

ISLAM

Its Meaning for Modern Man

by Muhammad Zafrullah Khan

I

Background

WHEN MUHAMMAD, THE PROPHET OF ISLAM, was born in August, 570, of the Christian era, at Mecca, the principal town of Arabia, the civilizations associated with the names of Egypt, Babylon, and Greece were already matters of history. They awaited the researches of the archaeologist, the antiquary, and the scholar to be rescued from oblivion.

Europe was still largely pagan, devoted to the worship of Nordic, Teuton, and a host of other gods. In South Asia, Brahmanism and Buddhism had long passed their prime and had entered upon a placid and prolonged old age.

In the Far East, the homely philosophy of Confucius and the "way" of Lao-Tze pursued a sluggish and somnolent course. They had earlier been stirred by the advent of Buddhism into China, but had fallen back into passivity, along with Buddhism. Chinese scholars, feeling that a period of decline and decay had set in, made sporadic efforts at revival.