Like Jesus, we are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world which deepens relation, embodies and extends community, passes on the gift of life.

—Beverly Wildung Harrison, *The Power of Anger in the Work of Love*"1

"JUSTICE IN THE MAKING" is an apt title for this collection of essays in honor of Beverly Wildung Harrison. Her own abiding passion for justice has animated her nearly five-decade connection with Union Theological Seminary in New York, first as a student and then as a distinguished and beloved teacher, mentor, scholar, and colleague. Equally strong has been her investment over the years in nurturing her students and her delight in how they and other "friends of ethics" creatively pursue a comprehensive justice agenda within the field she pioneered, feminist liberation ethics within a Christian theological perspective. This special issue of the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* provides a sampling of the work of these ethical artisans.

In her 1983 inaugural address as president of the Society of Christian Ethics, Bev pressed a thesis that pervades her teaching, writing, and social activism, namely, that "a radical conception of justice as rightly related community may be claimed legitimately as the core theological metaphor of a Christian moral vision of life, in much the same way that

many have claimed love, in the form of *caritas* or *agape*, as Christianity's central theological-moral metaphor." Pursuing justice passionately, she advised, requires engaging the whole self—whole body, whole mind, whole spirit—in a never-ending project of extending and strengthening community among diverse peoples and with the earth itself. Justice-making in this radically inclusive sense alone makes love real in both the large and small places of our lives, a life shared or not lived at all. Because love and justice are imperiled by structures of race, sex/gender, economic, and cultural oppression and their intertwined evil-doing, however, the moral life is necessarily a life of struggle, including intellectual struggle. In the midst of literally life-rending conflicts, Christian vocation requires of each person an advocacy and accountability of a particular order of magnitude. As she explained in her classic essay "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," "[a] Christian moral theology must be answerable to what women [and other marginalized peoples] have learned by struggling to lay hold of the gift of life. . . . We must learn what we are to know of love from immersion in the struggle for justice." 

On the occasion of her retirement as Carolyn Baird Professor of Christian Ethics at Union, some of her students and other colleagues, in the writings gathered here, reflect on matters of method and current inquiry within the field of Christian liberation ethics. Each contributor has been asked to assess Bev's influence on his or her thinking and practice, as well as on the field of Christian ethics generally. Using this as a starting point, each was then encouraged to reflect on the implications of feminist liberation ethics for their own justice-making, especially in terms of discerning the joys and challenges of their current context and its struggles, deciphering where, how, and by whom they feel stretched as scholars and justice advocates, and naming those precious, often fleeting sources for sustenance and renewal.

Not all contributors have responded directly to this set of concerns, but each manages to sort out matters of method and substance that build on, and in some ways extend, Bev's own work as a liberation ethicist. As guest contributing editors of this special *USQR* issue, we have tried to take to heart counsel that Bev and her colleague Carol Robb noted at the very beginning of *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*:


“It is not possible to do feminist ethics,” they wrote, “without a commitment to a collaborative style of work.”

We agree wholeheartedly. In fact, no one contributor and no one of the following essays says it all, but together they (and we) give voice to the rising moral wisdom of “lovers of justice” everywhere who seek, against great odds, to locate vision and alternative possibilities so that life with and on this planet can flourish for all.

The main section of this volume, “Method and Issues,” leads off with Larry Rasmussen’s “A Different Discipline,” in which he makes the argument that Christian ethics is a different discipline after—and because of—Beverly Harrison. Her impact on the field is not, and never has been, a function of “paying homage to the fathers” but rather of how she has shifted the very nature and style of ethical discourse through her radical commitment to economic democracy, her feminist style of moral inquiry and collaboration across communities of difference, her theory of social change and conscientization that privileges underrepresented peoples and their movements for justice and well-being, and her theological clarity that justice struggles are the prime locus for divine and human revelation. “She is also aligned,” Rasmussen writes, “with the broad tradition of ‘the making and renewal of social Christianity,’” which is “the broad channel Union Seminary has navigated over the course of the last [twentieth] century.”

