

Bible – Nature, Culture, Languages, Social Organizations

- Look at the Bible from the perspectives of study about human beings. Why from a cultural perspective? – Understand better the Bible from human viewpoint to do a better translation
- PNG: Most linguistically & culturally diverse country in the world. For a population of 7-8 million, there are over 800 languages. Highest diversity index: 0.99 – Number One. Next are Vanuatu (0.972), Solomon Islands (0.965), then all African countries till No.9 India (0.930).
- Diversity of languages means diversity of ethnicity, cultures, customs, practices, etc. Diversity not only in languages and cultures, but also in nature, such as species of plants & animals, geography.
- Diversity of languages = need to communicate and to translate - use of English or the local national language.
- Why do we have to translate the Bible? = to communicate the Bible message; reading the Bible in a foreign language is not ideal; the faith may not take root in the heart of the reader.
- Linguistic diversity: A curse or a gift from God? GEN 11.1-9 versus ACT 2
- For scientists & linguists: linguo-diversity is comparable to bio-diversity; languages are more diverse near the Equator, just like bio-diversity is stronger near the Equator
- Why such diversity? Geographical isolation, social isolation due to structure of small bands of hunters-gathers, tribal warfare and constant hostilities between villages preventing contacts
- Today, extinction of languages is at a rate more alarming than that of species of animals and plants. Minority languages are endangered if not revitalized: spoken & taught to the young, available in print or other media, used in ceremonies, folklore, rituals, songs
- NAUTRE = Planet Earth created by God, entrusted to the care of humans: avoid over-exploitation
- With the arrival of agriculture and industry, the nature or planet earth has suffered; deforestation & loss of habitat lead to the extinction of many plants and animals
- Only humans and their domestic animals & plants can multiply, the rest is crowded out for lack of space; humans and a few species of domesticated animals and plants monopolize the space.
- Bible contains some messages about care and concern for the nature. DEU 20.19; 22.6
- The development of human society from hunting-gathering (foraging) to planting and herding: Echoed by the two sons of Isaac: Esau & Jacob; and by the two sons of Adam & Eve: Abel & Cain.
- Culture is a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies: human behaviors, interactions, language, kinship, gender issues, marriage, art (dance, song, music), ritual, religion, technologies (cooking,

food, shelter, clothing, jewelry, material culture), social & political organizations and institutions, mythology, philosophy, value systems, customs & manners, education, etc.

- GEN 4.17-22; 9.20; 10.9 Early record of human culture
- SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: The record in OT reflects the development of human society.
- Basic unit from beginning: family and close relatives, then small band of hunters-gatherers and tribes. The shift from nomadic to sedentary life style happened with the arrival of the domestication of a few plants and animals. The idea of land ownership became important, because of the need for land for plantation and for herding.
- The history of the ancient people of Israel, their entry into Canaan and the taking of the land echo this development of the importance of land ownership
- Formation of village, simple settlement close to plantations and domestic animals. Food surplus led to explosion of population, then formation of towns and fortified settlements. NUM 13:17-20
- Food surplus allowed some people to have free time & became the elite with special privileges. Some engaged in activities other than procuring food, such as artisans, musicians, keepers of stories & myths, priests, landowners, chiefs, rulers, government officials, kings.
- Ancient Israel's social structure reflects this development. From nomadic tribes to villages, to towns, fortified cities, kingdoms, empires – highly developed civilizations.
- Conflicts, violence, wars: The more ethnically diverse a region is, the more prone it is to conflicts, violence and wars, due to competition for land and resources.