

# *Christianity in South Arabia*

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It is not yet possible to write the history of the planting and early spread of Christianity in South Arabia. It is not that there is a dearth of documents, but rather a lack of the right kind of documents such as would guide us to an understanding of how rightly to interpret and use those we already have. Most of our information as to the history of Arabia comes, of course, from the Muslim chroniclers and antiquarians writing in Arabic. They have a great deal to say about South Arabia, and the older authorities, such as Caussin de Perceval, were inclined to follow them rather than the Greek writers who also dealt with South Arabian affairs. The discovery and interpretation of inscriptional material in the old South Arabian languages, however, has shown that the Greeks spoke truly and that the Arabic accounts were largely legendary. For this reason the accounts of South Arabian Christianity in the Muslim Arabic sources, while they may contain elements of truth, and even preserve names of real people and reminiscences of things which really happened, yet must be used with extreme caution even after the obvious legendary accretions have been removed.

The information given in Christian Arabic writers is very meagre, and is often nothing but a repetition of what they found in Greek and Syriac sources. The ecclesiastical writers in Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic and Coptic, provide us with an abundance of isolated bits of information about the spread of Christianity in South Arabia and its fate there, but these bits are extremely difficult to fit together, and still more difficult to fit with what we learn from the Byzantine chroniclers, who themselves, indeed, are by no means in agreement in what they tell us about South Arabian affairs. The old Arabic poetry has been used by Louis Cheikho as a source; but the learned Jesuit's enthusiasm and imagination ran away with him in his *Christian Arabic Poets*, and all we can really garner from this old poetry is a collection of isolated references which, while they may be good independent evidence for the presence of Christianity at various points in that area, do not tell us very much. The geographers, whether Byzantine or Arab, tell us very little more than what they had themselves learned from the antiquarians, and in South Arabia it has not yet been possible to make even such surface archaeological investigations as have uncovered the ruins of numerous Christian monasteries, churches and settlements in North Arabia. Among the South Arabian inscriptions are some Christian inscriptions, such as the famous GI. 618 from the mound of Ma'rib, which opens with an invocation to the Trinity, but so far the net result of gleanings from the inscriptions is meagre.

Thus the task of writing the history of Christianity in South Arabia is that of weaving together a great number of strands gathered from one source or another, never quite certain that some strands are really going to hold, and very conscious that there are great gaps where we have no strands at all to help fill out the picture.

There are, of course, legends of the Apostolic origin of Christianity in this region, of how Thomas stopped there for a while on his way to India, of how Bartholomew preached there before going on to his martyrdom in the land of the Parthians, and left there a Hebrew Gospel that was later found there by the Alexandrian catechist Pantaenus, who brought it back to Egypt, and of how the Ethiopian eunuch, besides his labours in Africa, preached also in Arabia Felix and on some islands in the Red Sea. All the early notices, however, labour under the confusion that in their days the word India was used to mean not only India proper, but also South Arabia and at times even Abyssinia and the neighbouring coasts, so that we are never quite sure to what area these Apostolic legends refer.

The other accounts of the planting of Christianity in these regions agree only in the suggestion that it was of lay origin and not the result of planned ecclesiastical endeavour. Arabic sources both Muslim and Christian tell of its planting there by slaves who were sold to South Arabian masters and who introduced their faith among those with whom they had newly come to dwell. Greek and Syriac sources suggest that it was founded there by merchants who were either born in Christian communities abroad, or had learned the Christian faith while in foreign centres of trade and brought it back with them to South Arabia, where later it became important enough to need ecclesiastical supervision.

We really reach something tangible, however, only when we come to the great persecutions of the sixth century. The Martyrdom of the Christians of Najran is celebrated in the Roman Martyrology on the 24th of October; in the Jacobite Menologies on December 31st; in the Arabic Feasts of the Melkites on October 2nd; in the Armenian Synaxarium on the 20th of October, and in the Ethiopian Senkesar on November 22nd, so that it was an event of some notoriety. The Arabic chroniclers know that the invasion of South Arabia by the Abyssinians, which put an end to the old Tubba' dynasty, was brought about as a consequence of the persecution of the Christians, and they have long accounts of the deeds of one Dhu Nuwas, a local ruler who had become a Jew and whose massacre of the Christians was notorious, and which may even be referred to in the Qur'an LXXXV, 4 ff. It was this persecution that led to Abyssinian overlordship in South Arabia, an overlordship that was associated in Muslim legend with the famous Year of the Elephant, the year in which tradition says Muhammad was born. The legend is clear evidence of the fact that the Abyssinian suzerainty was Christian, for the reason for the great expedition against Mecca, with which the legend of the Year of the Elephant deals, was to mete out chastisement on the city for a desecration committed by two Meccans on the new Christian church the Abyssinian viceroy had just completed at San'a. A later native rising against the Abyssinians brought the Persians into the country, invited by the native princes to help them against the Abyssinians, but remaining to rule, and that struggle so weakened the country that the Muslim conquest, even in the lifetime of the Prophet, was an easy matter. When the Caliph 'Umar in 635 compelled the Jews and Christians of Najran to emigrate to Mesopotamia and take up new lands there, the fate of Christianity in South Arabia was sealed.

