a somewhere and to a somewhen" in great compassion. His unchangeableness only relates to his faithfulness as good exegesis of the Scriptures usually quoted to support this view shows (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).

Jonah 1:1,2 starts the ball rolling by stating that the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai commanding him to go to Nineveh and preach against it. This command is repeated in 3:1,2. As indicated earlier, the word is compulsive, demanding a geographical change that was symbolic of the spiritual, mental and social change (Brueggemann 1996:227), clearly showing God's desire to initiate a change where necessary.

The changes the Lord is implementing (1:2,4) revolve around his anger (Hauser 1985:24) and compassion (1:17; 2; 3:10; 4:11), as He creates and destroys as needed, using the elements of nature. Blenkinsopp (1996:243) in commenting about this manipulation, says that "there is something distinctly sapiential about this appeal to the world of nature to make a point about divine causality and divine freedom and then apply it to God's action in history". This reminds us that of all God's creation it is only human beings that He has to struggle with in fulfilling his will. God is portrayed as the One who is involved with human life and He can initiate change when and where necessary. He will not command a change He will not undertake (as seen in his dealings with Jonah). God not only initiates change, He also pursues those He chooses to use.

5.2.2 The God Who Pursues His Chosen Man

The narrator makes it clear that the word came specifically to Jonah who deliberately disobeyed it (1:1-3) although he obeyed when commissioned again (3:3-4). We can only speculate why God chose him but the reader is at a loss when it becomes clear that the

Lord pursues the disobedient prophet. The pursuit is directed in two ways. Firstly, God pursues Jonah as an instrument with which to implement the change in Nineveh. Secondly, He pursues him as an individual with personal convictions to be convinced of God's perspective in order to help his kind. (It is obvious from the Book of Jonah that Ninevites are not the primary "target" of God, although they play a major role in the story. The Israelites are the main target of change. The Ninevites are only implemented, like the sailors initially, to bring about a change of mind amongst Israel.)

The Lord pursues Jonah through the sea which intensifies its activity as the narrative continues (1:4,11a,13) and yet when Jonah is thrown overboard there is immediate calm as if He has been appeased (1:15). But then He continues to pursue him even below the sea as shown by Jonah's prayer (2:1-9) in the belly of the fish provided by the Lord (1:17). Chapter 2 reflects the depths to which Jonah allowed himself to descend before crying to the Lord. But more importantly is how far the Lord pursued him. This was God's deliberate action as indicated by Jonah's clear attribution to the Lord. In this incident, God's power to destroy the prophet's life is in contrast to his power to save him. But why is God so determined to use him?

The pursuit is continued in chapter 4, at a different level, as God attempts to help the prophet deal with his actual problem in regard to his compassion towards Nineveh. The Lord could have been satisfied with the repentance of the Ninevites and left Jonah to wallow in his own self pity. Yet He provides an object lesson with a vine to create an opportunity to save Jonah from his own predicament. In spite of all these deliberate steps taken by God towards change, the reader is still puzzled by the choice of Jonah, which is as much inexplicable as Israel's (also ours) as it points to the compassion of God which is stated in Exodus 33:19, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy".

5.2.3 The God of Compassion

Hints of God's compassion are found throughout the narrative. Actually, it seems as if it is the underlying factor in the whole narrative. It is firstly implied (though vaguely as it is overshadowed by God's anger) in the command for Jonah to preach to the Ninevites because their wickedness has come up to God (Hauser 1985:24). The Lord could have just destroyed them without any warning but he chose not to. Instead, the command for

Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh implies the possibility of mercy from God should they respond positively to the message. This could have been the reason why Jonah refused to go, not wanting to be instrumental in their salvation because they were long-standing enemies of Israel. Yet God could have destroyed the disobedient prophet rather than pursuing him to such great lengths (or depths) and even giving him a second chance.

This all-encompassing compassion is faintly shown in God's dealings with the sailors in chapter 1. The sailors were merely caught in God's pursuit of Jonah. Yet the Lord took that opportunity to gradually reveal himself to the sailors (1:9,14-16). Their response moves from a general fear of the unknown superhuman power to a reverent fear of "the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land" to whom they offer a sacrifice and make vows.

The same compassion is shown when God saves Jonah from death and ultimately recommissions him. In spite of the fact that the prophet was reaping what he had sown, when Jonah cried out to the Lord, He listened and answered. The provision of the fish for the deliverance of Jonah (1:17) comes as a surprise to the reader for it indicates God switching from anger to compassion. I believe that if the fish was intended to harm the prophet it would have been stated differently. The Lord kept the prophet in the fish's belly and then, at his appointed time, commanded it to vomit him on dry land (2:10).

God's compassion is clearly demonstrated in his encounter with the Ninevites. Their response to Jonah's message was overwhelming, immediate and positive. He only went a day's journey and people "believed God". Deliberate exaggeration is reflected through the elaborate and sometimes repetitive explanation of their repentance (4:5-9). And the Lord did have compassion on them - a deliberate action after seeing "what they did and how they turned from their evil ways" (vs. 10).

The climax of God's compassion is seen in the way He deals with the prejudiced prophet. Jonah is said to be greatly displeased and angry at the compassion shown the Ninevites. God, instead of being impatient and angry with Jonah (who should know better as a prophet of the Lord), gives him another chance as He compassionately tries to help the prophet deal with his anger through an object lesson with the vine. Here again, as in chapter two, God is forced to use very drastic measures to get the prophet's attention. He compassionately pursued the prophet so that He could reason with him. In

the light of Jonah's reason for fleeing from the Lord (4:2), it would seem God is now challenging Jonah, as his prophet, to show the same compassion to others. He understood God's compassion but he needed to practice it too.

The compassion of God as demonstrated in this narrative, clearly shows that all its recipients do not deserve it. The sailors and the Ninevites were not Yahweh worshippers, but Jonah was the worst of them all, knowing all the truth as God's spokesman and yet being so disobedient and destructive of other human beings.

5.2.4 The God of Hope

Hope is first indicated by the captain when he asked Jonah to wake up and call upon his god. He goes on to say "Maybe he (*Jonah's God*) will take notice of us, and we will not perish" (1:6c). The pagan captain without knowing the God of Jonah expressed hope of salvation from at least one other deity. This hope was fulfilled when the God of Jonah calmed the sea even at a very high price. In the fish's belly, Jonah expressed his hope against hope (2:4b) in a desperately hopeless situation. I believe that it was because of this hope in the salvation of the Lord that he was able to make the promises and vows (2:9). The greatest of all hopes was expressed by the king of Nineveh when in his proclamation to fast and pray he declares, "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish" (3:9). Yet it is the Lord who in the end has to hope for the change of mind and understanding He desires of Jonah/audience (4:11). After all He has done for and to the prophet, the Lord can only hope for the best response for He does not interfere with Jonah's freedom of choice. At the same time it is an expression of his continued hope about Israel and ultimately for all his people. It is the most tangible illustration of love that always hopes (1Cor. 13:7c).

5.2.5 Conclusion

The God of Jonah is very real both in the background and foreground. He is portrayed as the One who is much involved in the whole of life. He appoints and uses his creatures for his purposes. He gets angry at the wickedness of a nation just as much as at the stubborn disobedience of his servant, the prophet. This anger compels Him to act accordingly. Thus He could initiate change as He determined to destroy Nineveh, and the

secure environment of Jonah's hiding place.

While his anger moves him to deal negatively with the situation, his compassion gets the best of him and compels him to change his mind. He is not afraid to change if it is for the best of his people. That is why He could manipulate the sea, fish, etc. to get through to Jonah. Therefore, we may say that change, as far as God is concerned in this narrative, is necessitated by these two factors: his anger towards evil and his compassion towards his creation.

God had confidence that Jonah would be instrumental in bringing about change in Israel as he ultimately was for Nineveh. Not only is he perceived as an instrument but also as an object for God's compassion - an object lesson to the Israelites/believers. At this point, it is still not clear why the Lord chose Jonah but his determination to use him indicates his confidence in him.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERIZATION OF JONAH AS A HOLY PERSON

As with God, I believe that the characterization of Jonah will disclose some characteristics, which I think are generally overlooked. The following is an attempt to discover these traits which may help us have some understanding of Jonah. The character of Jonah comes out better when contrasted to other creatures involved in the narrative - sailors, Ninevites, sea, vine; etc.

