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Home > Inquiries about Islam > Foreword

## **Foreword**

Centuries ago when the nobles in the service of the Catholic Church drove the Muslims out of Europe, the message of Muhammad also was expurgated from the Western world. Had this power struggle never occurred, there would have been less need for Arab scholars and teachers like Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri to bring God's Message to the Western world. These rare men leave family and friends because they see the centuries of unfulfilled need in America for theological clarification of the requirements God makes upon mankind.

I am one of the many who have benefited from Imam Mohamad Chirri's teaching. I was his first "convert"; but never having been a believing Christian, it would be more exact to say that I came to believe in God for the first time through the path of Islam, patiently guided by my imam.

If you are a Muslim, read this book out of the obligation to acquire knowledge. If you are a Jew or Christian, read it for the same devout motive. Comparative study of religions may be unsettling if your belief in God is based upon non-rational grounds but can only have the ultimately desired result of strengthening your belief. The pervasive belief in God as represented in our motives must be the goal which our religious educators work toward, with gains in sectarian support becoming quite secondary.

If you are unable to say that you believe in God, you can still find value in the study of religion. In the following pages of dialogue, you will be pursuing some of the most important concerns of mankind that can be traced back to the beginning of recorded history. The thoughts and historical events are important in their own right, and perhaps you will, as I have, find the way to a belief in God through them.

Colonial Britain has been more fortunate than we in America in having the history and teachings of Islam accessible. It is no accident that while no really great American has expressed his recognition of the value of Islam, three of the most famous British writers fully acknowledge the importance and value of Islam. They are: Arnold Toynbee, historian; Bertrand Russell, philosopher; and George Bernard Shaw, playwright. Out of respect for these figures, we will want to know more about that which they value so highly.

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