

# OneAccord 2026 Speaker Bio

## *Byron Johnson*

Byron Johnson is Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University where he is the founding director of the Institute for Studies of Religion as well as the founding director of the Institute for Global Human Flourishing. Johnson is a faculty affiliate of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, a senior scientist at the Gallup Organization, and co-founder of the Religious Freedom Institute, based in Washington, DC. Professor Johnson is also a visiting distinguished professor in the School of Public Policy at Pepperdine University.

Johnson is a former member of the Coordinating Council for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Presidential Appointment). He has been the principal investigator on grants from private foundations as well as the Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Defense, National Institutes of Health, and the United States Institute for Peace, totaling more than \$100 million. He is the author of more than 400 journal articles, monographs, and books. He is recognized as a leading authority on the scientific study of religion, the efficacy of faith-based organizations, and criminal justice. Recent publications have examined the impact of faith-based programs on offender treatment, drug addiction, recidivism reduction and prisoner reentry. These topics are the focus of his book *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How It Could* (2011).

Johnson's work examines the ways in which religion impacts key behaviors like volunteerism, generosity, and purpose. These topics are covered in four books, *The Angola Prison Seminary* (2016), which evaluates the influence of a Bible College and inmate-led congregations on prisoners serving life sentences; *The Quest for Purpose: The Collegiate Search for a Meaningful Life* (2017), which examines the link between religion and finding purpose and meaning, and the subsequent link to academic integrity; *The Restorative Prison: Essays on Inmate Peer Ministry and Prosocial Corrections* (2021), which looks at the empirical evidence in support of the link between religion and the emerging subfield of positive criminology; and *Objective Religion Volume 1, 2, 3* (2023, 2024, 2025), which examine factors related to the importance and resilience of religion. *A Compendium of Global Flourishing Study Translations* (2025), provides details on the elaborate process of translating the questionnaire from the Global Flourishing Study into approximately 40 different languages.

His new textbook *The Faith Factor and Social Welfare: Rethinking Evidence, Practice, and Polity* (2026), examines evidence for the important role of religion and faith-based organizations in addressing social problems including drug/alcohol addiction, crime and delinquency, homelessness, offender rehabilitation, prison reform, and prisoner reentry. Johnson's newest book *The Death of Religion?: Nones, Others, and the Global Renaissance of Faith* (2026), provides an empirical as well as historical argument countering the claim that religion is in decline.

He is the project co-director (with Tyler J. VanderWeele) of the Global Flourishing Study (GFS) a five-year longitudinal data collection and research collaboration between researchers at Baylor University and Harvard University, in partnership with Gallup and the Center for Open Science (COS). This initiative includes data collection for approximately 200,000 participants from 22

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geographically and culturally diverse countries. The data from the study are an open access resource so researchers, journalists, policymakers, and educators worldwide. A GFS special collection of recent papers appears in the [Nature portfolio of journals](#).