Dear Reader,

In 2004, Beacon Press will complete 150 years of continuous book publishing. This rare achievement in American publishing is a milestone a mere handful of active houses can claim.

To mark this important anniversary, Beacon retained author Susan Wilson to research the history of the press in archives and through extensive interviews. What you see printed here is only a précis of her work, though we hope it will give you a sense of the importance of the press over the past three centuries. Ms. Wilson’s interviews with key figures in the press over the past sixty years are preserved on high-quality digital minidisks; many have been transcribed as well. Her notes from the extensive Beacon archives held at Harvard Andover Library, which includes a fuller annotated bibliography of books published by the press, are also preserved for scholars and interested readers. Both will be available through the Beacon website (www.beacon.org) in the coming months.

Over the years, many notable Americans, from George Emerson to Albert Einstein to Juliet Schor, have recognized the importance and vitality of this press. I hope and believe that the next 150 years will be even more rewarding ones for the press.

Helene Atwan
Director
Beacon Press gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program, which has made this project possible.
The history of Beacon Press actually begins in 1825, the year the American Unitarian Association (AUA) was formed. This liberal religious movement had the enlightened notion to publish and distribute books and tracts that would spread the word of their beliefs not only about theology but also about society and justice.

During the first decades, AUA book publication was only occasional, with printing often done by William Crosby, of the prestigious Crosby, Nichols, and Company, on Washington Street in Boston. By the early 1850s, however, the executive committee of the AUA agreed that the time had come to move toward a full-fledged Unitarian publishing program.

In 1854, a Book and Tract Fund was established, with the goal of raising $50,000, and educator George Emerson, cousin of Unitarian minister Ralph Waldo Emerson, headed the fund-raising effort. New AUA headquarters, replete with a street-accessible bookstore, were set up at 21 Bromfield Street, near Boston Common. With the fund and the storefront in place, the precursor of Beacon Press—then called simply the Press of the American Unitarian Association—was officially born.
On March 9, 1854, AUA president Samuel Kirkland Lothrop addressed a gathering at 21 Bromfield to explain why regular and planned book publishing was the logical next step for the AUA. In the nineteenth year of his incumbency, Lothrop was pastor of the very wealthy, very distinguished Brattle Street Church.

“We can send forth a thousand volumes, to be read by ten thousand, for what it will cost to send one missionary to speak here and there to a few hundreds,” explained Reverend Lothrop. “The voice of the speaker can reach but few even among his contemporaries....A sermon of Dr. Channing’s printed in his Works, if each copy has found but ten readers, has already been read by hundreds of thousands, and by how many more will it be read!” (Not so coincidentally, the six-volume Works of the legendary Reverend William Ellery Channing was one of the first books published by the AUA; printed in both six- and one-volume editions, it proved a perennial seller for the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.)

Sending books to places where ministers and missionaries could not yet travel was not the only reason Unitarians wished to publish under their own imprint. Well-written books, distributed both near and far, could explain and defend Unitarian thought and promote what they called “more reasonable” thinking. Moreover, the AUA could print scholarly Unitarian works that others could or would not publish. One final consideration was frankly financial: The American reading public was growing rapidly, and works by Unitarian authors were selling swiftly, especially in Boston; with contributions to the AUA at low ebb, why not reap the benefits of this lucrative new field of American publishing?

Over the next five and a half decades, the Press of the American Unitarian Association purchased and published works that were largely religious in nature and “conservative Unitarian” in viewpoint (far more progressive, nonetheless, than many other denominations). The authors were often Unitarian ministers—dead or alive, American or British, mostly Caucasian, and far more male than female. Many of
the books were collections of sermons, lectures, and letters, balanced by volumes of devotion, hymns, and morally uplifting tales.

Although sermons and stories may sound like timid fare, those nineteenth-century books did not lack social significance or political clout.

“Unitarian books of the period sometimes are dismissed as being just collections of sermons,” writes Frank Schulman, a Unitarian minister and scholar who has studied and collected early Unitarian volumes. “Those sermons were social dynamite and people took them seriously.

“Social reform (the term they used for what we would call social action or social responsibility) was important, but the writings on it were embedded in the books of sermons and tracts. There were eloquent writings on such topics as temperance, women’s rights (stressing, in order, educational, political, and economic equality), abolition of slavery, and education of the working classes. The appeals were effective because they were placed in the context of theology.

“However, the bulk of the books dealt with doctrine and theology. The great thinking of the nineteenth century came from Unitarians. People seriously interested in religious thought had to read what the AUA published.”

All in all, the AUA published 136 books over the course of the nineteenth century. Forty-two were originals, and the rest, a variety of reprints, new editions, compilations, abridgments, and exchanges with other publishers. Throughout that period, the goal was to publish well-produced, high-quality works at prices lower than those of popular literature of the day.

Whether new or recycled, the movers and shakers selected for publication by the AUA read like a veritable Who’s Who of nineteenth-century Unitarianism. Prominent among them were stateside ministers William Ellery Channing, William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Noah Worcester, Andrews Norton, Henry Miles, William G. Eliot, Edmund Sears, Orville Dewey, Cyrus Bartol, Minot Savage, James Walker, Octavius Frothingham, Frederick Mott, Frederic Hedge, and their esteemed British colleague, James Martineau.
TRANSCENDENTALISM
IN NEW ENGLAND

By
OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM

Hymn and Tune Book
and
Services

The Works
of
WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D.D.

With an Introduction.

NEW AND COMPLETE EDITION, REARRANGED.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
1875.
Predictably, two of nineteenth-century Boston’s most radical Unitarian divines—Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker—were conspicuously missing. Books about or by these liberal renegades would eventually be published by the AUA and Beacon Press, but not until the twentieth century.

The AUA Press initially intended to develop four series of books: The Devotional Library, The Theological Library, The Biblical Library, and The Christian Youth Library. Though only the first two of these were cultivated to any real extent, a precedent for producing series of quality books on timely topics was set—a precedent that Beacon Press would fully realize almost a century later.

By 1858, the AUA realized it lacked the skills, the agents, and the funding to continue book publishing on its own. Faced with a severe economic depression that was damaging the publishing industry in general, it chose to turn over publication to James P. Walker and Daniel Wise. Between 1859 and 1866, Walker and Wise reissued or purchased all thirty AUA titles, plus another forty Unitarian publications requested by the AUA. Though the “official publishers of the AUA,” Walker and Wise were free to publish their own authors and books as well. Since their print quality and selections were excellent—with books on abolition, women’s rights, transcendental and Unitarian thought, and history—the association with Walker and Wise enhanced the image of the AUA.

Walker and Wise had at first moved into the AUA rooms at 21 Bromfield. In 1860, they all moved to 245 Washington Street, with Walker, Wise, and Company’s bookshop in front and the AUA in back.

All religious denominations circulated literature to the troops during the Civil War. The most novel may have been a tract produced by Walker and Wise for the AUA during this period called A Soldier’s Companion. This handy booklet, intended to supply Union soldiers with solace and inspiration, included hymns, anthems, poems, and practical instructions. Some 57,000 were distributed, free of charge, during the course of the war.
Amid songs and hymns about freedom and temperance were allusions linking the American Revolution—the patriotic fight for independence from England—with freedom for all mankind. References to abolition and the dreaded fugitive slave laws were scattered throughout the booklet. The poem “Wipe out, O God! The Nation’s Sin,” for example, warned, “There is no liberty for them / Who make their brethren slave.” Songs like “Arouse, New England Sons” invoked, “Free! While the very homes you’ve made / Beside your fathers’ graves / Are pillaged, if ye dare to aid / The panting, flying slave?” Luminaries such as Harriet Beecher Stowe altered classics to fit the cause; her lyrics to “America, the Beautiful” included the lines “Let Freedom’s banner wave / Till there be not a slave.” A Soldier’s Companion also contained practical advice to men in the field. Soldiers were warned, for example, to “sleep as much as you can,” avoid “all use of ardent spirits,” and “wear flannel all over in all weathers.”

In 1866, the AUA parted ways with Walker, Wise, and Company. From 1870 to the end of the century, the AUA resumed its own publishing program, producing fifty-one volumes. These works—many of which were simply new editions of titles published earlier in the century—were again dominated by sermons and lectures of popular Unitarian ministers, as well as books of prayers and hymns.

Though specific topics and approaches varied, a clear interest was evident in looking deeply into Unitarianism—its history, its present state, and its future paths. Among notable religious titles of this period were several anthologies, including Christianity and Modern Thought (1872), Unitarian Affirmation (1879), Unitarianism: Its Origin and History, A Course of Sixteen Lectures Delivered in Channing Hall, Boston, 1888–1889 (1890), and the Reverend Orville Dewey’s The Works of Orville Dewey (1883).

Beginning in the fall of 1888, the Unitarian Sunday School Society sponsored a series of lectures on Unitarian history that ranged from
biblical and European antecedents through the American experience. Intended for Sunday school teachers and others, the lectures were meant to instill “a sense of the worth of Unitarianism as a faith which has deep historic roots, and . . . great allies.”

The increased liberalism of nineteenth-century Boston is apparent here in talks on the New England Renaissance, transcendentalism, science, and the need to awaken “a sense of denominational responsibility, and . . . greater usefulness as a helper of the moral and religious life of the world.” These lectures may also have presaged the future direction of the book publishing program.

---

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1854–1900

Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol, Jr., *Grains of Gold; or Select Thoughts on Sacred Themes* (1854).

Credited as the first book officially under the AUA imprint, this original work contained two hundred pages of brief sentences from the sermons of Bartol (1813–1900), the junior pastor of West Church in Boston. A prolific writer with “a soaring mind enamored of thoughts on divine things,” in Octavius Frothingham’s words, Bartol was a conservative transcendentalist and member of the Transcendental Club who taught at Bronson Alcott’s Concord School of Philosophy in the 1880s.

The AUA Quarterly Journal praised his early *Grains of Gold*, noting, “No one can have read those sermons without admiring the poetical beauty of their illustrations, and the richness of wisdom and spiritual insight of many of their paragraphs.”


Reverend William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), a Unitarian minister, was the acknowledged spiritual and intellectual leader of nineteenth-century American Unitarianism. Pastor of Boston’s Federal Street Church from 1803 until his death in 1842, Channing influenced New England’s greatest transcen-
dentalists—including Emerson, Alcott, James Freeman Clarke, Margaret Fuller, and George Ripley—with sermons and writings on the divinity of the human soul, moral intuition, and the dignity of human nature. Channing wrote only eighteen sermons on social reform, most notably on slavery. Far from a radical abolitionist, he did chastise the institution for the moral corruption it wrought on slave and slaveholder alike.

Channing was not an AUA “exclusive” and was published both in the United States and abroad by various houses. The AUA purchased plates of “this little work” and published it in 1854. Other volumes released by the AUA were *The Works of William Ellery Channing*, which became the first volume in the AUA’s Theological Library (1855, 1867, 1875, 1883), and Channing and Dewey’s *Sin and Its Consequences* (1854), first of a planned series called The Devotional Library. In 1858, the AUA began corresponding with William Henry Channing, a nephew, to negotiate purchase of the plates to WEC’s *Memoir* (1868). New editions of all of these books, abridged and unabridged, continued to sell well for the AUA for decades. *Thoughts* alone had seven editions.

Channing is sometimes confused with two of his nephews, transcendentalist poet and Thoreau biographer William Ellery Channing (1817–1901) and William Henry Channing (1810–1884), the minister, editor, reformer, and radical transcendentalist. Nephew William Henry Channing provided the AUA with *Memoir*, later released, in abridged form, as *The Life of William Ellery Channing* (1880). Newly transcribed materials were the basis of William Henry Channing’s *The Perfect Life* (1885), which received praise from the *Philadelphia Press*: “It is, independent of its high literary merit, by far the cheapest book yet published in the United States.” The book’s retail price was one dollar.