Jonah is portrayed as the man of God as shown by his communication with the Lord, his confession and obedience to proclaim God's message to the Ninevites (1:1, 9;3:1,4). Yet there are instances when Jonah acts contrary to expectation as a holy man. This is contrasted to the actions on and of the sea, the sailors and the Ninevites - people who are not so holy and yet responded to God with enthusiasm. The control of God over nature is as if to demonstrate the pliability He expected of Jonah as his man. Jonah lacks commitment to God and fellowman and thus he becomes unethical in his interaction with them.

5.3.1 The Man Who Refused to Work with the Lord

Jonah is portrayed as a man who understood his relationship to God (1:9) and especially the implications of the mission set before him (4:2). There is no question in

Jonah's mind about his relationship with God. By his own confession (1:9) he shows that he is a worshipper of God. He knows that his God is the creator of the sea and land. But he also knows that his God is compassionate (4:2). This is the man who received the word of the Lord (1:1).

Though the reader does not learn the reason for Jonah's flight in the first three chapters, and the narrator uses that ignorance as one of his motifs for the narrative, Jonah knew why he was running away from the Lord from the beginning (4:2). According to this text he knew and understood God's compassion well enough to anticipate the forgiveness for the Ninevites should they repent and he was not willing to be instrumental in their change. Probably the question about his right to be angry was asked even at the beginning but this is not mentioned in the text. Yet if we considered that possibility it would give us the impression that Jonah was genuinely hoping for God's compassion to Israel which, in his mind, would be indicated by the destruction of Nineveh. That is why in response to God's commission for him to go to Nineveh, Jonah intentionally refused, as seen in the exaggerated description of his flight from the Lord. He is insensitive to the plight of the Ninevites, the worst long-standing enemy of Israel and therefore intentionally refuses to cooperate with God, and subsequently with the sailors.

He persistently seeks death over life rather than the salvation of the Ninevites. He is actually so determined to see them destroyed that he intentionally went outside Nineveh to wait and "see what would happen to the city" (4:5). We see throughout the narrative that Jonah would not cooperate with God for the change in Nineveh and since he does not respond to the challenge in 4:11, we are not sure if he did ultimately accept or even understand the change that God was actually intending for him and for Israel. We can only assume his consent from the challenge-response contest. His refusal to cooperate is indicative of insufficient understanding of his God.

5.3.2 The Man of Determined Persistence

As shown above, Jonah is persistently disobedient. The writer does not tell us exactly when Jonah did realize that he was responsible for the storm, but one would expect that he should have accepted responsibility and acted appropriately at least when the lot fell on him. It is not so with Jonah. He does not seem to regret his response and is willing

even to die (1:12). It was his encounter with death that shook him to his senses to seek the Lord. This disobedience continues even after his proclamation in Nineveh. He refuses to accept the Lord's action towards these Gentiles.

The narrative portrays Jonah as persistently looking up to the Lord for help in spite of his disobedience. In his distress he calls unto the Lord (2:1,2; 4:2). In his prayer of thanksgiving (2:4), he expresses his tremendous hope in the Lord. The operative word is "yet" before "I will look again toward your holy temple". These words seem to echo Job's hope in Job 13:15a. Actually this helps us see why he persistently sought God's help. He realizes that all the odds are against him (1:4a) but he still has hope. For Jonah there is a sense of helplessness without God. In his anger (the word "anger" actually meaning burning grief like that experienced by Samuel at God's rejection of Saul) he turned to God and prayed (4:2). The sense of helplessness comes out clearly in his hope for the destruction of Nineveh and his persistent plea for death. If it were in his power he would just destroy the city but he cannot and therefore has to wait and rely upon the Lord. Jonah desperately seeks death but he has to look up to God to kill him thus he keeps praying that he would die. It seems as if whatever Jonah has set his mind to, he will not deviate to the left or right; thus he struggles with the change in relationships with God and the Ninevites.

5.3.3 The Inconsistent Man

Firstly, Jonah's inconsistency is seen in his actions. He was quick to run away from the Lord but would not throw himself into the sea. There is no hesitation on Jonah's part when he runs away from the Lord. All his actions are deliberate, intentional and quick. Yet when the sailors asked what they should do to him to calm the storm his response is that they should throw him into the sea. The deliberate intention of the suggestion Jonah is making, is shown by the fact that the writer uses the imperative double action - "pick me up and throw me into the sea" (1:12).

Secondly, Jonah seems to be inconsistent in his relationship with God. Although he says that he worships God, his communication with Him is only when he perceives danger to his own life, and not that of others. When the captain asked him to pray during the storm, when the life of the crew was in danger, he did not (1:6c). Yet, when his life

was in danger in the sea (2:1-9), he desperately called upon the Lord, accusing Him of throwing him into the sea, but in the end thanking Him for his rescue. In 4:2 Jonah's prayer is actually an accusation of God and a complaint. A comparison of these two prayers shows that Jonah is grateful for compassion directed to him but is angry when it is directed to others. Thus he received and gladly accepted salvation from the Lord but would not accept the salvation of the Ninevites. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the pagan sailors and the Ninevites. The writer indicates the sailors' sensitivity to spiritual matters in that their first response to the storm was to cry out to their gods. This attitude builds up until they focus on the Lord God of heaven and worship him (1:5a,10,14,16) - something that is not even slightly indicated about Jonah. They seem to be more aware of the involvement of the superhuman power (gods/God) in human life. The Ninevites, responded overwhelmingly to the message of Jonah although they were not worshippers of Yahweh.

Thirdly, Jonah's values are lop-sided. The vine was more important to him than the people of Nineveh, thus his request for death (4:9). His anger even up to death for the vine reflects the irrationality of his anger for the Lord's compassion towards Nineveh. All the trouble the Ninevites went into and their hope to be spared meant nothing to Jonah (3:5b-9). But he would rather die for the vine he never toiled for. He had not even prayed that the Lord would provide it. It was just an act of mercy from the Lord. In contrast, the sailors who could have destroyed his life spared it. They had already lost cargo and had toiled much to save themselves and the ship from the storm (1:5). In the light of all this, Jonah was not deserving of their mercy. Yet even when he disclosed his fault they still tried to rescue him. By so doing they were indicating that human life is more valuable than any possessions.

5.3.4 The Man with Emotions

Throughout chapter one, the reader wonders what kind of a person Jonah is. He does not speak except when confronted by the sailors. The writer says nothing about him or his thoughts, intentions and feelings while there is an indication that the sailors were afraid, surprised, concerned and confused. It is with relief that one is confronted with Jonah's emotional state. His prayer of thanksgiving gives a glimpse of his distress when

faced with death. This is indicated at least three times (2:2a,4a,7a). Jonah is also capable of being grateful and happy. He was grateful for the salvation of God and even made promises and vows to the Lord. He was very happy for the shade of the vine (4:6b).

Yet there seem to be other emotions underlying Jonah's actions. Jonah got very cross with God. He threw tantrums. He became disappointed. All his emotions reflect his self-centeredness. Without his explanation in 4:2, we do not understand the fear and anger underlying Jonah's actions. These surface because of the sparing of the Ninevites and the destruction of the vine. These emotions seem to thwart Jonah's activity in relation to God and to others.

5.2.5 Conclusion

While God has no problem with change, Jonah is cringing away from it and ends up acting in comical and unreasonable ways. In spite of his relationship with God, Jonah is disobedient to a definite command from the Lord to cross boundaries and change. This resulted in insensitivity and unresponsiveness to God and to the needs of others – the sailors and the Ninevites. Therefore in contrast to God, other characters and natural elements, Jonah resisted change. He is a man with determination and is not easily persuaded even of God's viewpoint.

Although Jonah is not cooperative with God, he realizes his helplessness and inadequacy and is therefore dependent on the Lord for his life. Yet he resists God's will for his life and even when he cooperates, it is grudgingly. This shows his lack of understanding of the person and actions of God. His fluctuating emotions make him irrational and inconsistent. We may be correct to assume that through all this Jonah is more angry towards God than anybody else for he could not trust Him to always be the same. We can say that Jonah struggled with God for he could not confine or put Him in a box.

Jonah, though a man of God, is lacking commitment towards God while he seems to be committed to the values of his society especially the honor of his particularistic contemporaries. Ethically Jonah fails, as the pagans seem more responsive and responsible to the well-being of others. The sailors tried to save him even when they knew that he was responsible for the storm. Most of the Ninevites, including the king got

his message second hand. His attitude towards his own life makes us wonder if he cares at all about life.

