Within the Adventist Church, the most asked question by church members and leaders alike regarding Muslim evangelism is whether or not the Qur’an should be used when witnessing to Muslims. This is a classic issue where theology and mission seem to cross paths and where there is the need to understand the issues at both levels. There are three approaches that are being taken concerning the use of the Qur’an.

1. Some say Christians cannot use the Qur’an as it is not the Word of God and because it contradicts the Bible.
2. Some say that the Qur’an can be used since God revealed it.
3. Some say that the Bible is the only Scripture and they realize that the Qur’an does have theological differences with the Bible, but since the Qur’an is the Holy Scriptures for Muslims, then Christian witnesses need to begin from where they are.

This third approach emphasizes the missional aspect of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement. Since Adventists have a mission to reach all people groups or nations or all religions, the Adventist witness should be willing to use everything that already exists in their tradition for building bridges of understanding and as analogies to the truth. I believe that God has already left footprints of his truth in every culture, religion, or faith system. It is therefore our responsibility to see where God has already placed those footprints of his truth and unravel them and build bridges of understanding. This approach will also bear the weight of truth later.

For Muslims, the Qur’an is not just a tradition, but is seen as the very Word of God and is the highest authority for Muslims. Christians believe in the principle of Sola Scriptura so do not consider any other scriptures except the Bible to be the Word of God. However, Christian witnesses who think missiologically are willing to use what is already in other people’s traditions even though it does not have the same relevance or meaning for
them and provided it can be used to move people towards Christ. Therefore, if Muslims have a high regard for the Qur’an, there is a very real possibility that Christian witnesses can share gospel principles with Muslims much easier when they begin in their holy book to find footprints of truth and analogies of truths before leading them to their book—the Bible.

I believe there are at least seven reasons why Christian witnesses can use the Qur’an.

1. It is the highest authority for Muslims.
2. No matter how much the Bible is quoted, many Muslims (at least initially) will not accept answers from the Bible.
3. Many Muslims assert that “the Bible has been corrupted by the Christians.”
4. Christian witnesses must start from where they are. God’s people must have a humble approach of patiently working with Muslims while keeping in mind that it is the missionary who has to learn the traditions and cultures and ways of the people she or he is reaching. When Jesus wanted to reach human beings, he had to take the first step of humbling himself to our level and learning our human culture and language.
5. Jesus and Paul also give us the example of using what was in their culture and writings when speaking and witnessing to other people.
7. The Qur’an is probably one of the best tools for effectively sharing with our Muslim friends, especially at the early stages.

I am not suggesting that using the Qur’an is the only way of sharing with Muslims, but having used it over and over again, I believe it is a very positive way of interacting with our Muslim friends. There may be others who are not willing to use the Qur’an in reaching out to Muslims. I would not argue with them but would support their efforts just as I would hope that they will also support what I am attempting to do. We are all trying to reach Muslims through various methods that may be very different. I not only support them but consider them part of the Adventist Muslim Relations team.

**Qur’an—The Highest Authority for Muslims**

As stated earlier, one of the main reason we use the Qur’an is, because in Islam it is the highest authority for Muslims, and is considered as the very Word of God. Every human being has someone whom he or she highly respects and will bow down to his or her authority. It may be a father or mother or grandfather or another person in their relationship. However, in the matters of spiritual life, for a Muslim, the Qur’an has
greater authority than any human opinion as it is considered as the very Word of God. Therefore in our communication with our Muslim friends, we cannot put down either the Prophet (of Islam) or the religion of Islam nor the Holy Book of Islam (the Qur’an), although we have to be very careful of syncretism. For us, the Qur’an may not hold the same authority but that does not give us the right to put down or criticise.

The very first contact that I was able to reach with the love of God was possible when, unlike previous times, instead of avoiding any mention of the Qur’an, I was able to use the Qur’an as the main source of our discussion. For a few months I shared analogies of truth from the Qur’an itself. In an unobtrusive and non-judgmental way, I was able to bring out the biblically relevant themes from the Qur’an. Just as Christians in their Bible studies like to use the Bible as the main source for their references, in the initial contacts with Muslims I began by laying down a foundation with similar biblical themes from the Qur’an as the initial source. This not only removed the barriers between us but also gave me greater credibility in their eyes. After a while we were able to transition to the Bible because of the interest that had been awakened in our Muslim friends.

**Allegations Against Christianity**

Muslims make some serious allegations against Christianity. These allegations can be presented in three main categories: (1) the Bible is corrupted, (2) Jesus is not God, and (3) the Trinity is wrong.

Most Christians, in trying to answer these questions turn to the Bible to respond to their Muslim friends. They do that mainly because they do not know what the Qur’an says and also because their theological training did not include much information on how to interact with Islam. Though the Bible truly has answers to life’s questions, yet for a Muslim, an answer from the Qur’an would be more relevant in initial conversations.