Reverend James Freeman Clarke (1810–1888) expanded the scope of nineteenth-century Unitarianism through his ministry, popular writings, scholarship, and involvement in social reform. A Harvard classmate of William Henry Channing and Oliver Wendell Holmes, he was committed to spreading Unitarian thought and liberal Christianity to the American West. Though a transcendentalist, he was more conservative than his friends Emerson and Parker, who denied the divinity of Jesus. Clarke’s Church of the Disciples, formed in Boston in 1841, was a legendary model, as was his own later tenure
on the faculty of Harvard Divinity School. A fighter for reforms ranging from
temperance, women’s suffrage, and peace to prisons, unions, and slavery,
Clarke was also a true friend of the press of the AUA.

This 1854 *Christian Doctrine of Prayer*, selected as the second volume in
their Devotional Library, was still on Beacon’s “List of Publications” in 1925.

**Henry A. Miles, The Gospel Narratives: Their Origin, Peculiarities, and
Transmission (1854).**

The gentle and optimistic spirit of Reverend Henry Adolphus Miles
(1809–1895) was evident in this book, originally published by Crosby, Nichols,
and Company in 1848. The text tried to answer how the Gospels were created
and transmitted to the present times. A Unitarian clergyman and historian,
Miles was pastor of the South Congregational (Unitarian) Church in Lowell,
Massachusetts. In the 1850s he served as secretary of the AUA and editor of
the denomination’s *Quarterly Journal* before committing his life to travel and
writing.

By the end of 1857, the AUA had printed 9,000 copies of *Gospel Narratives,*
which continued to sell steadily for years thereafter.

**William G. Eliot, The Discipline of Sorrow (1855).**

A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Reverend William Greenleaf Eliot
(1811–1887) preached in St. Louis, Missouri, where he founded Washington
University (originally Eliot Seminary) in 1853. The minister and philanthropist
was a gradual emancipationist before the Civil War, then worked to improve the
status of freedmen in the years thereafter; he also fought for women’s suffrage
and temperance and against legalized prostitution.

**Sarah White Taber, Early Piety; or Recollections of Harriet B — — — —by
one who knew and loved her well (1855).**

The AUA occasionally published books specifically for young girls or boys,
which were generally viewed as morality lessons. *Early Piety* was one of their
most requested volumes, recommended for parents to give to children. Written
by a Bible-class pupil, this book was described as a “tender and holy lesson”
chronicling “the character, sickness, and death of a young girl.”

**Andrews Norton, A Statement of Reasons for not believing the Doctrines
of Trinitarians concerning the Nature of God and the Person of Christ (1856,
1890).**

Though out of print for a long time, *Statement of Reasons* (originally pub-
lished in 1833) was reissued as the third volume in the AUA’s Theological Library. Touted as “the book on the subject of the alleged Deity of Christ,” it contained, according to the Quarterly Journal, “a vast amount of research and valuable knowledge.” The AUA was proud of this work by Andrews Norton (1786–1853), noting in the Journal, “In this large and fair volume we begin to have a pledge that the Book Fund of the Association is producing good fruits.”

Norton, a conservative Unitarian, was a biblical scholar, litterateur, and poet whose formal poems still appear in modern hymnbooks. His Cambridge mansion, known as Shady Hill, became a center for arts and letters, especially under his son, scholar Charles Eliot Norton. Part of that beautifully wooded Norton lot has been home to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1981.


Rather than being a collection of sermons, this popular book was a selection of sacred poetry, and the fourth volume of the Devotional Library. Reverend Bulfinch was credited with assembling a “selection of gems, adding here and there a few original poems from his own graceful pen.”


Late in 1856, the executive committee of the AUA agreed to purchase remaining editions of this 1843 work by famed British theologian Reverend James Martineau (1805–1900) and add it to their list of publications. It became the first of several Martineau books—collections of sermons, first printed in England—that the AUA would publish repeatedly for the next five decades. The younger brother of celebrated author Harriet Martineau, Reverend James Martineau was considered by many to be nineteenth-century Britain’s finest intellect, and one of the first philosophers to understand the importance of Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Among his other works published by the AUA were *Sacerdotal and Spiritual Religion* (1857), *Studies of Christianity* (1902), and *Tides of the Spirit* (1905).

Lucretia Hale, *Seven Stormy Sundays* (1858).

Though numerous educated and eloquent women authors were published in nineteenth-century Boston, the AUA rarely tapped their services. One simple reason: there were no female Unitarian ministers, and no women admitted to divinity schools. A notable exception to the AUA’s policy was this popular volume by layperson Lucretia Hale (1820–1900), the sister of the legendary minis-
ter and sage, Edward Everett Hale. A collection of previously unpublished sermons by beloved preachers, this book was described by the Quarterly Journal as “a series of religious services,—prayers, sermons, hymns, meditations,—designed to be read by persons detained at home on Sundays in consequence of stormy weather.” Though the Journal curiously omitted Hale’s name in its review of the book, it noted that “the work has been prepared by a young lady of many gifts and accomplishments fitting her for this service.”

Seven Stormy Sundays was selected as the sixth volume in the AUA’s Devotional Library series, and it was frequently reprinted. Lucretia Hale later gained fame as a proponent of feminism, social work, and education, as well as for her satire, The Peterkin Papers, released by another publisher in 1880.


Charles William Eliot (1842–1926), the powerful and longtime president of Harvard University, was always willing to help out his son Samuel and the American Unitarian Association over which Samuel presided. Charles contributed to Beacon’s biographies with books like Four American Leaders (1906), as well as John Gilley, an appreciative story of his neighbor at Northeast Harbor in Mt. Desert, Maine.

In 1904, the Gilley book became the first of the press’s True American Types series, a special subset of biography meant to inspire by example. The AUA Bulletin called this series “sketches of the sterling American manhood which travels along the bypaths of life rather than in the highways of fame.” The 1905 Yearbook hailed Gilley as an ideal prototype of modern AUA publishing, since the biography was based on “the dignity of human nature on which our Unitarian faith lays stress.”

The positive reviews Charles Eliot’s books received, as well as his name recognition, helped broaden the press’s audience. Eliot was lauded by a Putnam’s critic as having a “lucid, direct and vigorous style...[and a] well disciplined, well-stored and independent mind.”
Before 1900, the American Unitarian Association and its book publications were managed by a secretary and an assistant or two, tucked into the Association’s offices on Beacon Street. As the century turned, however, the AUA and Unitarian publishing began a new era, with a newly defined mission. In order to move forward and grow in a serious and timely manner, a full-time executive position had to be created and filled. As a result, the man originally appointed AUA secretary in 1898 was made the first president of the Association, only two years later. It was a job that Reverend Samuel Atkins Eliot (1862–1950) was to hold—and to continually remold—for twenty-seven years.

The son of Harvard president Charles Eliot and descendant of the legendary “Apostle to the Indians,” John Eliot, Samuel Eliot was prepared to lead both the AUA and its press into a much more complex and troubled world. With a determined desire for change, Eliot asked Unitarian congregations to actively enter the fields of social justice, education, and civic reform, to attack “the corruption of the day [and] the low standards of commerce, society, and civics.” In his view, broadening missionary work to include both social and religious goals
meant supporting the basic aim of human freedom, but from new perspectives.

Eliot applied his bold vision to the world of Unitarian publishing, arguing that “books which appeal to the higher instincts of men do not, as a rule, command a large circulation, and cannot therefore be handled by publishing houses which are primarily commercial enterprises.” His plan for the AUA Press, noted in the 1902 Annual Report and the 1904 Yearbook of the Unitarian Congregational Churches, was clear:

It is the purpose of the department to broaden its scope by publishing books dealing with ethical, sociological, philanthropic, and similar subjects, as well as those of a more strictly religious character. . . . Although books of marked theology and religious note will continue to have a predominant place in Association publication, the wide interest in all subjects relating to social and moral betterment should be recognized by the Association’s imprint. . . . The evergrowing topics of war and peace and arbitration, or national amity and racial brotherhood will be represented.

For those who found Eliot’s ideas offensive, or at least inappropriate for a church-owned press, Eliot crafted a fine answer. “Although some of these books may not deal directly with Unitarian ideas,” he argued in the 1905 Yearbook, “they open the mind, through the favorable impression which they make, to the consideration of Unitarian literature and tracts where open-mindedness otherwise never existed.”

Eliot’s request for a capital fund of $100,000, specifically earmarked for AUA publishing, was never realized. But his demand for increased professional assistance was. The singularly most important staff addition was Charles Livingston Stebbins, a young Bostonian and Harvard graduate with experience in publishing and book sales, who was hired as the press’s first “Publication Agent” in 1902.

With Stebbins on board, President Eliot’s vision began to blossom. Eliot personally worked on the backlist, deleting outdated books and securing rights and plates to classic works of Unitarian thinkers. Religious books, whether popular or scholarly, remained a central con-
cern for Eliot and included works by prominent ministers including Minot Savage, Samuel Crothers, Robert Collyer, Brooke Hereford, John Chadwick, Charles Ames, and Stopford Brooke.

Meanwhile, Publication Agent Stebbins concentrated on new books outside the religious field, especially those that combined religion with social causes and science. Between 1902 and 1913, when Stebbins left the Association, the AUA published 133 new titles: 96 originals, and the rest, reprints or exchanges with foreign publishers. (Roughly the same number of books had been published by the AUA during the entire nineteenth century, and only one-third of those were AUA originals.)

The year of Stebbins’s arrival, 1902, was also the year that the Beacon Press imprint and colophon made their formal debut. Though the name Beacon had been occasionally used on earlier hymnals and prayer books, a new moniker was deemed essential for the broadened, twentieth-century identity of the publishing house. The “Beacon” referred to Beacon Hill, where the AUA had established its permanent home. But it specifically made reference to the object that had given Beacon Hill its name nearly three centuries earlier.

In 1634, when Beacon Hill was sixty feet taller and much wilder, a primitive tar bucket was suspended from a pole on top of this hill. If colonial Bostonians needed to be warned of enemies approaching by land or by sea, the bucket was set aflame and hoisted up the pole. The idea of shedding light to warn of imminent dangers was appealing to Eliot and the Association, and it was reflected in the original Beacon colophon, created by New York type designer Frederick William Goudy. Appropriate as well, beginning in 1906, was the printing of the phrase In luce veritatis, “In the light of truth,” beneath the Beacon symbol.

Under the inspired guidance of Eliot and Stebbins, Beacon Press won immediate recognition for the excellence of its books. The New York State Library included almost every new AUA book in its 1903 listing
of outstanding books. And the San Francisco Chronicle of January 3, 1903, noted, “Whether we are attracted or repulsed by the teachings of Unitarian theology, honesty compels us to acknowledge its superlative intellectuality... and... a lucidity of thought and an employment of pure English... unsurpassed in the cause of any other religious body.”

In 1910, Eliot reiterated his interest in publishing more “creative scholarly works” and began to seek out books by foreign writers. He traveled to Europe to make personal connections, especially with English and German liberal theologians. Publication Agent Stebbins knew that, while all of these scholarly books were important, they were rarely profitable. “The best books by no means always have the largest sales,” the two men noted in the AUA Yearbook. “Four fifths of the books published [by Beacon Press] would not have seen the light had they not borne the imprint of the Association.”

During this period, Beacon Press tried to improve its financial situation by issuing AUA classics—including Carroll Davidson Wright’s Some Ethical Phases of the Labor Question and Octavius Frothingham’s Transcendentalism in New England—in inexpensive paperback form. The paperback experiment failed, however, and wasn’t pursued again until 1955. Beacon did score successes, both literary and financial, by producing a number of Special and Centennial Editions of the works of legendary nineteenth-century Unitarians. Among the writing gathered, edited, and repackaged were those of Joseph Allen (1820–1898), Starr King (1824–1864), and the two Boston blockbusters, William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker.