The history of Christianity in South Arabia was thus not a long one, but it had apparently a vigorous life, and though short was yet long enough to seal its faith by martyrdom and so have a place in the remembrance of the Church universal. The story of that martyrdom was brought vividly to mind in 1924 when Axel Moberg published some Syriac fragments that had been rescued from the binding of an old Syriac liturgical MS, and which proved to be odds and ends of a *Book of the Himyarites*, which once contained the full story of that martyrdom. This, however, is only one document, and as the documents dealing with this brief history of Christianity in South Arabia have an interest in themselves, and deserve to be known to a wider group than the

very small circle of Orientalists who have access to them at present, three of them have been selected as typical examples.

The first consists of the two divergent traditions on the introduction of Christianity into Najran, taken from the Muslim Arabic sources. The selection here is from the *Sirat an-Nabi* of Ibn Hisham (c. 834). It is the earliest extant Life of the Prophet Muhammad, and is based on the earlier Life of one Ibn Ishaq (c. 768), which he frequently quotes in extenso. In the early part of this work the author gives some account of the condition of affairs in Arabia before the coming of Muhammad, and is at pains to explain the presence of Jewish and Christian communities in the peninsula. The stories of Phemion and Ibn ath-Thamir are on pp. 20-25 of Wüstenfeld's edition of the text. The legends have been studied by Axel Moberg in his *Über einige christliche Legenden in der islamischen Tradition*, Lund, 1930.

The second is an Abyssinian legend of the planting of Christianity, which some have thought connected with the above Arabic story of Phemion, and which certainly has been translated into Ethiopic from some Arabic source. Conti Rossini published the Ethiopic text of *Acta Azqir* from a MS in the British Museum and one in the d'Abbadie collection, in Tome XIX of the *Rendiconti dell'Accademia dei Lincei*, Roma, 1910. In its present form it cannot be earlier than the XIVth Cent. but as the martyr Azqir is commemorated in the Ethiopian Synaxarium on the 24th Hedar, the legend may be fairly old.

The third is the famous letter of Simeon of Beth Arsham over which so much controversy has raged since Assemani first published the text in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. The text used here is that published by Ign. Guidi in 1881 in Vol. VII of the *Memorie della R. Accademia dei Lincei*. Its authenticity was denied by J. H. Mordtmann in the *ZDMG* for 1881, in his discussion "Die himjarisch-äthiopischen Kriege noch einmal," and Halévy impugned its genuineness in his articles in the *Revue des Etudes juives* for 1889, where he tried to prove that the persecutors in South Arabia were not the Jews but the Arians. Curiously enough both Duchesne and D. S. Margoliouth have been willing to give up the genuineness of the letter, though that has been strongly defended by both Dillmann and Nöldeke, who have more right to be heard on such a question. The genuineness of the letter, of course, only means that the letter was written by Simeon of Beth Arsham in much the form in which we have it, but does not guarantee that all that Simeon tells of in the letter actually happened as he describes it. Simeon was the monophysite Bishop of Beth Arsham, who preached the monophysite doctrine at al-Hira, the capital of the Lakhmid kingdom, which perhaps explains why he was part of an embassy from Justin II to the Lakhmid king al-Mundhir III, and so was there when the news of the massacres at Najran reached the Lakhmid court. Halévy in his articles in the *Revue des Etudes Juives* laboured hard to prove that the persecutions were not at the hands of Jews, but there are numerous odd pieces of evidence to show that there was some sort of Jewish hegemony there at the time, and the documents from one point of view are rather interesting as documents of anti-Semitism, showing the sort of things that were being said and the arguments used in that sad business in the sixth century. However, it is as documents illustrating the stories that were circulating in that century as to the history of Christianity in South Arabia that they are presented here.

### **IBN HISHAM ON PHEMION**

(ed. Wüstenfeld, pp. 20-22)

Now in Najran there were adherents of the people of the religion of Jesus the son of Mary, who followed the Gospel, a kindly and upright people as are the people of their faith. They had a chief named 'Abdallah b. ath-Thamir. The place where that religion first took root was Najran, which was the centre of the Arab country at that time. Its people, like the rest of the Arabs, worshipped idols, and the reason for Christianity starting there was that a man of the Christian faith, named Phemion, settled among them and led them to his religion, which they adopted.

