

## Love, Compassion, Justice

-- Gemma d'Eustachio

Simply, corruption means a lack of integrity or honesty and the use of a position of trust for dishonest gain<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, corruption exists everywhere in our world, from the bullies on the playground who steal your lunch money, to much bigger issues such as the immoral system of trading diamonds known as “blood diamonds”. Everyone has witnessed corruption in some form, but few actually fight against it. This is why the people who do attempt to transform corruption into harmony shine all the more. Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were three such men. Through Jesus’ love, Muhammad’s compassion, and Moses’ justice, the corruption around them was transformed and minimized so that the societies in which they found themselves could live peacefully.

In the Gospels, Jesus states that everyone holds love and peace in their hearts, but many are unable to find that love because they feel it is unreachable. But they are wrong because peace is the ultimate goal and it is reachable<sup>2</sup>. Jesus uses this as his refrain all through his life, and thus transforms evil and corruption into love. Throughout his life, Jesus traveled to many people, spreading his peaceful wisdom and encouraging unconditional, self-sacrificing love and peace for all people. Once, Jesus came to a town and saw Joanna, the steward to Herod’s wife, being publicly shamed because she had taken a lover other than her husband. Instead of calling Joanna a prostitute, as the townspeople had labeled her, Jesus condemned the punishers and advised them to have empathy rather than harshness<sup>2</sup>. Jesus also preached that when the world ends, every person will be judged on their individual characters, and that people who treat the vulnerable kindly and with love will be greatly rewarded. Jesus was labeled throughout history

as the “son of God.” Rather than using this lofty title to boost himself and bedeck himself with even more power, Jesus instead used his power to spread love and peace to the people around him. Toward the end of his life thousands followed Jesus, and many even called him king. Instead of letting this power corrupt Jesus into a terrible man, Jesus used the power to give back to the people and to love them as they loved him. Jesus is said to have “given his life as a ransom for many,” which means that instead of only working towards personal gain, Jesus helped out those who were in need, and so metaphorically “sacrificed” his life towards helping other people. Jesus often met with society’s outcasts, such as the publicani, who were imperial tax collectors who extorted money from people. Jesus talked to the publicani, and tried to teach them the error of their ways, and to help them understand how corrupt and evil it was to take money from the people that need it most. In this way, Jesus attempted to drive out the corruption in people, which he said was his way of “healing the sick.”<sup>3</sup> Overall, Jesus used his influence on people to preach not about his power and closeness to God, but instead about how people need to look inside their hearts and find love, and use that to make peace and so overcome corruption.

Muhammad changed and conquered the corruption around him through his compassionate and steadfast ways. Muhammad learned his views of compassion at an early age when he was orphaned and sent to his kindly, but poor, uncle at the age of eight. It is because of his deprived upbringing that Muhammad can understand suffering, so he can feel compassion for the poor sufferings of others.<sup>4</sup> Muhammad lived in a very corrupt society in which certain people were valued over others simply based on their race or religion or gender. Muhammad saw and understood the corruption where one person can hold power over another based simply on the color of their skin. Muhammad had compassion for all people, no matter who they were, and he understood that people were going to have to show compassion for one another if they were

going to live peacefully together. So that there could be a peaceful society, Muhammad declared that there was no superiority or inferiority between the races<sup>5</sup>. Muhammad's views of compassion shine through in the religion of Islam, which, preached Muhammad, stated that the Islamic belief held that there was equality of all people regardless of their race. Muhammad felt that everyone was equal, and that "to you your way of life, and to me mine."<sup>5</sup> Muhammad proves that he is able to overcome corruption when he first arrives in Mecca. The great merchants of Mecca who held the majority of the power came to Muhammad and offered him many things including great power in Mecca. They feared that Muhammad's compassionate views threatened the corrupt power that they held in Mecca. But Muhammad realized two things. First, that accepting the offered power would only lead to his own corruption and that the people of Mecca would see no peace. Second, Muhammad saw the leaders of Mecca, and he saw their corrupt and evil ways, and he knew that by continuing his teachings, he could overcome the great merchants' power and turn this corruptness into peaceful coexistence. So Muhammad refused their offers, and thus conquered the corruption in Mecca. Muhammad and his followers were eventually forced to leave Mecca, but when Muhammad reached Medina (then called Yathrib) he found eight warring tribes, who had been fighting for several years. Muhammad used his compassion for all people to create peace among the tribes, and he created the Constitution of Medina, which united the tribes.<sup>4</sup> In these ways Muhammad used his compassionate nature to transform corruption in his society, such as racial superiority and violence, into peace.