After the departure of Publication Agent Stebbins in 1913, Beacon Press did not replicate the numerous successes nor the literary diversity it had enjoyed under Stebbins. Part of the problem was that Stebbins’s successor, Forbes Robertson, was more passive; he tended to wait for, rather than aggressively pursue, literary submissions. An even greater part of the problem was a succession of eras that proved difficult for the world of publishing in general. The lull of the World War I period was
followed by a strong publishing program in the 1920s, but that segued into the Great Depression, which, in turn, segued into World War II.

One important change in Beacon’s organization was made in 1914. On September 1, the AUA formally incorporated Beacon Press in order to more clearly delineate the division between sales materials and free religious literature. In theory, Beacon Press was henceforth to operate as a trade press, covering its expenses with monies from book sales. In reality, that rarely occurred. By 1918, the AUA placed Beacon in charge of all its own marketing, sales materials, staff salaries, advertising, and book publication. From that time on, AUA books—which, in the past, sometimes bore the Beacon imprint, and sometimes the AUA—were all to be marked Beacon. Within the next decade, Beacon Press was to have its own board of directors as well, with members selected for their knowledge of book publishing.

Though the number of publications in general diminished from World War I through World War II, Beacon published 368 books between 1900 and 1945. From the mid-teens through the mid-1920s, the religious education department dominated, and the Beacon Sunday School series, based on progressive educational ideas associated with John Dewey, flourished. Hymnals often proved to be among Beacon’s best-selling books, especially *Hymns of the Spirit* (1937), which sold 20,737 copies in its first seven months. After 1925, Publication Agent Robertson helped Beacon publish more biographies and histories, as well as books on education, government, literature, civics, psychology, war, and postwar conditions. The *Annual Report* of 1929 described these works as having “a liberal outlook but not strictly of a religious nature.”

In the mid-1930s, the emergence of yet another member of the famed Unitarian Eliot family—Frederick May Eliot (1889–1958)—laid the groundwork for a renewed energy and yet another new era for Beacon Press. First, as head of the AUA’s Commission on Appraisal, and then, in 1937, as the newly elected president of the Association, Eliot envisioned a bolder, more
socially purposive approach to publishing. The report of the publica-
tions department, issued in 1937, mapped out Beacon’s future as Eliot
and his colleagues envisioned it:

The university presses for various reasons—religious, political, and eco-
nomic—are not interested in the publication of liberal religious books and
it is our purpose to establish a Liberal Press, the foundations of which we
have already laid. In these days of regimentation, we feel that it is essential
that there should be a press in this country to combat the forces that would
destroy liberalism.

It would take several more years, however, and the end of World War II,
for this dream to become reality.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1900–1945

CARROLL DAVIDSON WRIGHT, Some Ethical Phases of the Labor Question
(1902).

Credited as the first book with the Beacon imprint, and the first under
Stebbins’s management, this landmark study attacked the evils of modern
industry and suggested changes in capitalistic enterprises, as well as the need
to protect laborers’ rights. Carroll Wright (1840–1909) was an important statisti-
cian, social economist, and former Massachusetts state senator who organized
the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since Wright was also honorary president of
the AUA, Stebbins was able to get this manuscript for free—a skill the agent per-
fected over the next decade.

JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER, Religious Freedom in American Education
(1903).

This study on religious education in schools and universities foreshadowed
Beacon’s later interest in education, especially Paul Blanshard’s 1963 work,
1939) was an ordained Unitarian minister, a popular traveling lecturer, and
the author of multiple books and articles on temperance, religion, history, and
culture.
Though President Eliot was forward-looking in many ways, feminism was clearly not his forte. Eliot felt women were unsuited for professional life, and he devalued women ministers and their accomplishments in particular. This work is an unusual volume of biographies in that it heralds the accomplishments of seven of Greater Boston’s nineteenth-century heroines, including internationally renowned reformers and radicals Harriet Beecher Stowe, Margaret Fuller, and Lydia Maria Child.

More in tune with Eliot’s vision of womanhood was Sophie Lovejoy’s *Self-Training for Motherhood*, which Beacon published nine years later (1914). Among the practical items discussed therein were the problems of, and practical solutions to, motherhood—ranging from finances and discipline to “the art of self-criticism” and “the soul of the child.”

Educator Kelly Miller (1863–1939) was born in South Carolina, the son of a free black and a slave. As professor and dean at Howard University, he became increasingly interested in “the Negro question” and lectured and wrote widely on the importance of higher education for African Americans. This forward-looking and well-respected book dealt with educational advances and problems for blacks, from the Civil War onward. The study presaged Beacon Press’s later concern for civil rights in its books of the 1950s, ’60s, and beyond.

Beacon’s number-one author during the Stebbins period was surely David Starr Jordan (1851–1931), the famed zoologist and president of Stanford University. Though his training was mainly in ichthyology (the study of fish), Jordan was well known as a popular and prolific topical writer and an outspoken peace activist. Beacon Press published nineteen of his books between 1902 and 1916, more works than by any other single author. Many of his books remained on AUA lists until the eve of World War II.

Some of Jordan’s arguments for peace are timeless. “The genius of our people is all for peace, the peace of strength and self-control, not that of cowardice and indifference,” he wrote in *The Call of the Nation*. “It is our privilege among the nations to spread this spirit. This we may do by the power of example.”

A few of his arguments for peace are clearly dated, referring to eugenics, and
therefore unsettling to modern ears. (He often wrote from a biological viewpoint, noting that war hurt the species by removing the fittest from the gene pool.) When not writing about peace, Jordan acted in its behalf, presiding over such bodies as the World Peace Foundation, the World Peace Conference, and the American Peace Society.

Other Jordan books published by Beacon—including *The Blood of the Nation* (1902), *The Call of the Twentieth Century* (1903), *College and the Man* (1907), and *The Philosophy of Hope* (1907)—dealt with such topics as materialism, race, evolution, civic duties, college and education, war, politics, and political reform.

**Abraham Rihbany, America, Save the Near East (1918).**

This timely study was rushed into print the month after World War I ended and sold out three editions in its first year. The book’s intelligent, informed central argument—asking America to liberate Syria and support Syrian independence under U.S. protection—was among the reasons the author was invited to attend the Versailles peace conference. Ibrahim (Abraham) Mitrie Rihbany (1869–1944) emigrated from Syria (an area now in Lebanon) at the age of twenty-two and spent much of his life speaking and writing about Middle Eastern issues. From these pulpits, including monthly articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*, he argued on various issues and debated the popular notion that a Jewish state should be created in Palestine.

**Earl Morse Wilbur, Our Unitarian Heritage (1925).**

*Our Unitarian Heritage* was the first of many groundbreaking studies by noted theology professor and historian of Unitarianism Earl Morse Wilbur (1886–1956). A parish minister and scholar who served as teacher at Meadville Theological School and president of the Pacific Unitarian School (now Starr King School for the Ministry), Wilbur came to be known as the world’s foremost authority on the development of liberal religion.

**John Moors Cabot, Racial Conflict in Transylvania (1926).**

Beacon’s interest in international politics was apparent in books like John Moors Cabot’s *Racial Conflict in Transylvania*. This volume is an early work by Cabot (1901–1981), who spent four decades in the U.S. Foreign Service and served as the American ambassador to five nations from 1954 to 1965. In his retirement, Cabot was consultant and lecturer on law and diplomacy at Tufts and Georgetown universities.
Cabot was praised by reviewers for his “easy and graphic way of writing,” as well as for his scholarly, unbiased, and dispassionate analysis of “Transylvania and the dangerous possibilities it presents to the peace of Europe” (New York Herald Tribune).


This biography of the first American president was adopted by the New York public schools for classes in high school reading and literature. One reviewer called the book “a refreshing contrast” to Washington biographies that depicted young George as superhuman and therefore impossible to emulate. Thompson’s book was credited as the first Beacon publication to be officially taught in New York schools—a profitable and prestigious market.

A similar classroom success was made by Walter Fogg’s One Thousand Sayings in History Presented as Pictures in Prose (1929), a selection of the American Library Association.

J. A. C. Fagginger Auer, Humanism States Its Case (1933).

Educator and clergymen Johannes Abraham Christoffel Fagginger Auer (1882–1964) was born in the Netherlands and schooled in both Europe and North America. A Unitarian pastor and professor at the theological schools of both Tufts and Harvard, he wrote on the purpose of humanism within the field of theology. This short volume—“full of solid thinking presented with delightful clarity,” as one reviewer observed—was based on Professor Auer’s 1932 Lowell Institute lectures.

Horatio Willis Dresser, Knowing and Helping People: A Study of Personal Problems and Psychological Techniques (1933).

This book by Horatio Willis Dresser (1866–1954) was lauded by a Commonweal reviewer as “much better than the common run of books on mental health, [and] . . . recommended to normal people interested in self-knowledge.” Through summaries of cases, Dresser presented the techniques and problems of psychoanalytical work, in coordination with physicians and ministers.

Willard Reed, A Letter to Emerson (1934).

The AUA Annual Report of 1936 noted that literary critic and Yale professor William Lyon Phelps called Reed’s study one of the one hundred most important books published that year. Willard Reed (1870–1944) was a minister, educator, and local political activist who served both the Roxbury Latin and the Browne and Nichols schools.

The AUA’s continued interest in religious education and Sunday schools was evidenced in this work by Angus Hector MacLean (1892–1969), an educator, writer, and clergyman who received doctor of divinity degrees at both Tufts and Meadville.


This compact, illustrated volume chronicled the story of journalist and novelist Émile Zola, who incurred the wrath of French officials for defending Alfred Dreyfus in the open letter known as “J’Accuse” (1898). Dreyfus was an army officer wrongfully convicted of treason because he was Jewish. Author Friedman, writing on the eve of World War II, took care to link Zola’s heroic stance against anti-Semitism with the situation in Hitler’s Germany.


The indomitable Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876–1978) was a nationally known leader in the development of progressive religious education for children. Born in China to Presbyterian missionaries, she studied, taught, wrote, and analyzed her way to recognition before being employed by Beacon Press. Ernest Kuebler, secretary of the Unitarian Department of Religious Education, influenced Fahs’s hiring in 1937. Soon after, a curriculum called The New Beacon Series began, which Fahs edited and often authored or coauthored. The books and curriculums she helped create received even greater acclaim after World War II, when Unitarianism membership soared and other liberal church and public schools groups sought out her teachings.

Among the many popular books she wrote for Beacon were *Beginnings of Life and Death* (1938), *Jesus the Carpenter’s Son* (1946), *The Church Across the Street* (1947), and *Today’s Children and Yesterday’s Heritage* (1952).


Though raised and educated as a Baptist, Curtis Williford Reese (1887–1961) moved to Unitarianism and a lifelong commitment to humanism. Rejecting the autocratic God he saw in the Baptist faith, Reese sought to liberate humankind socially and intellectually through humanistic endeavors. *The Meaning of Humanism*, a defense of the humanistic viewpoint by one of its pre-eminent spokespersons, was his last book.
In August of 1945, the world entered a bold new era. That month, World War II came to a thundering close as the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over the ensuing months and years, the questions of how to maintain peace and hope, how to cope with a new cold war, and how to achieve meaningful racial integration and complete equality for women were among the most urgent facing the nation.

In August of 1945, Beacon Press entered a bold new era as well. That month, a thirty-two-year-old former news editor and public relations man named Melvin Arnold became the first director of Beacon Press. Arnold would hold the job for more than a decade, helping shape a daring vision, as Beacon Press sought to publish intelligent, eloquent answers to the pressing questions of the day. The result was a significant increase in the number of books published, heightened visibility, and a burgeoning respect for the Unitarians’ ninety-one-year-old publishing venture.