Building on Rasmussen’s contention that Christian ethics as a discipline must address systemically the accelerating power of advanced capitalist economies to transform and deform the earth and its communities, Katie G. Cannon speaks of Harrison’s and her own interest as “ethical archeologists” who seek to dig deep and uncover the signs of socioeconomic class that burden and disempower so many people within global market capitalism. In “Unearthing Ethical Treasures: The Intrusive Markers of Social Class,” Cannon suggests three criteria for developing a critical ethical analysis of class relations and how class dynamics reinforce hierarchies of power and status: observability (and the untruth of classlessness), accessibility (and the injuries of class), and availability (and some proposed social class indicators). Because most people do not have workable tools to assess actual class status and analyze how class undermines community, Cannon offers her own set of probing questions and a research strategy for opening up this area for critical inquiry. “If we are to understand socioeconomic class as Harrison teaches it,” Cannon writes,

“then we must ask: Who benefits from the constructed stratification between those who make pots and those who own pans?”

Pamela K. Brubaker’s “To Feed the World: Gender, Class and Economic Justice” continues to probe the contours of political economy through the dual lenses of gender and class analysis. In acknowledging Bev’s influence on her own scholarship and advocacy for economic justice, Brubaker cites, in particular, the importance to economic ethics of Harrison’s defense of radical social theory and Marxian economic theory. Although she has not persuaded every practitioner within the ethics guild to go and do likewise, she “did clear a space for those of us who use this theory in our ethics to work and speak.” Brubaker illustrates the usefulness of radical economic theory for exploring two issues, sweatshops and international debt. “Each of these issues,” she writes, “is at an intersection of unjust gender, racial/ethnic, and class systems within and between nations in our current rapidly globalizing capitalist political economy. Each of these issues points to the need for systemic transformation of the political economy for justice to prevail.”

In “Ecological and Social Transformations and the Construction of Race and Place: A View from Iowa,” Daniel T. Spencer provides an extended case study of changes in Iowa’s political economy and argues that “we need a much more nuanced understanding of how the social and the ecological interweave, of how ecological changes in the land have been thoroughly racialized, and how racial issues often have an ecological dimension.” In sketching how race and white supremacy in Iowa were constructed both socially and ecologically, Spencer analyzes how changes in “nature” and “culture” were interdependent and mutually reinforcing, in this instance as a result of neo-European conquest, immigration, and settlement. The very ecological transformations that, beginning in the nineteenth century, turned Iowa into a settled agricultural center were bound up, as well, with efforts to institutionalize white supremacy in that state. In exploring the implications of social and ecological location for doing ethics, Spencer recounts how “most white Iowans I have taught view their ancestors as having arrived at an empty land of ‘endless acres of lush loam’ lying ready for the plow. The whiteness of the population and invisibility of the original Indian population have become naturalized categories, simply ‘the way it is.’ . . . These pervasive and distorted views of race and nature in history and contemporary society make clear ethical analysis problematic, if not impossible.” Liberation ethicists are challenged to examine how the construction of “whiteness” has ecological as well as social implications.
Marvin Ellison’s essay, “What God Hath Joined,” extends the conversation about justice-making in another direction by examining how opponents and proponents of same-sex marriage frame marriage as an ethical issue and, in particular, whether and how they make the link between justice and intimacy. Viewing sexuality and family life through a justice lens helps people make better sense of their lives by taking a critical look at power and powerlessness close to home in intimacy relations. “For better or for worse,” Ellison writes, “power relations shape all aspects of life, including intimacy and eroticism. Therefore, ethical discourse is needed to open up and critically assess the political as well as the personal dimensions of the cultural crisis in sexuality and family.” Some critics of marriage rights for same-sex couples, especially among conservative Christians, argue that marriage is an exclusively heterosexual institution and, further, that gay sex is morally problematic and should not be blessed. Other critics, this time from within gay and lesbian communities, argue that marriage is not a gay-friendly institution and that extending the right to marry to same-sex couples will only reinforce the cultural obsession with policing sexual activity among gays and non-gays. In assessing these critiques, Ellison suggests that justice-making should focus less on acquiring access to a troubled institution and more on transforming the prevailing sex/gender system, rethinking the nature and place of sexuality in human life, and reforming sexual ethics in ways that affirm the diversity of responsible sexualities. “Developing an ethic that affirms sexual diversity and difference,” he contends, “will require breaking with sexual fundamentalism, the notion that there is a singular ideal sexuality—heterosexual, marital, and procreative—and, further, that those abiding by this standard have the right to police and control others.”