Corruption, when fed with ultimate power needs a strong will to transform it into peace. Moses had such a will, and by having justice and treating everyone fairly, Moses eliminated corruption in his society. An example of this is, once, when Moses was traveling, he came upon a band of vulgar shepherds bothering six shepherdesses. Moses protected the shepherdesses

because he felt that it was the just thing to do and that only a coward could watch such a spectacle and do nothing<sup>6</sup>. Moses knew that only a corrupt society has inequality and discrimination where certain people can do terrible things to other people without repercussions. So Moses knew that a society that practiced justice and equality would be a peaceful, harmonious one. Slavery is a perfect example of corruption because the whole idea of it is to give one person absolute, and thus corrupt, power over another person. Moses saw this injustice of slavery being forced upon his people in Egypt, and so he overcame it by leading the slaves of Egypt through the Red Sea and away from slavery to freedom. After saving his people, Moses instructed them on the Ten Commandments, which was his ingenious way of thwarting future corruption in his society. The Ten Commandments were rules that established that there would always be morality and justice within the people. By having the Ten Commandments, Moses had insured that justice would always reign, so that corruption couldn't, which meant that the society would be at peace<sup>6</sup>. Through the salvation of his people, Moses transformed the corrupt society in which his people were slaves, into a peaceful community. Moses did this by using justice to eliminate the corrupt people who would hold absolute power over one another, and giving everyone the fair justice that they deserved so that there could be equality and peace within his society.

Everyone knows, "a diamond is forever." But not if you're dead. Unfortunately, this is the case in many countries, particularly in Africa, where the blood diamond trade continues, despite the United Nations' attempt to slow it. Blood diamonds, or conflict diamonds, are diamonds which not only were mined under harsh conditions, but the profits from the diamonds goes to funding rebel groups that aim at destroying the peace. One such rebel group is al Quaida, who is suspected to have used as much as \$10 million in diamonds to carry out their terrorist

activities, such as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks<sup>7</sup>. In 2000, the UN created the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, which regulates the trade of rough diamonds and certifies them. Because of the Kimberly Process, the UN says that less than one percent of diamonds are conflict diamonds. However, consumer advocates believe that more like 10-15% of the world diamond supply today is made up of conflict diamonds<sup>7</sup>. This corrupt system, in which traders can forge the paperwork needed to make their diamonds legitimate, ensures not only that violent rebel groups will be well funded, but also that diamond miners will continued to be underpaid and harshly treated. It is certainly a corrupt society that we live in if a woman is willing to wear blood on her finger, just so that she can be assured her husband will love her forever.

Jesus, Muhammad, and Moses, all teach us to overcome corruption and to use compassion to transform injustice into peace and love. Jesus states that everyone holds in themselves self-sacrificing love, but that many people have yet to find it. Well, let us come together and help people find this love by encouraging men who are buying their wives rings, celebrities who don diamond encrusted jewelry, and everyone else, to boycott jewelers who use conflict diamonds, and to ensure that the diamond you buy is not blood stained, so that it can shine all the more brightly. If we as a nation agree to stop buying conflict diamonds, then we, as a nation, will show how the love in our hearts can overcome the corruption of diamond trading, just as Jesus' love did. Jesus blazed the trail towards sympathy and love for everyone because, even when Jesus was being arrested, he showed love for everyone, not just himself. One of Jesus' apostles, Simon Peter, cut off the ear of one of Jesus' captors. Instead of thanking Simon Peter, Jesus rebuked him, and reminded him to have sympathy for everyone, no matter if they are friend or foe. Jesus then healed the man's ear, because he reminds us to love our friends and enemies, and not to simply think of ourselves alone<sup>3</sup>. By having love such as Jesus', we should