In spite of all this, Jonah was a man of prayer and a man of God. He seems to have some integrity because he could have lied to the sailors about himself. This is confirmed by lack of hypocrisy on his part in relation to God's decision about the Ninevites. Probably Jonah's strength was his strong character and determination (deliberate intention to disobey [1:3;4:2,3]; deliberate hope in the face of death [2:4b]; sitting and waiting for the destruction of Nineveh even though he knows that God has relented [4:5]; and the bold expression of his anger towards God [4:1,9b]).

These negative characteristics make Jonah a suitable character to demonstrate the Lord's willingness and desire to be compassionate to him/Israel; just as much as Nineveh, a wicked nation, was used as an object of God's compassion to be an example to Israel. But more importantly, he is an excellent character to illustrate Israel's reluctance to change. Among other things, this narrative shows God's compassion and hope in helping his people through change.



GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS TO MANAGE CHANGE

6.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE IN THE BOOK OF JONAH

This research is addressing the problem of the reluctance of Christians towards socio-religious change, which is complicated by their responsibility as custodians of social values and by their theological perspectives. One of the most helpful definitions of change is that it is a condition of renewal and progress requiring to be anticipated, initiated and managed. Through the preceding study of the Book of Jonah some helpful attitudes relating to socio-religious change were identified.

Analysis of the Israelite society has revealed that the post-exilic Israelites portrayed particularism as a dominant culture and universalism as the counterculture. These cultures were influenced by values of honor and shame, dyadic personalities and reciprocity. One's honor was so highly regarded that it became a central issue in all

social interactions. Religious outlooks reflected were conversionist, introversionist, revolutionist and thaumaturgical. The Book of Jonah is intended to change the mindset of these Israelites by showing God's perspective of the gifts (vine/honor) they are hoarding for themselves.

The following are a number of important aspects that were deduced from the textual analysis above. These ideas will be used later to draw conclusions with regard to anticipation, initiation and management of a socio-religious change.

6.1.1 Deductions from God and Change

- Change, in God's view, involves leaving one's own stronghold (comfort-zone). It usually involves leaping into the humanly unknown, trusting and hoping only in Him.
- Based on his will, He can initiate change when and where necessary as determined by his compassion and his anger. Certain issues in life are not according to his will and therefore evoke his anger. He also initiates change as a consequence of his compassion although sometimes this depends on man's positive response to Him.
- In this sense, change is linked to the fact that it is God's desire (hope) and not merely change for the sake of change.
- Very often God has to struggle to bring about change through people. Yet He supports his agents of change.
- He can enforce change however patiently and persuasively with those who struggle with it. He is always compassionate and willing to lead people through the process of change.
- He can employ different ways and means, even his creation (nature), to bring about change.
- He provides, but can also take away, that which is dear to us in order to help us understand his will.
- He uses change to deal with our own lives, attitudes and conduct. This is where God commences when asking for and bringing about change.
- His intention with change is that it should always be to the benefit of those involved in it (the self and the other) and be in relationship with God.

6.1.2 Deduction from Jonah and Change

- He was compelled to bring about change in spite of his own prejudices. God had confidence in him for He required a change in Nineveh/Israel. He could only work through Jonah.
- He acted contrary to what was expected of him as a holy person. This indicated his lack of commitment to God and other humans and his insufficient understanding of God.
- By refusing to cooperate with God he became disobedient resulting in insensitivity, indifference and irresponsibility even when people's lives were in danger.
- In being unattached to the reality of his world Jonah became irrelevant.
- He was to learn from the conduct and response of non-believers (the value of life from the sailors and sensitivity to God's word and humility from the Ninevites).
- He persistently looked up to the Lord for help in spite of his disobedience. Yet, he really prayed to the Lord when he was in trouble himself, which is an indication of his self-centeredness. He was grateful to receive God's compassion for himself but became angry when it was given to others.
- Like other people (Moses [Ex. 3], Gideon [Jdg 6:13-23], Jeremiah [1:6]) who had been called upon to act on God's behalf and tried to avoid their duty, Jonah desired to die rather than to obey as he clung to his "vine". But in all the other cases mentioned, it is interesting to note that every time God gives the assurance that He will bring about the change or that He will supply.

The contrast between God and Jonah clearly shows that the latter is threatened by change while the former is not. Through this narrative we can see that God actually seeks to implement change among his people and through them in spite of their reluctance. If this is God's attitude towards a socio-religious change, how should we, as his people today, handle it effectively? I will start with an analysis of our society today as presented by Prinsloo (1998) before addressing this question.

6.2 ANALYSIS OF OUR PRESENT DAY SOCIETY

I found E Prinsloo's (1998:13) article, "Social change in South Africa: opportunity or crisis?" helpful in giving some understanding about the situation of the South Africans

today. Its aim is "to determine their experience of and meaning attribution to a new social order and a complete new way of life".

South Africa today is striving to form a new society which is just and democratic "with a shared macroculture within a multicultural society" (1998:14). I think that the macroculture referred to here is the ultimate dominant culture that will be embraced by all South Africans while maintaining, as much as possible, their unique traditional culture. This is a completely different setting as compared to the former in which the society was a "racial hierarchy" structured "socially and culturally" while being subject to economic changes (Kinloch 1972:174). During this era, religion, especially Christianity, functioned as one of the important social institutions in maintaining social control (Kinloch 1972:52). Christian values of love and respect for others were supposedly upheld however affected by both social and cultural elements.

This investigation by Prinsloo, was inspired by the rapid changes occurring both locally and worldwide. These changes were technological, ecological, economical, political, demographic and recreational. Others involved the career world and the change of norms and value systems. In order for us to appreciate the challenge confronted by Prinsloo, we have to understand that before this time social change was restricted to cultural change if it proved not to be a threat to the economic and political system (Kinloch 1972:175). It is believed that the dominant culture back then was White and since 1950 predominantly Afrikaner with a rigid political system "designed to contain English liberalism, the non-White franchise along with their economic and political aspirations" (Kinloch 1972:128,174). I use the phrase "it was believed" because back then, sociology was pursued by Whites who paid more attention to their interests and purposes which resulted in a partial reflection of the situation in South Africa (Jubber 1979:82). Thus the rapid change is truly a great shock to all South Africans. A very important aspect of Prinsloo's research is that it is representative of all the peoples of South Africa and is for the interest of all. A brief summary of his report reflects the following:

Economic disparities are evident, among others, in technological progress and recreational pursuits. While there are ample opened opportunities for most communities, and some can afford these advantages, others cannot as they struggle for basic necessities

due to extreme poverty. In some areas recreational facilities are not available and most people use their leisure time to take extra jobs to supplement their income.

There is a general feeling of insecurity as revealed by demographic shifts, disintegration of communal life, norms and value systems. Communal life has deteriorated due to violence and crime, suspicion and intolerance among ethnic groups, increasing possession of dangerous weapons, ineffective policing and an increasing number of people taking law into their hands. There is a general decline of the standard of living. There is fear of uncontrolled population growth through birth and influx, especially of the cities. Lack of jobs, worsened by the increasing number of immigrants from other African countries and the resultant increased crime, violence and corruption adds on the decline of the standard of living. There are health hazards due to overcrowding, negligence of the environment and strained health facilities. Education, welfare and transport facilities are also strained. Christianity is also losing its control as people renounce it as part of Western culture in preference to the traditional way of life including ancestral worship. In spite of all this there is a notable involvement of the civic organizations in the communities. These organizations may be the only hope through which the church can make a difference in the bleak picture before us.

Changing norms and value systems also add to the insecurity of the people. Added to crime, corruption and violence, are moral licentiousness and the negative influence on the morale of all South Africans. There is also "an increasing loss of honesty, chastity, diligence, a pride in work well done, and respect for the lives and possessions of others" (1998:19). Other concerns with norms and values include the generation gap between parents and children especially among the Blacks. Black young people generally disregard their parents. Veleleni Mashumi (1988:17) reflects this situation well when he says that, "Black South Africans must be the only nation in the world which is dictated to by its children most of whom are hardly beyond the stage of knowing whether or not it is true that children are brought into the world by storks".

Other drastic changes in social values include the perceived negative effects of the liberation of women, individualism, the honoring of individuals according to power, position and/or possessions and the loss of respect for family and marriage while sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies are on the increase. People experience low

morale because of perceived non-fulfillment of promises by the new government. Greed and selfishness has replaced 'ubuntu' - an attitude of helpfulness and consideration for others. There is general lack of faith in the government's ability to create jobs, to control illegal immigrants, crime, violence and corruption, and also in the affirmative action.

