CHAPTER - VI

ETHICS AND VALUES IN
CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

History of Christianity:

The historical accounts of Jesus Christ's life depict an astonishing stature. The historical records portray someone who stands out as one of the most remarkable figures in human history. They suggest that Jesus taught revolutionary principles such as loving others like ourselves, turning the other cheek to the person who strikes us and giving our lives on behalf of others. They indicate that his deeds were no less remarkable. The historical documents of his time tell of him healing the diseased, restoring sight to the blind, walking on water and even raising people from the dead. History records much about Jesus Christ.

History of Christianity is defined by Earl E. Cairns as:

“The interpreted record of the origin, progress and impact of Christianity upon human society, based upon organized data gathered by scientific method from archeological, documentary or living sources. It is the interpreted, organized story of the redemption of man and the earth.”

The sources of Christian history are reliable because the primary sources are mostly contemporary to the events those described. The

275 Earl E, Cairns, Christianity through the Centuries, p.40.
originators of these sources wrote basing on their own experiences, and on the information of eye witnesses. Many of these sources are made available to us by the tremendous advancements in archaeology. The history of Christianity is the story of the followers of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is a story of how they tried to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, how they organized themselves into the church as specially called out people, how they attempted to formulate what they believed in a system of doctrines, how they attempted to combat false teachings, how they suffered for the sake of the gospel and how they responded to persecution.\textsuperscript{276}

Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians:

“But when the time has come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law and to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full right of sons.”\textsuperscript{277}

Discovery about Jesus further explores the meaning of his name. His given name was Jesus. The word Christ comes from the Greek Khristos which means the “anointed.” Its origins go still further back to the Hebrew word Messiah. Historical documents indicate that for thousands of years before Jesus’ birth, many prophets had predicted that the “Messiah” would come to save God’s people. Jesus’ biographer’s state that on several occasions, he declared that he was God’s Messiah or the Christ. This includes a conversation he reportedly had with a woman from Samaria.

\textsuperscript{276} Hrangkhuma, F., \textit{An Introduction to Church History}, p.1.
\textsuperscript{277} Scofield, C.I., The Bible., Galatians, 4:4-5.
“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto them am He.”

So, Jesus’ biographers suggest that he was the one Messiah or the Christ, hence the name Jesus Christ.

**Birth of Jesus:**

About 2000 years ago God sent an angel to Israel, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. The angel told Mary that by God's power, she would conceive and bear a son. When Joseph learned that she was pregnant, an angel instructed him to marry her. Joseph took her to Bethlehem to register for a census. While there, Mary gave birth to Jesus. She laid him in a manger because there was no room at the inn. Shepherds visited Jesus in Bethlehem. Later, wise men brought gifts to Jesus. They told Herod the Great, a wicked king, that Jesus would rule Israel. So Herod sent soldiers to kill the children in Bethlehem. Warned by an angel, Joseph took his family to Egypt. After Herod died, they returned to Israel and raised Jesus in a town called Nazareth.

The disciples were men Jesus selected as companions. They had different backgrounds. Jesus chose fishermen, a tax collector, a twin, and others. They traveled with Jesus as he preached. After Jesus died, they taught others about him. The apostles names were: Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew,

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Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon, and Judas Iscariot.\textsuperscript{279}

Jesus delivered his most famous sermon on a mountain.\textsuperscript{280} In it, Jesus taught his listeners to: Love your enemies. Do not judge others. Trust God. Don't be anxious about tomorrow. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Jesus often taught with parables. A parable is a short story with a spiritual meaning. Jesus taught with many parables. Some were easy to understand, and some were difficult. Matthew chapter 13 has several parables of Jesus. Jesus did many miracles to show others that he was God's son. God gave Jesus power over nature, power over disease, and even power over death.

Jesus, at the beginning of his public ministry says, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.” This means the time appointed by God for the incarnation of Jesus has come. God prepared the world in such a way that the situation was ripe for the coming of the Son of God, and the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ. We will study how the world was prepared by God to receive his son. Earl E. Cairns commented:

“At the time when Christ came, men realized as never before, the insufficiency of human reason and polytheism. The individualistic philosophies of Epicurus and Zeno and the mystery religions all testify to man’s desire for a more personal relationship to God.


\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., \textit{Matthew.} 5:1-12.
Christianity came with the offer of this personal relationship and found that Greek authors, because of their own inadequacy had created many hungry hearts.²⁸¹

Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus. They accused him of blasphemy, and had Jesus arrested. A Roman governor named Pilate tried Jesus. He wanted to release Jesus. But when the Jews threatened to riot, Pilate condemned Jesus to death on a cross. Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. He was beaten by Roman soldiers, scourged, stripped, and nailed to a cross. He was crucified between two robbers, and died. His body was placed in the new tomb of a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus had promised the disciples he would come back after he died. His enemies knew this. So, to prevent anyone from stealing the body, they had soldiers guard the tomb of Jesus. On the third day after Jesus died, an angel descended, and the soldiers fled. The disciples came and found an empty tomb. Jesus had risen from the dead. He later appeared to many believers, commanding them to teach and baptize others.