be able to not only think of our own pleasure at having a diamond ring, but also to think about the suffering that ring might have caused someone else, and so be able to put it back on the self. Muhammad also taught people to have compassion for one another. Muhammad believed that a person's character could be judged by their piety, not by their wealth<sup>5</sup>. The UN has had a lot of compassion already in setting up the Kimberly process, but they need to finish their work because the diamond trade is still very corrupt, with many conflict diamonds slipping through the cracks. Right now, the only thing required by the Kimberly process is that the diamond has a certificate, but a certificate is easily forged. The Kimberly Process needs to be tightened to ensure that no diamond slips through the cracks, and that every diamond is conflict free. The corrupt system of diamond trading extorts many citizens of African countries who mine the diamonds, and then the money from the diamonds is used to fund groups who go and violently attack, mutilate, and kill the very people who first mined the diamonds<sup>7</sup>. Muhammad showed considerable compassion to stop a war in Medina that had been going on for several years, so that the warring tribes could stop counting their dead and start living in peace<sup>4</sup>. The UN needs to reflect Muhammad's compassion and strengthen the Kimberly Process so that the diamond trade can be transformed from a corrupt system that funds the killing of innocent people, to one that shares the wealth and beauty of the diamond equally between miners, sellers, and buyers. Lastly, Moses taught us that a world full of justice is a world full of peace. For example, once when Moses saw a master brutally beating his slave, Moses killed the master and freed the slave. Moses saw that the slave had suffered enough, but felt that the slave master should feel pain for the pain that he had inflicted. Thus Moses turned the corruption of violence and slavery into justice<sup>6</sup>. This is what the UN needs to do when it comes to the blood diamond industry. Thus far traders of conflict diamonds have mostly gotten away unscathed, and are much richer for their

work. The UN should not only tighten up the Kimberly Process, but should also make the penalty for trading blood diamonds much harsher so that traders will be discouraged and justice will rule instead of corruption. As Corinna Gilfillan with Global Witness declares, "This is not just an issue for Africa. If the monitoring process for conflict diamonds was working, we wouldn't see smuggling of conflict diamonds in trading centers around the world, including the United States.<sup>8</sup>" Basically, her point is this: if the Kimberly process was working, then there wouldn't be a corrupt business of smuggling blood diamonds for evil gain. By using the teachings of Jesus, Muhammad, and Moses, we as a world could put an end to conflict diamonds, which means that we as a nation would have transformed a corrupt business into an honest and fair one.

In conclusion, through the love that Jesus has taught us to look for within ourselves, the compassion with which Muhammad would have us treat each other, and the justice that Moses feels every human has a right to, we can transform a society full of corruption and violence into one full of equality and peace. Though no one is perfect, we all can try to be the best we can be, which is to say, overcome corruption by recognizing its presence and thus eliminating it and putting peace and righteousness in its place. When the UN recognizes the fact that the blood diamond trade still exists, then they have a moral obligation to have love for the people of Africa who are suffering because of the rebel groups, and to show compassion towards them by offering justice to the dealers and putting them out of work. This is just one instance of corruption in our society, but it is a huge issue that is very easily transformed through love, compassion and justice. Because of the teachings of Jesus, Muhammad and Moses, our society is not filled with quite so many playground bullies who corrupt our society, but rather with good honest people who try to make our society a better, peaceful place.

## Bibliography

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