

# Speaker Resources

Speaker: George Clare

Link: [First Islamic State - Wikipedia](#)

Link: [Constitution-Medina](#)

## **Flourishing Libraries in Al Andalusia by MS Copilot:**

The period of Al-Andalus, which lasted from 711 to 1492, is often celebrated for its multiculturalism and tolerance. During this time, Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisted in the Iberian Peninsula, creating a unique and diverse culture. This era is sometimes referred to as the "Convivencia," meaning coexistence.

### **Key Aspects of Multiculturalism in Al-Andalus**

1. **Cultural Exchange:** There was a significant exchange of ideas, knowledge, and traditions among the three religious communities. This led to advancements in science, philosophy, medicine, and the arts.
2. **Religious Tolerance:** While there were periods of conflict and persecution, many historians agree that Al-Andalus was relatively tolerant compared to other regions at the time. Muslims, Christians, and Jews were able to practice their religions and contribute to society.
3. **Intellectual Flourishing:** The libraries and educational institutions in cities like Cordoba, Granada, and Seville became centers of learning and intellectual activity. Scholars from different backgrounds worked together, translating and preserving ancient texts.
4. **Architectural and Artistic Achievements:** The architecture of Al-Andalus, including the Alhambra and the Great Mosque of Cordoba, reflects the blending of different cultural influences. The art and literature of the period also show a rich fusion of styles and themes.

### **Historical Perspectives**

While the idea of a perfectly harmonious coexistence is sometimes romanticized, the reality was more complex. There were instances of discrimination and conflict, but the overall atmosphere of cultural and intellectual exchange left a lasting legacy.

Link: [Libraries of the Muslim World \(859-2000\) - Muslim Heritage](#)

Link: [Bing Videos](#) (Cordoba Mosque/Cathedral)

## **The Great Library of Cordoba**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Hakam\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Hakam_II)

Al-Hakam II, the Caliph of Cordoba in Al-Andalus (Moorish Iberia), was fond of books and learning, and amassed a vast library that may possibly have contained over 400,000 books, though this number cannot be substantiated, and may well be far greater than what was actually held in the library. During his reign a massive translation effort was undertaken, and many books were translated from Latin and Greek into Arabic. For this project he formed a joint committee of Arab Muslims and Iberian Mozarab Christians.<sup>1</sup> The catalogue of the royal library "alone consisted of forty-four volumes. Under Al-Haim II (961-976) this library was reported to have given employment to over 500 people.... Elsewhere at Moslem Spain there was a total of seventy libraries in the 10th century, several in Toledo. In addition to the royal library, these included libraries in universities in Cordoba, Seville, Malaga, and Granada, among others, and in numerous mosques. Private libraries flourished in Moslem Spain, and it was said that Cordoba was the greatest book market in the western world in the 10th century" (Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World* 4th ed [1999], 81). Al-Hakam II (al-Ḥakam II ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III; (January 13, 915 – October 16, 976) was the second Caliph of Córdoba, in Al-Andalus and son of Abd-ar-Rahman III (al-Nasir) and Murjan. He ruled from 961 to 976. Early rule Al-Hakam II succeeded to the Caliphate after the death of his father Abd-ar-Rahman III in 961. He secured peace with the Catholic kingdoms of northern Iberia, and made use of the stability to develop agriculture through the construction of irrigation works. Economic development was also encouraged through the widening of streets and the building of markets. Patron of knowledge Hakam himself was very well versed in numerous sciences. He would have books purchased from Damascus, Baghdad, Constantinople, Cairo, Mecca, Medina, Kufa, and Basra. His status as a patron of knowledge brought him fame across the Muslim world to the point that even books written in Persia, which was under Abbasid control, were dedicated to him. During his reign, a massive translation effort was undertaken, and many books were translated from Latin and Greek into Arabic. He formed a joint committee of Muladi Muslims and Mozarab Catholics for this task.<sup>[1]</sup> His personal library was of enormous proportions. Some accounts speak of him having more than 600,000 books. However, Hitchcock (2014: 91-92) argues that any number in excess of 600 is "inconceivable."<sup>[2]</sup> The catalogue of library books itself was claimed to be 44 volumes long. According to Hitchcock (ibid.), this may be because "volume" and "page" were confused. Of special importance to Al-Hakam was history, and he himself wrote a history of al-Andalus.<sup>[1]</sup> Following his death, Hajib Almanzor<sup>2</sup> had all "ancient science" books destroyed.<sup>[3]</sup> The mathematician Lubna of Córdoba was employed as Al-Hakam's private secretary. She was said to be "thoroughly versed in the exact sciences; her talents were equal to the solution of the most complex geometrical and algebraic problems."<sup>[4]</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Mozarabs were Iberian Christians who lived under Moorish rule in Al-Andalus. Their descendants remained unconverted to Islam, but did however adopt elements of Arabic language and culture. They were mostly Roman Catholics of the Visigothic or Mozarabic Rite. <sup>2</sup>Abu Aamir Muhammad bin Abdullah ibn Abi Aamir, al-Hajib al-Mansur (c. 938 – August 8, 1002), better known as Almanzor, was the de ruler of Muslim Iberia (al-Andalus) in the late 10th to early 11th centuries. (see below) The famous physician, scientist, and surgeon Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi (Abulcasis) was also active in Al-Hakam's court during his reign. Construction projects His building works included an expansion of the main mosque of Córdoba (962–966), the Mezquita, and the