Christian ethics:

Science defines ethics as “a set of moral principles, the study of morality.” Therefore, Christian Ethics would be the principles, derived from the Christian faith, by which we act. While God’s Word may not cover every situation we face throughout our lives, its principles give us the standards by which we must carry ourselves in those situations where there are no explicit instructions. For example, the Bible does not

²⁸¹ Earl E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, p.42.
say anything explicitly about the use of illegal drugs, yet based on the principles we learn through Scripture, we can know that it is wrong.

“While more than just a list of “do's” and “don'ts,” the Bible does give us detailed instructions on how to live as a Christian should. The Bible is all we need to know about how to live that Christian life. However, the Bible does not explicitly cover every single situation we will face in our lives. That is where Christian Ethics comes in.”

St. Paul, while writing to the Colossians, says:

“If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, and covetousness (which is idolatry). For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the sons of disobedience.”

For one thing, the Bible tells us that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that we should honor God with it. Knowing what these drugs do to our bodies, the harm they cause to various organs, we know that by using them we would be destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is certainly not honoring to God. The Bible also tells us that we are to follow the authorities that God Himself has put into place. Given the illegal nature of the drugs, by using them we are not submitting to the authorities, but rather, rebelling against them.

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282 William, B. Philip., An Introduction to Christian Ethics, p. 45.
284 Ibid., I Corinthians. 6:19-20.
By using the principles we find in Scripture, Christians can determine their course for any given situation. In some cases it will be simple, like the rules for Christian living we find in Colossians, chapter 3. In other cases, however, we need to do a little digging. The absolute best way to do that is to pray over God’s Word. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, and part of His role is teaching us how to live:

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” ²⁸⁶

“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit just as it has taught you, remain in him.” ²⁸⁷ So, when we pray over Scripture, the Spirit will guide us and teach us. He will show us the principle we need to stand on for any given situation. Accordingly Isaac S. Banerjee says:

“Most things we can simply see what the Bible says and follow the proper course based on that. In the cases where Scripture does not give explicit instructions for a given situation, we need to look for the principle behind it.” ²⁸⁸

Again, in some of those cases it will be easy. Most of the principles Christians follow are sufficient for most situations. In the rare case where there is neither explicit Scripture nor seemingly clear principle, one has to rely on God. People are expected to pray over His

²⁸⁷ Ibid., I John 2:27.
Word and open themselves to His Spirit. The Spirit will teach and guide people through the Bible to find the principle that helps to stand on so that people may walk and live as a Christians should.

Fasting:

The term "fast" is defined as abstaining from food or other items. There are medical fasts, moral fasts, and religious fasts. However, there are many instances in the Bible where people fasted food. Most famously, Jesus abstained from eating for 40 days in the desert when he was tempted by Satan:

“Being forty days tested by the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward was hungry.”289

Reasons for Fasting

Abstaining from food is the typical kind of fast.290 There are occasions when people abstain from both food and drink, though this is not common.291 Typically, fasts are one day in length.292 Sometimes, they are three days293 or even seven days. When the king Saul was killed all the valiant men arose, and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burned them there.

290 Ibid., Daniel. 6:18.
291 Ibid., Ezra. 10.6.
293 Scofield, C.I., The Bible., Esther 4:16.
“And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.”

On three occasions in the Bible, people fasted for forty days. This is not a prescribed practice; these were very unusual circumstances. The first occasion was when Moses received the Ten Commandments. The next occasion was when Elijah encountered God before the anointing of Elisha. The third occasion for such a fast was when Jesus was in the wilderness and tempted by Satan.

There are plenty of reasons to fast. Sometimes people fast to help them make a decision, and they want to make sure they hear God’s direction. Other times they fast to help others, to grow closer to God, or to heal from some hurt. It gives us some insight into some biblical reasons for fasting:

“Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it ‘such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to they house?”

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294 Ibid., 1 Samuel 31:13.
295 Ibid., Exodus 34:28.
296 Ibid., 1 Kings 19:8.
When thou are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth like the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rear guard. 298

Mourning was once a common reason for fasting, though it is not so much anymore. The fasting may have been incidental in some cases but was often a way to feel closer to God during a particularly difficult time.

“And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and its gates are burned with fire.” 299

Fasting is a way of communicating feelings of fear, anxiety, distress or grief to God. Self-denial is one way of expressing genuineness or sincerity. It’s also a way of making a spiritual contribution to relieving the situation, a way of showing God a willingness to do our part and asking Him to make up the difference.