Said Ibn Ishaq: Al-Mughira b. Abi Labid, the client of al-Akhnas, related to me from Wahb b. Munabbih the Yemenite, that the story of the coming of that religion to Najran, was that a man of the adherents of the religion of Jesus the Son of Mary (upon whom be peace) named Phemion, who was a pious, earnest, unworldly man, whose prayers God heard, used to wander about from village to village, never staying long enough to be well-known in one village ere he set off to another where he was not known. He was a builder and brick-layer, and never ate save what he earned by his own labours. He used to honour the Lord's day, for when it was the Lord's day he would not labour, but would go out into the open places to pray until evening came.

He was in one of the villages of Syria working in his unobtrusive way when he caught the interest of a man of the place named Salih. This Salih conceived such an affection for him as none before him ever had, and used to follow him wherever he went, though Phemion took no notice of him, till one Lord's day he went out into the open spaces as was his wont, and Salih followed him without Phemion being aware of it. Salih sat down within sight of him, but concealed from him, not wishing him to know where he was. Then Phemion rose up and prayed, and while he was praying there drew near him a *tinnin*, that snake which hath seven heads. When Phemion saw it he cursed it and it died. Salih saw this snake, and not knowing what had happened to it, he feared what it might do to Phemion, so he began to lament and cry out, "O Phemion, the *tinnin*! it is coming after you" But he did not turn round, but went on with his prayers till he finished them. Then evening came and he departed. But he knew now that he was taken notice of, and Salih knew that he had seen his spying-place. So he said to him, "O Phemion, you know that I have never loved anyone as I love you. I desire your companionship and to be with you wherever you are." Phemion answered, "As you will. My condition is as you see, so if you think you can bear it, well and good." So Salih followed him.

Then the people of that village also began to take notice of him, so that when he returned home any slave who had sickness would come to him and he would pray for him, and he would find relief, but if he were summoned to anyone in sickness he would not go to him. Now there was a man in that village who had a son who was sick. He asked about Phemion, and was told that he never came to anyone who summoned him, but that he laboured for daily wage as a builder. So the man went to his son and laid him in a room and put a cover over him. Then he went to Phemion and said, "O Phemion, I have some work that needs doing at my house, so come along with me that you may see it and I will strike a bargain with you about it." So he went along with him till they reached and entered the room. Said Phemion, "Well, what do you want me to do for your house?" He said, "Thus and thus." Then the man pulled the cover from off his son and said, "O Phemion, this is a servant of God to whom has befallen what thou seest, so pray to God for him." Then Phemion prayed for him, and the youth rose up whole.

But Phemion knew that he had become known, so he departed from the village, and Salih followed him. Now while he was journeying along in a part of Syria he passed by a very ancient tree, when a man called to him, "O, Phemion!" "Yes," answered he. Said the man, "Long have I been looking for you and saying, Will he never come? Then I heard your voice and knew that you were he. Do not leave this place till you have attended to me, for I am about to die." Straight-way he died, so he attended to him and buried him, and then moved on. Salih continued following him till they set foot in a certain territory of the Arabs, who fell upon them. Afterwards a caravan of some Arabs took them and carried them off and sold them in Najran. At that time the people of Najran followed the religion of the ancient Arabs, worshipping a tall date-palm they had there, for which also they had an annual festival when they hung upon it the finest garments they could find, and female ornaments. Then they would come and dance around it the whole day.

Phemion was bought by one of the nobles, another of whom bought Salih. Now when Phemion rose up by night to pray in the house in which his master had set him to dwell, it shone brightly for him till morning came, so that he had no need of a lamp. His master noticed this and was amazed at what he saw, so he asked him about his religion. Then Phemion told him and said to

him, "But you people are in error; this palm tree neither harms anyone, nor does it benefit them, and were I to curse it, my God whom I worship, would destroy it, for He is God alone Who has no partner." Said his master, "Then do it, and if you succeed we will enter your religion and abandon ours." So Phemion arose and purified himself and prayed a two bow prayer, and called down God's curse upon it. Then God mighty sent a wind which tore it up by the roots and cast it away. Thereupon the people of Najran embraced his religion, and he brought them over to the religious laws of the religion of Jesus the Son of Mary. Afterwards there entered among them those innovations which came among people of their faith all over the earth. Thus was the origin of Christianity in Najran in the land of the Arabs.