## **Spread of Islam into Northern Africa (From Britannica on-line)**

Islam spread from the Middle East to take hold across North Africa during the second half of the 7th century CE when the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) (661-750 CE) of Damascus conquered that area by military force. From there, it spread via Islamized [Berbers](#) (who had been variously coerced or enticed to convert) in the 8th century CE along the trade routes which crisscrossed West Africa, moving from the east coast into the interior of central Africa, finally reaching Lake Chad. Meanwhile, the religion also spread down through [Egypt](#) and swung westwards through the Sudan region below

the Sahara Desert. A third wave brought the religion to Africa's eastern shores, the Horn of Africa and the Swahili Coast, directly from [Arabia](#) and the Persian Gulf.

Once the religion had reached the savannah region which spreads across Africa below the Sahara Desert, it was adopted by ruling African elites, although very often indigenous beliefs and rituals continued to be practised or were even blended with the new religion. As Muslim traders penetrated deeper into Africa so the religion spread from one [empire](#) to another, taking hold first at Gao in 985 CE and then within the [Ghana Empire](#) (6th-13th century CE) from the late 10th century CE. From there, the religion spread eastwards to the [Mali Empire](#) (1240-1645 CE) and the [Songhai Empire](#) (c. 1460 - c. 1591 CE). With the adoption of Islam by the rulers of the [Kingdom of Kanem](#) (c. 900 - c. 1390 CE) between the 11th and 13th century CE and [Hausaland](#) from the late 14th century CE, the religion's encirclement of Africa below the Sahara Desert was complete.

Link: [History of the Jews in Turkey - Wikipedia](#)

Link: [African Muslims in Early America | National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

Link: [Letter To Baghdadi | PDF | Philosophy | Religion & Spirituality](#)

## Crosscurrents Model

### Why Crosscurrents?

"It seems to me that if there is an avenue that's going to work, it has to be that we all swallow hard and again start talking to people with whom we really don't agree, and maybe think we don't respect, to see if there is common ground. We need, as a country and as individuals in communities, to take the really difficult step of figuring out how to start having those conversations."

Benjamin Ginsberg, has practiced election law for 38 years, representing Republican candidates, elected officials, and party committees. He is co-chair of the Election Officials Legal Defense Network, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution and a lecturer at Stanford Law School, and a panel discussant at Freedom House

### Origins

- Idea from members of Liberal Men of the Low Country
- Not easy to start
- "Two of us with left-of-center views (Richard and Roger) invited fellow citizens with right-of-center views (Rick and John) to join us in conversations on critical issues...We opted at the start to examine gun-associated deaths..."
- A Pancake House July 10, 2019
- An agreement on background checks combined with licensing, improved "red flag" database, and a ban on high capacity magazines.

## Outcome

- Editor’s Note from the Bluffton Sun
- “This opinion piece is a bit different from anything we have published before. We found it intriguing that the four citizen authors of differing ideologies met numerous times to discuss and eventually agree upon a ‘middle ground’ stance on the hot button issue of gun violence.
- We have long believed that civil discourse among those with divergent views is not only possible, but necessary, in finding solutions for social issues. This article is evidence that such discussion and action have good potential for success.”

## Key Elements of the Beta Model “ Its Structure”

- Recruit diverse political perspectives—Liberals, conservatives, and in-betweens
- Add age, sex, and race diversity as feasible
- Participants agree to ongoing meetings
- A moderator is chosen to act as a “jury foreman”
- Prerequisites to participate must be met
- Ground Rules of behavior are agreed to
- Meeting places—in person, zoom 2x/month
- Using criteria, a topic for discussion is selected
- Dialogue and Deliberation take place
- Publication of results

## Key Elements of the Beta Model “Its Implementation”

- Collect the facts
- Discuss and learn more about the problem
- Prioritize the most important facts
- Develop possible solutions
- Agree on a recommended solution(s)
- Write up the agreement
- Publish the results in local newspapers
- It’s still a work in progress

## Selected Headlines

- Yes, we can agree on guns. Two liberals, two conservatives, and a pancake house...
  - November 21, 2019
  - The Island Packet
- Consensus supports censuring, not removal, of President
  - Feb 4, 2020
  - Bluffton Sun
- Yes, we can agree...four liberals, four conservatives answer the central question in health care
  - Medium.com
  - June 2, 2020
- Principles for improved health care outlined by diverse group
  - September 1, 2020
  - Bluffton Sun
- Liberals, conservatives discuss, agree on police reform
  - Bluffton Sun
  - January 20, 2021

## Key Elements of the Model “Structure”

### Prerequisites

- Curiosity about different topics
- Willingness and interest in learning from others
- Tolerance for frustration with messy process,
- Capacity to hear provocative statements without getting angry and overly upset

