

John Witte, Jr.

Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Law
McDonald Distinguished Professor
and CSLR Director



Throughout his career, internationally renowned scholar John Witte, Jr., Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Law, McDonald Distinguished Professor, and CSLR Director, has played a seminal role in creating a framework of academic study within which law and theology not only co-exist, but work with the other for the good of society.

Witte earned a Bachelor of Arts at Calvin College (1982) and Juris Doctor at Harvard Law School (1985). While at Harvard, he worked on law and religion themes in Western history with Harold J. Berman, a Harvard law professor, who later become Emory's first Woodruff Professor of Law. These ideas so captured their imaginations, that they came together to Emory in 1985 to co-found the Center, which Witte has directed since 1987.

"Together with Frank Alexander and many other colleagues who later joined us, we had the privilege of building up this distinct new area of interdisciplinary study," recalls Witte. "We developed deep Abrahamic conversations about foundational questions of law and theology, and the fundamentals of faith, freedom, and family." This work would eventually ignite global conversation, which now takes place in some 60 such centers and 30 journals worldwide.

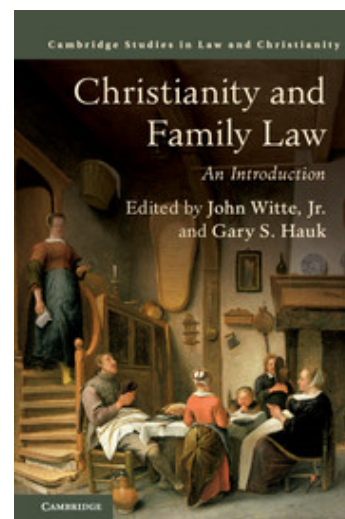
At Emory, Witte was able to engage in his study of the complex dimensions of law and theology. As he writes in *Christianity and Law: An Introduction*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), which he co-edited with Frank S. Alexander, "Law gives religion its structure and encourages its devotion to order and organization. Law and religion share such ideas as fault, obligation, and covenant and such methods as ethics, rhetoric, and textural interpretation. Every major religious tradition strives to come ... to terms with law by striking a balance between the rational and the mystical ... and every major legal tradition struggles to link its formal structures and processes with the beliefs and ideals of its people." (More on reverse side)

Recent publication

Christianity and Family Law: An Introduction (2017), co-edited by John Witte, Jr. and Gary S. Hauk, is part of the Cambridge Studies in Law and Christianity series, edited by Witte.

The Western tradition has always cherished the family as an essential foundation of a just and orderly society, and thus accorded it special legal and religious protection.

This volume introduces readers to the enduring and evolving Christian norms and teachings on betrothals and weddings; marriage and divorce; women's and children's rights; marital property and inheritance; and human sexuality and intimate relationships.



Over three decades, Witte has explored the relationship between law and religion in 250 articles, 18 journal symposia, and 30 books – work that has been translated into 15 languages.

“I’m especially happy with early monographs that broke new ground and opened new fields of scholarship on marriage and family themes, religion and human rights, and law and Christianity,” Witte says. These include, *From Sacrament to Contract* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, 2d ed., 2012); *Law and Protestantism* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); *The Reformation of Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); *The Sins of the Fathers* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); *The Western Case for Monogamy over Polygamy* (Cambridge University Press 2015); and *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment* (Oxford University Press, 2000, 4th ed., 2016). “I am also proud to be editing the new Cambridge Studies in Law and Christianity series (2014-), which will produce scores of new path-breaking titles in the years ahead.”

Witte serves as co-editor of the *Journal of Law and Religion* (2013-) and editor of *Emory University Studies in Law and Religion* (W.B. Eerdmans, 1989-). He has delivered 350 lectures around the world, including the Franke Lectures at Yale, the Jefferson Lectures at Berkeley, and the Cunningham Lectures at Edinburgh. Recently, he lectured at Heidelberg University in Germany, where he received an honorary doctorate in theology.

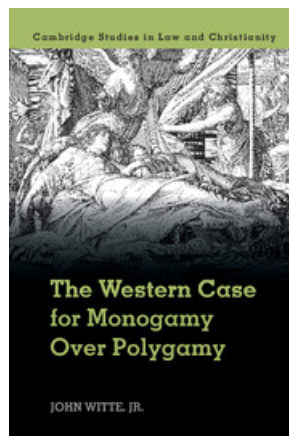
Witte’s career is defined by more than academic successes, writing and lecturing, and the millions of dollars in grants he has raised for major research projects he has directed. His impact is also in the passion he brings to educating the next generation of scholars – efforts that have garnered him multiple awards including being selected 12 times by Emory Law students as “Most Outstanding Professor,” and receiving the University’s prestigious Scholar/Teaching Award, Emory Williams Teaching Award, and two Crystal Apple Awards.

“I feel called to be a teacher,” says Witte. “I cherish the privilege of teaching students in my courses, readers of my books, and audiences at my lectures. I am especially grateful that this small and controversial field of law and religion study now commands worldwide attention and is a commonplace topic at academies throughout the world. If ‘imitation is the highest form of flattery,’ my colleagues and I have been flattered beyond measure to see echoes and elaborations of our work in scores of universities and among thousands of scholars.”

Originally from St. Catharines, Ontario, Witte lives in Atlanta, Georgia with his wife, Eliza Ellison, a theologian and trained mediator. They have two daughters and four grandchildren.

Other Publications

The Western Case for Monogamy Over Polygamy, (Cambridge University Press, 2015): Witte documents the Western case for monogamy over polygamy from antiquity until today. He gives the arguments pro and con a full hearing and concludes that Western nations need to hold the line on monogamy.



Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment: Fourth Edition, John Witte Jr., and Joel A. Nichols, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2016): A comprehensive analysis of every Supreme Court case on religious freedom from 1815 to 2015.