The advantage of knowing what the Qur’an says in responding to some of these major allegations is very important because the irony is that these allegations can be adequately answered by using the Qur’an. Nick Chatterth encourages us by saying, “Some Muslims have significant doctrinal questions about Christianity. As you get ready to address them, you may be glad to know that it is easier than you think” (2011:60). Concerning the allegation that the Bible is corrupted, John Gilchrist argues that “the arguments produced to disprove the integrity of the Bible are often extremely weak and unconvincing” (2002:17). The reason why most Adventists do not turn to the Qur’an is because they believe that the Qur’an must be very opposed to Jesus or must be very negative towards the Bible. However, the Qur’an actually is positive towards both Jesus and the Bible.
William Saal in presenting this concept states, “The Qur’an does not regard the Bible as a dead book. Sometimes the Qur’an appeals to the Torah and Gospel as an authority for life and doctrine” (1993:88). What the Qur’an does do is to accuse some of the People of Book (the readers of the Bible) for their misinterpretation of it and for saying things about Jesus that are not correct. In the 7th century there were all kinds of factions among the Christians in the region where Islam arose with all types of heretical teachings. In Surah 3.110 it states, “If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.” (Surah Al-Imran 3.110).

Saal states that a “detailed study of the Qur’an suggests that some Jews are accused of deliberately misreading the texts or distorting the message. Even if that charge were true, it is still not the same thing as changing the written text itself” (1993:90).

So in order to answer these objections a Christian can turn to the Qur’an if he or she has done their homework ahead of time. As mentioned above, the Qur’an is positive towards the Bible but some Islamic teachers and scholars have raised this objection that “the Bible is corrupted.” However, they do not have enough evidence to support this accusation since the Qur’an itself says just the opposite. Notice possible ways of dealing with this charge.

First, one of the five fundamental Muslim beliefs is a belief in the Holy Books, which include the Torah, Zabur, Injil (the Bible), and the Qur’an. So a Muslim believer cannot and should not deny the authenticity of the Bible considering that belief in all the Holy Books is one of the beliefs of Islam. Gilchrist believes that “Muslims do not believe that the Bible has been changed because they have discovered adequate evidences that it has but because they have to disprove its authenticity to maintain their conviction that the Qur’an is the Word of God” (2002:17).

Second, the Qur’an does not support the view that the Bible is corrupted, though some Muslim scholars assert that the Qur’an was revealed because the People of the Book had changed their Scriptures. Carl Medearis in arguing against this allegation states, “Many Muslims consider the Bible to be a holy book, but they are reluctant to read it because they think the Qur’an says that early Christians and Jews changed the original wording. However, this is one example of how many Muslims are not very knowledgeable about the Qur’an. It does not say the Bible has been changed, though it has become commonplace to believe it has been changed anyway” (Medearis 2008:69).

Third, there is another view that believes the Qur’an annuls the Bible. Saal presents this view as follows: “As the Injil (Gospel) abrogated the Tawrat (Torah) of Moses, so the Qur’an abrogated the Injil. Abrogation
means declaring it null, void, or unnecessary. Therefore, even if genuine copies of the former books exist, there is no need for Muslims to read them” (1993:85).

Another important reason Muslims give for their assertion that the Bible was changed is that “if the Scriptures had not been corrupted, then they would still contain prophecies regarding his [Mohammad’s] coming” (Gabriel 2004:224).

Therefore, when Christian witnesses meet Muslims who make these types of charges it is almost impossible to adequately answer them by using the Bible since their main allegation is that the Bible has been corrupted. If we understand this kind of challenge in light of Paul’s initial presentation to the Athenians on Mars Hill then we will understand how to deal with this situation. In Acts 17, Paul was not necessarily happy with what he saw in Athens and he was disturbed to see their idolatry. However he did two things. First, he did not begin with the differences but with the similarities. Second, he used what was already in their culture and tradition in order to explain about the one true God. Though he was disturbed by their idolatry, he did not attack it, but looked for a positive side, by stating that “I see that you are very spiritual people.” Though he would have loved to talk about the Bible and the God of the Bible, his initial conversation began by using the unknown God in their tradition that he observed rather than beginning by quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures that they did not believe in.

I believe that the objections listed above can be answered by using the Qur’an itself since the Qur’an views the Bible as among the authentic Holy Books that were still valid when the Qur’an was revealed. Jacques Jomier in dealing with this matter makes the same point by stating that “the Qur’an speaks very highly of the earlier Scriptures that were transmitted by the messengers of God. It is a duty for the Muslim to believe in those Scriptures and in those messengers of God” (2002:19).

