

Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad in the Fight Against Corruption

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The three prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were arguably the greatest leaders of the world in their respective times. Indeed, their lives and teachings have become the bases of three of the most influential religions in today's world. Yet, while the world reveres these men, it still occasionally forgets what they truly stood for. These three leaders were Prophets, and their mission was to deliver the messages of love and equality to their peoples. They were models of leadership, and went to the extremes of self-sacrifice to lead their peoples on the right paths. Through their actions and teachings, the Prophets showed that corruption, although beneficial for a few in the beginning, ultimately results in negative consequences for everyone, and that living peacefully and respectfully is the only way to obtain true satisfaction. One leader of the world who has forgotten the Prophets' teachings is Pakistan's President Musharraf, who claims to be a democratic ruler but in reality exhibits dictatorial qualities. In the end, while the lives of the Prophets were different, their goals were the same: to instill in the heart of every individual a brotherly love and respect, thereby ensuring justice and equality for the peoples of the world.

Moses worked to eliminate the corruption in the societies that he lived in by converting the avarice existing in people to feelings of remorse and regret, teaching people to lead virtuous and altruistic lives. The first example of Moses doing so is when he stood up for the rights of a slave under the rule of the Pharaoh of Egypt. To begin with, Moses was actually the adopted son of the Pharaoh's daughter. Given this position, Moses was able to observe the entire realm of Egypt from a safe and clean environment. However, one day when Moses was going through the kingdom, he came across an Egyptian overseer beating a slave. Impassioned by what he saw, Moses killed the overseer, saving the slave from any more torture. The significance of Moses'

action was not in the action itself, but in the fact that he chose to do it. While any normal person could have done what Moses did, the fact that Moses, a person in power who was protected from ever having to undergo torture, killed the overseer and so forfeited his position of power was a lesson—not everyone in power was corrupt, and there were those who didn't approve of the government's injustice. Thus, Moses' action, although not a revolution in itself, was the beginning of a revolution and a signal of hope for the future. Another example of Moses fighting corruption is when he, with God's aid, freed the Hebrew slaves of Egypt. Many years after his escape to the Sinai Peninsula, Moses went back to Egypt to free the slaves. Upon reaching Egypt, Moses told the Pharaoh that God wanted the Pharaoh to allow the slaves to have a feast in the wilderness. The Pharaoh claimed that he did not recognize Moses' God and refused to let the slaves have the feast. This resulted in God unleashing the Ten Plagues on Egypt, which killed many Egyptians but spared the lives of all the slaves. Eventually, to rid themselves of the plagues, the Egyptians let the slaves go. This event is important to note because it epitomizes the idea that one ought to treat others as one wants to be treated. The Egyptians, who were offered a chance to make up for their past sins when Moses asked them to allow the slaves to feast, declined the opportunity. The Ten Plagues were only a fair payback of the Egyptians' treatment of the slaves, and it was this event that replaced the Egyptians' sense of superiority with repentance and humility. The battle that Moses had begun by slaying an overseer culminated with the righteous power of God. A final example of Moses' dedication to fighting corruption is what he did after bringing the Ten Commandments to his people. After obtaining the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai, Moses returned to his people to find them engaged in adulterous activities. The actions of the people enraged God, who threatened to kill the people. However, while Moses was angry at his people as well, he still loved them and recognized that

killing them was not the correct solution, and so he told God that if God would kill the people then He would have to kill Moses as well.¹ This action not only won God's sympathy and spared the lives of Moses and his people: it taught the people that what they had done was wrong. When Moses offered his life to protect them in spite of the fact that they had sinned, the effect must have been to change any sinful thoughts in the people's minds to thoughts of guilt—Moses might have died because of their sinful actions. By replacing the people's emotions with guilt, Moses taught them to behave better in the future and so eliminated their corruptness. In this way, Moses recognized that not only do those in power sometimes behave wrongly: even the common person must be shown the correct path, and by transforming the avarice in people to realization of the truth, Moses was able to stop corruption on all levels.

