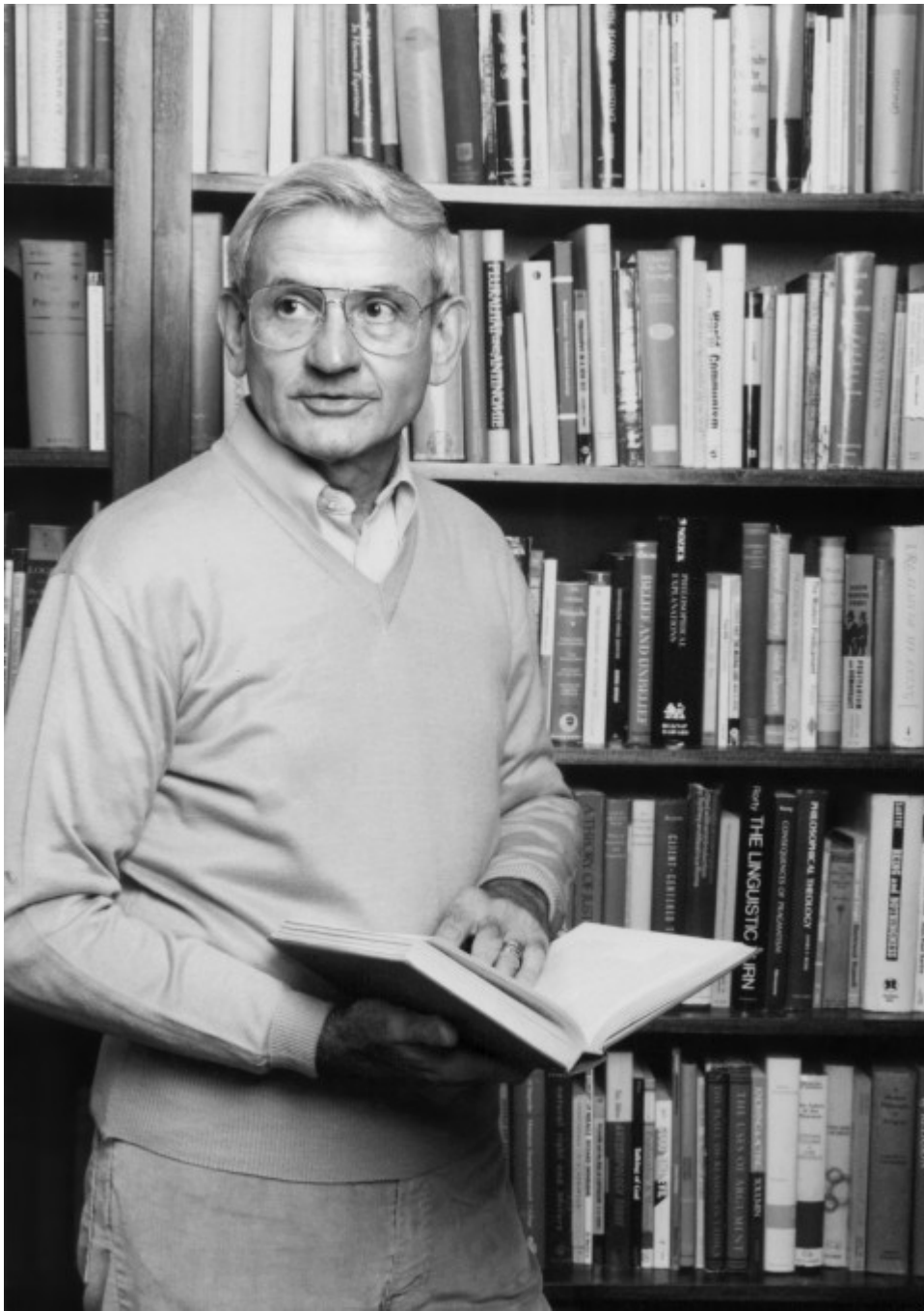


Schubert Miles Ogden, Protestant theologian, dies at age 91

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by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [July 31, 2019](#) issue



Schubert Ogden. Photo from [Ogden via Creative Commons license](#)

Schubert Miles Ogden, a central figure in mainline Protestant theology in the mid-20th century, died June 6 at age 91 in Louisville, Colorado, after a long illness.

His books included *Christ without Myth* (1961), *The Reality of God* (1966), and *Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation* (1979). A selection of his sermons was published in 2015 with the title *To Preach the Truth*.

An ordained United Methodist elder, he taught at University of Chicago Divinity School and the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University until retiring in 1993.

In 1980, he contributed to the *Christian Century's* How My Mind Has Changed series, writing about his work “toward a genuinely postliberal theology” that addressed the challenges raised by theologies of liberation.

“Positively or negatively, intentionally or unintentionally,” he wrote, “the traditional witness of faith has served again and again to justify the interests of one group of human beings against those of others—whether class, nation, race, or gender.”

Ogden sought to engage “the credibility of the Christian witness, which concern arises from the fact that Christian faith itself claims to be credible in terms of common human experience.” By 1980, he had a “new sense that there is a practical as well as a theoretical aspect to such credibility, and that theology must concern itself with the justice of the Christian witness as well as the truth of that witness if it is to vindicate the Christian claim.”

It is equally essential, he wrote, that theology evaluate whether Christian witness is congruent with the prior faith and witness of the earliest apostles, sought through “methods of historical analysis and reconstruction.”

Philip Devenish, a theologian who was mentored by Ogden, told United Methodist News Service that one of Ogden’s primary contributions was his “recognition that what is Christian and what is true are independent of each other.”

“There’s a historical judgment about what is accurately Christian and then there is a philosophical judgment about what is true,” Devenish said. “Christian theology is responsible for both judgments.”

Charles Wood, a former colleague at Perkins, told UMNS, “I’ve had generations of Perkins students tell me, ‘He taught me how to think.’ . . . He saw his vocation primarily as caring about the way students thought, caring about their theological formation, and he wasn’t cutting any corners with that.”

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “People: Schubert Miles Ogden.”

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