Said Ibn Ishaq: "This is the narrative of Wahb b. Munabbih, which he got from the people of Najran."

#### **ANOTHER ACCOUNT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO NAJRAN**

(Ibn Hisham, ed. Wüstenfeld, pp. 23-24)

Said Ibn Ishaq: Yazid b. Ziyad related to me from Mud b. Ka'b al Qurazi an account which I heard also from certain people of Najran, who had heard it from their forefathers, how that the people of Najran were polytheists, worshipping idols. In one of the villages near Najran, for Najran itself was the capital city of that country, there was a magician, who taught occult arts to the youth of Najran. When Phemion came there (the story of Ibn Munabbih does not name him, but says — "a man came there"), he set up a tent between Najran and that village where dwelt the magician, to whom the people of Najran used to send their youths to learn occult arts. Now it came to pass that Ath-Thamir sent his son 'Abdallah along with the youths of Najran, and as he passed the owner of that tent he was astonished at what he saw of his prayers and his worship. So he began to take his seat near him and listen to him, which resulted in his conversion, so that he turned his face to God and worshipped Him. Then he began to ask (Phemion) about the religious law of this faith, and when he was well instructed therein, began to ask him about the mightiest names of God. But though Phemion knew this he concealed it from him, saying, "My child, you could not bear it; I fear you are too weak for it."

Ath-Thamir, 'Abdallah's father, had no idea that his son was not going to the magician like the other youths. When 'Abdallah saw that his friend kept this knowledge from him and feared his weakness, he went and got some divining arrows, and wrote on these arrows all the names of God that he knew, for every name one arrow till he finished the number. Then he lit a fire for them and began to throw them in, arrow after arrow until he came to the arrow on which was the mightiest name of God. He threw this arrow in but it leaped out without harming him. So he took this arrow and went to his friend (Phemion) and told him that he now knew the name which he had kept from him. Said he, "And what is it?" He said, "It is such and such." Said (Phemion), "And how did you learn it?" Then he told him what he had done, and (Phemion) said, "My child, you have obtained it, but keep yourself under control, a thing which I am afraid that you will not do."

Then 'Abdallah went back to Najran, and never did he meet anyone in distress but he would say to him, "Servant of God, will you admit the unity of God and join my religion? Then will I pray to God for you and He will relieve you from all the trouble you are in." He would say, "Surely," and would confess the unity and be converted, whereupon 'Abdallah would pray for him and he would be relieved. This went on till there remained not in Najran anyone in trouble or distress who had not come to him and submitted to his command that he might pray for him for relief. Then the king of Najran heard of him and commanded him to come to him, and said, "You have turned against me the people of my city and have transgressed against my religion and the religion of my fathers, so I shall make an example of you." Said ('Abdallah), "But you cannot do that." Then the king had him taken to a high mountain and cast down head first, but he reached

the ground unharmed. Then the king sent him to a pool they had in Najran wherein everything that fell perished, and had him cast therein, but he came out unharmed. When he had brought him to the end of his resources, 'Abdallah said to him, "You will never be able to kill me till you confess the unity of God and believe in what I believe. If you do that you will have power over me and be able to kill me." Thereupon the king proclaimed the unity and confessed the faith of 'Abdallah b. ath-Thamir. Then he struck him with a stick that was in his hand and fractured his skull a little so that he died. But the king perished at the same moment.

Thus did the people of Najran agree upon accepting the religion of 'Abdallah b. ath-Thamir, and it was then just as Jesus gave it in the Gospel and as He ordained. Later there affected them also those corruptions that affected all the people of this religion. Such was the origin of Christianity in Najran.

### THE ACTS OF AZQIR

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one sole God. The spiritual conflict and martyrdom of the holy martyr Azqir, priest of Najran, who was the first teacher of the Christians in the city of Najran, and who spread Christian religion in the time of Sarabhil Dankéf, king of Hamer. He set up a tent for an oratory, and set up a cross. Learning of this the chief people of the city of Najran of the She'eban and the Qefan, sent men who threw down the tent which was his oratory, broke the cross, arrested the holy Azqir, and cast him into prison in darkness. This cavern was called Qafnayt. While he was in prison there came those men whom he had instructed before being imprisoned, whom he made neophytes, and who now came to seek baptism. The holy Azqir said to the guards of the prison, "Open to these men," but the guards of the prison refused to open. Then the holy Azqir rose to his feet and prayed, saying, "O my Lord, Jesus Christ, Who didst open the iron gate for Peter and loosed his bonds, do Thou order for these that the door stand open all night, and close not till Thy servants have entered and have received Thy grace." The door then opened of itself by the power of the Lord, and those men to the number of fifty entered. The prison guards rose up to shut the door, but they were afraid, and they were about fifty. The prison guards did not succeed in shutting the door to hinder anyone from entering in to the holy Azqir. Then the prison guards recognized that such a miracle was from the Lord, and being afraid they fled, abandoning their post. So those fifty men entered in to the holy Azqir, who made a pool in the prison and baptized them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, so that those men received baptism that night. The Saint led prayers, and there appeared to them full light within the prison. So it was, and this was the first miracle that the holy Azqir did, being in prison.

