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**“We may have  
different beliefs,  
different customs,  
but we can come  
together in support  
of each other and  
religious freedom.”**



## Fifth Religious Liberty Prayer Breakfast Hosted at North American Division

Some 110 faith and civic leaders gathered at the fifth Religious Freedom Prayer Breakfast, hosted by the North American Division and organized by the NAD Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, on January 18, 2024, recognizing both Religious Freedom Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Members of 13 denominations — including Adventist, Bahá’i, other Christian, Islam, Judaism, and Mormon — as well as state and county government representatives and others gathered for a keynote speaker, music selections, and prayers touching on peace, personal responsibility, religious freedom, and unity of spirit.

Orlan Johnson, NAD PARL director, shared that almost 80% of the world cannot “serve God [as] they see fit.” He also stressed that in a world marked by growing discord, love and kindness among people of different faiths are paramount.

Walter Kim, president of the

National Association of Evangelicals, gave the keynote address defining religious freedom, which he described as “labor[ing] for the common good, for the dignity of all created in God’s image while holding onto [their] own convictions of faith.”

In a poignant joint prayer, Craig Axler, rabbi for Temple Isaiah, and Amjad Chaudry, imam for Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, prayed for strength to stand against evil, courage to combat hate, and the ability to heal the broken world. “Because there is hope, teach us to be [stewards of] justice and kindness,” said Chaudry. “Because there is love, help us to be a beacon of light and compassion,” added Axler.

Attendee Teresa Cochran, outreach coordinator for the Baltimore Coordinating Council, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, reflected, “We may have different beliefs, different customs, but we can come together in support of each other and religious freedom.”

# Liberty Magazine Shares Religious Liberty Resources

The following list of books and media sites was published in and has been partially excerpted from Liberty Magazine. Additionally, a Bible study has been added.

## BOOKS

### Copy Culture War Casualty or Culture War Cure?

*Religious Liberty in a Polarized Age* (Eerdmans, 2023), by Thomas C. Berg

Many Americans believe that religious freedom rights are being used as a “sword rather than a shield” and must be legally constrained. What if religious liberty could help reduce polarization in America, providing a common language and shared framework for honoring the dignity of every person? First Amendment scholar and lawyer Thomas C. Berg shares insights into some of today’s religious freedom challenges, and focuses on the potential of religious liberty as a “cross-cutting” value that could help bridge political and cultural divisions.

### A Biblical Misreading

*The Ballot and the Bible: How Scripture Has Been Used and Abused in American Politics and Where We Go From Here* (Brazos Press, 2023), by Kaitlyn Schiess

As America braces for another election season, podcaster, scholar, and writer Kaitlyn Schiess has produced a brilliant primer on the use and misuse of Scrip-

ture within America’s political life.

She explores how the language, imagery, and authoritative power of Scripture have been co-opted for political ends. She traces the use of the Bible as a political prop — by both the political left and right through America’s history.

Schiess’ book provokes self-reflection, challenging passive acceptance of the ongoing misuse of Scripture by political leaders.

### An Uncomfortable Conversation Made Easier

*American Idolatry: How Christian Nationalism Betrays the Gospel and the Church* (Brazos Press, 2023), by Andrew L. Whitehead

Following the U.S. Capitol events on January 6, 2021, this book on Christian nationalism stands out. Andrew Whitehead, associate professor of sociology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, provides an easy-to-read overview of what drives this phenomenon and its danger, not just to American society, but to the Christian church as well. In an interview with *Liberty* magazine, Whitehead explained that “we claim we want to follow the way of Christ, but Christian nationalism ... hinders us from living our faith.”

### Divided Loyalties, Divided Churches

*The Spirit of Our Politics: Spiritual Formation and the Renova-*

**“If you only read one book on religious liberty in 2024, choose this one.”**  
*(Religious Liberty in a Polarized Age)*

*tion of Our Public Life* (Zondervan, 2024), by Michael Wear

Political sectarianism within the Christian church is the focus of political consultant/strategist Michael Wear’s book, which explores a disturbing reality in congregations across America. “There are two primary modes in which Christianity is regularly considered in our political life,” he writes. “It is either dismissed as irrelevant or co-opted into a tool to advance one policy or another.” The book traces how American Christianity — including pastors and congregations — has been caught up in the toxicity of America’s left-vs-right polarization.

### Ten Words and Endless Disagreement

*Agreeing to Disagree: How the Establishment Clause Protects Religious Diversity and Freedom*

- A new bill in New York would require some Chick-fil-A (CFA) locations to remain open on Sunday, founder Truett Cathy’s day of rest. The Rest Stop Restaurant Act would require all restaurants on the 570-mile New York State Thruway to be open every day. This would affect seven CFA locations. Currently, this law would violate the New York Constitution.
- Parents in Maryland are requesting to be notified before their pre-K and elementary children are presented with LGBTQ materials. Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox Christian, and other parents filed a lawsuit in mid-2023 against Montgomery County Board of Education, asking to be notified and given the opportunity for their children to opt out. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments on December 5, 2023, but no decision has been published.
- The Notre Dame Religious Liberty Clinic has filed an amicus brief in favor of religious liberty protections for the Yanaguana (San Antonio River), an indigenous sacred site in Texas. The City of San Antonio’s project to restore concrete retaining walls would destroy the spiritual ecology of the site by destroying trees and driving away cormorant aquatic birds.