As far as careers are concerned, people are moving out of the traditional careers of nursing, teaching, etc. and are challenging the education department to restructure its model. The aim is to have an education that will encourage "initiative, innovation, entrepreneurship and life skills to meet the information era with self-confidence" (1998:18).

The findings, which are a reflection of the current dominant culture as we are working our way to the macroculture while identifying and/or re-establishing our microcultures, indicate that people are generally distraught about life in South Africa as it is characterized by economic disparities, insecurity - especially due to crime, violence and corruption - and loose morals. This results in increased tensions between racial and ethnic groups as suspicions about each other increase. People are sadly described as "rootless, degenerated and confused" in many ways in spite of the little signs of optimism expressed by a few.

Prinsloo's (1998:20) conclusion about norms and value systems is worth noting for at least it identifies the problem and what the solution should entail: "Many people have become extremely confused because they are exposed to different value systems. This confusion is intensified by the conflict between traditional and modern value systems. Everyone wants to be modern and successful but they do not know how to achieve their ideals in a secular world without sacrificing traditional and spiritual values". I think the best thing is to start by reconsidering the God we serve.

In conclusion we see that the formal rigid structure of South Africa has been greatly affected by drastic local and global changes. It is now a country plagued by economic disparities, insecurity and loose morals. Disparities are seen especially in the technological progress and recreational pursuits. The general feeling of insecurity is shown by demographic shifts, disintegration of communal life, norms and value systems. Violence, crime, corruption and strained health, education and transport facilities are evidences of a breakdown in communal life, in spite of increasing involvement of civic

organizations. Disintegration of norms and value systems, which has been complicated by the generation gap, has resulted in loss of honesty, chastity, diligence, a pride in work well done and especially respect for lives and possessions of others.

Confusion reigns as people are exposed to different value systems. This is intensified by the conflict between tradition and modernity. There is a general desire to be modern while struggling to achieve this in a “secular” world without sacrificing traditional and spiritual values.

It is interesting to note that the increasing loss of respect for lives and possessions belonging to others is in stark contrast to an increasing emphasis on human rights by individuals or groups of people sharing common interest. We identified a similar situation in the case of Jonah - the more concerned he was for his honor the more he neglected other lives in danger and at times even his own. Could there be any connection between our pursuits – Jonah for honor and us for human rights? I think that personal honor or that of the ingroup is the common link between the two. While in Jonah’s culture defending one’s honor without reservations was a given in all social interactions; in our day defending one’s honor is embedded in other social values like human rights. That honor is embedded in human rights is indicated by the inherent respect required for every human being based on these rights. We may conclude that honor is the basic factor underlying all pursuits for human rights – individual and cooperate. For instance, a closer look at the past regime of South Africa shows that it thrived on the propagation of the honor of the minority at the expense of the majority (and this is how small groups generally survive) in its pursuit of perceived human rights. The current escalating crime rate could be due to the previously disadvantaged making up for “honor” lost in the past while the previously advantaged, disillusioned by the loss of their “honor” may give themselves up to all kinds of vices. It is all in the pursuit of rights/honor for oneself. It is honor that may stand in the way of socio-religious changes as individuals and groups become afraid of what others will say. This means that in spite of the developing individualism, our society, like Jonah’s, is dyadic to some extent.

It is unfortunate that the pursuit for human rights/honor is usually based on misconceptions, which I believe are due to the fact that little or no consideration is given to all the aspects of this concept. That is why most lives and/or possessions continue to

hurt or lost in pursuit of human rights as evidenced by the increasing uncontrollable violence in the taxi industry, schools, political arena, etc. I am convinced that the basic problem is that people are struggling to cope with the implementation of a notion that is thrust into their faces without fully understanding its implications. On the other hand, there may be those people who fully understand the need to maintain a balance in giving/defending one's rights/honor and laying them down for the sake of others. The problem is that they are unwilling to deviate from the socially accepted norm of striving for all and any cost in pursuing one's rights/honor. This is where I think Christians can assist the nation by implementing the full concept of human rights by the grace of God. A brief analysis of the church is in order before we can see how this can be done.

1.1 The Church in Relation to the Analysis of Society

Formerly, the church was also structured socially and culturally along racial lines. In general, it enjoyed respect from the government and the society as it helped maintain social control. Christian values were upheld although influenced by theological, social and cultural elements.

In the current situation, it goes without saying that as part of the society, the church is also affected by the consequences of the drastic changes with the resultant confusion. In my opinion, the most notable consequence is an increasing feeling of insecurity within the church as the norms and value systems change and sometimes without a word from the church. At times, there has been confusion because the church has been unable to give clear answers or directives as a unified body. In some cases there has been no correspondence between the proclaimed word and the conduct of its herald/s (reflected in changing attitudes towards abortion, homosexuality, AIDS, human rights, etc.). The church as the custodian of social values mostly feels the struggle mentioned by Prinsloo (1998:20) about moving to modernity without sacrificing traditional and spiritual values.

This poses a direct challenge to the interpretation of the Scriptures by the church. In some cases reinterpretation is necessary because other factors based on ideology, materialism, culture, and so on, have been given precedence as spiritual values. The challenge is even greater where this has been done at the expense of core spiritual values like love, justice, mercy, etc., since it is not easy to turn around and admit one's long held

The members were mainly from poor disenfranchised communities suffering from the effects of political and economic oppression. Stable and reasonably paying jobs like teaching and nursing were a privilege enjoyed by a few. Actually, poverty and illiteracy were regarded as virtues by this group because Christ has said that the poor in spirit are blessed (Matt. 5:3). It is also recorded of Peter and John that they had amazing courage in spite of not having had formal education (Acts 4:13). Christian values of love and respect were practiced among members of the ingroup so long as they remained loyal and faithful to God and the church. Even that was to a limited extent as loving participation in the promotion of missions to suffering people in other countries was generally seen as a virtue, more noble and valuable than local involvement. This partly explains the discriminate practice of "ubuntu" by these believers.

Their discrimination could also be attributed to the unbalanced emphasis placed on one of the sixteen articles of faith taught by the church. This belief is that a believer must have personal experience of two crisis moments, justification and sanctification, in his/her spiritual life in order to be fully possessed and used by the Holy Spirit. This essential truth came out in almost every lesson taught and every sermon preached. It was followed up through a list of rules, supposedly from the Scriptures while affected in one way or another by culture; and formulated locally by individual member churches and/or on the district level by several member churches combined. This encouraged alienation and isolation from the society in general as we attempted to keep ourselves "pure".

This attitude was further nurtured by the typical post-war evangelical stance of social non-involvement. A stance which stood in contrast to John Wesley's period, which was the highlight of a previously socially aggressive attitude of the evangelicals. Today it is unfortunately said of them that they regard social and political involvement as betrayal of the gospel. Social service is only a means to the end and is useful only as it allows for confrontation with the gospel (Bocsh 1980:202-203). This accounts for the little or non-involvement of the members of this church in compassionate organizations of the society.

Within the group, endeavors were made to maintain open channels of communication and review of its practices and conduct through annual meetings of different kinds. However, this was done with the main purpose being to rigidly pass on tradition/s to the younger generations and help them, as much as possible, "adjust"

accordingly. Unfortunately this resulted in a breakdown in communication because of the increasing misunderstandings related to generation gap. The young minds were beginning to critically evaluate the church. They challenged some of the rules, practices and at times the teaching itself. Unlike their parents and elders, they had learned to think critically and been encouraged to express their views. Thus they could not merely accept authority for its own sake (though at times it was to their own detriment). And, true to African belief that children know nothing, authority was not willing to be questioned by them. (It is important to note that the word "children" may differ from culture to culture and its meaning may range from small children, youth, women – married or single, to uncircumcised, unmarried and/or childless married men). As some of their reasoning proved valid and realistic, measures that were previously used to ensure proper conduct, like ideology, peculiar identity, conformity and obedience, began to crumble thus shaking the value systems from within. The ensuing disillusionment was expressed in different ways. In frustration, a pastor exclaimed that there is no way of preaching holiness in these circumstances. He could not understand how it could be done. In such situations the young people were neglected as they were considered not to be appreciative of the message or traditions of the church. In others, young people were allowed to "reign supreme" in the church in an attempt to keep and not lose them. In some areas, the truth of children dictating to parents among the Blacks noted by Mashumi (1988:17) was becoming true in the church.