In truth, the changes at Beacon had begun in 1937, when Reverend Frederick May Eliot, a longtime minister of the Unity Church in St. Paul, was appointed president of the American Unitarian Association.
Both as chair of the AUA’s Commission on Appraisal and as president of the AUA, Eliot voiced a clear desire to build on Beacon’s progressive foundations by expanding its efforts to publish important books that could help “combat the forces that would destroy liberalism.” These books would include works on liberal religion—a mainstay of Beacon’s history—but would also emphasize studies on human freedom, social and political concerns, and various critical issues or controversial topics that other publishers were clearly reluctant to touch.

Though production had come to a virtual standstill during the war years, the late summer of 1945 was filled with promise. Unitarian membership and monetary support were strong and growing, and a general commitment to social action was evident in AUA ranks. With such fertile ground and his own fervent hopes, Eliot convinced the Association to gamble its resources and grow its press. After meeting Mel Arnold through a mutual friend, Eliot persuaded Arnold to become the first director, and the first editor-in-chief, of Beacon Press.

In the reminiscences of Ed Darling—Arnold’s first assistant and, later, a director of Beacon—Mel Arnold arrived at the 25 Beacon Street offices like a bolt of lightning:

A born crusader and a committed religious liberal, Arnold had been with the Portland Oregonian, had done his share of public relations work, and had come to New York for a big job with Standard Oil when Frederick May Eliot invited him to head up the Department of Publications. He took it like a shot, despite the personal financial loss entailed. . . . To him the essential thing for western civilization was that the liberal spirit should prevail; and liberal religion, at that time drowsing at the switch, should take leadership. He began by working with local church groups. . . . Then he modernized the pamphlets and the Christian Register. And all the while he was working on books that should carry reliable information, the finest scholarship, and discussion worthy of the liberal heritage. His pockets were stuffed with notes written on torn pieces of newsprint or on the backs of envelopes.
Mel Arnold’s first task was to salvage what he could from the Beacon backlist—at the time, down to two hymnals and seventeen trade books of limited modern relevance—and begin to build. In order to reach and scintillate “the minds of men,” he actively began pursuing well-known thinkers admired for their quality scholarship and provocative ideas. Within three years, he had assembled an impressive lineup of intellectuals that included Alfred North Whitehead, Pitirim Sorokin, John Dewey, Lord Acton, Bronislaw Malinowski, Henry Steele Commager, and Henry Wilder Foote.

Sometimes Arnold connected with writers through old and new friendships, or colleagues at other publishing houses; sometimes it was simply inspired serendipity. An article on the humorous side of Alfred North Whitehead, for example, which Arnold spotted in The Philosophical Review, led him to contact its author, a University of Western Ontario philosophy professor named A. H. Johnson. Expanded by Johnson and designed by Arnold, the article became The Wit and Wisdom of Alfred North Whitehead, the first of Beacon’s well-received Wit and Wisdom series.

Arnold’s next coup came upon learning that the Unitarian Service Committee had sent $2,000 to French Equatorial Africa to help support Albert Schweitzer’s financially strapped jungle hospital. The seventy-two-year-old medical missionary, musicologist, and clergyman wrote a lengthy thank-you to Frederick May Eliot, which inspired Mel Arnold to pay Dr. Schweitzer a visit. The press had just published an anthology of Schweitzer’s work. Encouraged by Eliot, and accompanied by photographer, minister, and the Schweitzer anthology editor, Charles R. Joy, Arnold set out in 1947 for Africa to interview Schweitzer about his ideas. Arnold and Joy returned to Boston with a glow in their hearts, reams of material, and more than 1,200 negatives, which they molded into The Africa of Albert Schweitzer. Select images and text were offered to, and published by, Life magazine. As a result, the fame of Schweitzer spread, providing a great foundation for Beacon’s Schweitzer titles, which sold well for
years. The AUA also began sponsoring Schweitzer’s stateside lecture tours.

The book that truly expanded Beacon’s audience far beyond its academic and denominational following, however, was officially published on April 19, 1949. “The first Beacon book in defense of civil liberties—the First Amendment, in particular—was Paul Blanshard’s bold and pioneering critique of the Roman Catholic Church, American Freedom and Catholic Power,” explains former Beacon editor and longtime Beacon friend Jeannette Hopkins. “It had been rejected by scores of other publishers before Mel Arnold found it. There were immediately widespread rumors that if Beacon Press dared to publish this book, Boston’s city building inspectors would condemn the elevator at 25 Beacon Street, and refuse to collect the garbage, and that the denomination’s invested funds would be frozen pending settlement of threatened lawsuits.”

Though the board of the AUA initially considered denying publication, it ultimately gave American Freedom and Catholic Power a vote of confidence. The book was published, the garbage was collected, and no lawsuits ensued. Despite (and perhaps, because of) the fact that many periodicals would not review the book, and the New York Times for a decade refused to run an ad for it, the book sold more than 300,000 copies in its first six years.

Blanshard’s book was a prime example of what a credible entity Beacon Press had become under President Eliot and Director Arnold. When not exploring the humor or accomplishments of great men, the ancient roots of modern thought, or applied religion, the thoroughly modern Unitarian publishing house would soon be recognized worldwide for challenging McCarthyism, totalitarianism, and religious hierarchy, and for supporting scholarship, civil rights, religious education, and freedom of thought.

During the last years of the Mel Arnold era, Beacon published several pioneering works that exposed the evils of anti-Communist crusader Joseph McCarthy (in the series called Beacon Studies in Free-
dom and Power); other Beacon books of the era unveiled the evils of totalitarianism inherent in the Soviet system under Joseph Stalin (Beacon Studies in Soviet Tyranny and Power). This commendable balance confounded those who insisted that anyone who was anti-McCarthy was, by definition, pro-Communist or pro–Soviet Union. In a letter to Beacon dated September 29, 1953, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., applauded the press for “doing a fine job in demonstrating that it is not only possible but necessary to be against both Communism and McCarthy.”


In a 1956 article in the Christian Register, Walter Kring, director of the AUA Division of Publications, observed an aspect of Beacon Press that rings true to the modern day. “In strong contrast to what has become the publishing situation on Madison Avenue in New York . . . ,” Kring observed, “the Beacon Press has always felt that what is printed is of far more importance than whether the balance sheet is in the red or the black. Today the Beacon Press is known by many as one of the most courageous presses in America . . . But it has also become known as one of the quality presses of America, rating with those of universities in size and standards.”
Meanwhile, Beacon was competing with those other “quality presses” in an entirely different aspect of book publishing. Starting in the mid-1950s, Beacon began producing what was called the “library-sized” paperback. Though two other publishing houses (Jason Epstein’s Anchor Books line at Doubleday, and Modern Library) had recently entered the potentially lucrative field of paperback editions, their products were smaller, sometimes even pocket-sized, books. The innovation that Beacon made, based on the ideas of Mel Arnold and consulting editor Sol Stein, was a high-quality paperback printed the same size as the cloth-covered version, known today as the “trade paperback.” The move soon gave second life to numerous volumes, enabled select new books to be simultaneously released in cloth and paper, and led to the addition of many Beacon titles to college reading lists.

Whether the books were cloth or paperback, however, content remained the core of Beacon publications. From the mid-1950s through the late 1970s, several trends and issues loomed larger than the rest in the selection of Beacon titles: Beacon’s ongoing interest in publishing great thinkers led to the signing and development of radical new philosophers of the left; interest in African-American issues—which had begun with antislavery writings in the mid-nineteenth century—continued in support of civil rights, as well as in scholarly studies of the black experience in America; opposition to the new war in Vietnam and the draft, and a commitment to promoting peace, inspired a flock of controversial new publications, including The Pentagon Papers; and demands for equality from “the second sex” grew into a wealth of materials on the women’s movement in general, and feminist theology in particular.

Hence, the list of Beacon’s prestigious authors began to have a whole new ring: from the mid-’50s to the mid-’70s, the Jordans, Schweitzers, Sorokins, Whiteheads, and Blanshards started giving way to names like James Baldwin, Kenneth Clark, Herbert Marcuse,
Jürgen Habermas, Howard Zinn, Ben Bagdikian, Thich Nhat Hahn, Mary Daly, and Jean Baker Miller.

Many of Beacon’s landmark titles were brought in by Beacon editors and friends. During this period, for example, consultant Sol Stein convinced James Baldwin to assemble the essays that were published as Notes of a Native Son. Editor Jeannette Hopkins met Kenneth Clark at an Atlanta conference for black and white educators and encouraged him to write his first book, Prejudice and Your Child. Author Gordon Allport connected Beacon to Viktor Frankl; his landmark book, Man’s Search for Meaning, rejected by dozens of U.S. publishers before Beacon accepted it, would go on to sell more than 5 million copies in America. And Beacon editor Arnold Tovell was responsible for bringing back Herbert Marcuse after a decade’s absence—an act that bore fruit in more ways than one.

“We had this very good working relationship,” remembered Tovell of his years with Marcuse. “What is much more important is that Herbert became a fundamental advisor to me about others. And it is because of Herbert Marcuse that Beacon has published Barrington Moore and Jürgen Habermas.

“I went to Germany . . . in ’69, and got together with Habermas, and proceeded to commit Beacon to publishing seven books…. Marcuse, Habermas, and Moore all remain in print with Beacon twenty-five years later. What more can editors ask?”

It was under Beacon director Gobin Stair that many of these new directions emerged, grew, and coalesced. And it was under Stair that the publication that arguably garnered Beacon more press and more problems than any book before or since—the infamous five-volume Pentagon Papers—came to life. Issues of war, peace, and freedom of speech had always been concerns of the Unitarian and UUA press (the Unitarians and Universalists consolidated in 1961, becoming the
ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN
by Herbert Marcuse

BEYOND GOD THE FATHER
TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION
MARY DALY

The Senator Gravel Edition
THE Pentagon Papers
The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on VIETNAM VOLUME ONE

NOTES OF A NATIVE SON
JAMES BALDWIN
Unitarian Universalist Association, or UUA). But the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam brought them all to a head—inextricably intertwining them with threats to religious freedom, freedom of association, and freedom of the press.

The story is long and complex, but the essential outline runs as follows: Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department consultant, had made public the existence of a 7,000-page collection of papers that documented the lies and cover-ups used by the U.S. government to maintain the war in Vietnam and public support of that war. Through Ellsberg’s anonymous urging, Senator Mike Gravel (D-Alaska) read the papers into his Senate subcommittee records, then turned them over to Ben Bagdikian of the Washington Post. Though the Washington Post and the New York Times published excerpts of the papers, thirty-five book publishers turned down the opportunity to print The Pentagon Papers in their entirety. Gravel believed it was essential that the historical record be made complete in book form—and Beacon Press director Gobin Stair agreed.

Remembering those tumultuous times, Stair later recalled, “At Beacon Press, our previous order was to publish those good books which are important books—which the commercial press won’t publish. That was handed down to us.... It became obvious that this was a principle. I had to tell my trustees that this was a principle...but they had to know that it would cost them. I stood up at that...meeting and said it just as simply as that.”

Stair approached UUA president Robert West with the politically and financially risky situation. West agreed to support the project, knowing that it would be an extraordinarily expensive venture. And despite the best efforts of the Nixon administration—which tried to halt publication with tactics including a personal phone call to Stair from Nixon, intimidating government agents lurking about Beacon seeking indictable evidence and UUA donation records, and the threat of jail for both West and Stair—the four-volume Senator Mike Gravel Edition: The Pentagon Papers was officially published on October 22,
1971. A fifth volume of commentary and analysis on the *Papers*, edited by prominent antiwar activists and authors Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky, was released the following year.

The importance of these volumes was obvious to Senator Gravel: “No one who reads this study can fail to conclude that, had the true facts been known earlier, the war would have long ago ended, and the needless deaths of thousands of Americans and Vietnamese would have been averted.”

