

Ecofeminist theologian Sallie McFague dies at 86

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Sallie McFague (courtesy photo)

Theologian Sallie McFague died November 15 at the age of 86. McFague influenced a generation of feminist theologians with her work in ecofeminist theology. For 30 years she taught at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

McFague was an early adopter of feminine names for God. In one of her seminal books, *Metaphorical Theology* (1982), she wrote: “metaphors of God, far from reducing God to what we understand, underscore by their multiplicity and lack of fit the unknowability of God. . . . This crucial characteristic of metaphorical language for God is lost, however, when only one important personal relationship, that of father and child, is allowed to serve as a grid for speaking of the God-human relationship.”

A panentheist, McFague made significant contributions to the field of ecotheology. In a 2008 interview with Fortress Press to promote her book *A New Climate for Theology*, McFague described Western consumerism as a sin—adding that this sin was to blame for several contemporary disasters.

“The economic meltdown and the climate crisis are two sides of the same problem,” she said, “a problem based in large part on the basic assumptions we well-off Western human beings hold about ourselves: that we are ‘individuals’ who deserve whatever we want and can legally hoard for ourselves, our comfort, and our pleasure. The major religions disagree about many things but none of them commend ‘Blessed are the greedy.’”

In 1974, McFague became the first female dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, serving for four years before returning to teaching.

She left Vanderbilt in 2000 and moved to Canada where she became a distinguished theologian in residence at the Vancouver School of Theology. —*Christian Century* staff