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“Go, gather together all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also, and my maidens, will fast like wise, land so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.” 300

298 Ibid., Isaiah, 58: 4-8.
300 Scofield, C.I., The Bible., Esther. 4:16.
Fasting is sometimes used as a sacrifice when asking God to intervene in a situation.

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.”\(^{301}\)

Fasting can also be a way of expressing sorrow or regret for sin. God doesn’t ask us for this sacrifice but He is pleased by it.

“And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against the Lord…”\(^{302}\)

When Christians seek guidance from God fasting may be an action that is helpful. The idea is to use the time that one spend on food to spend with God instead. It provides extra time to spend in prayer, worship and listening. It is also a way of preparing for a spiritual event or change. It’s an act of submission, a way to get out of the way in order to allow the spirit to work.\(^{303}\) Fasting can be a form of worship.

“And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”\(^{304}\)

Surrendering comfort as an act of worship is not necessary but it is pleasing to God if it is sincere. Fasting can be made for the sake of restoring a right relationship with God, or can be made coupled with a


request for help. Fasting is a way to subdue the body for the sake of spirit. According to Christianity fasting must be done sincerely to be a pleasing sacrifice to God. It should be kept private; there is no need to reveal our sacrifice to anyone else unless a group is fasting together for a particular reason.

According to Christianity choosing to fast can be a way to communicate feelings like sorrow, grief, and regret but it can also be a way of worshipping God. Fasts can be a sacrifice when people ask God for help or guidance and they can be acts of obedience when God asks men to fast. Fasts are time limited and are done for a reason; one shall be clear about how long he will fast and why he is fasting. Whatever the reason for fasting, may be one has to use the extra time to grow closer to God. G. Samuel Sundar writes:

“No matter what the reason is for the fast, it important to understand that fasting is not about blackmail. If you are fasting because you think that God will give you what you want if you give something up, then you are basically trying to blackmail God. Fasting is very much about your intentions. It is also not something to do just for the sake of fasting. It is to be used to draw closer to God and focus on Him, not to get Him to do what you want. It is about you seeking His direction, not getting him to seek yours.”

When Christians are fasting, they expected to pray at the same time. The point of a fast is to grow closer to God and get in touch with the Holy Spirit. It is a time to listen and pray. Every time whenever

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fasting is undertaken and whatever it is given up, one has to spend time in prayer and focus on the Lord. It is important that whenever one is fasting away from whatever you gave up are focused on God. Otherwise, fasting is just going through period of deprivation, not a spiritual discipline.

**Caution about Fasting:**

According to Christianity if one decided to fast meals or food items, the first thing one need to do is talk to parents and even sees a doctor. It is not always healthy for teenagers to fast, and that may not be able to fast all solid food. The body of young people is still developing, so they need nutrients. Therefore, teenagers are expected to see a doctor before they make a final decision to fast any type of food. One does not need to fast food items in order to fast, and you may want to focus your fast on other items. Or, if teenagers do want to fast some sort of food, they should be careful about that will not jeopardize their health.

Spiritual fasting is not just about giving up food or other items, but it is about feeding the spirit through obedience to God. Here are some scripture versus that can inspire the act of fasting and how it can help the fasting people to grow closer to God as one is praying.

In the Old and New Testaments of the Bible there were so many occasions in which well known Biblical personalities observed fast. All of
them expressed the same opinion to have a strong bond with the Lord and against the sin. Moses remained there on the mountain Sinai with the Lord forty days and forty nights.

“And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”

Thus the historical accounts of Christianity assert the need and relevance of fast in one’s life either to please God or to get His blessings. Fasting is a bond between man and God and is an expression of devotion.

The king David begged God to spare his child born to Bathsheba, wife of Uriah. David repented of his sin with Bathsheba and he went without food and lay all night on the bare ground.

“David, therefore, besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth, but he would not, neither did he eat with them.”

Ezra gave orders for all to fast and humble themselves before the Lord.

“Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the

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307 Ibid., 2 Samuel. 12:16-17.
enemy on our way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, the hand of our God upon all them for good who seek him; but his power and his wrath are against all them who forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this and he was entreated by us."  

Isaiah, concluding exhortations and prophecies, he advised about right and wrong fasting.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen to loose the hands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"  

Daniel confessed that he had sinned against God by departing from God's precepts and ordinances and prayed to God:

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes."  

"I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

The prophet Joel describes the invasion of Judah by a plague of locusts that destroyed everything in its path and impoverished the people. He said to the people, only repentance can avert invasion.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly."
When the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah to pray before the Lord, he said to the people that the word of the Lord of hosts unto him saying:

“Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”

When Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil, he had fasted forty days and forty nights.

“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry.”

Jesus gave instruction in praying and said:

“Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

In his parable ‘the Pharisee and Publican’, Jesus said how the Pharisee stood and prayed to God.

“I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.”

In their First Missionary Journey, Paul and Barnabas were set apart by the Holy Spirit.