Even before the publication of *The Pentagon Papers*, however, there had been talk in the UUA of selling Beacon Press to a private investor because of the press’s ongoing losses. By the late 1970s, that talk had turned to distinct possibility, inspiring publishing professional and former Beacon editor Jeannette Hopkins to fight back. Supported by a group of Beacon believers, she formed “The Friends of the Beacon Press,” which worked to help persuade the UUA board not to sell the press. After all was said and done—and a great deal was said and done—the board did pay attention. Its decision was submitted to the General Assembly meeting of delegates representing UU congregations nationwide, who voted overwhelmingly against a sale, and the tide was turned: Beacon, it was agreed, would remain within the folds of the UUA.

When Wendy Strothman became Beacon’s director in 1983, the press was in need of firm new ground, both financially and editorially. “I thought [Beacon] had some really wonderful books sitting on its backlist,” said Strothman, recalling her early analysis of the press. “But I thought it needed a sense of focus.” Strothman proceeded to build on strengths of the past, with an eye to the future. She pushed to establish Beacon’s first advisory board, a group of scholars and publishing professionals who helped guide Beacon’s choices and direction. Meanwhile, some of the best books on Beacon’s backlist were revived, while new authors and titles were pursued and acquired. Within a few years, Beacon was operating in the black. Critical acclaim and commercial
success came with important books like Marian Wright Edelman’s *The Measure of Our Success* and Cornel West’s *Race Matters*, cultivated with the persistence and assistance of editors Deanne Urmy and Deborah Chasman. Strothman also made publishing world headlines when she refused to accept a $39,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, as protest against that organization’s last-minute veto—and essential censorship—of an exhibit scheduled for the M.I.T. art gallery.

In the spring 1995 catalog, during her last year at Beacon, Strothman summarized the press’s raison d’être at the turn of the twenty-first century: “We at Beacon publish the books we choose because they share a moral vision and a sense that greater understanding can influence the course of events. They are books we believe in.”

When Helene Atwan took on the director’s job late in 1995, Deborah Meier’s *The Power of Their Ideas* had just been published. “I thought that book could open a whole new vista for Beacon,” said Atwan, “excellent, important books about public education in this country. And I’m delighted to say we’ve been very successful in doing that.”

Atwan also established a goal of adding more literature, fiction, and literary memoir to the Beacon list, with books that reinforced the mission of the press. In addition, she made a deliberate effort to ensure that excellence and importance in content—the hallmark of Beacon Press books for a century and a half—was balanced with excellence in writing.

Today, a glance at Beacon’s catalog shows how the press has continued to build on its strengths of the past ten, twenty, and even one hundred fifty years while experimenting and expanding to meet the needs of the twenty-first century.

- Beacon’s Black Women Writers series—begun in 1986, and originally edited by Deborah E. McDowell—was reinvigorated in 1998 as the Bluestreak series of innovative literary writing by women of all col-
ors. The official Bluestreak debut included a repackaging of Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred* and Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora*, and the series today contains fiction, stories, and memoir by women from a dozen different cultures.

- The interest in the role and voice of women, evident a century and a half ago, has continued in the works of writers and thinkers like Nancy Mairs, Sonia Sanchez, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Vivian Gornick, Doris Grumbach, Ruth Hubbard, Martha Nussbaum, and Martha Minow. In theology and spirituality, those voices have included Diana Eck, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Marilyn Sewell, Carol Christ, Starhawk, and Margot Adler.

- Beacon’s commitment to scholarly works continues in the fields of anthropology, American studies, religious history and comparative religion, law and society, politics and economics, and women’s studies.

- Beacon’s longtime interest in African-American issues—from abolitionism through civil rights, race relations, and black scholarship—is evident in Marian Wright Edelman’s and Cornel West’s bestsellers, as well as books by such legendary leaders as Ron Dellums, Howard Thurman, Robert Moses, and Roger Wilkins.

- Beacon’s support of peace and justice harkens back to the sermons of nineteenth-century Unitarian clergymen and World War I pacifist David Starr Jordan and extends through Schweitzer and Gandhi. Today, the tradition of publishing strong advocates for the public good has prospered anew with works by Robert Reich, Juliet Schor, Bill Gates, Sr., and Lani Guinier. Community activism is represented with works like Geoffrey Canada’s *Fist Stick Knife Gun* and Michael Patrick MacDonald’s *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*.

- Sophia Lyon Fahs and John Dewey were early voices in education and education reform for Beacon. During the last two decades in particular, Beacon has developed an extraordinary education list and taken the lead in educational reform, with books by Deborah Meier, Ted and Nancy Sizer, William Ayers, Theresa Perry, Asa Hilliard, and Claude Steele.
• New England history and history from the point of view of the common people have flourished with such authors as Alfred Young, Lawrence Levine, and Marcus Rediker. Beacon has also pioneered in publishing local history with a new twist: The History Project’s Improper Bostonians was the first book to depict Boston’s three centuries of gay and lesbian life. It is also an important part of Beacon’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies list, which includes Leslie Feinberg’s bestseller, Transgender Warriors.

• Interest in the natural world has also flowered in Beacon’s Concord Library series, which offers new editions of classics from Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Rachel Carson as well as modern-day classics from Gretel Ehrlich, Scott Russell Sanders, and the incomparable Mary Oliver.

So where is Beacon Press today, a century and a half since its founding? In the words of author and activist Juliet Schor, “Beacon Press is a gem in a publishing world rendered increasingly impoverished by global corporatization. Remarkably, it steadfastly combines serious progressive content with inspired writing and beautiful design. In a world where market values have triumphed over most others, Beacon’s moral vision is a treasure.”

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1945–2003

KENNETH L. PATTON, Beyond Doubt (1946).

Poet, mystic, and minister Kenneth Leo Patton (1911–1994) is most closely associated with the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston and the merger of Unitarianism and Universalism, formalized in 1961. Beyond Doubt, his first book for Beacon, was a collection of poems that received fine reviews. Among his other contributions to Beacon were The Visitor and Hello, Man (1947) and Services and Songs for the Celebration of Life (1967).

When Mel Arnold began salvaging titles from Beacon’s backlist that he
deemed appropriate for the new catalog, he chose Patton’s 1946 book, as well as A. Powell Davies’s *American Destiny* (1942), Ulysses G. B. Pierce’s *The Soul of the Bible* (1935), and Earl Wilbur’s *Our Unitarian Heritage* (1925).


This book, along with Schweitzer’s famed thank-you letter for the Unitarian Service Committee check, was the impetus for Mel Arnold and Charles Joy’s original trek to Lambaréné, Gabon, French Equatorial Africa, where Schweitzer had founded his missionary hospital in 1913. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) was a true Renaissance man, with multiple degrees and advanced studies in fields as diverse as theology, tropical medicine, obstetrics, dentistry, musicology, and the pipe organ. “One of the significant contributions of Beacon Press was to popularize Schweitzer,” explained historian Frank Schulman. “Organists knew his reputation on organ construction and as an authority on Bach; medical people knew his work in tropical diseases; theologians knew of that reputation. Beacon made him well known in . . . diverse fields.”

Beacon’s Schweitzer series eventually included fourteen books, all but one of which were published between 1947 and 1954. Some were about Schweitzer, some by him, and some—because of the magnitude and importance of the projects—published jointly with Harper and Brothers.

Albert Schweitzer, one of the world’s great thinkers and humanitarians, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

**John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1948).**

Alfred North Whitehead once observed that distinguished philosopher and education pioneer John Dewey (1859–1952) was “the chief intellectual force providing [the North American] environment with coherent purpose.” A series of lectures given in Japan by Dewey in 1919 became the book *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920). Though it was arguably the finest popular statement of Dewey’s progressive thoughts, the book was unavailable for many years. Mel Arnold had developed a friendship with Dewey and was working on a new edition of *Reconstruction* when John Dewey and Arthur Bentley’s *Knowing and the Known* became available (1949). Having both books in the catalog was a coup for Beacon.

The willingness of Beacon and its directors to share, or take over, titles from other publishers enhanced its ability to build a roster of respected intellectuals as early as 1948. For example, Mel Arnold and his friend Jeremiah Kaplan, who ran the new Free Press in Illinois, agreed to share Lord Acton’s *Essays on
Freedom and Power and Bronislaw Malinowski’s Magic, Science, and Religion—with Beacon selling to the trade market, and Kaplan to universities. Arnold also took over Henry Steele Commager’s Theodore Parker: Yankee Crusader from Little, Brown.


So successful was this first foray into mirth among the intellectuals that other authors were soon contracted and subjects selected. A. H. Johnson next edited and compiled The Wit and Wisdom of John Dewey (1949), while Charles R. Joy was an obvious choice for The Wit and Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer (1949). Meanwhile, Maxwell Myerson immortalized Franklin Roosevelt (1950) for the series, Homer A. Jack compiled Gandhi (1951), and Lester E. Denonn contributed Bertrand Russell (1951) and Oliver Wendell Holmes (1953).


Born in imperial Russia and banished by the Bolsheviks in 1922, sociologist Pitirim Alexandrovitch Sorokin (1899–1968) founded and headed Harvard University’s Department of Sociology. Through his friendship with Mel Arnold, the famed criminologist and social theorist was invited to publish eight titles with Beacon, starting with Reconstruction of Humanity in 1948: Altruistic Love (1950), Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior (1950), Leaves from a Russian Diary (1950), Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis (1950), S.O.S.: The Meaning of Our Crisis (1951), Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth (1954), and The Ways and Power of Love (1954).


With this book, Blanshard broke through the long-held taboo against criticizing the political power of the Roman Catholic Church. His bold, impeccably researched exposé was selling well and causing controversy even before the Spellman-Roosevelt argument began. But once Francis Cardinal Spellman and former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt started sparring in print over the issue of federal aid to parochial schools—she was against it, he was for it—Blanshard’s book sales soared. Ed Darling, Beacon’s head of sales and promotion, had a yellow band put around copies of the American Freedom announcing, “See the background of the Spellman-Roosevelt quarrel.” The book, which the New York Times refused to advertise, became what insiders liked to call “Beacon’s first New York Times bestseller.”
Blanshard’s other works for Beacon were *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (1951), *The Irish and Catholic Power* (1953), and a book about censorship called *The Right to Read* (1955). His books became a cornerstone of Beacon’s Church-State series.

**Jack Anderson and Ronald May, McCarthy: The Man, the Senator, the “Ism” (1952).**

Though other American publishers were too frightened to touch the subject, Mel Arnold remained committed to exposing Senator McCarthy. After *The Herblock Book* (see below), he added four more two-fisted attacks on McCarthy to the Beacon list. Anderson and May’s well-researched study caused a real storm and was a *New York Times* bestseller. The *New York Herald Tribune* called it “an amazingly successful book.” James Rorty and Moshe Decter’s *McCarthy and the Communists* (1954) was another brilliant exposé, sponsored by the American Committee for Cultural Freedom.

Beacon’s anti-McCarthy work elicited one of the most impressive letters of appreciation ever received by the publisher. On January 21, 1953, Albert Einstein wrote in German (in a letter translated by Beacon editor Janet Finnie), “If we succeed in renewing the spirit of the American Constitution after the confusion of our day, it will be in considerable measure to the credit of the courageous efforts of the Unitarians and of their Beacon Press.”

**Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (1952).**

The great church historian and theologian Roland Herbert Bainton (1894–1984) wrote one of Beacon’s all-time bestsellers. *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, the classic telling of Martin Luther’s irreparable breach with the church, featured a winning combination of exceptional scholarship and compelling prose. Once in paperback, it was adopted nationwide by colleges and universities, ensuring regular readership and sales through the modern day. Bainton also published *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553* (1953) and *Studies on the Reformation* (1963) with Beacon.

