

does not redeem the work but points to its dangers. To provide for these women a view of their futures which focuses on exciting new aspects of personal choice is to contribute to the ideological barriers which obscure the ground on which their privilege is built.

This is a book that will sell to an affluent readership of middle class, childless couples who read with their free evenings. Score one for the publishing industry.

Woman, Church and State: The Original Expose of Male Collaboration Against the Female Sex

Matilda Joslyn Gage.
Watertown, Mass.:
Persephone Press, 1980
(Reprint from the
original, 1893)
Shirley Davy

I used to think that as grey began to salt my hair I would become mellow in my view of things. Perhaps that would be true in an 'unfallen' world. As things are, however, there is only a growing rage—generalized and intense—at what have been passed off as 'true' accounts of our collective human past. Of course, the concept of *history* has become academically suspect in the past few years, with the realization that there is, in the long run, only *cultural narrative* told from a particular point of view. *Women*—always historically invisible and inconsequential—have known this all along.

Woman, Church and State is the closest to a history of woman that I have ever come across. The author, Matilda

Joslyn Gage, is impeccable in her scholarship, lucid and astute in her analysis and courageous in her choice of targets which include virtually every cultural institution in the Western world. What angers one so is that her book was written and published in 1893. How is it that an advanced student of religion, such as I, could not have heard of it until a review copy—a 1980 reprint—arrived in the mail last month? It should *already* have become part of every curriculum dealing with church history and an essential part of the library of any person, male or female, who has attempted to understand the patriarchal power relationship between men and women on both an ecclesiastical and a temporal level.

Woman, Church and State reminds us how radical the women's movement was in the United States until it '... was replaced by a conservative caricature of feminism committed only to achieving the vote.' Most of the windmills Gage tilts at are positions that oppose the current Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.) advocates. In fact, the contemporary state of American affairs regarding women gives Gage's work a curiously prophetic tenor which, undoubtedly, accounts for its re-issue at this particular time.

There is much to interest Canadian readers apart from the generally similar circumstance of women in their relation to church and state. Gage writes, for instance, of Rev. Charles Chiniquy, a French-Canadian priest who left the Church in 1856, taking 5,000 of his followers with him to Illinois. The main reason for his renunciation was the abuse of the confessional which, in his experience, degraded and demoralized female

parishioners. Gage also includes a letter written by 49 Montreal women to their bishop in 1877 to protest 'against the abuses of the confessional of which their own experience had made them cognizant.'

It is difficult in the scope of this brief review to convey the richness of both information and argument in *Woman, Church and State*. The first chapter, 'The Matriarchate', deals with the development of patriarchal ideology out of an original female-dominant, mother-oriented world view. In the chapter entitled 'Celibacy', Gage analyzes the political and economic implications of that practice within the church and demonstrates very convincingly how celibacy contributed, in fact, to the further degradation of women within the church and to their persecution, finally, as witches during the Inquisition. There are also chapters devoted to the subject of witchcraft itself, marquette (the right of feudal lords to the 'first night' with the brides of their serfs), Canon law, wives, polygamy, woman and work and the Church of today (1893).

In all my feminist readings I have come across nothing tougher, nothing more painful, nothing more enlightening than *Woman, Church and State*. It documents the underside of history and gives us a glimpse into the corrupt dungeons of those magnificent phallic edifices that have provided woman with little real sanctuary over the past two millennia. That Gage herself understood how important her mission was is evident in her last chapter, 'Past, Present, Future':

'The most important struggle in the history of the church is that of woman for liberty of thought and the

right to give that thought to the world.

... During the ages, no rebellion has been of like importance with that of Woman against the tyranny of Church and State; none has had its far reaching effects. We note its beginning; its progress will overthrow every existing form of these institutions; its end will be a regenerated world.'

I wish I had read it ten years ago.

**Turning Points
and
A Reckoning**

Turning Points
by Ellen Goodman,
Doubleday,
1979, pp. xiii and 290,
cloth.

A Reckoning
by May Sarton, Norton,
1978, pp. 254, cloth.
Sybil Shack

Let me admit immediately that when I received *Turning Points* and *A Reckoning* to review I felt a good deal less than interest and no anticipation at the prospect of reading them. So many writers have dealt recently with the effects of change on people's lives that another book on the subject was not exactly titillating; and a whole novel about a woman dying of cancer was not my first choice for summer reading. It is only fair, therefore, to say at once that I was not bored by the first nor unduly depressed by the second, although I have reservations about both.

The subtitle of *Turning Points* is 'How People Change, Through Crisis and Commitment.' The turning points of the title are the points in the life of a person at which change is initiated, in the case of the book, the points where changes in traditional sex roles are either forced by