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313 Ibid., Zechariah 7:5.
314 Ibid., Matthew 4:2.
315 Ibid., Matthew 6:16.
“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”\textsuperscript{317}

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.


“And when they had ordained elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”\textsuperscript{318}

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

The word Islam means "submission to God". The Holy Quran describes Islam as an Arabic word \textit{Deen} (way of life). The followers of Islam are called Muslims. The literal meaning of Muslim is "one who surrenders" or "submits" to the will of God. In order to understand Islam, the basic portrayal of belief in Quran must be considered. According to Quran, those who submit to one God are Muslims. Aisha Y. Musa writes in his article:

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., \textit{The Acts}. 13:3.  
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., \textit{The Acts}. 14:23.
"Islam is the religion of all the prophets from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses, Jesus and Mohammad."  

Quran also declares that all the prophets who came before Mohammad and their followers were all Muslims. The origin of Islam dates back to the creation of the world. All the prophets who came to this world preached the same message of believing in one God and to accept them as His messengers. The prophets were also blessed with a manifestation of divine will or truth. Likewise, Prophet Mohammad was also a messenger of God. He revealed the truth and the way of life through the Holy Quran.

Before the birth of Prophet Mohammad, the Arab society was sunk into darkness. Although the Arabs believed in the unity of God, but they also claimed that God has entrusted His duties to various gods, goddesses and idols. For this purpose, they had more than 360 idols. They considered angels as the daughters of God. They were ignorant of social values. They were nomadic people who were dependent on cattle for their living. There was no government or law. All power existed with the rich. The society was full of barbarity and brutality. Tribes fought with each other over trivial matters for centuries. A slight argument over horses or water could lead to the slaughtering of thousands of innocent people.  

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It was the birth of Prophet Mohammad in 570 A.D in the city of Makkah which brought a revolution to the entire fate of the nomadic Arabs. He became famous among the people of Makkah at a very early age because of his allegiance and reliability. He was widely known as Al-Ameen (honest, trustworthy.) When Mohammad was meditating at Mt. Hera, at the age of 40, he received revelations from God. The angel Gabriel said to him, "Iqra" which means "to read". Mohammad replied "I cannot read". Gabriel embraced and released him. Then the first five verses of God was revealed to him which said,

"Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man, from clots of congealed blood. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."\(^{321}\)

Mohammad started proclaiming the message of believing in one God. The people who once called him "Trustworthy" and "Honest" boycotted and plotted to kill him. In 622 A.D., due to worsening living conditions and social isolation, Prophet Mohammad migrated to Medina along with his followers. This flight was known as Hijrah and marks the beginning of the Muslims calendar. Mohammad's message spread rapidly and the number of followers increased in Medina. During the next few years, a series of battles were fought between various tribes of Makkah and the Muslims of Medina. In 628 A.D, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed between the two parties. Truce was declared for 10 years. The treaty was broken in 629 A.D by the non-Muslims of the

Makkans. Mohammad moved towards Makkah with 10,000 men and the battle was won without a single bloodshed. Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) died in 632 A.D. at the age of 63 in the city of Medina. Mohammad’s death brought a huge catastrophe among Muslims. People could not believe that Mohammad had left them forever. Many of the followers were perplexed and distraught, and claimed him to be still living. At that time Mohammad funeral, Abu Bakr, who was the most respected of all the followers affirmed that, "O people, those of you who worshipped Mohammad, Mohammad has died. And those of you who worshipped God, God is still living." 322

After the death of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, the friend of the Prophet and the first adult male to embrace Islam, became caliph. Abu Bakr ruled for two years. Before his death in 634 A.D., Umar ibn ul Khattab was caliph for a decade and during whose rule Islam spread extensively east and west conquering the Persian empire, Syria and Egypt. It was Umar who marched on foot at the end of the Muslim army into Jerusalem and ordered the protection of Christian sites. Umar also established the first public treasury and a sophisticated financial administration. He established many of the basic practices of Islamic government.

Umar was succeeded by Uthman who ruled for some twelve years during which time the Islamic expansion continued. He is also known as the caliph who had the definitive text of the Noble Quran

322 Shajahan., The spread of Islam, p. 72.
copied and sent to the four corners of the Islamic world. He was in turn succeeded by 'Ali who is known to this day for his eloquent sermons and letters, and also for his bravery. With his death the rule of the "rightly guided" caliphs, who hold a special place of respect in the hearts of Muslims, came to an end.\textsuperscript{323}

**The Quran:**

The “Word of God” to Islam is ‘Reading’ The Quran.. Muslims believe that the same book is in Heaven and Allah sent the angel Gabriel to Mohammed to reveal his “Word”. The Quran is divided into 114 chapters or *Surahs*. The *Surahs* are revelations given to Mohammed during his 23 years of “Prophethood” from 610 AD to 632 AD. The Quran, composed during Mohammed’s lifetime corresponds to the time and circumstances of his life. The *Surahs* or chapters can be divided into three time periods.