**Herbert Block, The Herblock Book (1952).**

Herbert Block (1909–2001), the widely syndicated cartoonist for the *Washington Post*, had been using his imaginative drawings to undermine the powerful and poisonous Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin for some time. Block knew that McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee threat-
ened our freedoms; Americans were holding their collective breath as public figures and educators were accused of Communist affiliations, then blacklisted from their careers. The political cartoonist phoned Mel Arnold with the idea of doing a book of his drawings, saying, “My name is Herbert Block. I am a cartoonist. . . . I’ve been looking through catalogs of publishers to decide where I might publish my first book. Would you be interested?” Arnold happily agreed, Jeannette Hopkins leapt into her first book editing job for Beacon, and the resulting volume became the first book by a major publisher to openly criticize McCarthy and his witch-hunt.

Block was credited with coining the term “McCarthyism.” He won Pulitzer Prizes for cartooning in 1942, 1954, and 1979 and shared a fourth Pulitzer for the *Washington Post*’s coverage of Watergate.

**Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom* (1953).**

Ed Darling called Leo Pfeffer’s *Church, State, and Freedom* Beacon’s “biggest book” of 1953, “in number of pages, in weight, in importance of subject matter, in national influence.” The encyclopedic study of the disasters that occur when church and state join together to govern people was a standard reference for years and was often cited in legal cases. Pfeffer (1910–1993), a lawyer and professor, also published *The Liberties of an American* (1956), *This Honorable Court: A History of the United States Supreme Court* (1965), and *God, Caesar, and the Constitution* (1974) with Beacon.


An esteemed social psychologist and longtime Harvard psychology professor, Gordon Willard Allport (1897–1967) published three books with Beacon, including *Personality and Social Encounter* (1960) and *The Person in Psychology* (1968). *The Nature of Prejudice*—at the time, the most comprehensive survey of prejudice ever published in one volume—was an important part of Beacon’s works promoting racial understanding and harmony.

**Emmett McLoughlin, *People’s Padre* (1954).**

This volume was an autobiography by Father Emmett (née John Patrick), a noted Franciscan who quarreled with the church, left the priesthood, and found true holiness in his spiritual pilgrimage and pioneering social work. Among his many accomplishments was the founding, on the south side of Phoenix, of the first U.S. hospital deliberately chartered to service all races. Thanks in part to a fan who spent years hauling cartons of *People’s Padre* to
churches across the nation, the inspirational book became one of Beacon’s top sellers—with some 250,000 copies sold—rivaling Paul Blanshard as an income producer.

James Baldwin, Notes of a Native Son (1955).

One of the greatest coups in Beacon’s history was publishing the first nonfiction book of James Baldwin (1924–1987), Notes of a Native Son. Though the young writer had already published his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, and completed his play The Amen Corner, writing a memoir about growing up black in America had not occurred to Baldwin. “It was [Beacon consultant] Sol Stein, high-school buddy, editor, novelist, playwright, who first suggested this book,” Baldwin later wrote. “My reaction was not enthusiastic, as I remember, I told him that I was too young to publish my memoirs.” Stein persisted, Baldwin contributed brilliant essays, and though Notes sold less than 2,000 copies in its first few years, sales eventually soared to over 600,000.

Baldwin was not only an important voice in civil rights activism; he was an important, and timeless, literary voice as well. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., later explained his own affection for Baldwin’s gracefully written, searing classic: “He named for me the things you feel but couldn’t utter.... Jimmy’s essays articulated for the first time to white America what it meant to be American and a black American at the same time.”

This book, along with Kenneth Clark’s Prejudice and Your Child, put Beacon Press in the forefront of the civil rights movement—a place where, in the 1950s especially, major publishing houses feared to tread.

Kenneth Bancroft Clark, Prejudice and Your Child (1955).

Kenneth Clark (b. 1914), the country’s most highly esteemed black social scientist and psychologist, worked tirelessly to expose the ill effects of racism and school segregation. His writings were cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in laying the factual foundation for the landmark 1954 decision, Brown v. Board of Education. That decision refuted the argument that “separate but equal” schools were adequate for the full development of children and declared school segregation unconstitutional.

Prejudice and Your Child was developed specifically to help parents, teachers, school administrators, and—most importantly—children through the transition to integrated educational facilities. It was the author’s first book, and the first book spotted, pursued, and signed by Beacon editor Jeannette Hopkins.
Beacon Press remained committed to civil rights, and to the scholarly chronicling of African American history, throughout the rest of the 1950s and equally turbulent ’60s. Among the significant titles of that period were C. Eric Lincoln’s *The Black Muslim in America* (1961), praised as the first objective study of the black supremacy movement; Howard Zinn’s *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (1964); Joseph R. Washington’s *Black Religion* (1964); William Styron’s *Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond*, edited by John Henrik Clarke (1968); and *Black Titan: W. E. B. Du Bois*, edited by John Henrik Clarke et al. (1970).

**Leslie A. Fiedler, *An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics* (1955).**

The provocative and provoking scholar Leslie Aaron Fiedler (1917–2003) viewed the American novel as a tool for analyzing the American psyche. In his collections of essays for Beacon, *An End to Innocence* and *No! In Thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature* (1960, 1973), the professor of English and literature explored his unique psychological/sociological approach to literary analysis. The *Catholic World’s* review of *No! In Thunder* noted, “There is something here to offend almost everyone. . . . Much of [the book] seems close to angry raving; but there are passages of sheer brilliance.”


Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948), popularly know as Mahatma or “Great Soul,” led the movement for Indian independence from British imperial rule. His philosophy of nonviolence—and his commitment to community, equality, self-sacrifice, and mass civil disobedience—influenced the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and continues to inspire freedom fighters around the world. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, written during Gandhi’s imprisonment for nonviolent demonstration in the 1920s, first appeared in India in 1927, and a second edition was published in 1940. Beacon began publishing the only authorized American edition in 1957. The book still sells 5,500 to 7,500 copies per year. Royalties, paid to the Navijivan Trust founded by Gandhi, carry on his work to this day.


*The Gnostic Religion*, the first book published in English by educator,
philosopher, and writer Hans Jonas (1903–1993), was called “a pioneer effort, unrivaled and indispensable,” by Commentary. Born and raised in Germany, Jonas fled Nazi oppression, taught in Jerusalem, and served with both the British and the Israeli armies before making his permanent home in the United States. Almost half a century since its first publication, the book remains in print.

**Viktor E. Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning (1962).**

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) endured three long years in Nazi concentration camps; the story of that time, and his discovery that “the will to meaning” is the basic motivation to human life, are the core of this landmark book. Though originally rejected by twenty-six American publishers, the book has sold over 5 million copies in the United States alone. A 1991 survey conducted by the Library of Congress and the Book-of-the-Month Club cited *Man’s Search for Meaning* as one of the ten most influential books in America.

This edition, subtitled “An Introduction to Logotherapy,” was a revised and enlarged version of Frankl’s *From Death Camp to Existentialism* (Beacon, 1959). Beacon friend and author Gordon Allport wrote the preface to the new edition.

**Miguel León-Portilla, ed., The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico (1962).**

Originally published in Mexico as *Visión de los Vencidos* in 1959, this classic compilation of oral histories from native Aztec descendants was called “a moving and powerful account” by the *Los Angeles Times*. Understanding the conquest of Mexico from the perspective of the vanquished, rather than the victors, gives the book a unique perspective. This work of Professor León-Portilla (b. 1926) has been expanded and updated and remains one of Beacon’s best-selling scholarly titles.

**Gaston Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire (1964).**

The great French writer and philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) had published *La Psychoanalyse du feu* in France in 1932. Beacon released the long-awaited English translation, by Alan C. M. Ross, two years after Bachelard’s death. The book, in print to this day, is a classic study of the symbols of fire and the social, emotional, and biological origins of the imagery of fire in prose and poetry. Bachelard’s classic *The Poetics of Space* has been on the Beacon list since 1969 and is one of the most widely adopted books on the list.

German-born university professor Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) was an internationally celebrated social theorist, philosopher, and political activist and one of America’s most influential intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. Beacon had already published Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* in 1955, which the *New York Times* called “the most significant general treatment of psychoanalytic theory since Freud himself ceased publication.”

A decade later, Beacon almost turned down *One-Dimensional Man* for lack of a discernible market, and, in some quarters, concern over Marcuse’s far-left politics. *One-Dimensional Man* resonated with the ideas of the vociferous student left of the 1960s and earned Marcuse the nickname of “father of the New Left.” In the book, Marcuse critiqued both capitalist society and the disappointment of Soviet communist society. Though *One-Dimensional Man* originally sold modestly, within a few years it was selling 50,000 copies a year.


Though activist and educator Howard Zinn (b. 1922) was asked by Beacon to write a history of the NAACP, he argued that the cutting edge of the civil rights movement in the South was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. The result was *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*. At the time, Zinn was teaching at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, with a student roster that included Alice Walker and Marian Wright Edelman. Zinn later recalled, “I had a special fondness for the SNCC book because it was right out of my own experience in the South. In my most egoistic and romantic moments, I liked to think of myself as John Reed in 1917 . . . you know, *Ten Days That Shook the World* . . . standing there in the midst of these enormous crowds and writing, scribbling out of my notebook.” Zinn’s other books for Beacon include *Vietnam*, below.


Beacon’s ongoing interest in comparative religion and the ecumenical spirit was again demonstrated when it decided to print paperback editions of the *Why I Am* series, originally published by Thomas Nelson and Sons. *Why I Am a Mormon* was among the many books—including Episcopalian, Presbyterian,
Baptist, Jewish, Methodist, and Catholic—that openly explored the question of denominational choice. *Why I am a Unitarian Universalist* (1966), written by Reverend Jack Mendelsohn during his first year ministering to the Arlington Street Church in Boston (1959), was the springboard for Mendelsohn’s writing career.


Through his excellent working relationship with Herbert Marcuse, Beacon editor Arnold Tovell was able to connect and work with Barrington Moore, Jr., and Jürgen Habermas. Barrington Moore, Jr. (b. 1913), was a researcher, educator, social philosopher, and longtime senior research fellow at Harvard University’s Russian Research Center. In the *Yale Review*, C. Vann Woodward called *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* “a landmark in comparative history.”


**ALBERT MEMMI, The Colonizer and the Colonized (1967).**

First published in 1957, then translated from French to English in 1965, Memmi’s book was confiscated by colonial police around the world. Sociologist and educator Albert Memmi (b. 1929) grew up in a Jewish family in Tunisia. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, his philosophical appraisal of the relentless reciprocity binding colonial powers to the fate of their colonies, is a timeless study, another scholarly gem, and a Beacon perennial.

Beacon also reprinted Memmi’s *The Pillar of Salt* (1992), a semi-autobiographical novel about a young boy growing up in French-colonized Tunisia.

**HOWARD ZINN, Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal (1967).**

Howard Zinn, professor emeritus of political science at Boston University, has been called “the eminent radical historian” and “a model of the academic as activist.” His 1967 *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* was one of the first public books to call for America’s withdrawal from the civil war in Vietnam. It sold extremely well, played a major role in reversing public opinion about the war, and helped establish Zinn at the center of the antiwar movement.

Among the letters that flooded into Beacon, praising or pummeling Zinn’s book, was a note from Mrs. Jules Lederer (Ann Landers), complimenting the author and ordering more copies to give to friends and colleagues. Zinn co-

Many Americans adored Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), called “the Picasso of literature” by scholar Henri Peyre. But the French existentialist’s fiction, plays, and philosophical forays were easier to accept than this original and cogent essay, *On Genocide*, written for the International War Crimes Tribunal. In his condemnation of America’s performance in Vietnam, Sartre compared American actions to Hitler’s “final solution” to the “Jewish problem.” The U.S. national press chose not to fully report the findings of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which were included in this volume. Beacon printed the text as both cloth and paperback books in 1968.