It was sad that at the dawn of the new day of political freedom, this church had also lost its privilege as one of the socially recognized institution of social control. The situation worsened because the government became secular and people, in search of their microcultures, renounced Christianity as part of Western culture. This meant that we, as a church, had to earn the respect we once freely received and enjoyed.

This is an immense challenge because there is a state of changing norms inside and outside the church that is resulting in disillusionment due to fear of being unable to handle it. Added to that is the process of reintegration into the society to which we are grateful, though with embarrassment, for the political freedom they achieved for us. Like the Israelites, we are humbled that God would use "secular" people and not us. We now find ourselves having to follow the "secular" world to define/reinterpret situations and/or

issues mentioned above - abortion, homosexuality, AIDS, human rights, etc. Yet, at the same time we, like Jonah, are angry and disappointed in God because He has not intervened by revealing his power to destroy the “evil ones” as we have been preaching. By working out events in this manner God, as was the case with Jonah/Israel, is forcing us to reevaluate how we understand Him and his ways, which will impact our relationships with others accordingly.

6.2.3 Conclusion

Like Jonah/Israel of old, we have held too long, too rigidly and too tightly to dogma (possibly misconceived) without allowing God to continuously reconstitute a new community relevant to its society in conduct and in word. Like Jonah/Israel we have become irrelevant and unattached to the reality surrounding us. In the process, we have neglected and/or even violated the rights of others to the total benefits of life – physical, spiritual, mental and social. Now, as we are reestablishing ourselves as a church in the “new” South Africa, I do not think that we want to miss the opportunity God is giving us by repeating errors of the past, even in another form. Therefore, based on the deductions from the research about God and Jonah, I hereby propose the following as a means of anticipating, initiating and managing change with regard to human rights. I have chosen human rights because it is one of the burning issues of our day and as already discussed, it has personal honor embedded in it. In clinging to our honor/rights, Jonah and us, have shown disregard for human life. Lastly, it applies to the most basic elements of life. This is only one of the many ways Christians may violate human rights without realizing it.

I see the challenge for Christians in relation to human rights being to allow personal attitudes and conduct to be dealt with by God as He pleases. This is on the basis of the realization that God uses change to deal with our own lives, attitudes and conduct (sparing of Nineveh vs Jonah’s attitude); and that this is his usual starting point. As implied by the narrative, it is only if Jonah’s attitude will change that he can be an example to Israel; and Israel in turn will be an example to other nations; the same principle applies in relation to Christians. One’s attitude clarifies or obscures their view of people, circumstances and things. But, what is it that we need to understand about human rights?

6.3 HUMAN RIGHTS – THE CHANGING VALUE SYSTEM

Insights from Stott's (1990) explanation of human rights from the Scriptures are very helpful. Most of the following discussion is taken verbatim from Stott (1990:154-161). Human rights are defined as "rights of human beings, and the nature of human rights depends on the nature of human beings whose rights they are" (Stott 1990:154). God gave these rights at creation (Gen. 1:27-28). There are three aspects that constitute the whole concept of human rights. The first is human dignity, which is reflected by our relationship with God, to one another and to the earth with rights and responsibility of worship, of fellowship and of stewardship respectively. This aspect basically denotes the fact that we are all made in the image of God and have the same worth to Him. This is indicated by the costly price He paid to redeem all through Jesus Christ. Our value, as human beings, "depends on God's view of us and his relationship to us" and thus none has absolute freedom but a limited one.

The second aspect is human equality, which is reflected in the protection of the weak and vulnerable by the Mosaic Law. The command is to fear God, to show no partiality, to defend the course of the widow and the fatherless, and to love the alien (Deut. 10:17-19). Jesus also displayed an attitude of impartiality for it is said that He was not "swayed by men" (Mark 12:14); while Paul and Peter write about the God who shows no favoritism (Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). This aspect emphasizes the fact that before God we are equal irrespective of power, position or possessions. There is none better than others; thus all are entitled to the respect inherent in all human beings.

The third aspect is human responsibility. This is opposed to extreme assertion of one's rights since the Scriptures challenge us to a responsibility to God and to one another through the command to love the Lord wholeheartedly and also to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). This demands renunciation of rights as Christ did when He came to die for us. It is helpful and more positive to understand renunciation not as a sacrifice but as a challenge in which God adds positives into one's life and one has to decide what should go (Miller 1965:62). In an attempt to strike a balance in the pursuit of human responsibility especially as it relates to others, decisions should also be affected by our love for self (properly understood), which is the basis of

our love for others. This then means that we can only talk about absolute renunciation as it applies to given situations. Renunciation should be coupled with total commitment to God as the Avenger against all ill-treatment (Rom. 12:19). Therefore our understanding and implementation of human rights should embrace all of these aspects equally.

This compares well with Malina's (1993: 28ff) definition of honor according to Jonah's cultural setting. It is defined as being basically a claim to worth that is socially acknowledged. Human "worth" is a factor that is entrenched especially in the aspects of human dignity and human equality, which are a reflection of the respect inherent in all human beings irrespective of their power, position or possessions. This shows that honor is not only the underlying factor in the pursuit of human rights as indicated earlier, it is also an integral part of these rights.

It is my observation that while the understanding of human rights by the majority of South African citizens emphasizes equality and dignity (with possible misconceptions) responsibility lags behind. Therefore, striving for attitudes that express the dignity and equality of humanity best, believers must take responsibility for the rights of the brother/sister to help deepen and broaden the scope of human rights to the general populace.

6.3.1 Enhancing Human Rights Through Anticipation

All can testify that in spite of yearnings and expressions of longing for the "good old days" they will never come again! This is unfortunately a fact one has to come to grips with if they will have any progress. The truth is that there are things that we appreciate about both the past and the present and those that we dislike or even detest. In my discussion about change in the introduction, I have indicated that it is inevitable. It is part of growth. The only way we can deal with it is by anticipating it as we do physical growth. That can be achieved by reconsidering the God we serve.

One factor that comes out clearly through this narrative is that God is the underlying reality in all of life (each chapter begins and ends with "the Lord"). He is mostly addressed indirectly and yet through all the activities his presence is evidenced. He intervenes when He is called upon (2:1-9; 3:5-9; 4:2-3) for He is sensitive to the needs of his people. It is important to remember that He is the God of all nature. The implications

of this truth is that "everything is 'sacred' in the sense that it belongs to God, and nothing is 'secular' in the sense that God is excluded from it" (Stott, 1986:15). This is in spite of man's misuse of God's good gifts due to sin. His dealings with Nineveh are proof of this together with the peaceful transformation of our country.

Secondly, it is imperative to consider the implications of the fact that God can initiate social change when and where necessary. This factor coupled with the inevitability of change in society, clearly indicates that He cannot be confined to our finite comprehension as to how He should deal with life and people, including us. Since God uses people to implement change He may appoint us to be his agents. He alone can explain the choices He makes. If He does choose us, our attitude should not be like Jonah's who desired death to fulfilling the mission given him. It only delayed the fulfillment of God's desire. The God who initiates change is also the One who will undertake for his agents and help them deal with personal and communal change as illustrated by his patient persuasion of the prophet. This understanding helps us accept or objectively evaluate genuine or valid socio-religious change initiated by others or ourselves from the ingroup or outgroup. By doing this we will be enhancing our own dignity and that of others as we become aware of God's acceptance of ourselves and of others as his instruments. Also, we will willingly undertake our responsibility to our fellow human beings encouraging them in the task laid upon them as God leads and guides. In this manner, anticipation of a socio-religious change helps us prepare for its management (at least psychologically) however vaguely rather than resisting it for resistance's sake. If Jonah/Israel or we had been aware of this, not only in theory but even practically, we could have saved ourselves a lot of disillusionment and frustrations. This can only be possible as we endeavor to fully (as much as possible) and progressively comprehend the God we serve.

6.3.2 Enhancing Human Rights Through Initiative

Initiative presupposes an awareness of a perceived or real need and, on one's own accord, doing everything humanly possible to alleviate it. While Jonah was insensitive to the needs of the Ninevites and not aware of his own, God saw the predicament both Jonah/Israel and the Ninevites were in. He took the initiative to rescue them in spite of

their being unaware of their peril. Christians should adopt this kind of sensitivity and commitment to both God and society. Some of the areas in which Christians may take initiative with regards to human rights involve attitudes resulting from differences based on religion, affluence, age and gender, to mention but a few.

