

Deaths

News in the [February 10, 2009](#) issue

Robert Handy, who studied under legendary scholars like Paul Tillich before becoming a prominent Baptist historian, died January 8 at a retirement community in West Caldwell, New Jersey, January 8. He was 90. Handy was a professor of church history at New York's Union Theological Seminary from 1950 until 1986. He published works on church history and American religion many consider standards in the field. Handy was particularly known for studies on U.S. church-state relations and attempts by some Christians last century to impose their vision of a Christian America.

Cardinal Pio Laghi, 86, the Vatican's first official envoy to Washington and a papal emissary who launched an 11th-hour bid to halt the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, died January 11 complications from a blood-related illness, according to the Italian news agency ANSA. During his time in Washington, Laghi helped negotiate full diplomatic relations, established in 1984, between the U.S. and the Vatican. A career diplomat, Laghi was the envoy to Argentina when a coup set up a military dictatorship there in 1976. Human rights activists later accused him of failing to speak out sufficiently against abuses by the regime. He retired in 1999. Pope John Paul II sent Laghi to Jerusalem in May 2001 to encourage peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine. In early March 2003, the same pope dispatched him to Washington to urge President Bush to halt invasion plans. In December, Laghi applauded the victory of President Obama and voiced optimism for Vatican relations with the incoming administration.