

**REDEEMING THE DREAM: FEMINISM, REDEMPTION AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION** by Mary Grey. *SPCK*, 1989. xi + 209pp. £11.95.

**WOMEN AT THE WELL: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUAL DIRECTION** by Kathleen Fischer. *SPCK*, 1989. 216pp. £7.95.

*Redeeming the Dream* has a most attractive title and cover; it sets out on an exacting and exciting task 'to construct a new model of Redemption and Atonement resting on the belief that the whole enterprise of feminist theology is itself about "redemption" in the sense of reclaiming what has been lost'. Mary Grey links redemption with a creation-centred spirituality, and looks at redemption as self-affirmation, as right relation. Her concern throughout is that women, inheriting a model of redemption worked out down the centuries with little awareness of the needs and contribution of women, may find redemption damaging rather than saving.

Since creation and redemption include every aspect of life, there is room for Mary Grey to weave a rich tapestry of ideas and quotations, which makes it read rather like a stream of consciousness. It is not always an easy or smooth read: the fact that almost every idea or symbol is being related to every other idea, makes it convoluted, and sometimes, I felt, unnecessarily obscure. I found myself alternating between an enjoyment of the connections she makes, and a suspicion that she feels obliged to include everything she knows, whether or not it is strictly relevant. An example: 'The myth of Mother Nature bounteously and endlessly overflowing with her gifts and her fertility, that there is permanently "the dearest freshness, deep-down things" as Gerard Manley Hopkins once said so expressively, should have ceased to lull us into security and inaction.'

*Women at the Well* has also been given a beautiful cover; its purpose is clear, important and practical and it fulfils its purpose. Its style is pleasant and readable; its author is wise and balanced.

For spiritual directors who are less aware of feminism than they should be it is an ideal introduction. For those already aware it is a mine (or a well) of resources for spiritual understanding and discernment. In some ways feminism itself belongs in the same tradition as spirituality, as its concern is with how people see and value themselves and how they relate. So in some ways feminists are already into spirituality and it is not surprising that bringing the two together is so fruitful. The author has been a social worker and a therapist as well as a theologian and teacher and is able to make connections in a style which is down to earth and practical, and full of real examples and case histories. She describes her task better than I can: 'I bring a particular perspective to the topics almost always covered in discussions of spiritual direction: spiritual direction itself, models of Christian growth, the experience of God, the role of Jesus, modes of prayer, discernment. Second, I treat several topics which are of special significance to women but are usually not included in discussions of spiritual direction. These are power, anger, violence against women, and women's spiritual legacy. At the end of each chapter I offer suggestions for prayer and reflection.'

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