## Challenges

- It’s not easy or always fun.
- We need to find ways to strengthen members’ capacity to tolerate frustrations and their motivation to reach agreements on each topic. Awards? Pledges? Recognition?
- Finding ways to administer and sustainably manage the group.
- Make the model replicable and extend it beyond Beaufort/Aiken County areas

## Case Studies/Greg Blackburn

### ▪ US Healthcare

- Based on comparison of costs, coverage, and outcomes for US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Japan
- US is more expensive, more variable in coverage and outcomes
- Something like Obamacare 2.0 with HC exchanges could work with larger pool of subscribers; greater access/competition by insurers across state lines; standardized administration
- Unions and companies with "Cadillac Policies" will oppose it
- Goal should be evolution to at least a "Chevrolet Policy" level for all

## A Conservative's View of the Crosscurrents Dialogue Method

- We are all Americans, we are very closely divided – we do need to talk
- We do best when we talk about a bounded issue and seek policy solutions to make it BETTER
- To propose something useful, we have to do some research – and there are reputable conservative based sources to draw upon as well as liberal
- We need to realize that there are major differences in knowledge, assumptions, values, and experience among us – agreement is not likely in whole or even part on every issue

## The Case for Democracy

"When big things are at stake, the danger of error is great. Therefore, many should discuss and clarify the matter together so the correct way may be found."

- Shotoku Taishi, first Buddhist emperor, **604 AD**

## Key Elements of the Model "Structure"

### Ground Rules:

- Don't dominate the discussion
- Disagree respectfully
- Share reliable information sources
- Seek to find common ground
- Do not attempt to discuss provocative differences of opinion using email

## TEACHING RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Crosscurrents, December 2024

The question of whether religion should be taught in public schools is prominent again due to recent government activity. In Louisiana, until a recent judicial ruling, the Ten Commandments were to be posted in every classroom starting in 2025. In Oklahoma, the superintendent of public instruction has mandated that all teachers teach the Bible. In Texas, the Board of Education recently approved a Bible-infused curriculum. All three efforts face continuing legal challenges or are being threatened with legal action. The subject is rich in controversy.

On the one hand, it is an outgrowth of a perceived decline in moral values. On the other hand, it inspires fear about lack of separation of church and state. It also stirs interpretive debate about the role of Christianity in American history and culture. Crosscurrents entered into this controversy to see if liberals and conservatives can come to an agreement about the teaching of religion in K-12 public schools.

Crosscurrents is a group of twelve individuals with a full range of liberal to conservative political perspectives. We seek to find common ground through dialogue and reach agreement on public policy choices, and our goal is to be a model of productive public discourse on difficult public issues. We have reached agreements more than a dozen times over the past three years on a wide variety of topics such as health care, election reform, and immigration.

On the topic of the teaching of religion in public schools, we came to two major agreements. First, we agree that students should be informed with a broad overview of religions and the absence thereof, but that religions should not be promoted to students. Second, we agree that schools have a responsibility to foster basic ethical values in students so that they can function in society with a foundational level of respect and decency. We see teaching a universal moral principle (known by many as the Golden Rule), which states that we should treat others the way we want to be treated, as a practical way to achieve this goal.

Our youth needs a basic understanding of major religions so that they can navigate our society as adults, in the same way they need to acquire other social and occupational tools for engagement. We acknowledge that religions have had profound influence on United States history and culture, with the Christian faith being dominant. We agree that this influence, both positive and negative, should be taught to older students. However, the exact content of this instruction should be left to education and history experts, as there is much room for varied interpretation of the nature of this influence.

Critically, the content should be taught in a way that does not promote religion to students, nor induce them to practice any particular religion. The United States is home to countless religious beliefs. No lessons about religious texts or figures could be devised that would be suitable for every one of these beliefs. Furthermore, many parents believe their children should be taught about religion only according to the family's values. Finally, teachers are not trained to educate in theological matters.

We endorse the wisdom of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which decrees that government should neither promote religion nor interfere with the free exercise thereof. For these reasons, Crosscurrents does not support the governmental efforts in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, which appear to elevate the Christian tradition to a degree that we consider to be promoting that religion.

Many factors have motivated the promotion of religion, and particularly of Christianity, in public schools, and Crosscurrents members recognize that a perceived decline in moral and ethical values is one such factor. Many believe that both our youth and society at large exhibit this decline, exacerbated by our country's increasingly polarized views and aggressive behaviors. Therefore, we agree that teaching a universal moral principle would be of great benefit to K-12 students.

This endeavor will be challenged, because values are inherently very personal. However, we offer up this universal moral principle as behavioral guidance that is advocated by most religions and which can be taught with age-appropriate applications absent religious or political bias. We agree that reminders to treat each other with respect, empathy, and civility can be useful for adults as well. This universal moral principle, more broadly extended and embedded in our civic lives, could contribute to more domestic tranquility and meaningful, cooperative action in our polarized nation. Thus, we believe that such instruction for children would be helpful as they learn to navigate society.

Crosscurrents demonstrated that conservatives and liberals can come to agreements about teaching religion in K-12 public schools. While implementation would invariably come with thorny details, we believe that these agreements form a viable framework on how religion and moral values should be incorporated into K-12 education.