The king Sarabhel was annoyed by what the holy Azqir had done, and the king sent a messenger to the chiefs who were in Najran, saying, "Bring quickly that man who has introduced a new religion into my country." Then there ran to the holy Azqir, as he was in prison, a man named Kiryaq, who spoke and said, "I am come to give you good news, because the king of Hamer has sent a message regarding you, for which reason they will take you to him for martyrdom." The holy Azqir said to this man, "Truly, yours is good news, and this good news of yours will be at my expense" (i.e., for me to reward). The inhabitants of the city came and spoke to the holy Azqir, brought him out of the prison, and bound him with that man who had held discourse with the holy Azqir. At that moment there arrived many merchants from Tonah, with whom they sent the Saint to the king of Hamer. As they went out from Najran many people followed him, accompanying him as far as the place called Wadho, about fifteen furlongs from the city of Najran. Arrived there, two men besought him to baptize them, so he made there a place of prayer, near a rock, caused water to flow, and there baptized them that day. Although there was no water in that place it flowed at the prayer of the holy Azqir and still flows to this day. The place where the water flowed is precipitous. When he who was bound with him saw this prodigy, he begged of him, saying, "Remember, O my lord, that it was I who spoke to you when you were in prison, and you said to me, 'At my expense is thy good news.' Fulfill now the promise of what you were

going to give me for my good news. I desire not, indeed, gold or silver, or any such thing; but baptize me, and that will be my recompense for my good news." The holy Azqir thanked the Lord for this man, and straightway baptized him.

## II

Passing beyond that place, as they proceeded they came to the desert called Gaw'an. As it says in the Book, "My soul had thirst in the desert land, where there was neither tree nor water," so in that land there was neither tree nor water. Gaw'an in Arabic signifies "hunger." When they arrived in that place there came all the travellers, and found themselves in great tribulation, both they and their beasts, on the day of that dry stage. So they begged the holy Azqir and besought him, saying, "Pray the Lord for us, to everyone's advantage, that we die not of thirst. For we know well that whatever thou dost ask the Lord He will grant thee." Said the holy Azqir, "Give me a drinking-trough." So they brought him a drinking-trough. Then he separated himself from them, placed the drinking-trough in front of him, stretched out his hands, raised his hands to the heavens and prayed, saying, "O my Lord Jesus Christ, who hast created the heavens and set them as a vault; who didst change the water into wine, and didst satisfy a great multitude with five loaves, work now a miracle. Send Thy mercy and quench the thirsty soul." Then a cloud came down on the drinking-trough to the height of a man's palm, and the drinking-trough was filled with water. Men and beasts drank, quenched their thirst, and furnished themselves for the voyage. The number of men who drank from that water was more than six hundred, besides the beasts. That drinking-trough still exists today in Tonah, in the house of a spiritual descendant of Azqir. This is the third miracle wrought by the holy Azqir in the name of God, after his imprisonment.

## III

Passing beyond there they came to Sefar, to the king of Hamer. They made him enter to the king, but as he entered he made no salutation. The king looked at him with supreme disdain, and said to the holy Azqir, "What is this new religion that you have introduced into my country?" The holy Azqir said to him, "But this is not a new religion, for indeed, the Prophets and the Pentateuch foretold it." Then he began to discuss with the Jews, basing himself on the Holy Scriptures. Said the king to him, "What does it profit you, O Azqir, to go into all this question? Think rather of yourself and of your life in this world, since Christ in whom you have believed will not avail you. So take heed lest I inflict on you a great and terrible punishment." The holy Azqir answered him, "Life in this world is death, and your condemnation to death, which is in your hand, to us is life." Then the king began to tempt him with riches, but the holy Azqir said no to him, "Gold and silver are but ephemeral, whereas Christ will abide for ever." After this one of the Rabbis rose and said to the king, "My Lord, these Christians have a magic beverage which they make men drink. If one spits it out directly, he may deny Christ, but if it enters anyone's marrow he will never deny Christ for ever; prolong no further discussion with him, but send him back to his country and to his Christian companions, that he may be judged in Najran, where his own people may see and fear." The king granted this request and wrote to the chiefs who were in Najran, the She'eban and the Qefan. He sent the holy Azqir to Najran and wrote as follows, "When Azqir is come to you, let him not be executed in secret, but publicly. Attach him to a stake; pile around it wood, and keep it burning so long as he is still alive." The holy Azqir went out from the king as one rejoicing, having heard how the king had written that he be suspended and burned with fire for Christ's sake. Back in Najran he taught and made converts to Christianity. At break of day they led him without the city, planted there a stake, and suspended him thereon. Then they brought much wood of palm branches, and lay them close together against him. A Jew said, "Let Christ come and save you who have trusted in Him, if He is able." Said the holy Azqir, "I have put my trust in the Lord, in my Lord Jesus Christ. Were fire set to all the wood in your country laid against me, it would avail naught against me." Then they lit the fire against him, and it burned up all the wood and the cords with which they had bound his hands and feet, but the holy Azqir descended from the stake and stood in the midst of the fire like gold