The earliest *Surahs* are the shortest and known as Early *Meccan*, and date from 610 to 622 AD. Composed in Mecca, prior to *Hejira* where Mohammed fled to Medina in September 622 AD. The *Median Surahs* were composed during the time Muslims controlled the city of *Medina*. They date from 622 to 630 AD. The doctrine of *Jihad* was introduced as war was waged against Mecca and its idol worshipers. Animosity toward the Jews and Christians increased as they rejected Mohammed as a prophet from God. Late *Meccan Surahs* were between 630 and 632 AD.

\textsuperscript{323} John Robert., *Early Islamic History*, p. 75-76.
The last 2 years of Mohammed’s life after Mecca surrendered to his authority.  

Surahs were at this time not collected in one book but were memorized and collected on various items. In the battle of Yamamah in 633 AD many of the Hafiz died. The Hafiz were Muslims who had committed much of the Quran to memory. With the urging of Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit, one of Mohammed most trusted secretaries was appointed to the task of collecting the Quran into one book. Still later after different versions of the quran began to appear Zayd was put in charge of collecting all the Qurans throughout the Muslim world and issuing an authorized copy in the place of ones collected. The Quran makes the appeal to its beauty and consistency with previous scriptures as proof of its inspiration.

The Five Pillars of Faith:

1. “The Confession” "La ilaha illa llah" "There is no God but God." The Shahada, (Testimoney) Kalima. There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.

2. Salat Prayer 5 times a day facing Mecca

3. Zakat Almsgiving

4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan, from sun-up till sundown.

John Robert., Early Islamic History., p.90.

Ibid., p.90-91
5. **Hajj** Pilgrimage to Mecca once a lifetime

### Customs and Practices of Muslims:

Islam is a quilt of many colors rather than a monolithic faith etched in stone, due to the broad cultural diversity in the Muslim world. The majority of Muslims have never considered Islam to be "straight and narrow" but rather "straight and broad." The word in Arabic for the sacred law of Islam, *shariah*, literally means "the broad path to water." The *shariah*, rather than being a rigid and inflexible law, is governed by a fluid and elastic set of principles, and Muslim legal theorists consider it rationally comprehensible and thus capable of being altered when the rationale is absent or the circumstances warrant.\(^{326}\)

Generally most Muslim cultures manifest their own characteristics. There are some differences among Muslims belong to various places in the world. Muslims are required to wear modest clothes, and women are required to cover their hair and entire body except for the hands and face when in the presence of unrelated males. In some places the bright colors of the women contrast sharply with the moribund black of the some other countries and both are considered acceptable. Food and merrymaking also differ greatly, and Muslims, like other peoples, have diverse ways of enjoying themselves and appreciating the milestones of life such as weddings, births, graduations, and religious holidays. Religious music and chanting are

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\(^{326}\) Williams., *The Vision of Islam*, p. 108.
widespread in the Muslim world, and Quran reciters with beautiful voices have statuses in some Muslim countries.  

The meaning of Fasting or saum:

The institution of fasting in Islam came after the institution of prayer. It was in Madinah in the second year of Hijrah that fasting was made obligatory, and the month of Ramadhan, the ninth lunar month of the Islamic calendar, was set apart for this purpose. Before that the Prophet used to fast, as an optional devotion, on the tenth day of Muharram, and he also ordered his followers to fast on that day, it being a fasting day for the Quraish as well. The origin of fasting in Islam may thus be traced to the time when the Prophet was still at Makkah. It was after his flight to Madinah that he saw the Jews fasting on the tenth day of Muharram and being told that Moses had kept a fast on that day in commemoration of the delivery of the Israelites from Pharaoh, he remarked that they (Muslims) were nearer to Moses than the Jews and ordered that day to be observed as a day of fasting.

The most important meaning of fasting or saum is refraining in an absolute sense. In the technical language of the Islamic law, saum and siyam signify fasting or abstaining from food and drink and sexual intercourse from dawn till sunset. Al-imsaku ‘ani-l-fil’, which includes abstaining from eating or speaking or moving about. Thus a horse that

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327 Ibid., p. 108.
328 Shajahan., The spread of Islam, p. 225.
abstains from moving about, or from fodder, is said to be *sa‘um*, and wind is said to be *saum* when it abates, and the day when it reaches the midpoint. In the sense of abstaining from speech, the word is used in the *Quran* in the early *Makkah* revelation. When a voice cried out to *Mariam*, saying to eat and drink and rejoice, she said:

"I have vowed a fast to the Merciful and will not speak with any man today."\(^{329}\)

In the Quran, the subject of fasting is dealt with only in one place, that is, in the 23\(^{rd}\) section of the second chapter; though there is mention on other occasions of fasting by way of expiation (*fidyah*) in certain cases. This section opens with the remark that the institution of fasting is a universal one.