In “The Work and Well-Being of Women in American Social Christianity,” Michael Bourgeois offers an historical case study of Henry Codman Potter, New York’s Episcopal bishop from 1883 to 1908, in order to gain critical distance on the roots and contours of progressive Christianity and, in particular, to examine the role of male religious leaders as allies in the struggle for gender justice and women’s empowerment in both church and society. Such investigation clearly resonates with Beverly Harrison’s own interests in locating feminist struggle historically and in tracing, for example, the problematic relationship of many early feminists and male religious leaders, especially those clergy who were disparaging of women’s claims for justice.5 As Bourgeois notes, the his-

torical task of the ethicist "can be neither simply the glorification nor solely the debunking of the efforts of those who came to the struggle before us. Rather, it must be a clear-eyed rendering of the strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of the women and men who sought, within the limits of the material, intellectual, and moral resources available to them, to establish a more just social order." Although Bishop Potter argued in favor of expanding women's work beyond the domestic roles of wife, mother, and housekeeper, he did not break with the reigning cultural ideology of women's domesticity nor question the "special natures" theory that reinforced women's subordination and men's authority and control. As a "soft (male) feminist," Potter appealed, in fact, to women's special nature to argue against restricting women's labor to the home and for enlarging their opportunities for service in the church and beyond. As Bourgeois concludes, Bishop Potter's is an ambiguous legacy.

Emilie Townes's contribution, "Women's Wisdom on Solidarity and Differences (On Not Rescuing the Killers)," emerges from womanist struggles to "comfort and to empower the possible victims of evil." In this theo-poem, originally delivered at a 1999 Union Day in celebration of Beverly Harrison's contributions as a feminist scholar, teacher, and mentor to countless numbers of women and men at Union and beyond, Townes insists that acknowledging the pain inflicted on persons by existing historical conditions is a source of liberation. Solidarity work, she notes, "does not demand or require that I save those who would see others dead or annihilated/either through neglect/indifference/calculation/or theo-ethical musings/I will not rescue the killers of dreams and visions of a world better than this/of hopes that continue to pulse, however faintly, in the midst of disaster and ruin...." She challenges us to interrogate how church and academy do not stand with the victims. Naming many typical and often denied anti-solidarity practices, she reaches down into the graves of injustice and finds a frustrated yet living hope. Solidarity is ambiguous and "messy work" that shares and receives "the dignity and gift of humanity and creation" by learning to make hard daily choices to widen and empower circles of this gift. Townes reminds us that "as we seek to work together, we must always be working on ourselves. . . . the point is not some religious version of perfection/but that we live our humanity with passion and vigor—regardless/that we live our lives in justice and hope and even love—relentlessly/that we recognize that none of us has the corner on righteousness...."
For Bev and other liberation ethicists, an adequate ethical account must pay full attention to the complexities of race, nationality, class, gender, and sexual identity as these are shaped and activated within the context of global capitalism. Marilyn Legge, in “Wild Geese and Solidarity: Conjunctural Praxis for Spirit-Filled Ethics,” continues this tradition of ideological critique by asking, “What kinds of vision and practice does a feminist theological ethics shape in a globalized world? If Christians are to shape identities and ministries that sustain energy for change, how and where can they take their places in diverse communities and global networks?” As a preliminary response, she sketches a conjunctural method with historical materialist convictions advocated by Harrison. It aims to connect personal identity and location in webs of structured social relationships and to do political analysis for action and for incarnational practice at “the conjuncture”—the specific historical moment of lived experience. Legge presents key elements or basepoints for a feminist theological ethic of justice-in-the-making to meet basic needs of species and planet in a globalized context: a conjunctural cultural materialist praxis that is grounded in principles of love and justice, community and difference; in intersubjective identities that reintegrate politics and ethics, based in self-critical connection and active compassion for the sake of repentance, forgiveness, and accountability; and in communities of multiple crisscrossing accountabilities and solidarities.

