

as some affirm, at the age of thirteen, into Syria with Abu Taleb's trading caravan, in order to his being perfected in the business of his intended vocation. Upon the simple circumstance of this journey, the superstition of his followers has grafted a series of miraculous omens all portending his future greatness. Among other things, it is said by his historians, that upon his arriving at Bozrah, a certain man named Boheira, a Nestorian monk, who is thought by Prideaux to be otherwise called Sergius, advanced through the crowd collected in the market-place, and, seizing him by the hand, exclaimed, "There will be something wonderful in this boy; for when he approached he appeared covered with a cloud." He is said to have affirmed also, that the dry trees under which he sat were every where instantly covered with green leaves, which served him for a shade, and that the mystic seal of prophecy was impressed between his shoulders, in the form of a small luminous excrescence. According to others, instead of a bright cloud being the criterion by which his subsequent divine mission was indicated, the mark by which Boheira knew him was the *prophetic light* which shone upon his face. This miraculous light, according to the traditions of the Mohammedans, was first placed upon Adam, and from him transmitted to each individual in the line of his descendants, who sustained the character of a true prophet. The hallowed radiance at length rested upon the head of Abraham, from whom it was divided into a two-fold emanation, the greater or clearer descending upon Isaac and his seed, the less or obscurer to Ishmael and his posterity. The light in the family of Isaac is represented as having been perpetuated in a constant glow through a long line of inspired messengers and prophets among the children of Israel; but that in the family of Ishmael is said to have been suppressed, and to have lain hidden through the whole tract of ages, from Ishmael down to the coming of Mohammed, in whom the sacred symbol was again revived, and now pointed out [to Boheira] the high destiny of him on whose person it appeared. However intrinsically vain and visionary this legend may be deemed, it may, nevertheless, be worth adverting to, as affording perhaps, in its remoter sources, a hint of the origin of the HALO, which in most of the paintings or engravings of the Saviour is made to encircle his sacred brows.

When Abu Taleb was about to return with his caravan to Mecca, Boheira, it is said, again repeated his solemn premonition, coupled with a charge, respecting the extraordinary youth. "Depart with this child, and take great care that he does not fall into the hands of the Jews; for your nephew will one day become a very wonderful person."

The early Christian writers have laid hold of the narrative of this interview with the Syrian monk, as affording a clew to the true origin and authorship of the Koran. According to them, this Boheira, also called Sergius, who, they say, was an apostate Jew or Christian, instructed Mohammed in the histories and doctrines of the Bible, and that they in concert laid a plan for creating a new religion, a motley compound of Judaism and Christianity, to be carried into execution twenty years afterward; and that accordingly the monk, rather than Mohammed, is entitled to the credit of the most important parts of the Koran. Others, however, gain, deeming it altogether incredible that a youth of thirteen should have had