

Max Stackhouse, influential theologian and ethicist, dies at 80

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [March 2, 2016](#) issue

Max L. Stackhouse, an influential theologian and social ethicist, died at the age of 80 at his home in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, on January 30.

Stackhouse taught at Andover Newton Theological School for nearly 30 years, and then at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1993 to 2006. He was an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and had served as president of the American Theological Society and the Society for Christian Ethics.

He authored or edited 25 books, including *On Moral Business* and *God and Globalization*.

Stackhouse was an editor at large for the *Christian Century* and wrote many articles for the magazine, including a 2011 essay in the “How my mind has changed” series.

In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he and Dennis P. McCann wrote for the *Century* “A postcommunist manifesto,” which situated Marxism in relation to the social gospel, liberation theologies, and other Christian perspectives. Public theology after the collapse of communism, they wrote, “must develop a social ethic for the emerging world in which democracy, human rights, and a mixed economy are acknowledged as universal necessities.” They also wrote of how one could serve in “a holy vocation” in the marketplace. “If public theology can help us overcome our contempt for corporations as mere money machines, then Christians can begin to articulate what we expect of these institutions.”

When the *Century* in 2011 asked theologians, pastors, and others to sum up the gospel in seven words, [Stackhouse’s response was](#), “God enters history; renewed covenants promise salvation.”

Reviewing *Shaping Public Theology*, a selection of Stackhouse’s writing, for the *Century*, [Robin Lovin wrote](#): “His understanding of covenant illustrates the idea that runs through his work: our moral life is not just given to us. It must be constructed in response to conditions that limit us but that also leave us free to choose.”

*Editor's note: Logged-in magazine subscribers can search for articles from before 1998 via the EBSCOhost platform from [our archives page](#).*