After Moses came Jesus, whose passion in preaching equality for all worked to transform corruption into a sense of love for all. Jesus' first noteworthy action is his resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus was a beggar who spent his life outside the gate of a house belonging to a very rich man. While the rich man inside feasted daily inside of his house, he never once bothered to give Lazarus any food, despite the facts that there was a great surplus of food and that Lazarus was needy. After Lazarus' death, Jesus miraculously brought Lazarus back to life. He did so simply because Lazarus had led a poor but virtuous life whereas the rich man had lived a rich but greedy life, and so, after the rich man had died, it should only be fitting that Lazarus be allowed to live, as he deserved to live more. It was Jesus' love that prevented injustice from happening with Lazarus. In addition to using love to establish equality, Jesus preached a philosophy which itself discouraged corruption. The philosophy Jesus preached is basically what the religion of Christianity is built upon: those who do well are treated well, and those who act wickedly are

¹ Jewish Virtual Library. Moses. 2006. Jewish Virtual Library. 29 Dec. 2006
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/moses.html>>.

punished. This is characterized by the idea of Heaven vs. Hell, where those who act justly in life are sent to Heaven for a beautiful afterlife whereas those who act unjustly in life go to Hell for eternal punishment. By spreading this idea, Jesus worked to portray corruption as being not only unethical but also illogical: by behaving corruptly in this world, one may be able to obtain material pleasure, but it's not worth it to do so because in the afterlife one is guaranteed to suffer for eternity. A life of ill-gotten happiness does not outweigh an eternity of pain. Finally, Jesus worked against corruption not only among those in power but also, like Moses, among his own people. When Jesus was betrayed by one of his apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane and consequently arrested, another apostle cut off the ear of one of the guards taking Jesus. Jesus immediately healed the ear and then reprimanded the apostle for his action because using violence made the apostle no better than Jesus' enemies.² By showing love for everyone, Jesus inspired humility into the hearts of friends and foes alike: the guards would have felt guilt for harming a man who wished them no harm, and the apostles would have felt guilt for harming a man when they themselves wouldn't want to be harmed. Thus, by giving love to all, Jesus began the gradual process of erasing the line separating the oppressors and oppressed, so that they might eventually unite and respect each other. Indeed, it is only through this gradual process that world brotherhood and eternal justice can be obtained.

The final Prophet was Muhammad, whose sense of duty and ethics helped him to always act justly and keep his people from the negative effects of corruption. Before Muhammad became a Prophet, he was known by the Meccan society as a fair and trustworthy individual. The Kaaba, or Meccan religious building, had been destroyed in a flood, and after rebuilding it, the Meccan tribes were arguing over who should be allowed to replace the Black Stone—the

² Wikipedia.org. "Jesus." [Jesus - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus#Life_and_teachings.2C_as_told_in_the_Gospels). Wikipedia. 3 Jan. 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus#Life_and_teachings.2C_as_told_in_the_Gospels>.

Meccans' most sacred object—inside the Kaaba. The solution that the Meccans eventually came up with was to have the first person to have entered the holy area decide how to replace the stone. Coincidentally, the first person to have entered had been Muhammad, and his solution to the matter was to lay out his cloak, place the Stone on it, and allow leaders of the four major clans to each take one corner of the cloak and in this manner lift the Stone to its proper position. From this event, Muhammad learned to eliminate the desire to act corruptly, because he saw that there was always a more desirable, fair alternative—he portrayed corruption as being an ineffective solution to problems. Another example of Muhammad's moral uprightness is in how he treated the pagans who opposed Islam. In the year 622 CE, when the pagans were persecuting Muhammad and his new religion of Islam, Muhammad didn't forget the promises he had made to the pagans regarding their monetary deposits. Previous to 622, the pagans, knowing Muhammad's reputation as a trustworthy man, had trusted him with their savings. Even when the pagans were planning Muhammad's assassination and were forcing Muhammad and his followers to flee from Mecca for safety, Muhammad still had the morality to honor his promises—he left all of the deposits with his cousin Ali so that Ali could return the deposits to the pagans after Muhammad left. This event has the same significance of Jesus' admonition of his disciple in the Garden of Gethsemane: Muhammad's sense of virtue and honor stood the test of impending doom, teaching all that no matter what the situation, one must never forget to uphold those principles of brotherly love and equality by which one wants to one day see the whole world live by. Finally, Muhammad not only treated his enemies as equals when they had the power, but also when he himself had power. After having fled from Mecca, Muhammad established his own city-state in Medina, complete with its own constitution and political structure. An interesting aspect of Medina was that it was a place of religious tolerance—

