

In Memoriam

Jane Williams-Hogan



On 11 February 2018, Jane Williams-Hogan (1942–2018) joined Jeffrey K. Hadden (1937–2003), Thomas Robbins (1943–2015), and Anson D. Shupe, Jr. (1948–2015) as part of the small group of distinguished scholars of new religious movements who have left us. Ours is a comparatively young discipline, and we still react to the news with surprise that one of the pioneers in our field has passed away.

Born Jane Kintner in Abington, Pennsylvania on 26 October 1942, the daughter of American soldier, academic, and diplomat William Roscoe Kintner (1915–1997), she married Michael Hogan and they had six children, one of whom, Daniel, predeceased Jane. Michael and Jane have fifteen grandchildren. Jane earned her Ph.D. at University of Pennsylvania in 1985 and she was professor of sociology at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

Jane was 75. She had still very much to teach us about her favorite subject, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), his influence on religion,

literature, and the arts, and the religious communities generated by his teachings. She published countless articles and lectured at hundreds of conferences on these subjects. In 1998, she organized at Bryn Athyn College a memorable annual conference of CESNUR, the Center for Studies on New Religions. In 2004, she published a book in Italian on Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian churches (*Swedenborg e le Chiese swedenborgiane*, translated by Marco Pasi (Leumann [Torino]: Elledici) in a series of which I was the editor. She published her article, "Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg's Religious Writings on Three Visual Artists," in *Nova Religio* 19, no. 4 (May 2016), in a special issue on "New Religious Movements and the Visual Arts." Her last, brilliant achievement was the "Swedenborg and the Arts" conference she organized and chaired at Bryn Athyn College in June 2017, nine months after she had been diagnosed with cancer. Her biography of Swedenborg in English was nearly completed at her passing.

With Jane, we lose the leading international scholar of Swedenborg, and the Swedenborgian community loses the spokesperson who involved it in a continuous exchange with academics all over the world. Small religious groups such as the Swedenborgians always run the risk of becoming insular. It is largely due to Jane's tireless efforts that their role among American and the world's religions is now generally acknowledged.

Jane, however, was much more than this. She was an exceptional human being. Her smile, kindness, and sweetness made her the kind of friend we knew we could rely on. Her advice and sympathy were especially precious to me, as they no doubt were to many others, in crucial and difficult passages of my life. Swedenborgians do not really believe in death, just in a rebirth in the spiritual world in a spiritual body. Those of us who believe in an afterlife look forward to continuing our conversations with her there. But we will all still miss her immensely.

Massimo Introvigne