"O believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil. Fast a certain number of days, but if any one of you is ill or on a journey let him fast a similar number of days later on; and for those that find it extremely difficult to fast, there is ransom: the feeding of a poor man. He that does good of his own account shall be well rewarded; but to fast is better for you, if you but knew it."\(^{330}\)

**A Spiritual Discipline:**

The practice of fasting received a highly developed significance in Islam. Fasting, as an institution, is made a spiritual, moral and physical


discipline of the highest order, and this is made clear by changing both
the form and the motive. Fasting, according to Islam, is primarily a
spiritual discipline: On two occasions in Quran those who fast are called
sa’ih (from saha meaning he travelled) or spiritual wayfarers. According to one authority, when a person refrains, not only from food
and drink but from all kinds of evil, he is called a sa’ih. While speaking of
Ramadhan, the month in which fasting is ordained, the Quran specially
refers to nearness to God, as if its attainment were an aim in fasting,
and then adds:

“Therefore, let them answer My call and put their
trust in Me, that they may be rightly guided.”

A man can avail himself of the best diet, yet he prefers to remain
hungry. He touches neither food nor drink, simply because he thinks
that it is the commandment of God that he should not do so. In the inner
recesses, there is none to see him if he pours down his dry and burning
throat a glass of delicious drink, yet there has developed in him the
sense of the nearness to God to such an extent that he would not put a
drop of it on his tongue. Whenever a new temptation comes before him,
he overcomes it, because, just at the critical moment, there is an inner
voice, "God is with me," "God sees me." Not the deepest devotion can of itself develop that sense of nearness to God and of His presence


\[332\] Ibid., 2:186, p.20.
everywhere, which fasting day after day for a whole month does.

According to Shajahan:

“The Divine presence, which may be a matter of faith to others, becomes a reality for him, and this is made possible by the spiritual discipline underlying fasting. A new consciousness of a higher life, a life above that which is maintained by eating and drinking, has been awakened in him, and this is the life spiritual.”

A Moral Discipline:

Fasting is considered as a moral discipline, for it is the training ground where man is taught the greatest moral lesson of his life, the lesson that he should be prepared to suffer the greatest adversity and undergo the hardest trial rather than indulge in that which is not permitted to him. That lesson is repeated from day to day for a whole month, and just as physical exercise strengthens man physically, moral exercise through fasting, the exercise of abstaining from everything that is not allowed, strengthens the moral side of his life. The idea that everything unlawful must be eschewed and that evil must be hated is thus developed through fasting. Another aspect of the moral development of man by this means is that he is thus taught to conquer his physical desires. He takes his food at regular intervals and that is no doubt a desirable rule of life, but fasting for one month in the year teaches him the higher lesson that, instead of being the slave of his

appetites and desires, he should be their master, being able to change
the course of his life if he wills it. Williams points out:

“The man who is able to rule his desires, to
make them work as he likes, in whom will-power
is so developed that he can command himself, is
the man who has attained to true moral
greatness.”

Social Value of Fasting:

The commencement of the month of Ramadhan is a signal for a
mass movement towards equality which is not limited to single vicinity or
even one country but affects the whole Muslim world. The rich and the
poor may stand shoulder to shoulder in one row in the mosque, but in
their homes they live in different environments. The rich sit down on
tables laden with dainties and with these they load their stomachs four,
even six, times daily; while the poor cannot find sufficient food with
which to satisfy their hunger even twice a day. The latter often feel the
pangs of hunger to which the former are utter strangers. A great social
barrier thus exists between the two classes in their homes, and this
barrier is removed only when the rich are made to feel the pangs of
hunger like their poorer brethren and go without food throughout the
day, and this experience has to be gone through, not for a day or two,
but for a whole month. The rich and the poor are thus, throughout the
Muslim world, brought on the same level in that they are both allowed
only two meals a day, and though these meals may not be exactly the

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334 Williams., The Vision of Islam, p. 126.
same, the rich have perforce to shorten their menu and to adopt a simpler fare and thus come closer to their poorer brethren. This course undoubtedly awakens sympathy for the poor in the hearts of the rich, and it is for this reason that the helping of the poor is specially enjoined in the month of *Ramadhan*. Smith Huston says:

> “Fasting has also a social value, more effective than that which is realised through prayer. Rich and poor, great and small, residents of the same vicinity are brought together five times daily in the mosque on terms of perfect equality, and thus healthy social relations are established through prayer.”

Refraining from food during stated intervals does no physical harm to a healthy person. On the contrary, it does some good. But fasting has yet another and a more important, physical value. The man who cannot face the hardships of life, who is not able to live, at times, without his usual comforts, cannot be said to be even physically fit for life on this earth. The moment such a man is involved in difficulty or distress, as he must be every now and again, his strength is liable to give way. Fasting accustoms him to face the hardships of life, being in itself a practical lesson to that end, and increases his powers of resistance.