Muhammad had made it so that both Muslims and non-Muslims would be allowed to live in Medina.³ By allowing people of different religions, who had originally opposed Muhammad's uprising, to live freely and equally in Medina, Muhammad showed the mark of a truly just leader. Even though he had the power to punish the non-Muslims, he chose instead to forgive and forget. This display of power restraint was a model for the rest of the world to follow, and an inspiration to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to fight not amongst each other, but against the great evils of greed and abuse of power that collectively make up corruption.

One region of the world that needs to be cured of corruption is the country of Pakistan, where the President Pervez Musharraf rules more authoritatively than democratically. Musharraf claimed the office of President in 1999, overthrowing the existing government via a military coup. By making deals with political parties to gain support, he got the 17th Amendment passed, which justified his military coup and position as both the President and head of the army. In this way, he made his unjust actions technically allowable, thus exculpating himself from having unjustifiably taken power. In addition, the way Musharraf has governed Pakistan thus far indicates that he doesn't have Pakistan's concerns as his first priority. He uses his control of the army to give army members benefits over the common people, practicing favoritism when he appoints officials to posts. The biggest example of corruption, however, was when Musharraf declared a state of emergency in 2007. In 2007, Musharraf was "re-elected" President, since the groups voting all came from the existing government which was composed largely of Musharraf supporters. However, before Musharraf could take office, the Pakistani Supreme Court had to decide whether Musharraf's re-election could even be allowed, as he had served since 1999 already, much too long for him to be allowed to have another term. Before the Court could reach

³ University of Southern California. "The Prophet of Islam - His Biography." USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts. University of Southern California/MSA. 6 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/prophet/profbio.html>>.

a decision, Musharraf declared a state of emergency, allowing him to suspend the Constitution and remove the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from office, thereby preventing the decision about his Presidency's constitutionality from being made. The result was that Musharraf obtained the title of President for yet another term.⁴ According to the Prophets, the best solution for transforming corruption is to treat others as one wishes to be treated, thereby teaching others to respect one. This idea could be applied to Pakistan by arranging a civil disobedience campaign in opposition to Musharraf's rule, much like Gandhi's revolution in India in opposition to British rule. By peacefully disobeying Musharraf's laws and by marching to openly express its desire for more democratic decision-making, the Pakistani public will succeed in showing Musharraf that in order to get the people to follow him, he must follow the people first. The final result will be either Musharraf's stepping down from power or else a massive turnover in governmental policy. In either case, power would return to the people and the injustice would be eliminated.

Thus, the teachings of the Prophets can be applied in any era to eliminate corruption and injustice. Indeed, their main principle of leadership, that a leader ought to treat his people as he wishes to be treated, holds true universally, because a true leader is one who can satisfy and work for his people, and not for himself. This idea resonates strongly with the current conflict in Pakistan, where President Musharraf's actions are in great contrast to his people's needs—his priorities as a leader are grossly misplaced. Ultimately, a leader is a civil servant, and as such, it is his role to maintain the peace, unity, and love of his people that encourage them to treat each other affectionately and equally, thereby dispelling the greed and desire for power which are the seeds of future corruption and injustice.

⁴ CNN. *Pakistan Under Martial Law*. 4 Nov. 2007. 11 Jan. 2008
<<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/11/03/pakistan.emergency/index.html>>.

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