purified. The Jews said, "This man who has vanquished the fire is a sorcerer and magician." They also said, "Leave him. We will stone him with stones."

#### IV

There was a Jew there with his wife and his sons. Having put on festal attire they had come out to take part in the death of the holy martyr Azqir. He and his wife were the first of all to hurl stones at the holy Azqir. The stone did not reach the holy Azqir, but the little son died before his father's eyes, even though his father was protecting him. His stomach split and he died. Also his wife, while still alive, was devoured by worms. The Jews said among themselves, "Come now, let us beat him with sticks." One of them said, "How long will you put up with this man? Come along now, let us make enquiry and prepare a sword with which we shall kill him." And they found a Najranite whom the same holy Azqir had before converted to Christianity, and this man carried a sword. They begged of him to lend it to them, but he refused to lend it. But the holy Azqir desired to end his spiritual combat, and said to the disciple, "My son, lend your sword. If you lend it not you will have no share and common heritage with me." So straightway he gave his sword to a Jew. The holy Azqir stretched forth his neck, and the Jew struck with the sword and severed the head of the holy priestly martyr Azqir. Many miracles were worked at his tomb. May his prayers be with us forever and ever. Amen.

Moreover others had the crown of martyrdom also. They flinched not, but gave themselves to the fire as a sacrifice for love of the name of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, to receive the crown of martyrdom, disdaining the world. In the territory of Najran there received the crown of martyrdom metropolitans, priests, deacons, monks, men and women, and many people together, and were judged. The number of those who were killed was thirty-eight. Their commemoration is on the 24th day of the month of Hedar in Greece. To us be their prayers, and may we have share in the reign and the heritage of all the saints and martyrs, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and glory, majesty and power, and of His Father, together with Him and the Holy Ghost, the giver of life, the celestial one, now and always, throughout all the ages. Amen and Amen.

#### LETTER GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF THE HIMYARITE MARTYRS

*By Simeon, Bishop of the Persian Christians; sent from Hirta de Beth Nu'man*

We would have you know, beloved, that on the 20th of Second Kanun of this present year 835 of Alexander (i.e., January, 524 A.D.), we went out from Hirta de Nu'man with the most excellent Mar Abraham, the priest, son of Euphrasios, who had been sent from Justinian, King of the Romans, to Mundhir, King of Hirta, to make peace with the Romans. About him we have already written in our previous letter, for we and all the faithful who are with us are in receipt of his goodness, for in everything he is assisting our part of the faithful, and he knows well what formerly we wrote and what we now are writing.

When we had journeyed in the desert towards the south and the east a journey of ten days, we overtook King Mundhir, over against the mountains called the Sand Mountains, in the tongue of the Arabs of the place called Ramleh. When we came into the camp of Mundhir there advanced to meet us the pagan Arabs and the Ma'adites, saying to us, "What is there then for you to do from now on, since your Christ has been expelled by the Romans, the Persians and the Himyarites, and from all lands?" And when with these and the like reproaches Mar Abraham the priest was reproached, and we also with him, by the pagan Arabs and Ma'adites, great sorrow came upon us, and it was a great affliction for all true believers. As we approached there came a messenger from the King of the Himyarites to Mundhir King of Hirta, having a letter full of vaunting, in which he told him what evil things he had done to the Christians of Najran, the Himyarite city. And thus did he write to him:

