

# The Bible: Alive in Context and History

*Reflections of the work in Cuba*

*(Background: another member of the Steering Group, Clara Luz Ajo Lazaro, incorporated into her work in Cuba aspects of the BILC project Case Studies. This Reflection comes from the conclusions of her report to the Steering Group.)*

Through the study of the texts in each of the two Case Studies and the whole process of contact with the Bible we can summarise what we consider important in view of our interest in analysing how we Anglicans in Cuba read and use the Bible.

Studying the Bible as Anglicans from the Latin American perspective, and specifically the Cuban context, we have felt that all this time of study has constituted a dynamic process through which the Bible is converted into the Word of God for each of us as we discover its relevance in our lives and in the midst of the social, cultural and political problems that surround us in our particular context.

The Bible for Cuban Anglicans is a book that is laden with memories. They are memories which reflect the faith of a people, their journey in dialogue and relationship with God, their interpretation of the events of their life and history in the light of faith, and through their spirituality. Those memories of liberation, organisation, resistance and survival in the face of different situations and forms of domination, speak to us today in our own life situation, our problems and conflicts, our joys and sorrows, our struggles to transform our world into a world of love, brotherhood and sisterhood.

In the unfolding of this whole process of reading the Bible as Cuban Anglicans, our communities have carried out a contextual, ecumenical, corporate reading of the Bible, in keeping with the Anglican ethos, and springing from the current ecclesial and social Cuban perspective. It is precisely on the basis of the experiences, commitments and needs of the persons who participate in the dynamic interpretive process of the selected texts that we feel that the Bible becomes the Word of God for our TODAY, lighting our path and guiding us to develop visions of hope, liberty, justice, equity and love towards all human beings, our world, our Universe.

We try to establish the relationship between Bible and Life, or better yet, the Bible at the service of all that produces Life. And since the issue is not simply interpreting the Bible but rather interpreting Life with the help of the Bible, the biblical strength and vitality spring from the corporate reflection of the groups that carried out this exercise with the texts. These people, who belong to the communities of the Episcopal Church throughout the whole Cuban territory, are committed to the affirmation of Life for which the Bible constitutes an important source of wisdom.

During this process, thanks to that union between Bible and Life, the community rediscovered and affirmed itself in the certainty that, in the same way that God was with the people of the past, God is with us today in our present struggles for a more just and better world.

The texts related to the unjust gender structures challenge us to find paths of equity in the relationships between men and women; paths of equity in our social, cultural and ecclesial structures. Characters such as Tamar, Lydia, the Syrophenician woman and the slave prophetess challenge us. They all have a story which is repeated today in our communities, in many of our contexts. The Bible shows us paths to equity and justice through unconventional characters, irregular persons, women who show daring attitudes of defiance, who invite us to look at the margins of the official history, asking ourselves about the social gender relations, the circulation of power between men and women.

The texts related to unjust economic structures challenge us to find, in the way of Jesus Christ, the equilibrium between loving our neighbor and loving ourselves. They challenge us to share food with the hungry, shelter the poor homeless vagabond, clothe the naked, and not turn our backs on our brother or sister. They challenge us to celebrate life around the table, a table with a place for everyone.

As Anglicans, we believe that our God is a God who embraces everything, so "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female" (*Galatians 3:28*). The Spirit of Wisdom, who inhabited Jesus Christ, also inhabits our Universe, and the Spirit is Life, so the expression of spirituality is the dignity and defence of all life. Today this spirituality discovers the ecological dimensions of our responsibility with respect to peace, justice and the integrity of all created things.

Clara Luz Ajo Lazaro