

unknown God. The intellectual difficulty was a real one to the Moslem exegete, as he must discover some root and some theory of derivation that is not in conflict with *his* accepted idea of God. Beidhawi, for example, suggests that *Allah* is derived "from an [invented] root *ilaha* = to be in perplexity, because the mind is perplexed when it tries to form the idea of the Infinite!" Yet more fanciful are the other derivations given and the Arabic student can satisfy his curiosity in Beidhawi, Vol. I., pp. 5 and 6.

According to the opinion of some Moslem theologians, it is infidelity (*kufur*) to hold that the word has any derivation whatever! This is the opinion of the learned in Eastern Arabia. They say "God is not begotten," and so His name cannot be derived. He is the first, and had an Arabic name before the creation of the worlds. *Allah* is an eternal combination of letters written on the throne in Arabic and each stroke and curve has mystical meaning. Mohammed, they teach, received the revelation of this name and was the first to preach the divine unity among the Arabs by declaring it. This kind of argument is of one piece with all that Moslems tell of "the days of ignorance" before the prophet. But history establishes beyond the shadow of a doubt that even the pagan Arabs, before Mohammed's time, knew their chief god by the name of *Allah* and even, in a sense, proclaimed His unity. In pre-Islamic literature, Christian or pagan, *ilah* is used for any god