

Tribute to John Warwick Montgomery (1931-2024)

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) pays tribute to Dr John Warwick Montgomery the founding Chair of its Academic Board and later life-long honorary Chair of the Academic Board, also serving on the Editorial Board of the International Journal for Religious Freedom. He passed away in Strasbourg, France, on 25 September 2024 at the age of 92. He was a citizen of the United States, United Kingdom and France and also held academic positions in Canada. From all we know, he was the only lawyer listed in the bars for the Queen's Court in the UK, the Supreme Court of California, USA, the Supreme Court of the USA, the highest court in France, the highest court in Greece, and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, always with major court cases fighting for religious freedom.

Montgomery was a towering figure in apologetics and in law and religion. He started a career as an ordained minister, and professor of dogmatics of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, since 1965. He became the brain behind the conservative swing of the denomination in the 1960s. He also emerged as a significant spokesman for Protestant Evangelicals, writing as a regular columnist in the flagship periodical *Christianity Today* (1965-1983).

In the 1970s he decided to add a second career as a lawyer. Over time he earned 11 degrees in theology, philosophy and law, among them three earned doctorates in theology and law and an honorary doctorate in law from Moscow.

As a theologian and a lawyer, he entered the field of evidential apologetics, that is, he defended the Christian faith from a legal framework, as spelled out in his book of 2017 *Defending the Gospel in Legal Style*. His major philosophic defense of the Christian faith *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* was published in 2002 in English and in French by the publishing house VKW, which also publishes IJRF. As a result of ongoing global debates, he updated it five times, the last time in 2012. Montgomery was a prolific writer and authored more than 60 books, and over 200 scholarly articles, beside thousands of smaller op eds and articles.

Montgomery established, in 1980, the Simon Greenleaf School of Law in California, which is now Trinity Law School. Montgomery worked as dean and professor from 1980 to 1989. In 1989, Montgomery and Michael Richard Smythe founded the Irvine, California-based Institute for Theology and Law which, in 1995, became the current International Academy of Apologetics and Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

From 1995 to 2007 Montgomery was a Professor in Law and Humanities at the University of Bedfordshire, England. Following that, he was the Distinguished

Research Professor of Philosophy and Christian Thought at Patrick Henry College in Virginia, United States until 2014. From 2014 to 2017, he was Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy at Concordia University, Wisconsin. He was the director of the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism & Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Montgomery taught thousands of students and was extremely influential in developing a Christian worldview, particularly for Christian lawyers. He had a unique ability to connect apologetics and law. He also taught summer courses in the International Academy of Apologetics and Evangelism on the one side and defended human rights including the right to one's own religion in Strasbourg, France. The cases he did win against European governments at the European Court of Human Rights are legendary, the two most important victories being *Larissis v. Greece* on proselytism and *Bessarabian Orthodox Church v. Moldova* on state registration of churches, both of 2001.

When the idea of IIRF arose, he became a strategist and senior advisor and offered his wide-ranging global connections to IIRE. His name as Chair of the Academic Board gave IIRF a lot of credibility in the academic world, both in the world of religion and the world of law. He became a close ally and friend of Thomas and Christine Schirrmacher, who published many of his books. In 2009 Thomas Schirrmacher together with William A. Dembski, edited his Festschrift *Tough-Minded Christianity. Honoring the Legacy of John Warwick Montgomery*.¹ In 2004 and 2009 they published two books about Montgomery,² as well as in 2020 his autobiography *Fighting the Good Fight: A Life in Defense of the Faith*.³

Montgomery has two daughters and a son with his first wife, who predeceased him. In 1988, he married Lanalee de Kant, a professional harpist, with whom he had an adopted son. She died in 2021. Montgomery subsequently married Carol Gracina Maughan in February 2022. We assure his wife Carol and his children of our prayers and that we will be grateful forever for what John has done for us and for human rights worldwide.

Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, President, and Dr Dennis P Petri, Director, International Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom and Dr Janet Epp Buckingham, Executive Editor, IJRF, on behalf of its boards and staff.

1 B&H Academic Publishing. Available for download at: <https://tinyurl.com/3fzexpk>.

2 Ross Clifford, *John Warwick Montgomery's Legal Apologetic: An apologetic for all seasons*, Wipf & Stock, 2016; David Andersen, *Martin Luther – The Problem of Faith and Reason*, Wipf & Stock, 2012.

3 Wipf & Stock, 2016.