In “Our Increasing Prospects for Reproductive Coercion,” Christine E. Gudorf first pays tribute to her mentor by underscoring that Harrison’s ethical method is distinctive in its ongoing appreciation for, and critical dialogue with, the social sciences (and economic theory, in particular), and also for its insistence that a contextualized ethic must be richly informed by “the broadest possible inclusion of particular human experience. Beginning with acknowledging our own social location, . . . Bev led us in uncovering the systematic exclusion and devaluation of women’s experience and that of various sexual minorities, and in strategizing to end their exclusion and devaluation.” Gudorf then examines the agreements reached at the United Nations’ 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and criticizes the dependence on voluntarism to limit human fertility rates around the globe.

admirable in its intent," Gudorf writes, Cairo "failed to look realistically at both the prospects for sustainability without fertility regulation, and at the likelihood that recourse to voluntarism would eventually provoke drastic emergency measures of coercion." In her ethical analysis of the Cairo "consensus," she identifies three problem areas that require feminist analysis and strategizing if women and children's lives, and the well-being of the planet, are to be protected: first, Cairo's failure to deal in a substantive manner with sexual and reproductive violence against women; second, the doubtful global commitment to economic and social development that is required for the success of voluntary efforts at population constraint; and third, Cairo's neglect of environmental issues, especially in conjunction with overconsumption. Her own view is that, in light of social and ecological limits, "some form of reproductive coercion is not only inevitable but necessary, even morally appropriate." In the best Harrisonian tradition of not skirting controversy, Gudorf writes, "The ethical problem that should concern the religions of the world and all those committed to justice should be not the use of reproductive coercion, but the form that this coercion takes."

Daniel Maguire in "The Passions of Genius" affirms that "if you open an issue with Harrisonian depth perception to see what is under it as well as in it, the effort is never simple or unrewarded." For Maguire Bev's crucial role in the field of Christian ethics has been a consistent challenging toward social conversion. As he takes up pen to honor his friend and colleague, Maguire writes: "Her work is ensouled by the need to assess and activate our full powers of reasoned, affective, and sociologically conditioned cognition and she is always at that, even when immersed in a particular issue. She knows that the issues are symptoms that can be dabbed at more easily but it is the disease with its often cloakaded pathologies that presents the real challenge to a searching methodology." As an example of going for the deeper methodological core, Maguire explores Bev's ethical method in her treatment of abortion with extended reference to his Catholic tradition. He discusses her "exploratory surgery on the assumptions and presuppositions that have ruled the discussion. At issue is not just the discussion of the rights of the fetus; more to the point is (a) the contextualizing and hegemonic misogyny and consequent refusal to treat the morality of abortion and other issues in ways that fully reflect women's experience; (b) the historical Christian devaluation of the human body; (c) the concerted distortion of the Christian legacy on the very issue of abortion." Maguire uses a Harrisonian approach to abortion to show that it leads into "questions of
social psychology, the role of affect in all moral, religious, political, and economic discourse, the impact of myth and historically ensconced ideology on our best and never fully successful efforts at objectivity.” For instance, in the midst of a wise and witty exegesis of historical and contemporary positions, he wonders along the way if, in view of the fact that women are often less blunted by socialization in their affectivity and, therefore, remain more connected to the real world, in ecclesiastical circles “the question should not be whether women can be ordained, but whether men should be.” Maguire concludes that because Bev’s work is born of courage and tough brilliance, it will continue to grace our communities.

The contributors to section one, “Tributes from Colleagues, Past and Present,” concur. Four current and former members of Union’s Theological Field respond to the question, “What have you learned about faith and justice-making from working with Bev and other feminists at Union and elsewhere?” Their responses sparkle with moral wisdom and abiding affection for their cherished sister-colleague.

The final section includes book reviews of recent published work in (or of particular interest to) feminist liberation ethics. These books and their reviews have been contributed by feminist ethicists who either were or currently are Bev’s doctoral students or by colleagues who count Bev as a special mentor. This section in all its diversity exemplifies another contribution Bev has made to field of Christian social ethics, namely, her mentoring of her own and other graduate students. Chris Gudorf in her essay below speaks for many when she acknowledges, “More than any other teacher I have ever known, Bev educated not only minds but hearts and souls. I hope,” she adds, “that I have carried at least some of these lessons into my own work.”

To this, we add only our own “amen” and a word of gratitude. We are grateful for this latest opportunity to collaborate with justice-loving friends and colleagues in order to bring out this Special Issue of the Union Seminary Quarterly Review. We are especially grateful for our ongoing connection with Beverly Wildung Harrison. In ways she may not herself recognize, she has transformed lives by embodying a truth she has taught with such conviction, namely, that “justice is a praxis that realizes conditions that make my fulfillment and yours possible simultaneously, that literally creates a common good.”? May she with us, and we with her, continue to make justice with intelligence, passion, and a nagging hope that refuses to give up or settle for less.

7. Harrison, Making the Connections, 39.