In this article I will focus on dealing with the objection that the Bible is corrupted. If we want to study the Bible with our Muslim friends and show the beautiful truth about who Jesus is, or who God is, they need to be convinced that the Bible can be trusted. Therefore, I will deal with this objection in order to demonstrate how one can use the Qur’an to positively present even the biblical message. The other two objections will not be dealt with in this article, but will be the subject of a later article.

Is the Bible Given by God?

Let us begin by asking the question, Was the Torah and Injil (the Bible) given by God? The Qur’an clearly states that the revelation of God includes that which has come down through the Qur’an and also the Scrip-
tures that came before it. “It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)” (Surah Al-Imran 3:3).

In Surah 5:44 it says that God gave the Torah to Moses (see also Surah 3:3; 45:16; 40:53; 2:41). It offers guidance and light, a standard. From this verse it becomes clear that God sent the Torah and more specifically the Old Testament. “It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah’s will, by the rabbis and the doctors of law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah’s book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers” (Surah Maidah 5:44).

The Qur’an also confirms that the Zabur (Psalms) was given by God to David (Surah 4:163; 17:55) and it is “a blessed book sent down to him” (Surah 38:29). Because David was one of the Abraham’s rightly guided descendants (Surah 6:84) therefore God gave him the Scripture, wisdom, and prophecy. Even the Muslim commentator, Yusuf Ali, writes, “David was given the Zabur, the Psalter or Psalms, intended (then) to be sung for the worship of Allah and the celebration of Allah’s praise” (1991:689). “And it is your Lord that knoweth best all beings that are in the heavens and on earth: We did bestow on some prophets more (and other) gifts than on others: and We gave to David (the gift of) the Psalms” (Surat Al-Isra 17:55).

The Qur’an also says that after God gave the Old Testament, he also revealed the gospel or the New Testament. In Surah 5:46 it says that God sent the gospel through Jesus and it was not only guidance and light, but it also confirms the Law (the Torah, the Scriptures that came before it). “And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah” (Surah Maidah 5:46).

In Surah 2.4 the Qur’an appeals to the believers (Muslims) to believe in the revelation sent to them (Muslims) and the revelation sent before their time. “And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:4).

Also in Surah 4:136 it says, “O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and
the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray” (Surah Al-Nisah 4:136).

The Qur'an is not asserting that the qur’anic revelation has come because the Bible was corrupted. However, now that the Qur’an has come, Muslims must believe in the Qur’an and the previous Scriptures as well. Therefore, “encourage Muslims to read the Bible” (Saal 1993:31).

The Qur’an Confirms the Bible

The Qur’an also points out that God sent the Qur’an to confirm the Scriptures that came before it which include the Torah, the Zabur, and the Injil. Surah 3:3 states, “It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)” (Surah Al-Imran 3:3).

This verse is clear that the Qur’an has not come because the Bible was corrupted or was invalid, but that “the Qur’an, from the Muslim standpoint, itself confirms the earlier Scriptures” (Jomier 2002:17).

The Qur’an and God—Guardians of the Bible:

God’s Word Cannot be Changed

In Surah 5:48 it says that God sent the Prophet of Islam the Scripture to confirm earlier Scripture and to give him the task of guarding it. “To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute” (Surah Maidah 5:48).

This verse states that not only has the Qur’an come to confirm the Bible (or the earlier Scriptures) but that Muslims believers were to guard the previous Scriptures (the Bible). Muslims should not make the claim that the Bible has been changed or been corrupted since they were charged with protecting and guarding it.

It is also important to note that in all these qur’anic verses it never states that the Bible was corrupted and neither does it say that the Qur’an has replaced the Bible. What it does say is that the Qur’an has come to confirm and guard the Bible.
Since the Bible, according to the Qur’an, is the Word of God, then more than anybody else, God himself must guard his own Word. In Surah 6:34 it says that no one can change God’s Word. “Rejected were the messengers before thee: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid did reach them: there is none that can alter the words (and decrees) of Allah. Already hast thou received some account of those messengers” (Surah Al-Anam 6:34).

Also in Surah 10:64 it states that there cannot be any change in the words of Allah. “For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. No change is there in the words of Allah. That is what is the great attainment” (Surah Yunus 10:64).

The Qur’an is clear that even if someone wanted to change the Words of God, they could not do that. “The word of thy Lord doth find its fulfilment in truth and in justice: None can change His words: for He is the one who heareth and knoweth all” (Surah Al-Anam 6:115).

When the followers of the Qur’an bring an allegation that the Bible is corrupted, it is surely their view but not a qur’anic view.

Is the Bible Invalid Since the Qur’an Was Revealed?

The Qur’an supports the idea that even after the Qur’an was given the Bible remained a valid revelation and is to be used as the authentic Word of God. Neither does the Qur’an say to the People of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) that they should stop reading the Old and New Testament and begin reading the Qur’an. Rather in Surah 5:47 it states that the Christians must judge by what God revealed to them in the Gospel. “Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel” (Surah Maidah 5:47).