6.3.2.1 The Religious Ingroup and Outgroup

By religious ingroup I am referring to those people who belong together because of their common belief, as in a denomination, church, etc. The usual relationship with the outgroup is discriminatory as the latter are regarded as people of low estate. They are usually labeled, criticized, reacted to with resentment or even ignored. The challenge here is while being sensitive to the needs and commitments of the ingroup, we should be sensitive to those of the outsiders, not as mere objects of outreach and upliftment but as human beings made in the image of God. One way of doing this is to develop a better attitude through our language.

This is especially important in some of the Black African languages, at least the ones I am familiar with. While it may be easy to avoid derogatory terms that are dehumanizing, it is not so with legitimate terms that may have the same effect. The words I am talking about are those used to label members of religious outgroups indulging in sin or socially unacceptable behaviors like drunkenness, prostitution, etc. These terms breed all kinds of negative attitudes towards the people being referred to. For instance the word used for a drunkard is “letahwa” in Sotho; “isidakwa” in Zulu; and “xidakwa” in Shangaan. According to the classification of nouns in these languages all these words fall under objects and not human beings. They are never used with respect for the person referred to. And sometimes, depending on how the word is used and the context they may be insults in themselves. That these words fit more in the dehumanizing derogatory group is further alluded to by the fact that children are generally discouraged from using them. We can see that these words affect our attitudes towards certain people.

Without condoning drunkenness and other sinful or socially unacceptable behavior for which people are generally classified as objects, I have to admit that it is sad when, we Christians, in our enthusiasm to share the gospel, use these words carelessly (without

thinking about the psychological and emotional effects on the person). This is in spite of our good intentions to discourage these behaviors. Sometimes I wish we could change our language so that there could be something in the words themselves that will always remind us that whenever we use them we are actually talking about other human beings and not just objects. Other people's dignity, honor, human rights are at stake here.

Presently, we may not be able to change the language and even if we could, that would not change the attitudes of people immediately. But we can change our own attitude towards these people and see them *first* as human beings made in the image of God like we are, alongside whom we stand before God and for whose rights we are also responsible. We are responsible to protect their dignity and give them the inherent respect due to them as human beings. My opinion is that we should see them *first* as people struggling to cope with the pressures of life (to which I may have a share) crying out for a caring person to lovingly reach out and rescue them for their *own* sake. Discriminatory attitudes are not only prevalent between the religious and the non-religious, but can be seen in the affluent and non-affluent.

6.2.2.2 The Affluent Ingroup and Outgroup

The problem of discrimination between the affluent and the non-affluent is not a new one as shown by the classical New Testament passage, entitled "Favoritism is forbidden" (NIV) in James 2:1-13. This passage prohibits showing respect to individuals according to their power, possession or positions. The problem could be in one of these three ways – discrimination of the outgroup by the affluent themselves; by other people as they give more respect and honor to the affluent at the expense of the disadvantaged; and/or the disadvantaged resigning themselves to insignificance as they are commonly classified. It is unfortunate that this problem is still persistent even today and especially in the church. Language also plays a role here since an uneducated person may be referred to as "sephoqo" or "setlatla" in Sotho; which is dehumanizing since it is usually used to rudely indicate that the individual could have done things differently had they been educated.

Yet, I think one of the most degrading kind of discrimination is when people intentionally give preference to the affluent and ignore the disadvantaged. The statement proclaimed is that "you are only worth what you are (from your looks) and have, which

is nothing". But, God showed his indiscriminate acceptance of Jonah, the sailors and the Ninevites (and their animals) irrespective of their social status by paying attention to their pleas for help. This grace has been freely bestowed to us when Christ accepted us irrespective of who we were and now challenges us to do the same to bring glory to God (Rom. 15:7). We need to develop an attitude that says, "I value you first as a human being" irrespective of class or social category.

In the interest of the human rights of the disadvantaged, the believing affluent should develop an attitude of thankfulness to God, for it is by Him that they have and/or are what they are. Christians must be sensitive to the uncomfortable situations of others and take the initiative to enhance their human rights in spite of their background. By freely accepting and associating with the disadvantaged the affluent will disprove the superstition that this association will result in one also becoming disadvantaged as if it were an infectious disease. Christ died for them too and therefore they are worth every effort to make living better for them so that even though they may not have plenty in resources or qualifications they can be assured of God's love and care through his children. They are not mere statistical targets for evangelism or social upliftment! They are as much human as anybody else and should be treated as such. They are both made in the image of God, and therefore responsible for each other's rights. Godly humility should be the distinguishing factor between the affluent Christians and the unbelievers.

6.3.2.3 Children

Africans are usually understood to as "event oriented people" because to them events are more significant than, for instance, time. Actually time is interpreted or understood in the context of events that may be described in very graphical details. One of the ways that was used to mark events was the birth of a child. The name would tell if the child was born after a death of a family member or the sibling before him/her and if it were during a good time of rain, peace or plenty. I have no problem with names describing happy events. Some of the sad ones are too sad to be borne by a living human being. For instance, in some Black African cultures, a child born out of wedlock is given a name that will reflect that for the rest of his/her life. Names like "Velaphi", meaning "where do you come from?" in Zulu; or "Lebamang", meaning "to whom do you belong?" in Sotho

or Tswana. A child by a man of other ethnic or racial groups, born in this context by a Zulu girl, may be called "Mgodoyi", meaning mongrel. The name is intended to embarrass the mother to the community and thus discourage her and other young girls from indulging in illicit sexual relations. Unfortunately the child is the one that suffers the most from unending embarrassment as s/he begins to understand the circumstances surrounding his/her name.

A child born after a sibling who died may be named "Moselantja" literally meaning a dog's tail or "Mokoto" meaning dog. I do not understand why a human being should be named a dog. If the name is intended to protect the child from death, as some believe, then this is a good opportunity for Christians to show how God protects in these circumstances. Some of these embarrassing names are transferred from grandparents or great-grandparents and if they were born out of wedlock, the context would not directly relate to the child. There are others, which even though there had been a good reason for them initially, are currently humiliating and dehumanizing. I therefore see no reason why Christians should insist on giving children such names.

As the issue of name giving is so important in the African communities, Christians can take initiative to protect the dignity of children by giving them good names that enhance their humanity. It is unfortunate that some children end up looking down upon themselves because of their names. It is in situations like these where society expects something terrible to happen because one has broken tradition, that Christians should stand firm as witnesses for Christ. Care should be taken not to make children bear the stigma of the parents' sins, shortfalls or even circumstances.

Another challenge with regards to children relates to their acceptance. It is amazing how the parents' lives are affected and changed by the coming of a newborn baby. In spite of the fact that, initially, the baby is unable to respond meaningfully to its environment, most babies' presence is enriching. It is a pleasure for people to come around the house to see the baby. There is such excitement around! Under normal circumstances, the baby is usually given unreserved acceptance, shown by cuddling and unending kisses. Yet, as it becomes older there are a lot of cultural restrictions as to how much they can express themselves and contribute to the life of the family. In some areas they are not even allowed to sit in the same room with adults and they cannot

express their emotions. These restrictions drive some children to isolation and emotional starvation. They are unable to develop skills to communicate and cope with life and as young people and even as adults may become social outcasts. It is a challenge for us to open up to our children as people made in the image of God, before whom we are equal and for whose rights we are responsible, although it is true that most of us grew up in environments that did not encourage freedom of expression. It is only as they learn to express themselves even from a younger age that they can be directed and instructed in simple ways of communication. Since we have personally experienced the pain due to unexpressed emotions why should our children suffer like we did?

As a church our greatest challenge is with the children who come to our churches, whose parents are not members. If we truly recognize them as human beings like we are we would understand their frustration when other children relate to their parents in a church setting while they are left out. Let us help these children become part of the family of God. Let us meaningfully invest in these children. Let us give children self-worth by honoring their right to human dignity and equality. Practical ways and means should be developed and applied by the church in this regard as part of its responsibility.

6.3.2.4 Femininity and Masculinity

This is another age-old problem plaguing our society and the church. In the past the pendulum was skew because of the oppression of women, which is still prevalent in some areas. Now there may be a possibility of it swinging to the other side with the oppression of men as an attempt is made to compensate for the women. I would like to challenge the church in areas where women, especially the married ones, are still oppressed culturally. Like the issues addressed above, I cannot exhaust the subject in this research.