This was the long-awaited, first English translation of Lévi-Strauss’s monumental *Les Structures elementaires de la parente* (1949), an anthropological analysis of kinship structures around the world. Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908), the French social anthropologist, has been ranked with Jean-Paul Sartre and André Malraux as among the greatest intellectuals in modern France.

Lévi-Strauss’s *Le Totemism aujourd’hui*, first published in France in 1962, appeared in an English translation by Rodney Needham for Beacon in 1963. *Totemism*, a study of the relationship between humans and certain animals or natural objects, remains in print to this day.


In this volume, Edith Fisher Hunter (b. 1919) chronicled the life of her colleague and friend Sophia Lyon Fahs, whose decades of pioneering work for the Unitarian Department of Religious Education were legendary. Hunter was an author, educator, and curriculum editor for the Unitarian Universalist Church who regularly wrote for and about children, including titles for Beacon.


Illustrated with more than twenty government forms, Tatum and Tuchinsky’s expert guide to everything a young American man needed to know about
the draft was simultaneously published by Beacon in both cloth and paper, and revised and updated at least once a year. Clearly addressed to those who did not wish to be drafted, the book dissected and explained forms, laws, processes, and options. “It sold like mad,” remembered Beacon editor Arnold Tovell, “and was very much a part of the world.”


The Times Literary Supplement hailed University of Frankfurt philosophy professor Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) as the “foremost social and political thinker in Germany today.” Equally adept in the fields of sociology and philosophy, Habermas spoke to a modern world and worked to develop a new conception of reason to outline his vision of rational society.

Beacon next published Habermas’s Knowledge and Human Interests (1971), translated from his 1968 Erkenntnis und Interesse. The Times praised this as “a brilliant book—and a bold outline for a new social theory.” Arguably his greatest work was the two-volume The Theory of Communicative Action (1984, 1989), which critiqued twentieth-century philosophy and synthesized many Habermas themes.

All these books, as well as Theory and Practice (1973), Legitimation Crisis (1975), Communication and the Evolution of Society (1979), and Jürgen Habermas on Society and Politics: A Reader (1989), were active Beacon titles for many years.


One of the bestselling books in Beacon Press history was also the best-known work by sociologist Philip Elliot Slater (b. 1927). Publishers Weekly called The Pursuit of Loneliness “an analysis of the American ideal of individualism and its effects on society at large.” In it, Slater takes a hard look at violence, competitiveness, inequality, and the collective addiction to technology—the great ills of modern society. Over 500,000 copies were sold.


ROBERT BLY, ED., Neruda and Vallejo: Selected Poems (1971).

Poet, editor, and translator Robert Bly (b. 1926) had been operating the
Sixties (later, Seventies, then Eighties) Press since 1958, where he was a pioneer in introducing relatively unknown European and South American poets to United States audiences through excellent English translations. *Neruda and Vallejo* was the first in a series of translation projects, beginning with the Seventies Press, which Beacon revised, expanded, and made available to larger audiences. The *Long Beach Press Telegram* hailed this volume, calling Bly “one of America’s foremost poets, and a translator of uncommon brilliance.”


**Senator Mike Gravel Edition: The Pentagon Papers (1971).**

Though the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* had printed excerpts of *The Pentagon Papers,* countless book publishers balked at releasing the complete edition. Wishing to increase public awareness of the U.S. government’s outright lies and continual suppression of facts about the Vietnam War, feisty little Beacon Press and the UUA agreed to take on this historic and risky initiative.

Among the many dramatic scenes that ensued in this passion play: President Richard Nixon phoning Beacon director Gobin Stair at home, trying to halt publication; and government agents, attempting to surprise Stair at his Beacon office, being turned away from the door by Stair’s assistant, Mrs. Burnell O’Brien, who thereupon sent them to sightsee at the Old North Church while Stair assembled his legal aides.

Ben H. Bagdikian’s memoir, *Double Vision* (Beacon, 1995), includes a remarkable chapter on his receiving the papers from Daniel Ellsberg. A fifth volume of commentary, edited by Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, was added to *The Pentagon Papers* in 1972.

**Paul Robeson, Here I Stand (1971).**

Paul Robeson (1898–1976), a prominent African-American singer and actor, was known worldwide for his magnificent voice, talent, and presence. His leftist politics and social views, however—including his work for African liberation from colonial powers and his support of the Soviet Union—caused the U.S. government to rescind his passport and irreparably damaged his career.
Though Robeson’s powerful autobiography, *Here I Stand*, was first released in 1958, it was largely ignored by the white press and white readers. Beacon’s 1971 edition, published near the end of Robeson’s life, brought long-deserved recognition to and greater understanding of this American hero.

**Herbert Schiller, *The Mind Managers* (1973).**

In *The Mind Managers*, renowned economist, communications expert, and educator Herbert Irving Schiller (1919–2000) delivered a landmark study on how the consciousness of almost every American was being programmed. *Publishers Weekly* called Schiller’s book “a relentlessly forthright account of the techniques of controlling and manipulating information in the U.S. by such institutions as the expanding national bureaucracy, the Department of Defense, and the giant corporations.”

**Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (1974).**

Beacon Press deliberately placed itself on the cutting edge of a variety of movements that defended and preserved freedom. One such cause was the women’s movement of the 1970s, in which radical Catholic theologian, feminist philosopher, and educator Mary Daly (b. 1928) was a major player. *Beyond God the Father* was the first important feminist book published by Beacon. Reviewer Alix Kates Shulman of the *Village Voice* called Daly “the ultimate Christian feminist,” while Adrienne Rich, in the *Washington Post Book World*, applauded Daly’s “closely argued affirmation of feminism as the radical source of vision—and liberation—in this century.”

When Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* was released by Beacon in 1978, one reviewer called it “the most important book to come out of the feminist movement since Daly’s last book, *Beyond God the Father*."

Among Daly’s other Beacon books were a reprint of her 1968 work, *The Church and the Second Sex* (1985), and *Quintessence . . . Realizing the Archaic Future: A Radical Elemental Feminist Manifesto* (1998).

**Daniel Berrigan and Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Raft Is Not the Shore: Conversations Toward a Buddhist/Christian Awareness* (1975).**

Individually, Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan (b. 1921) and Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926) were important voices of the New Left, using their religious backgrounds as a foundation for battling injustice and
opposing war and militarism. Together, the two were compatible, complementary political allies, poets, and philosophers whose inspired midnight conversations were the foundation for the remarkable book, *The Raft Is Not the Shore*.

Berrigan had already contributed *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (1970) to Beacon, a moving script that dramatized his trial for involvement in destroying draft files in Catonsville, Maryland. *The Geography of Faith* (1971) chronicled Berrigan’s conversations with Robert Coles during the period when Berrigan went underground to avoid imprisonment for his antiwar actions at Catonsville.

Thich Nhat Hanh had published with a few small houses in America before Beacon released his masterly *The Miracle of Mindfulness* in 1976. These gentle stories and exercises, introducing the reader to Buddhist meditation, have sold over 250,000 copies to date. The venerable monk had another bestseller in *The Blooming of a Lotus* (1993), which offered guided meditation exercises for beginners and experienced practitioners.


Beacon director Wendy Strothman called *Toward a New Psychology of Women* “one of our books that overturn an entire field.” Written by a practicing psychotherapist and educator, the book ably demonstrated how sexual stereotypes restricted men’s and women’s psychological development. Jean Baker Miller (b. 1927) later helped found Wellesley College’s Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies, an organization committed to preventing psychological problems.

“Although small in size, [this book] is monumental in its innovative—possibly revolutionary—restructuring of our psychodynamic understanding of women,” wrote Alexandra Kaplan in *Contemporary Psychology*. Sales were fairly monumental too, with tallies topping 200,000.

**Starhawk, Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics** (1982).

One outgrowth of the women’s movement of the 1970s was increased interest in women’s spirituality. Among the most prominent writers in this genre was Starhawk (née Miriam Simos, b. 1951), whose *Dreaming the Dark* combined the world of magic and spirituality with the world of political and social change. The *Bloomsbury Review* called *Dreaming* Starhawk’s best book: “It offers myths of fulfillment, rituals of healing, an unusual but perhaps ultimately pragmatic cultural perspective, and a vision for survival and growth.” With more than 100,000 copies sold, the work continues to inspire.


After more than three decades of immersion in the world of journalism and journalism education, Ben Haig Bagdikian (b. 1920) wrote *The Media Monop- oly,* a groundbreaking exposé of corporate control of the media. So hot was this topic of the growing concentration in ownership of major media that Simon and Schuster’s Richard Snyder insisted on seeing page proofs before the book was published. The book was launched, Bagdikian’s predictions came to pass, and the book remains a classic to this day. Its sixth edition, published by Beacon in 2000, includes a preface on the Internet and other new media. An entirely revised seventh edition is in preparation, slated for publication in the spring of 2004.


The press of the American Unitarian Association published numerous works on theology and religion from its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. Well over a century later, women theologians and religious scholars fought their way into the ranks of their male predecessors, figuratively rocking the ark in the pro- cess. Mary Daly’s groundbreaking works in feminist theology were followed by other significant studies, including Fiorenza’s *Bread Not Stone.*

In this work, biblical scholar and theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (b. 1938) radically re-visioned the Bible, making it a source of power, rather than repression, for women. The *New York Times Book Review* noted, “Schüssler Fiorenza stands among the most articulate and respected theolo- gians who have challenged the silence and marginality that have characterized the great majority of Christian women for nearly 2,000 years. . . . *Bread Not Stone* engages issues, explicit and implicit, that are sure to spark discussion, argument, and reflection among thoughtful Christians.”

Other timeless titles included Fiorenza’s *But She Said* (1992), Rosemary Radford Ruether’s *Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology*
(1985) and _Sexism and God-Talk Toward a Feminist Theology_ (1983), and two books already mentioned in the context of women’s spirituality, Margot Adler’s _Drawing Down the Moon_ (1980) and Carol P. Christ’s _Diving Deep and Surfacing_ (1980).

A later, major work in Beacon’s Religion and Theology series was Diana L. Eck’s _Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras_ (1993). In this book, Eck, a professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University, demonstrated why dialogue between people of all religions is crucial in the modern, interdependent world.

**Paula Gunn Allen**, _The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions_ (1986).

Professor Paula Gunn Allen (b. 1939) is an American Indian of Laguna Pueblo and Sioux heritage. _The Sacred Hoop_ was her pioneering work, documenting the continuing vitality of American Indian traditions and the crucial role of women in those traditions. New Directions for Women called it “a landmark book which may prove as important to American Indian women as Simone de Beauvoir’s _The Second Sex_ has been for western non-tribal women.”


Another work from the Laguna Pueblo tribe, scheduled for publication in the fall of 2003, is Lee Marmon’s _The Pueblo Imagination_, with writings by her daughter, Leslie Marmon Silko, and by poets Joy Harjo and Simon Ortiz.


In Beacon’s complete catalogue of 1986, the Press officially announced the inauguration of its Black Women Writers series, described as “rediscovered fiction classics by twentieth-century Black women writers.” Topping the list was Gayl Jones’s _Corregidora_, the author’s first novel, originally published by editor and author Toni Morrison at Random House in 1975.

In _Corregidora_, Jones weaves a tale of a tormented blues singer named Ursa, consumed by hatred for the nineteenth-century slave master who fathered her mother and grandmother. John Updike called the book “a living history of the slavery that otherwise will be forgotten . . . unpolemical where there has been much polemic, exploratory where rhetoric and outrage tend to block the path.” Maya Angelou characterized the tale “as American as Mt. Rushmore and as murky as the Florida swamps.”

Beacon next published Jones’s _Eva’s Man_, in 1987. A decade later, Jones
faxed a letter to Beacon, addressed “Dear Director” and requesting that Corregidora and Eva’s Man be put out of print. Director Helene Atwan responded and discovered Jones didn’t want those to be her only books in print in America. Atwan asked what other works Jones had. The result was two spectacular new novels, the first original novels published by the press, The Healing (1998) and Mosquito (1999). The Healing went on to be named a National Book Award finalist.

