

I am beginning this series of reflections with 'Old Woman Reading' by Rembrandt

I saw this painting at an exhibition of his work at the National Gallery and as I stood looking at it a woman next to me said *"you would think she'd need glasses"*

I looked at her and realised that both she and I were in fact wearing glasses; we smiled at each other, both seeing the humour in her remark.

I looked back at the painting and said to her *"She doesn't need them, she's reading the bible"*



There's not much more to say about this picture. Rembrandt was a devout Christian. One art critic has said of Rembrandt that 'The Bible, for Rembrandt, was ultimately about *him*. In its stories, he recognised himself.'

In other versions of this subject he named the woman Anna (the prophetess), often using his mother as a model.

This woman is nameless and timeless. He sets her in darkness; her eyes contemplating her book with a look of recognition, perhaps even revelation as she receives the knowledge of the Good News.

The light in the picture emanates from the page, from which she receives light physically reflected on her face and a spiritual insight from the Word. In that respect it doesn't seem to matter whether she needs glasses or not.

After Rembrandts death the inventory of his estate contained just one book: The Bible

Please take a few minutes to dwell on this painting

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, Luke 24. 44-45

Grant us, O Lord, the wisdom to see our own emptiness, that we might know our place in your divine vision, for in your light we shall see light.