If the Qur’an had come to replace the Bible then the Qur’an would have never said this nor would it have allowed the People of the Book to “judge by what God revealed to them” if that Word of Allah had already been corrupted. Steven Masood, in referring to this verse, argues that “those who raise the accusation of corruption in the Bible ignore the many translations of it which already existed long before the rise of Islam; the Septuagint in Egypt, the Syriac and the Vulgate. If discrepancies in these had affected the divine teaching of the Scriptures, the prophet of Islam, being inspired by God (as Muslims believe) would surely never have commended them as he did, nor enjoined their observance on the Jews and Christians in these words” (2001:71).

Even when there were conflicts among Muslims and Jews, Muslims still considered the earlier Scriptures to be valid. “In the controversy in
Mecca between Muslims and Jews, the question of the Sacred Scriptures played a considerable part. The Muslims continued to proclaim their faith in the earlier messengers of God in the revealed Books (Torah, Psalms, Injil)” (Jomier 2002:23).

**What Revelations Are the People of the Book Encouraged to Study?**

It is mentioned in the Qur’an in Surah 5:68 in a message to the People of the Book that their faith if useless if they do not stand by what God has revealed to them in the Law and the Gospel and the revelation previously sent to them. “Say: ‘O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.’ It is the revelation that cometh to thee from thy Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow thou not over (these) people without Faith” (Surah Maidah 5:68).

In this passage the Qur’an reprimands the People of the Book for not trusting or standing on what has been revealed to them. The Qur’an is pointing not just to the Torah, Zabur, and the Injil, but to all the revelations that had come to them in previous times which included Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Major and Minor Prophets, and including the Book of Revelation.

“The Qur’an also condemns some Jews for not following the Torah, which is in their possession. In this case, the Qur’an apparently supposes that they have a correct text of the Scripture. Otherwise there would be no point in the accusation” (Jomier 2002:25). This accusation against the Jews is mentioned in Surah 2:44. “Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (To practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:44).

Commenting further on this same topic Jomier asks, “Why then would the Qur’an blame some Jews for not living in conformity to the text they read if the text was not regarded as correct?” (2002:27).

In addition in Surah 29:46 the Muslims are clearly warned that they should not argue in matters of spirituality with the People of the Book. “And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, ‘We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)” (Surah Al-Ankabut 29:46).

The interesting thing is that the Qur’an not only reprimands the Christians for not following the revelation given to them but even states that the
Muslims were to adhere to the previous message (the Bible’s Message). However in Surah 10:94 it goes even further than that and suggests that the Prophet (who has apparently received these new revelations contained in the Qur’an) should ask those who are reading the Holy Book sent before his time if he has doubts about what God has shown him. “If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt” (Surah Yunus 10:94).

This verse speaks specifically to the prophet himself. The Sahih International translation of the Qur’an translates this verse as saying, “So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters” (Surah Yunus 10:94).

This is a powerful argument for in this verse of the Qur’an God is counseling the prophet, when he has doubts or questions about the revelation which God has sent to him (the Qur’an), to turn to the People of the Book (previous Scriptures).

### Conclusion

In the above analysis we have seen the following points:

1. If the Bible was corrupted would God continue to validate it even after sending the Qur’an?
2. The Qur’an in no way denies the earlier revelations—rather the Qur’an confirms the previous Holy Books and says that it has been given the responsibility to actually guard Allah’s Word that was previously given.
3. The People of the Book who read the earlier Scriptures are actually reminded to follow those revelations or they will have no ground to stand upon, and they must judge by that which has been revealed to them.
4. We also noticed that the believers (Muslims) must believe the revelation sent to them and believe in the revelation that came before their time.
5. God would never say that the earlier revelation was corrupted or totally replaced by the Qur’an and then confirm the validity of the previous Scriptures within the Qur’an.
6. Muslim believers in general and the Prophet in particular are reminded that when they have doubts about something, they should go and ask the People of the Book who were reading the Book before the Qur’an came.

If this is how the Qur’an can help in our witness and sharing with Mus-
lims, why should we not use it in this way that has such a positive impact? When Christian witnesses portray the Qur’an in a negative way and when they are not willing to use it in order to help Muslims arrive at a better understanding of what the Qur’an says about the Bible they are depriving themselves of an excellent opportunity to use the highest authority within Islam to affirm the Bible as God’s Word that still has purpose and meaning for Muslims today. They are also missing out in using the Qur’an as a positive tool for sharing the truths that Muslims need to hear.

For those who are interested in pursuing an approach that uses the Qur’an for initially directing Muslims to better understand what the Qur’an says about the previous revelations (the Bible) see the resources listed in the Works Cited section below and in the Other Useful References list.

Works Cited


Other Useful References


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