One of the things that a Black African married woman dreads is the death of her husband. The problem being that when she got married she became the wife of the whole family. That is why during the migratory labor system, a man would get married before leaving home to ensure that there was somebody to look after the parents while he was gone. Apart from the fact that there was no proper accommodation for married couples, he was torn between his needs and the parents' if he would continue to get blessings from the ancestors. The major problem comes about should he die before she does. Usually

the wife is blamed for the husband's death. Above that, the family of the husband now fully exercises their control over her. At times she is required to follow rituals that could not have been done if he were still alive because they knew their son's stance about them. The bereaved widow has to prepare for a battle should she refuse to succumb to their demands or to give in and allow them to do whatever they want. As a result there is usually an unpleasant tension in times of a husband's death.

On the other hand, in some cultures, like the Southern Sothos, the widow has to get ready to face the possibility of being "taken care of" by the dead husband's brother. This is to ensure that the children and the property acquired during the deceased man's marriage remains in the family. The living brother may have his own family, but he is expected to care for her as a husband would without obligations. Unlike polygamy, this practice is without the woman's consent and it does not provide any protection for her except for the man's mercy if he chooses, while he is entitled to all the benefits of the relationship. This increases tension, hatred of the prospective "caretaker" and enmity with his wife and children. Amongst the Shangaans, although still degrading, at least the woman is given an opportunity to choose from the deceased husband's younger brothers and nephews.

Apart from the practice being sinful before God (as it merely amounts to adultery), in my opinion it is also one of the worst violations of human rights, which needs careful attention. The sad part is that at times these cultural practices are followed, encouraged and even performed by Christians. The reasoning being that it is culture and we do not want to offend the family. I think that this is one area where Christians, while being sensitive, should stand firm for they know that most of the rituals and fuss around death are done out of ignorance and/or fear of death. They will be better witnesses as they stand against these dehumanizing rituals and practices and nothing evil happens to them. It will be an added proof of Christ's power over death and confirmation of the promised protection of his followers (Matt.28:20; Heb. 13:6).

A direct challenge facing the church with regards to femininity is to uphold its teaching about equality before God regarding the service and ministry of women. I think it is important for Christians to understand that equality here does not mean women becoming men. God has purposely created them "male and female" (Gen. 1:26). They

each have their own inherent dignity, respect and rights and each should be allowed to impact life according to their own gender as intended by God. The ministry of women should not be regarded as a threat, a loss of quality of ministry or competition. None of the genders should be given special privileges. This challenge is also facing women in the church who struggle to accept the ministry of other women. If we realized the true worth of every human being, regardless of gender, we would benefit immensely from one another.

These are only a few of the areas where Christians can take initiative especially in the Black communities in order to bring about socio-religious changes effectively. This truly demands commitment and sensitivity to God and to the community, ingroup and outgroup, and the renunciation of one's rights to enhance and protect the dignity, respect and rights of others irrespective of religion, affluence, age and gender. God demands that we leave our strongholds (rights), no matter what they are, and leap into this task trusting and hoping in Him alone. He has the power to initiate change and He will give us that power as He appoints us as his agents.

6.3.3. Enhancing Human Rights through Management of Change

Management of change is not very easy as acceptance of a socio-religious change depends on the community. In spite of one's desire to see change happening in their lifetime it may not be so because it usually involves an evolutionary process through which the community grows into the change or vice-versa. Change may result in disillusionment if rushed. This being the case, the challenge in the process of socio-religious change then is to set an example, to be open to learn from others while praying constantly without losing hope.

6.3.3.1 Management of Human Rights by Setting an Example

In the past the church "spoke" more than it "did" or "performed". This was in spite of what Christ said that "You shall *be* my witnesses . . . " and also "*Let* your light so shine . . ." (Acts 1:8; Matt. 5:16) (*italics mine*). God persisted in pursuing Jonah though he tried to run away from his responsibility to the Ninevites. As seen from the narrative, compelled by his compassion and desire to see the needed change among the Ninevites

and Jonah/Israelites, God did everything to help Jonah accept the event of the sparing of the Ninevites. This shows that He supports his agents of change in spite of their reluctance. If we have been challenged to initiate or accept a change, it is best to persist as an example of the change in teaching, preaching and especially in conduct. Unlike God, we cannot manipulate nature to convince people of the change but we can create an environment of tolerance: persuading them by example, listening to and discussing their fears and concerns. It is a very demanding process since it has to do with people's wills. God used all means to force Jonah to obey including making him lose that which he highly treasured (security in the vine/honor). This is an indication that God will enforce a change and will take care of his agents. Therefore one should persist in being an example in spite of all odds.

6.3.3.2. Managing Through Openness to Learn from Unbelievers

There is a cliché I heard several times that goes, "I am the leader. There go my people, let us follow them". Perhaps Christians should now add, "let us catch up with them, get past them and then truly lead them as God leads and guides". For us to do that we need to develop an attitude of openness to learn from other people including unbelievers. The narrator used the Ninevites and the sailors to challenge Jonah/Israel and us to be open to learn from the conduct and response of these unbelievers. They are also made in the image of God and may be used of Him for his own purposes. The South African government, which is "secular" as opposed to "sacred", is an immediate challenge for the church to learn from an outgroup with regards to attitudes towards women. While it is true that some government officials are Christians, the whole governing body cannot be described as such. Thus I think it is safe to refer to it as an outgroup since it represents many religious affiliations and also addresses issues more from the socio-political perspective than the spiritual. It was recognized that for decades women have been involved in building the society through their involvement in the homes and in institutions of learning and of health. And now the government has recognized that potential and is giving them an opportunity to serve within itself.

We need to realize that Jonah's disobedience resulted in his insensitivity, indifference and irresponsibility and that can be true of us. Jonah acted contrary to what

was expected of him as a holy person because of his lack of commitment to other human beings, his self-centered pursuit for honor and his misconceptions of God. We can avoid this if we keep focused on Him and seek to progressively comprehend Him.

6.3.3.3 Management through Prayer and Hope

All the chapters of the Book of Jonah include a prayer. I think this is very significant with regard to its length. It is an indication of the importance of prayer throughout the process of change. Jonah himself persistently looked up to the Lord in spite of his disobedience when he was in trouble and he was helped as needed. True Christian prayer changes one's attitudes and conduct, molding him/her to Christlikeness. In relation to change, it crosses the social, religious, economic and racial boundaries. It thus finds wholeness in unreserved involvement with all peoples (Miller 1965:65).

Prayer in this book is coupled with hope in God during devastating circumstances. At the end it is God hoping and desiring Jonah's/Israel's (our) conversion. This is an indication that while doing all we can to implement the change, we have to continue hoping for God's best intervention in the situation. It is his intention with socio-religious change that it should always benefit those involved in it and in relationship to Him.

This proposal can help us lead the nation into developing a deep and complete understanding of human rights by treating each other with respect (acknowledgement of individual dignity and equality or honor) and an attitude of selflessness (assumption of responsibility for the rights/honor of others). This is possible if we maintain the right perspective and pursue the demands of God's holiness in our lives by the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

My intention with this paper was to discover from the narrative how God and Jonah acted towards change and then see if there may be any directives for Christians today to handle socio-religious change effectively. My curiosity in this subject was roused by an observation of the apparent threatening effect of socio-religious change on the church

evident in little or no involvement in the “secular” activities of the society in general. Helpful deductions were reached by studying the Book of Jonah through a Challenge-Response Contest between God and Jonah.

One of the significant values emphasized within the developing dominant culture of the new South Africa is human rights. This concept is compared to the honor of Jonah’s day as the underlying factor in all pursuits of human rights and also as an integral element of human rights. An attempt is made to pursue these rights at different levels in all individual and community interactions. However, there is an apparent lack of a comprehensive understanding or commitment to such an understanding of human rights thus the increasing rate of crime in spite of the emphasis.

While the church is affected and/or influenced by the culture/s of its society as custodian of social values, it tends to go to extremes in its attempt to maintain social control through its structures within a given culture. This responsibility may be complicated by concern for individual or group human rights/honor and misconceived theological perspectives, which ultimately become rigid dogma hindering the effectiveness of the church in a society that is changing rapidly. In the past, this was the general attitude of the church in South Africa and Christians grossly violated human rights physically, spiritually, psychologically and socially. An attitude we cannot afford today if we intend leading the society in the new South Africa!

This research shows that God is no stranger to change for He actually initiates it when and where necessary while believers are fearful and reluctant. Christians are challenged to subscribe to a counterculture that explains and implements the concept of human rights, correctly understood in its full perspective – human dignity, human equality and human responsibility *as a three-legged pot*. A counterculture expresses a *constructive image of a better way of life that will evoke voluntary reform by the dominant culture* (Robbins 1996:66) (*emphasis mine*).