That king whom the Cushites set up in our land is dead; and the winter season having arrived the Cushites were not able to come across to our land, so I have taken the rule over all the land of the Himyarites, and before all else, this I intend to do: all the Christians will I exterminate from the whole land of the Himyarites, unless they deny Christ and become Jews like us. First, all the Cushites who were left in our country to guard the church which they hoped they had built for themselves in our land, I was able to unsettle, and laid hold on them and killed them all, 280 men, both clerics and laymen. And that church of theirs I made into one of our synagogues. After this I led 120,000 troops with me, and went to the city of Najran, and besieged it for not a few days. But when I saw that it was not soon subdued, I gave them the word of an oath that they should suffer no evil if they surrendered to me their city of their own accord. By this they were brought into subjection and opened the gates of the city, and all their leaders came out unto me. But it did not seem to me right to keep troth with Christians, so I demanded of them first that they bring me their gold and their silver and all their substance, and when they had brought it to me, and I had taken it from them, I demanded of them that they show me Paul, their Bishop. He, they told me, was dead, but I did not believe them till they showed me his tomb. His bones I took and burned with fire. I burned also their church and their priests, and all that was found therein. After this I demanded of them that they deny Christ and the cross and become Jews like us, but they were not willing. Then I said to them, "Lo! now the Romans recognize that Christ was a man, why do you go astray after Him? Ye, surely, are not better than the Romans?" And we said to them, "We are not demanding of you that you deny God, the maker of heaven and earth, nor that you worship the sun or the moon or other luminous bodies, or any other creature, but that you deny Jesus, He who considered Himself as God, and say only that He is man and not God." And with many such (words) we distressed them, but they were not willing to deny Christ, nor were they willing to say that He was man; but in their foolishness they were saying, "He is God, and the Son of the Merciful." And they elected to die for Him. Their leader, moreover, spoke much against us, and as he deserved so was he recompensed, and all their chief men were killed. Then the remainder fled and hid themselves. These we have not yet come upon, but we have given command that all, wherever they are found, are to be put to death, unless they deny Christ and become Jews like us.

After this we brought out their womenfolk and said to them, "Lo! ye have seen with your eyes that your men, because they blasphemed and said that Christ was God and was the Son of Adonai, have all been killed. But do ye now spare yourselves and your sons and your daughters by denying Christ and His Cross, and become Jewesses like us, and ye shall live, but if not ye shall surely die." But these women, more even than their husbands, were blaspheming and saying, "Christ is God, and the Son of the Merciful. In Him do we believe, the cross do we adore, and for Him will we die. Far be it from us that we should deny Him, or that we should survive our husbands. With them and like them we will die for Christ." We demanded of them that they confess that Christ was man, and live; but they would not so say, and chose for themselves death for the sake of the deceiver and sorcerer.

Moreover those women among them who are called the religious we saw disputing with those whose husbands had been put to death and who were saying, "It is right that we should die first after our husbands," for they were running and contending with one another who should die first. But we, when we heard their striving and saw them contending with one another as to whom of them should die first, laughed at their madness, such that they went astray after a man who had the audacity blasphemously to pretend that He Himself was God. And we were amazed that even the children, whom we supposed would not know anything about it, had been brought up in that error. So when we saw that they were thus in their foolishness striving with one another (for the honour of martyrdom), we gave command that all these women be put to death. One of them, however, because of her noble birth, her lineage and her beauty, we were hoping would perhaps spare herself and her daughters, and be persuaded to deny Christ, so we gave command that she be not killed. Thus she came into the city, grieving that she had not died.