*Ramadhan.*

In the Quran, relating to fasting in the month of *Ramadhan*, runs as follows:

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"The month of Ramadhan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore, whoever of you is well in that month, let him fast."\(^{336}\)

It has been chosen because it is the month in which the Quran was revealed. It is well-known that the Quran was revealed piecemeal during a period of twenty-three years; therefore by its revelation in the month of Ramadhan is meant that its revelation first began in that month. And this is historically true. The first revelation came to the Prophet on the 24\(^{th}\) night of the month of Ramadhan when he was in the cave of Hira. It was therefore in Ramadhan that the first ray of Divine light fell on the Prophet's mind, and the angel Gabriel made his appearance with the great Divine message. The month which witnessed the greatest spiritual experience of the Prophet was thus considered to be the most suitable month for the spiritual discipline of the Muslim community, which was to be effected through fasting.\(^{337}\)

The movement effected by the advent of Ramadhan in the Muslim world is the greatest mass movement on the face of the earth. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled, the black and the white, the Eastern and the Western, from one end of the earth to the other, suddenly change the course of their lives when they witness the tiny crescent of Ramadhan making its appearance on the western horizon. There is no other example of a


\(^{337}\) Shajahan., *The spread of Islam*, p. 335.
mass movement on this scale on the face of the earth, and this is due to
the specification of a particular month.\textsuperscript{338}

\textbf{Persons who may not fast:}

The Quran mentions the sick and those on journey in the following words:

\begin{quotation}
“If any one of you is ill or on a journey let him fast a similar number of days later on; and for those that find it extremely difficult to fast, there is ransom: the feeding of a poor man. He that does god of his own account shall be well rewarded; but to fast is better for you, if you but knew it.”\textsuperscript{339}
\end{quotation}

Tradition makes a further extension and gives relaxation to certain classes of people who, on account of some physical disability, are not able to fast. It is related of \textit{Anas} that he used to feed a poor man when he grew too old to fast. It will be seen that the underlying idea is that a burden should not be placed on any one, which he is unable to bear. The case of old people who have become enfeebled by age is very clear while in the case of pregnant and nursing women, the permission to effect a redemption is due to the fact that fasting may cause harm to the unborn baby, or the baby that is being nursed, as well as the woman herself; and as she is likely to remain in this condition for a sufficiently long time, she is given the benefit of the relaxation. Sickly people and those who are too weak to bear the burden would be dealt with as sick. The fast may be deferred in cases of hardship, and holds that those

\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., p. 336.
\textsuperscript{339} Malumud Y. Zayid., \textit{The Quran}, 2:184, p.19.
engaged in war may not fast, though they may not be journeying, for, he adds, the hardships of war are greater than the hardships of travel. From this it may be argued that, in unavoidable cases of very hard labour, the choice of postponing the fast may be given to those who are engaged in such labour.

Types of Fasting:

Although there is partial type of fasting as a whole, Muslims abstain from food, drinks and coitus during the hours from dawn to sunset. They resume their normal life thereafter, until before sunrise.

Mandatory Fasting:

Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory for every adult Muslim. It is stated in the Quran:

"O believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil."\textsuperscript{340}

(1) Fasting in Shawwal. Muslims are encouraged to fast six days in Shawwal, the month following Ramadan, after enjoying the Feast of Fast-Breaking (\textit{Eidul Fitr}) during the first three days after Ramadan. According to the Quran:

"He that does a good deed shall be repaid tenfold; but he that commits a sin shall be punished only for it. None shall be wronged."\textsuperscript{341}

\textsuperscript{340} Malumud Y. Zayid., \textit{The Quran}, 2:183, p.19.
One good act is equal to ten. Hence, a thirty-day fast during *Ramadan* plus a six day period in *Shawwal* makes thirty-six days, equal in merit to fasting 360 days.

(2) Fasting in *Muharram*, Muslims are encouraged to fast the tenth day of the month of *Muharram* (the first month of the Islamic calendar). It has been reported that on this day Moses helped the Jews migrate from Egypt to Palestine and, therefore they were saved from persecution and torture, for which the Prophet Muhammad encouraged Muslims to fast during this day in thankfulness to God.

(3) Fasting in *Zul Hijjah*. Muslims are also expected to fast the ninth day of *Zul Hijjah* (the twelfth month) if not on pilgrimage. This day precedes the Feast of Sacrifice. As far as pilgrims are concerned, they are not to fast the day preceding the Feast as it would be an added hardship to fulfill the spiritual rites and rituals during the pilgrimage.\(^{342}\)

**Forbidden Fasts**

Muslims are forbidden to fast on the first day of *Eidul Fitr* (the Feast of Fast-Breaking) and the first three days of *Eidul Adha* (the Feast of Sacrifice). These are days of happiness and joy, as well as of thanks and appreciation to God, and it is recognized that fasting may involve


\(^{342}\) Williams., *The Vision of Islam*, p. 250.
hardship. It is undesirable for Muslims to fast continuously every day of
the year and to single out Fridays.

