

## THE BIBLE THROUGH A WOMAN'S EYES

1. We are not able to read a text without the 'spectacles' of our own context which can make us blind or clear-sighted to certain things. Being a man or a woman is part of our contextuality and therefore co-determines our way of reading.

### ***What is the concrete situation of women in your context?***

2. Social structures, economic and political factors, written and unwritten laws define the concrete position of women, which can vary extremely from continent to continent, and from one social order to another, but also within a given society. Being a woman in India means something different from being an East German woman. The white Madam in South Africa will hardly have the same problems as her black maid. Never speak about 'the' women's point of view before analyzing the concrete situation of the women you talk about.

### ***Is there some kind of 'global sisterhood', or is this just an idealistic illusion?***

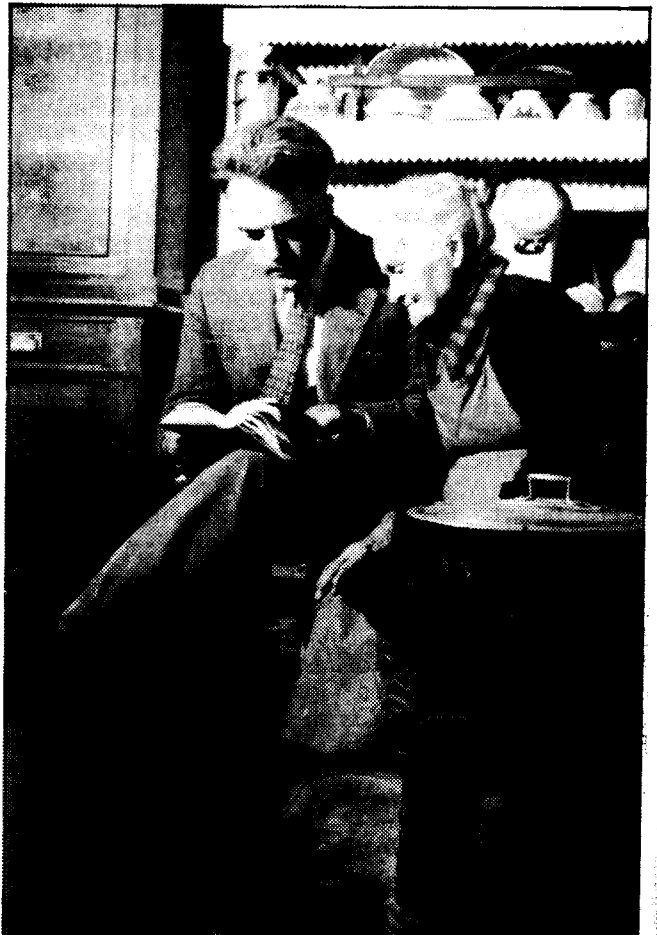
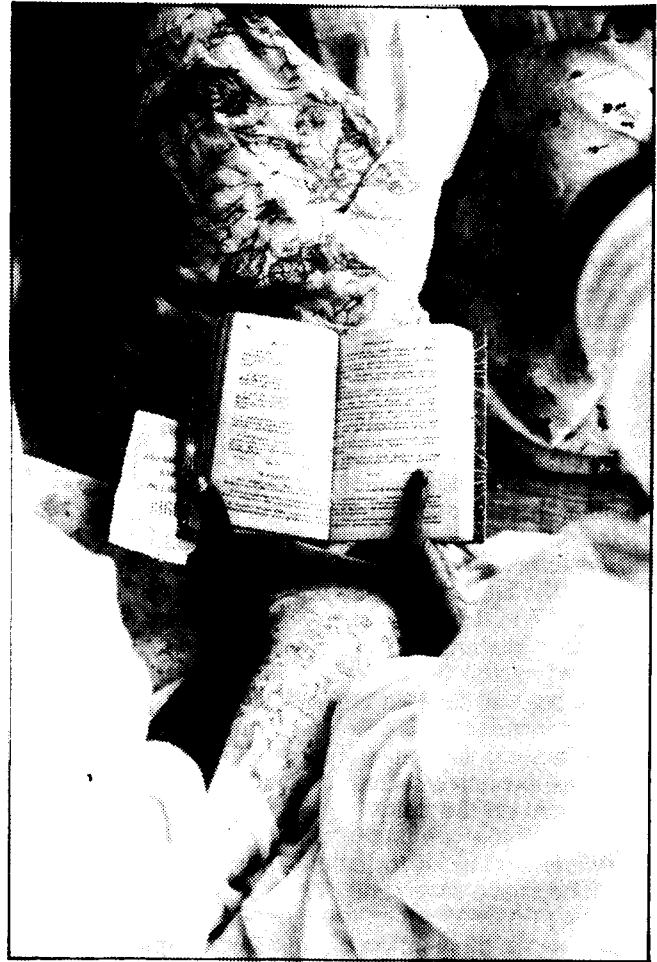
3. On the other hand, due to a long history of patriarchy in all parts of the world, the majority of women have something like a 'collective memory and experience' of discrimination. Amongst the poor, women usually have to bear a still heavier burden than men. In the houses of the privileged ones, wives are dominated by their husbands. And even in societies where there is full structural and legal equality, the patriarchal patterns are not so easy to abolish.

