

## March 10, 1922–November 6, 2009



Claude Welch, former dean, president, and professor emeritus of historical theology at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), died Friday, November 6, 2009.

Welch graduated from Upper Iowa University with a BA in history, received his BD and MDiv from Yale Divinity School in 1945, and his PhD from Yale in 1950. His doctoral dissertation was later published as *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Scribners, 1952) and is considered to be a seminal twentieth century work on the Trinity.

Welch taught at Princeton University from 1947–1951 and Yale University from 1951–1960. He served as Director of Graduate Studies in Religion at Yale from 1954–1955. From 1956 to 1957 he engaged in research on Karl Barth at the University of Heidelberg on a Fulbright scholarship.

Welch was appointed Berg Professor of Religious Thought and Chairman of the Department of Religion at the University of Pennsylvania in 1960. In 1964, he was appointed Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1969, Welch was appointed the Director of the Study of Graduate Education in Religion by the American Council of Learned Societies. He was elected President of the American Academy of Religion in 1970.

Welch served as Graduate Theological Union Dean and President from 1971 to 1982 and as Dean from 1982 to 1987, when he retired. He taught Nineteenth Century Theology throughout his career, and authored several books, among them *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted through its Development* , coauthored with John Dillenberger, (Macmillan, 1988); and the two-volume *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century* , (Yale University Press, 1985).

Among his many accomplishments at the Graduate Theological Union, Welch is best known for: 1) Expanding the academic ties between the GTU and the University of California, Berkeley, such as: the joint PhD in Near Eastern Studies and cross-registration for courses; 2) Overseeing the expansion of affiliated centers, institutes, and programs such as the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute; Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences; Institute of Buddhist Studies; Pacific Asian-American Center for Theology and Strategies; and the Center for Ethics and Social Policy; 3) Establishing the GTU Distinguished Faculty Lecture in 1976; and 4) Planning for the GTU Common Library building and the completion of Phase I in 1981.

James A. Donahue, President and professor of Ethics at the GTU, said, “Claude was the heart and soul of the GTU for many, many years. His is a powerful legacy. He gave the encouragement and support to many of our alumni/ae to help prepare them for their professional roles. The students, faculty, staff, and our surrounding community have Claude to thank for what the GTU is today — we could never be what we are without him.”

“Claude was one of the most distinguished religious historians of the twentieth century,” said Donahue. His writings have set the standard for scholarship in the field of theological studies, and his intellectual and scholarly leadership catapulted the study of theology and religion to a place of prominence in the intellectual landscape. His leadership in the creation of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in 1962 was seen as a pioneering and bold step in the advancement of ecumenical and interfaith relationships in the United States and globally. To this day, we are indebted to Claude for what he did for theology and the GTU.”

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