



IN MEMORIAM

Marilyn Adams
Professor of Philosophy
UC Los Angeles
1943-2017

The Rev. Dr. Marilyn McCord Adams died peacefully at her home in Princeton, New Jersey, on March 22, 2017. She is known internationally in academic circles for her contributions to the study of philosophy and theology. Born October 12, 1943, in Oak Park, Illinois, to William Clark McCord and Wilmah Brown McCord. She attended the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, graduating as valedictorian of her class in early 1964, with a major in philosophy. Continuing her study of philosophy at the graduate level, she received her Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1967.

At Cornell she met and married Robert Merrihew Adams, a fellow doctoral student in philosophy. This began a partnership spanning half a century in which their professional as well as personal lives were closely intertwined. They held faculty positions in the same universities, first in the philosophy department of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and then for twenty-one years in the UCLA philosophy department. It was during her time in Los Angeles that Rev. Dr. Adams was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood, having followed a sense of calling through an intense introduction to ministry in Hollywood during the AIDS crisis, and having acquired two Th.M. degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary.

In 1993 they moved east to Yale, where Rev. Dr. Adams was the Horace Tracy Pitkin Professor of Historical Theology in the divinity school, while Robert was in the philosophy department (and chaired it for eight years). In 2004 they moved to Oxford, England. He retired, and she became Regius Professor Divinity, and a Canon of Christ Church Cathedral. Historically, she was the first woman, and the first American, to hold that professorship.

As a scholar and interpreter of medieval philosophy and theology Marilyn McCord Adams is known especially for her definitive two-volume study of the work of William Ockham. She has also made a mark in contemporary philosophy of religion, particularly with two books presenting her distinctive approach to the theological problem of evil. She is survived by her husband of fifty years, and by a large and loyal extended family, including her brother and sister-in-law, William and Carolyn McCord of Peoria, Illinois, her nephew James Fearon, of Stanford, California, and her niece Mary Fearon Jack, of Hudson, Ohio, and many of her former students, with their families.