This can be done by anticipating, initiating and managing changes relating to human rights. Human rights can be enhanced through anticipation, which prepares believers for socio-religious changes. Psychological preparation, even though minimal, helps create room for believers to evaluate socio-religious changes objectively and accept and support God’s chosen agents, bearing in mind that Christians have access to the deep resources of

wisdom, courage, perception and discernment found in God.

Unlike Jonah who blatantly disobeyed God when prompted, Christians today need to initiate change as God leads and guides. Christians in South Africa could start by reviewing their cultural practices since they may seem innocent and not harmful on the surface, while subtly promoting discrimination and violation of human rights. Dominant cultures are not a finality before God and are still developing in South Africa. They are subject to socio-religious change as God wills. The saying that all cultures should be exorcised of their demons through the Scriptures need to be followed in order to institute a Christlike community that will lead the society in at least this one important aspect – human rights.

Unfortunately, it is in this area that we are engaged in a contest with God as we become more concerned about our own rights/honor. Due to this, as in Jonah's case, God is struggling to implement the socio-religious changes He desires through us. The basic problem is insufficient understanding of the concept of human rights and the inability and/or unwillingness to lay down personal rights/honor for the sake of others. This is clearly demonstrated by issues relating to differences in religion, affluence, age and gender as discussed above. For instance, while the dignity and equality of women is acknowledged, it is a struggle to put into practice even in the church as it disturbs the equilibrium maintained by the status quo. Sometimes commitments towards the accommodation and involvement of women in the leadership of the church are made although accompanied by restrictions not applicable to their male counterparts. This may be equated to Jonah's half-hearted obedience to God's call. It is important to distinguish this contest from the struggle encountered in seeking or ascertaining God's will since it relates to one's reluctance to implement the known will of God.

The idea that van Heerden (1992) describes the Book of Jonah as a divine comedy with its message brought across through humor, could be adopted to enhance the challenge-response interaction which could be used to seriously evaluate our own responses and conduct. He maintains that humor in this book is not intended as a dog without teeth but is actually used to expose the incongruities of a given situation. This is very significant especially in relation to Jonah's (ours) responses as a holy person. For it is possible that while eagerly maintaining our righteousness, our responses and conduct

towards others may be incongruous with our pursuit.

As much as possible, a conversionist outlook of life should be adopted. This outlook emphasizes that socio-religious changes of the world should come through “the presence of a new subjective orientation to it” wrought supernaturally within the self (Robbins 1996:55). It is essential for the management of socio-religious changes relating to human rights because change of attitudes cannot be achieved overnight especially if they are inherent in the integral cultural elements like language. This needs to be coupled with the thaumaturgical outlook, which is an indication of one’s dependence upon God for hope and salvation in any given situation.

Therefore, the Book of Jonah, through the Challenge-Response interaction between God and Jonah, does provide directives about God’s expectations of Christians in relation to socio-religious changes (human rights). While Jonah’s attitude towards a socio-religious change is generally negative because of the great concern he placed on his honor (our rights), it provides the necessary contrast against God’s attitude and the attitude He desires for his prophet as seen in the example set by the pagans in the narrative. The contest also highlights the role played by honor (rights in our case) in causing reluctance to change. It therefore presents the challenge to maintain proper perspective of honor/rights in order to be effective in anticipating, initiating and managing change. Christians should therefore be bold to take socio-religious changes by the horns and lead the nation/s into a better life according to God’s will. With the new opportunity given, let it not be said of us that we fear change so much that we/our property/our institutions (like Jonah) are willing to die rather than change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benson, Clarence H 1972. **Old Testament survey, poetry and prophecy.** Wheaton: Evangelical Teacher Training Association.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph 1996. **A history of prophecy in Israel.** Kentucky: Westminster.
- Bosch, David J 1980. **Witness to the World.** Atlanta: John Knox.
- Bright, J 1962. s v. 'History of Hebrew Religion'. **IDB.** Vol. 2, 560-570.
— 1981. **A History of Israel.** London: Redwood Burn.
- Brueggemann, Walter 1994. **A social reading of the Old Testament.** Mineapolis: Fortress Press.
- Day, J 1990. Problems in the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah, in van der Woude, AS (ed.), **In Quest of the Past: Studies on Israelite Religion, Literature and Prophetism,** 32-47. Leiden: Brill.
- Dowley, Tim 1977. **The History of Christianity.** Sutherland: Lion.
- Esterhuysen, Willie 1996. Challenges in change, in Burger, Johan AP; Theron, Francois and van Rooyen, Andries (eds.), **Challenges in Change.** 1-6. Bellville: University of Stellenbosh.
- Fretheim, TE 1977. **The Message of Jonah.** Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.
- Golka, Friedmann W 1988 (ITC). **Revelation of God - A Commentary on the Book of Jonah.** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Good, E M 1981. **Irony in the Old Testament.** Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Grider, J Kenneth 1994. **A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology.** Kansas City: Beacon Hill.
- Harrelson, W 1962. s v. 'Honor'. **IDB.** Vol. 2, 639-640.
- Hauser, Alan Jon. 1985. Jonah: in pursuit of the dove. **Journal of Bible Literature** 104(1):21-37.
- Horton, Paul B and Hunt, Chester L 1980. **Sociology.** 5th edition. Tokyo: McGraw-Hill.

- Janosik, Robert J 1979. Religion and Political Involvement: A Study of Black African Sects. In Hare, Paul A; Wiendieck, Gerd and van Broembsen, Max H (eds), **South Africa: Sociological Analyses**. 86-98. Cape Town: Oxford.
- Jubber, Kenneth C 1979. Introduction. In Hare, Paul A; Wiendieck, Gerd and van Broembsen, Max H (eds.), **South Africa: Sociological Analyses**. 79-85. Cape Town: Oxford.
- Kinloch, G C 1972. **The Sociological Study of South Africa: An Introduction**. Johannesburg: MacMillan.
- Limburg, J. 1993. **Jonah: A Commentary**. Louisville: Westminster.
- Louw, Dap and Edwards, David. (ed.) 1997. **Psychology An Introduction for Students in Southern Africa**. 2nd edition. Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- Macionis, John J 1997. **Sociology**. 6th edition. Sydney: Prentice-Hall.
- Magonet, J 1983. **Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Technique in the Book of Jonah**. Sheffield: Almond Press.
- Malina, Bruce J 1993. **The New Testament world-insights from cultural anthropology**. Kentucky: Westminster.
- Mashumi, Veleleni 1988. A Viscious Cycle of Paralysis. **Southern Africa Today** 5/7, 17.
- Miller, Keith 1965. **The Taste of New Wine**. Texas: Word Books.
- Morgenstern, J 1962. s v. 'Social and Economic Development of Israel'. **IDB**. Vol. 2, 766-770.
- Neil, W 1962. s v. 'The book of Jonah'. **IDB**. Vol. 2, 964-967.
- Peisker, Armor D 1966. **Beacon Bible Commentary Volume V. Hosea through Malachi**. Kansas City: Beacon Hill.
- Price, Brynmor F and Nida, Eugene A 1978. **A Translators Handbook on the Book of Jonah**. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies.
- Prinsloo, E 1998. Social Change in South Africa: opportunity or Crisis. **Society in Transition** 29, 13-21.
- Pusey, E B 1973. **The minor prophets: A commentary**. Grand Rapids: Baker.

- Robbins, Vernon K 1996. **Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation.** Pennsylvania: Trinity.
- Sasson, Jack M 1990. **The Anchor Bible: Jonah.** New York: Doubleday.
- Stott, John 1986. **Issues facing Christians today.** London: Marshall Pickering.
- Trible, P 1994. **Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press. (Guides to Biblical Scholarship: Old Testament Series).
- Van Heerden, Willie. 1992. Humour and the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah. **Old Testament Essays** 5/3, 389-401.
- Wolff, HW 1986. **Obadiah and Jonah.** Mineapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.
- Wright, Christopher J H 1990. **God's People in God's Land.** Exeter: Paternoster.

Other Sources Consulted

- Bar-Efrat, Shimon 1989. **Narrative Art in the Bible.** London: Almond Press.



JONAH'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CHANGE

BY

DAPHNE MATHEBULA

MINI-DISSERTATION

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS**

IN BIBLICAL STUDIES
(OLD TESTAMENT)



**IN THE
FACULTY OF ARTS
AT THE RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY**

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR JH COETZEE

NOVEMBER 1999