

It was not a theologian nor a philosopher who first called attention to this fundamental idea in Islam as the key to a proper understanding of the Moslem mind, but the Arabian traveller, William Gifford Palgrave, who knew Islam not from books as much as from long and close contact with the Arabs themselves. Whatever may be the opinion concerning Palgrave's accuracy as a geographer, there is no doubt that he was a capital observer of the *people*, their manners and religion. It is, therefore, without apology for the length of the quotation that we give here Palgrave's famous characterization of Allah.¹

“There is no god but God—are words simply tantamount in English to the negation of any deity save one alone; and thus much they certainly mean in Arabic, but they imply much more also. Their full sense is not only to deny absolutely and unreservedly all plurality whether of nature or of person in the Supreme Being, not only to establish the unity of the Unbegetting and the Unbegot, in all its simple and uncommunicable Oneness, but besides this the words in Arabic and among Arabs imply that this one Supreme Being is also the only Agent, the only Force, the only Act existing throughout the universe and leaves us to all beings else, matter or spirit, instinct or intelligence, physical or moral, nothing but pure unconditional passiveness, alike in movement

¹*Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia, 1862-63, by W. S. Palgrave, Vol. I., pp. 365-367.*