When Beacon officially began its Bluestreak series in 1998, the series opened with a repackaging of Corregidora and Octavia E. Butler’s Kindred.


Kindred is the engaging tale of Dana, a modern-day African-American woman who is pulled back in time by her great-great-grandfather, a white plantation owner in the slave-holding South. In order to ensure that she will exist in the future, Dana is forced to save the slaveowner’s life several times. “Butler makes new and eloquent use of a familiar science-fiction idea, protecting one’s own past, to express the tangled interdependency of black and white in the United States,” wrote Joanna Russ in the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

An acclaimed science fiction writer and novelist known for creating believable and independent female characters, Octavia Estelle Butler (b. 1947) was winner of the Nebula Award and twice winner of the Hugo Award. Originally published in 1979, and reprinted by Beacon in 1988, Kindred became part of Beacon’s new Black Women Writers series. It was then added to the Bluestreak series, where it now sells some 40,000 copies a year, almost twenty-five years after its first publication. Beacon has now sold well over 250,000 copies of Kindred.

Ann Petry (1908–1997) was another vital voice revived in the Black Women Writers series. In the period following World War II, she became the first black female author to address the unique problems of black women. Beacon revived her novels The Street (1985), The Drugstore Cat (1988), and The Narrows (1988); all three had originally been published in the 1940s.


This masterful biographical novel—which has sold more than 100,000 copies—tells the true story of a young Chinese girl sold into slavery in 1871 and auctioned off in the American West. Author Ruthanne LumMcCunn (b. 1946) weaves the tale of how young Lalu Nathoy struggled to free herself from ser-
vitude and gain dignity and independence in a manner that Maxine Hong Kingston has called “fast-paced and entertaining—packed with adventure, drama, and inspiration.” McCunn is among the most respected and prolific chroniclers of the Chinese experience in America.

McCunn is part of Beacon’s Bluestreak series; her other Beacon books are *Sole Survivor* (1999), *Wooden Fish Songs* (2000), and *The Moon Pearl* (2001).

**Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (1989).**

In *For the Common Good*, economist Herman E. Daly (b. 1938) and theologian John B. Cobb, Jr. (b. 1925), demonstrate how conventional economics and a growth-oriented economy have led us to the brink of environmental disaster.

Paul Ehrlich of Stanford called this “a brilliant book…. No one who is concerned with solving the human predicament can afford to be without this book.”


The *Village Voice* called this book “the most engaging treatment yet of anthropology’s predicament and the larger dilemmas of ethnicity, culture, and politics that have caused it.” In *Culture and Truth*, Renato Ignacio Rosaldo, Jr., (b. 1941), a professor of anthropology at Stanford University, argues for social science to acknowledge and celebrate diversity, narrative, emotion, and the unavoidability of subjectivity.

**Mary Oliver, *House of Light* (1990).**

Mary Oliver (b. 1935) had already published with several other houses when a former employee of the Atlantic Monthly Press asked Beacon director Wendy Strothman if he could send her one of the poet’s manuscripts. “I said, ‘We really don’t publish poetry,’” remembered Strothman. “And then I read it, and I was just so struck by it. It seemed to me it fit very much into Beacon’s sensibility, Beacon’s sense of spirituality.”

Oliver’s luminous *House of Light* was subsequently published by Beacon, winning the 1991 Christopher Award and the 1991 *Boston Globe* Lawrence L. Winship Book Award. Maxine Kumin called Oliver an “indefatigable guide to the natural world, particularly to its lesser-known aspects,” while the *New York
Times Book Review praised Oliver’s poems as “thoroughly convincing—as genuine, moving, and implausible as the first caressing breeze of spring.”

Mary Oliver’s next book with Beacon, New and Selected Poems (1992), won the National Book Award and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and her new Owls and Other Fantasies is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2003.


When another commercial publisher let Biting at the Grave go—because “Irish books don’t sell”—Beacon took over. In 1990 it headed the Best Books List in the New York Times. That same periodical called it “an eloquent and haunting book” that forcefully depicted and described the 1981 IRA hunger strikes in Northern Ireland and the deaths that resulted. The Washington Post applauded O’Malley’s ability to shrewdly assess “the psychological, cultural, religious, and political forces that kept the hunger strikes going against all odds, against all reason.”


Before the publication of The Measure of Our Success, few outside the world of child advocacy had heard of Marian Wright Edelman (b. 1939). This book, in the words of director Wendy Strothman, “put Marian’s important message on the national agenda.” It also became one of the bestselling books of the decade for Beacon, netting over a quarter of a million hardcover copies in its first year.


Donald Hall, Life Work (1993).

Louis Begley of the New York Times called Donald Hall’s Life Work “the best new book I have read this year, of extraordinary nobility and wisdom.” In this New York Times Notable Book, poet Hall (b. 1928) reflects on the meaning of work, solitude, and love and provides readers with a glimpse into his own
personal and professional life. “Reading Life Work is enough to make anyone short of John Updike feel unproductive,” mused Scott Donaldson in Washington Post Book World. “But forgive him we do, and gladly, for this extended essay is winning in its honesty and charm.”


Poet and essayist Nancy Mairs (b. 1943) is a feminist and the highly acclaimed author of several books of prose. Ordinary Time, her first book with Beacon, is an unconventional spiritual autobiography of one woman’s life—from infidelity to living with multiple sclerosis, to confronting death and renewing a marriage. The New York Times Book Review called it “a remarkable accomplishment.”


It was Beacon editor Deborah Chasman who noticed a brilliant Princeton professor named Cornel West and convinced him to pull a series of his essays together into a book. The result was Race Matters, which the New York Times called a “compelling blend of philosophy, sociology and political commentary” and selected as a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who invited West to join him at Harvard University, called Cornel West “the preeminent African-American intellectual of our generation.” The book was a bestseller and remains his most influential work.


DORIS GRUMBACH, Fifty Days of Solitude (1994).

Highly regarded as both author and literary critic, Doris Grumbach (b. 1918) is known for writing novels that incorporate elements of autobiography, biography, and history. Her Fifty Days of Solitude, a New York Times Notable Book, is an elegant meditation on age and memory, which Publishers Weekly called “a profoundly optimistic book: a validation of the strength and the tranquility to be found within the confines of the human mind.”

**Ann Jones,** *Next Time, She’ll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It* (1994).

Beacon’s ongoing commitment to women’s issues was evidenced in *Next Time, She’ll Be Dead*, which *Publishers Weekly* called “perhaps the most critically acclaimed book” on domestic violence. The book exposes the intricacies of abuse toward women, in the home and in the law enforcement and legal systems that fail to protect them.

Beacon also reprinted *Women Who Kill*—Jones’s powerful 1983 work chronicling women murderers in American history—in 1996.


Geoffrey Canada (b. 1954), an award-winning advocate for children, is president of the Harlem Children’s Zone in New York City. His pioneering work in inner cities was called to Beacon’s attention initially by Marian Wright Edelman. In this powerful book on violence in America, Canada uses storytelling to re-create the world of his childhood, where “sidewalk” boys learned the codes of the block from their elders. The title comes from the rituals, growing exponentially in their lethal possibilities, from fist to stick to knife, and then to gun.

*Fist Stick Knife Gun* was Canada’s first book. He also published *Reaching Up for Manhood* (1998) with Beacon.


A national leader in educational reform and progressive educational philosophy, Deborah Meier (b. 1931) used her twenty years in one of the country’s most remarkable public schools to boldly defend public education. “The founder and principal of excellent small schools in East Harlem,” read the *New York Times Book Review*, “Ms. Meier wants to make all students capable of participating in and sustaining a democracy.” Beacon has also published Meier’s *Will Standards Save Public Education* (2000), and *In Schools We Trust* (2002).

Other titles in Beacon’s strong contemporary education list include Theodore Sizer and Nancy Faust Sizer, *The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract* (1999); Etta Kralovec and John Buell, *The End of Homework:


Reverend Howard Thurman (1900–1981) was hailed by Life magazine as one of the great preachers of our time. The grandson of a former slave, a spiritual advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr., and the first black chaplain and first full-time black faculty member at Boston University, Thurman was a man of astounding charisma and foresight. A Strange Freedom is a lyrical anthology of his published and unpublished works. “The essence of his thought,” said Alice Walker, “emerges in the message of hope, reconciliation and love…. In those long midnight hours when morning seems weeks away, the words of Howard Thurman have kept watch with me.” Thurman’s wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, created the prototype of what is now known as Boston’s Black Heritage Trail.


From one of the country’s most important leaders, Lying Down with the Lions is a book about social change and working as an outsider on the inside. In 1998, liberal black leader and progressive Democrat Ronald Dellums (b. 1935) retired from the U.S. House of Representatives after twenty-seven years of service. This chronicle of those years is filled with crucial advice for Americans committed to progressive principles.


Alice Hoffman described this searing book as “a courageous and disturbing history of a family caught up in a web of violence, injustice, and rage.” Michael Patrick MacDonald (b. 1966) recounts a childhood in the poorest white neighborhood in the country—Boston’s infamous Southie—and covers the terrible
riots sparked by forced busing, creating one of the most celebrated books published about class in America in the last quarter century. The book was on the Boston Globe bestseller list for almost a year and has sold well over 100,000 copies.


Sindiwe Magona is one of the few black women writers to come out of South Africa. Her novel, which was the third original novel published by Beacon, began with an actual incident, the death of Fulbright scholar Amy Elizabeth Biehl in the black township of Guguletu. In the narrative, the killer’s mother addresses herself to the mother of the dead girl, introducing the concept of murder as an almost inevitable outcome of apartheid. Among the many critics and readers to praise the book were Amy Biehl’s parents, who cited it as an important step in their understanding of the roots of the violence that had killed their daughter.

Magona (b. 1943) is also the author of *Push-Push!* a collection of stories reprinted by Beacon (2000).


Alfred Young (b. 1925) tells a rich story of the American Revolution and the life of Boston shoemaker George Robert Twelves Hewes, which he intertwines with reflections on oral testimony, memory, and myth. The Boston Globe called The Shoemaker and the Tea Party “a major contribution to an understanding of the role of ordinary people in important events.”


Dr. William F. Schulz (b. 1949) is the executive director of Amnesty International USA and former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. In Our Own Best Interest provides a provocative new argument for defending human rights, delineating the connection between Americans’ prosperity and human rights violations around the globe. The book received widespread attention and has quickly become one of the most cited works in the field.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the individuals who made this research project possible: To Beacon Press director Helene Atwan and editor Christopher Vyce, who helped imagine, craft, and guide the research assignments and writing project. To those Beacon authors, editors, directors, and staff members, past and present, who contributed their time and knowledge through lengthy interviews with the author—Helene Atwan, Elena Gardella, Patricia Harrison, Jeannette Hopkins, John Huenefeld, Jack Mendelsohn, Burnell O’Brien, Charlotte Raymond, Frank Schulman, Gobin Stair, Wendy Strothman, Arnold Tovell, Robert West, Joanne Wyckoff, and Howard Zinn. To the above-mentioned individuals, as well as to Deb Johansen, Kay Montgomery, Meg Riley, Warren Ross, and Judythe Wilbur, for guidance, inspiration, and resource leads.

Special thanks to Beacon intern Kirsten Amann, without whose assistance the collection of the enormous amount of research materials would not have been possible. And to transcriber Joyelle West, for wading through, interpreting, and transcribing many sections of the wonderfully rich interviews. Thanks also to Cliff Wunderlich and Fran O’Donnell of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, to Lisa Tuite of the Boston Globe Library, and to members of the research departments at the Boston Public and Cambridge Public Libraries. And finally, to Rebecca Strauss, for ongoing editing, encouragement, feedback, and moral support.

Susan Wilson
May 2003