



and the Christian and Missionary Alliance), Stanley focuses entirely on her subjects' Holiness connections.

Holy Boldness is an intriguing book. Stanley has done us all a huge favor in lifting up the lives of these mostly forgotten women. She helps us think about the impact of spiritual experience on women's lives and our lives. Hopefully she will send many of us scurrying to our libraries and onto the used book Internet sites to find the books these women wrote (I already have my copy of Mattie Perry's *Christ and Answered Prayer* because she lived right here in the upstate of South Carolina).

If you want to get to know some of those holy women who form that "cloud of witnesses" who surround us and cheer us on, I urge you to read Susie C. Stanley's *Holy Boldness*. ♦

Reviewer **Nancy A. Hardesty**, national coordinator emerita of EEWC, is professor of religion at Clemson University in South Carolina. She has just completed a manuscript tentatively titled *Faith Cure: Divine Healing in the Early Holiness and Pentecostal Movements* for Hendrickson Publishers.



Nancy Hardesty asks one of the plenary speakers a question during the 2002 EEWC Conference in Indianapolis.

Fireweed: A Political Autobiography by Gerda Lerner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 377 pp., hardback, \$34.50.

Reviewed by
Anne Eggebrotten

Have you ever wished you had a different mother? Or at least that your own mother had experienced life differently?

For many years I've longed for someone more heroic, feminist, and politically conscious. While helping my mother put together her memoirs, I was saddened to see that August 6 and 9, 1945 were not important days to her. Like millions of other Americans, she accepted the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as necessary to save the lives of American soldiers.

Gerda Lerner, however, was the same age as my mother; and in her memory of those days she writes, "I was stunned and outraged. Now I, as an American, was part of a country that could justify the mass killings of civilian populations during wartime" (244).

For me, reading Lerner's account of her first 38 years was a chance to live through the critical events of the mid-twentieth century in the shoes of a young woman growing up in a Jewish family in Vienna and committed to social justice. The first part of the book reads like the story of Anne Frank. Gerda (just nine years older than Anne) finds herself and her family trapped, then imprisoned. Friends commit suicide or are shipped to Dachau. Unlike Anne, however, Gerda escapes first to Lichtenstein, then to the US, leaving her parents and sister behind, unable to succeed in getting visas for them.

The next half of the book shows us the 1940s in the US from the perspective of a penniless, but increasingly feminist, young immigrant woman. From 1946 on, she is cele-

brating International Woman's Day on March 8 along with the Congress of American Women (CAW). In Seneca Falls, New York, CAW stages a reading of the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments in the presence of Susan B. Anthony's grand-niece and namesake (who spoke at EWC's 1980 conference in Sarasota Springs). Gerda is working on starting childcare centers (discontinued at the end of the war) and on understanding the perspectives of African-American women.

Discovering this rich matrix of feminist activity in the 1940s was a blessing to me; I had thought that the years between 1920 and 1968 were mysteriously barren of feminist consciousness. Gerda encounters the women's movement because she has been active in socialist and Communist groups since her teenage years in Vienna. When she comes to the US at age 19, getting a visa through a marriage she doesn't want, she faces dire poverty, working in various blue collar jobs and becoming involved in union work. She finally leaves the failing relationship and remarries, this time to a talented but impoverished director of amateur theatre groups.

By 1941 they are living in Hollywood, where he gets off-and-on work directing films, and she finally gets work as an x-ray technician. They have two children, and she goes through the difficulties of balancing work outside and inside the home, finally opting to stay home but invest significant time in writing and political work. She and her husband join the Communist Party, and she helps to form the Los Angeles chapter of CAW, which is the American branch of the Women's International Democratic Federation, founded in 1946 by women from forty countries to advance women's rights, protect children, and promote democracy and world peace.

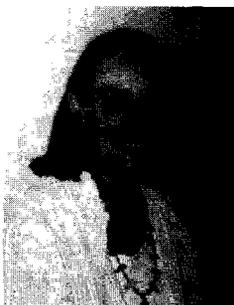
By late 1949, however, the House Un-American Activities Committee launches an investigation of CAW and decides that it is an agency



of the Soviet government; the group flounders and disbands. Gerda describes her despair and fear as she and her husband and their friends are black-listed and grey-listed, losing their jobs and their lifestyle of working for unions, women's rights, and childcare. I had never before read a personal story of someone persecuted during this period, so Gerda's story was a revelation to me.

