

16 THE MOSLEM DOCTRINE OF GOD

tion) of a mass of so-called tradition. The former is what Allah revealed by means of a book; the latter is what Allah revealed by means of a man, Mohammed. Both revelations have well-nigh equal authority and both rest their authority on the *kalimet* or creed of seven words. The accompanying analysis shows this relation.¹

Gibbon characterizes the first part of the Moslem's creed as "an eternal truth" and the second part as a "necessary fiction."² Concerning the latter statement there is no dispute, but whether we can admit the former depends altogether on the character of the Being of whom it is affirmed that He displaces all other gods. If Allah's nature and attributes are in any way distorted or are unworthy of Deity, then even the first clause of the briefest of all creeds is false. "Because Mohammed taught the unity of God it has been too hastily concluded that he was a great social and moral reformer as well. But there is no charm in the abstract doctrine of the unity of God to elevate humanity. The essential point is the character attributed to this one God."³ It is, therefore, not superfluous to inquire both from the Koran and from orthodox Tradition what Moslems mean by asserting God's unity and what character they ascribe to their only, true God. For there is no doubt

¹Revised and reprinted from *Arabia, the Cradle of Islam*.

²*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III., pp. 488.

³Osborne's *Islam under the Khalifs of Bagdad*, p. vii.