# Religious Liberty Resources, *Continued from page 2*

*of Conscience* (Oxford University Press, 2023), by Nathan S. Chapman and Michael W. McConnell

Former Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals judge Michael McConnell and co-author Nathan S. Chapman trace the origins of the establishment clause. The authors provide an extraordinary overview of almost 250 years of American politics, jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy. They propose that the "establishment clause ... favors neither the secular nor the religious, but instead ... the nation's public life should reflect the type and degree of religiosity of the people themselves ... shaped as little as possible by government."

## A Complicated Relationship

*The Godless Crusade* (Cambridge University Press, 2023), by Tobias Cremer

Is religion a fuel for, or a barrier against, the type of right-wing populist politics that's on the rise with in many western democracies? Oxford academic Tobias Cremer has broken new ground with his research into the political and religious dynamics of the far-right-wing movements that are sweeping some of the world's historically liberal nations. Cremer interviewed 116 populist leaders, key policymakers, and faith leaders from France, the United States and Germany, as well as numerous faith leaders on this global trend.

## MEDIA

### Supreme Court Analysis and More

*Respecting Religion Podcast*

The Respecting Religion podcast, now in its fifth season, is essential listening for anyone interested in church-state law. It provides in-depth analysis on religious liberty issues in both culture and the courts, with a special focus on the U.S. Supreme Court. The co-hosts are attorneys Amanda Tyler, executive director of Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC), and Holly Hollman, general counsel for the BJC. This weekly podcast tackles topics such as state funding for religious schools, laws around Sabbath accommodation in the workplace, and Christian nationalism.

### Civic Engagement Minus Partisanship

*Church Politics Podcast*

The Church Politics podcast is focused on encouraging faithful civic and political engagement without knee-jerk partisanship. The podcast is an extension of the work of the AND Campaign, an organization whose mission is to "educate and organize Christians for civic and cultural engagement," resulting in a "more just and compassionate politics and a healthier political culture." Pastors Justin Gibboney and Chris Butler, both AND Campaign leaders, are the hosts. Each episode models what reasonable, respectful conversation on challenging is-

**"Are you allowing your faith to shape your politics, or is your politics starting to shape your faith?"**

*(Faith and Politics TV Program)*

sues of public policy should look like.

### A Political Talk Show Alternative

*Faith and Politics Television Program, Sundays, 6 p.m. EST*

Fast-paced, balanced, and current, Faith and Politics has a faithful following among those who want up-to-date religious freedom news and analysis without the usual add-ons of angry rhetoric or political agendas. The 30-minute weekly program is hosted by attorney and religious freedom advocate Orlan Johnson, who brings on a regular roster of guests to debate issues at the intersection of church, state, and politics—both nationally and internationally. See Hope TV, Channel 368 on Direct TV; or stream on Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Roku, and at [www.faithandpolitics.tv](http://www.faithandpolitics.tv).

### A One-stop Shop for Religion Law Updates

*Religion Clause Website*

The Religion Clause website ([religionclause.blogspot.com](http://religionclause.blogspot.com)) is a resource for those who want to stay ahead of the mainstream media on developments in First Amendment religion law. The website is maintained by Howard M. Friedman, professor of law emeritus at The University of Toledo College of Law, who strives to avoid any religious or political slant. His briefs on current cases, along with his compilations of interesting articles, provide a wealth of information for anyone interested in this area of the law.

## BIBLE STUDY

### InVerse Bible Study

<https://www.inversebible.org/rl>

InVerse is a Sabbath School Bible Study Guide focused on religious liberty for young adults, ages 18-35+. It includes prophetic interpretations from Daniel and Revelation as well as Jesus' ministry in the gospels; writings from Ellen White and A.T. Jones; and historical insights from European, American colonial, and Constitutional history, with references to such religious liberty pioneers as Roger Williams. Joe Reeves, pastor and assistant director of InVerse, is author and has been active in inter-faith religious liberty meetings. Physical copies may be ordered or downloaded online.

**Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**  
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## NEWS OF THE WORLD

# Violation of Religious Liberty Includes Persecution of Atheists

Atheists and religious skeptics can be executed in at least 13 nations: Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Libya, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

It is important to note that freedom *of* religion includes freedom *from* religion. Article 18 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

The U.N.'s human rights committee declared that this article "protects theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief." However, atheists continue to be persecuted and even executed in some parts of the world.

Atheist organizations in Europe have expressed concerns regarding issues of separation of church and state. These include administrative fees for leaving the church in Germany,

sermons organized by the Swedish parliament, the requirement of religious training to teach in government-funded schools in Ireland, and the fact that one-third of state-funded schools are faith-based in the United Kingdom.

Even in the United States, seven state constitutions include religious tests that could prevent atheists from holding public office. Fortunately, these have generally not been enforced since the early 1900s.

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