For Gerda, this is the second time in her life that she has been hunted and hated for who she is. But like the Rocky Mountain fireweed, which takes root in burned or scarred hillsides, she manages to start a new life. She and her husband escape to New York, where he finds marginal work. In 1958, she is a 38-year-old mother, in bad health and disillusioned as the Soviet Union's repression and its betrayal of socialist ideals becomes evident. She pours out her heart in a letter to Lillian Smith, whose article she had read in the *Saturday Review* urging writers to make a deep social commitment. Lillian responds with warmth and encouragement, though she is dying of cancer. Then the housewife decides to take some courses at Columbia University and begins a historical novel on Angelina and Sarah Grimke, biblical feminists who worked to end slavery and advance women's rights.

By 1966, Gerda has earned a Ph.D. in history and is well on her way to becoming one of the earliest and most prominent historians on women. This amazing transformation is just the last page in an autobiography that I devoured in a week. You won't be able to put it down. ♦



Reviewer **Anne Eggebroten** serves on the *EEWC Executive Council* and is a frequent contributor to *EEWC Update*. She is a scholar of medieval literature; and her career thus far has included working as a college professor, authoring books, mothering three daughters, and

advancing feminist and other social justice causes at every opportunity.

Come, Holy Mother: Sacred Lullabies. A new recording by Kathryn Christian. Independently produced, 2002. Available from Kathryn Christian, P.O. Box 72, Williamsburg, MI 49690. CD, \$15; cassette tape, \$10; plus \$4.00 shipping per order. E-mail: kbchristian@earthlink.net

Reviewed by Letha Dawson Scanzoni, EEWC Update editor



Kathryn and Lydia at the 2000 EEWC Conference in Chicago . . .

If you attended any or all of the last three EEWC conferences, you're already aware of the depth and beauty of Kathryn Christian's music. In *Come, Holy Mother*, Kathryn's latest CD, her lovely voice, her talents as a composer, and her knowledge of Scripture, theology, and the medieval women mystics once again come together to provide listeners with an extraordinary musical and spiritual experience. The talents of David Chown at the keyboard and Michael McNamara and Brian Christian on guitar enhance the listening enjoyment.

The title song, *Come, Holy Mother*, is based on the writings of Julian of Norwich. Inside the CD cover, Kathryn includes some words from Julian that sum up the theme of the CD: "This fair and lovely word 'mother' is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot truly be said of anyone or to anyone except of the One and to the One who is the true Mother of life and of all things. To the property of motherhood belong nature, love, wisdom and knowledge. . . and this is God."

As I was writing this review, I paused briefly to listen to a National Public Radio feature on prayer. One woman said, "When I pray, I imagine myself sitting on God's lap and being enveloped—as if in a father's arms." Kathryn describes the same feelings of closeness to God in her songs, but she is speaking of a *mother's* arms. She says her own experience of motherhood since giving birth to her daughter Lydia has given her a new appreciation of God's motherly love.

A central purpose of Kathryn's music is to help her listeners broaden their concept of God to include the truth of those scripture passages that speak of God as Mother. The songs on this CD fulfill that purpose admirably. They're designed to help listeners experience God in ways that uplift tired spirits, soothe hurting souls, cheer lonely hearts, and bring comfort, calm, and hope in the midst of anxiety. As one of Kathryn's songs, "Long Ago," expresses it, it's as though God is holding us close, rocking us gently, and singing us a lullaby.

Four of the 12 featured songs are based on the writings of the mystics with their emphasis on turning away from our worries and fears, resting instead in God's loving care. Julian's writings inspired not only the title song but also a song based on her familiar and reassuring words, "All shall be well." Another song, "Set Aside Every Fear," comes from Catherine of Siena; and Mechtild of Magdeburg's description of the love between God and the human soul is captured in "Sacred Love."

Seven songs come directly from Scripture passages, such as Isaiah 66:13 ("As a Mother Comforts Her Child"), Isaiah 46:3-4 ("I will Carry You"), Ruth 1:16-17 ("Song of Ruth"), a blend of John 14:6 and Matthew 11:28-30 ("The Way"), and several of



. . . and at the 2002 EEWC conference in Indianapolis

(Continued on page 12, see Holy Mother)