Fasting for penance:

There are occasions when a Muslim must fast as penance. When
a Muslim travels to Mecca during the pilgrimage season, he or she may
choose to perform first the Minor Pilgrimage called "Umrah" before the
special days of the Major Pilgrimage known as "Hajj" in order to enjoy
the relief during the intervening period from the prohibited acts during
pilgrimage. Accordingly, he or she must sacrifice an animal on the first
day of the Feast of Sacrifice. If the pilgrim cannot afford it, he/she must
fast three days while still in the vicinity of Mecca and another seven
days on returning home. Allah says in Quran:

“Make the pilgrimage and visit the Sacred House
for Allah’s sake. If you are prevented, send such
offerings as you can afford and do not shave
your heads until the offerings have reached their
destination. But if any of you is ill or suffers from
an ailment of the head, he must pay a ransom
either by fasting or by alms, giving or by offering
a sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{343}

If a Muslim breaks his fast on \textit{Ramadan} during the day by
committing coitus or for any intentional breaking, he must atone for that
day by fasting one day, and, in addition, sixty consecutive days. If his
physical condition does not permit him to do so, then he must give food
to sixty needy people.

\textsuperscript{343} Malumud Y. Zayid., \textit{The Quran}, 2:196, p.21.
"Whoever breaks a valid oath becomes liable to the penalty of paying the cost of feeding ten poor persons. If a person cannot afford it, he/she must fast three days in atonement."344

**Fasts as expiation:**

Fasts are also recommended as expiation for breaking certain commandments. The expiatory fasts mentioned in the Quran are:

1. Two months' successive fasting when a Muslim has killed a Muslim by mistake and the killer has not the means sufficient to free a slave.

   "It is unlawful for a believer to kill another believer except by mistake. He that kills a believer by mistake must free one believing slave and pay blood-money to the family of the victim, unless they choose to give it away in alms. If the victim be a believer from a hostile tribe, the penalty is the freeing of one believing slave. But if the victim be a member of an allied tribe, then blood-money must be paid to his family and a believing slave set free. If a man cannot afford to do this, he must fast two consecutive months. Such is the penance imposed by Allah: He is knowing, wise."345

2. Two months' successive fasting when the husband resorts to practice called *zihar* (putting away of the wife by saying, Thou art to me as the back of my mother), and he has not the means to free a slave.

   "Those that divorce their wives by Zihar and afterwards retract their words shall free a slave before they touch each other again. ........He that

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345 Ibid., 4:92, p.64.
does not have a slave shall fast two successive months before they touch one another."  

(3) Three days' fasting as expiation for taking an oath by which one deprives oneself of something lawful when one is unable to free a slave or feed ten poor men.  

(4) Fasting as decided on by two judges, as expiation for killing game while one is on pilgrimage as an alternative to feeding the poor.

**Ethical Side of Fasting:**

The essence of the fast is its moral and spiritual value, and the *Quran* and tradition have laid special stress on this. It is not refraining from food that makes the breath of the faster so sweet; it is refraining from foul speech and abuse and evil words and deeds of all kinds, so much so that he does not even utter an offensive word by way of retaliation. Thus a fasting person undergoes not only a physical discipline by curbing his carnal desires, the craving for food and drink, and the sex appetite, but he is actually required to undergo a direct moral discipline by avoiding all kinds of evil words an evil deeds. It is not only training on the physical side, which has a moral value; it is a direct training on the spiritual side as well. In the sight of God, as plainly stated in these traditions, the fast loses its value not only by taking food or

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347 Ibid., 5:89, p.84.
348 Ibid., 5:95, p.85.
drink but also by telling a lie, using foul language, acting unfaithfully, or doing an evil deed.

The moral value of the fasting discipline is further enhanced by laying stress on the doing of good to humanity in the month of *Ramadhan*. The devils are chained in his case because he curbs and conquers the lower passions, by exciting which the devil makes a man fall into evil. The doors of Hell are closed on him because he shuns all evil which is man's hell. The doors of Heaven are opened for him because he rises above physical desires and devotes himself to the service of humanity. There is another sense in which the doors of Heaven are opened to a fasting person in the month of *Ramadhan*. It is specially suited for spiritual advancement, for attaining nearness to God. Speaking of *Ramadhan*, the *Quran* says:

"And when My servants question you about Me, tell them I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls to Me."\(^{349}\)

Thus both in Christianity and Islam fasting has been ordained to get mercy of God. It has both moral and religious value relating to their worlds as much as Heaven, the worlds for which the followers aim at.