Reading the Bible with a women's eyes therefore means reading the Bible from a subordinate perspective.

4. Most of us, whether we are men or women, Africans or Asians, Americans, Australians or Europeans, have been taught to read the Bible from a distinct perspective, often against our own interests. Such perspectives justified the rulers and pacified the oppressed. One of the features – amongst many others – was that the Bible was interpreted almost exclusively by men. Today all over the world Christians are starting to liberate the Bible from this dominant and dominating tradition. Re-reading the Bible with a woman's eyes is part of this overall 'relectura' (re-reading) with the eyes of the low ones, the poor, the homeless, the exiled, the black, the minjung.

### ***Is there a re-reading of the Bible in our context? Does the women's issue play any part in it?***

5. Wrestling with the liberation of the Bible from a one-sided male interpretation, one has to face at least two extreme counter-positions: the advocates of the status quo claim that the lack of equality and the inferior status of women are justified by the very word of the Bible itself. On the other hand, radical feminists turn away from the Bible, condemning it as a mere reflection of the patriarchal society.



***Which biblical texts and concepts are usually quoted to affirm male superiority?***

6. An emancipatory reading of the Bible will not deny that the biblical texts in some parts reflect the patriarchal contexts. According to critical research, this is not at all surprising. Surprising, however, is the fact that the Bible as a whole is not a mere reflection and affirmation of the historical context. What makes the Bible a constant source of trouble, challenge and renewal both for church and society is the fact that the text of the Bible is essentially a contra-text within its context: the centre of the Scriptures is the liberating Good News of God's justice and justification for the down-trodden ones: the poor, the sick, strangers, sinners, gentiles and – women!

***Try to find 'emancipatory' biblical stories, concepts, etc. (Gen. 1, Luke 1...)***

7. God's 'preferential option for women' refers to women as the victims of injustice. Because God loves all humans in the same way, God must give special attention to the marginalized ones. God's universality can never remain neutral. God's side-taking with women aims at a full and inclusive community without upper and underside, where men and women of all colours, races, classes, religions, live together as humans. Thus eyes are opened to the true richness of being human, i.e. being created in the image of God both as men and women.

***In which ways does discrimination destroy the human/God-like image of both men and women?***

8. The full extent of biblical texts and concepts which express such a 'preferential option for women' has not yet been discovered. It needs a deep change of reading habits, of thought patterns, of language to overcome the conscious and unconscious one-sidedness and exclusiveness of our Bible interpretation. It needs a readiness for renewal, to let the Bible become a source of challenge and transformation within our own community and context. This is an on-going task for reading the Bible through both women's and men's eyes.

***Is it correct to speak of God as 'he' or 'she'? How could we come to an inclusive language?***

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