On the third day we sent for her (telling her) that if she would deny Christ she should live, but if not she should die. But she, when she heard this word, ran out into the market place in the middle of the city, although, as we have heard of her, she was a woman whose face no man had at any time seen, nor had she ever gone out in the daytime into the city until that day in which she stood in the city with uncovered head. And, as those who were there tell me, she cried aloud, saying, "Women of Najran, my comrades, Christians, Jews and pagans, hearken. Ye know me, how that I am a Christian, and ye know my lineage and family, of whom I am and whose daughter I am, and that I have gold and silver and slaves and maid servants and fields and produce, and that I lack nothing. And now my husband has been killed for Christ's sake, and if I desired another husband, a husband for me would not be lacking. But here I am saying to you that on this very day I possess 40,000 stamped darics stored up in my treasury apart from the treasury of my husband, and apart from gold and silver and jewels and pearls and jacinths for my adornment. These things there are women among you who have seen in my house. And ye, my comrades, know that a woman has no happier days than the days of her marriage feast. From then onward are anxieties and sighings, the bearing of children in anguish and the suckling of them. And when she is deprived of children she is in grief and sorrow, and when she buries sons she buries them in weeping and lamentation. But I, from today on, am free from all these things. In the days of my first marriage feast I was joyful; and my virgin daughters who have no husband I have adorned for the Christ. Rejoice with me, O my comrades, for twice have ye seen my face: on my first marriage feast, and now this second time. At that time with unveiled face before you all I went to my first spouse; now with unveiled face I go to Christ my Lord, my God and the God of my daughters, like as He came to us. Rejoice with me, my comrades; rejoice with me and with my daughters, that I am not less beautiful than you, and with it I go to Christ my Lord, unspoiled by Jewish unbelief. This beauty of mine will be for me a witness before my Lord, that he was not able to lead me astray into the sinfulness of unbelief in Christ. My gold and my silver, and all the jewels that are my adornment, my slaves and my maid-servants, and all that I have, shall be a testimony for me, that not for love of them have I denied Christ my Lord. And now the king has sent for me to deny Christ and live; but I have sent to him (saying) that were I to deny Christ I should die, but if I die for Christ's sake I shall live. Far be it from me, O my comrades, far be it from me to deny Christ my God, He in whom I have believed, and in whose name I was baptized and had my daughters baptized, whose cross I adore, and for whose sake I die, I and my daughters, as He died for us. Earthly gold I leave to the earth. Whosoever wishes to take my gold, let him take it; and whosoever wishes to take my silver and the jewels of my adornment, let him take (them), for I have abandoned everything that I may go to take from Christ my Lord its recompense. Blessed are ye, O my comrades, if ye hearken to my words. Blessed are ye, O my comrades, if ye know the truth for which I and my daughters die. Blessed are ye, if ye love Christ. Blessed am I; blessed am I and my daughters, who are going to this blessedness. Henceforth peace and tranquility will be with the peoples of Christ. The blood of these my brothers and sisters, who were slain for Christ's sake, will be a rampart to this city, if it remains faithful to Christ my Lord. Behold, with uncovered face I am going from this city, in which I was as in a temporary dwelling, but I am going with my daughters to another city, that there I may betroth them. Pray for me, my comrades, that Christ my Lord may receive me, and pardon me that I have been living these three days after the father of my daughters."

Then we heard a voice of lamentation from the city, such that we were all disturbed, for we did not know why the women were lamenting. But when the men came whom we had sent, and told us that all these things (above) related had raised an audacious uproar before the entire city, and that on account of this the women were lamenting, we were desirous of putting them to death for having permitted her to speak all this discourse and to stir up the city with her enchantments. After this she appeared in the city with uncovered head like an insane person, with her daughters, and came and stood before me with uncovered face, unashamed and holding her daughters with her hands, adorned as for a marriage festival. Then she loosed the tresses of her hair and wound them in her hand, raised her neck and stretched forth her throat with her head bowed before me saying, "A Christian am I, and so are my daughters. For Christ do we die. Cut off our heads, that we may go and overtake our brothers and our sisters, and the father of my daughters." But I, after

all this foolishness again urged her and incited her to deny Christ, and say only that He is a man, but she was not willing to say it. One of her daughters, indeed, waxing bold, had the audacity to insult us when she heard us asking her mother to deny Christ. When I saw that there was no chance of her denying Christ, I gave orders, in order to terrify all the Christians, and she was thrown to the ground. Then we commanded that her daughters be slain and their blood poured into her mouth, after which her own head would be cut off. Thus did we deal with her. Afterwards I commanded that she be raised from the ground and I asked her how the blood of her daughters tasted. But she in her foolishness swore by that same deceiver, "Like to a pure sacrifice, without blemish, thus was I tasting in my mouth and in my soul." Then we gave command and her head was struck off. But I swear by Adonai, King of Israel, that I grieved much because of her beauty and that of her daughters, and greatly did I wonder at her foolishness, and how she went astray after a man, a sorcerer and deceiver, who had the audacity to blaspheme and give Himself out as God, and that she did not spare either herself or her daughters.

As for the sons and daughters of those who had been killed, it seemed good to our chief priests and to us to deal with them according as is written in the Law, that the son shall not be recompensed for the sins of the father. So we gave commandment that the children be left until they reached full age. Then if they denied Christ and became Jews they should live, but if not they also should be put to death. So we divided them among our chiefs.

These things have we written to your Majesty, that you may rejoice that we have not left a Christian, not one, in this land of ours, and that you also may act likewise, that all the Christians who are in your dominions you may make followers of your religion, as we have done in our dominion; but as for the Jews who are in your dominion that you be their helper in everything, and whatever is needed in your dominion in return for this, send to us that we may dispatch it to you.

All these things the king of the Himyarites wrote to Mundhir king of Hirta just as we came to him in the desert with the excellent Mar Abraham the priest, son of Euphrasios, of whom we have spoken above who was sent from Justin the king, with the reverend and venerable Mar Sergius, Bishop of Beth Rusafa, to make peace between the Persian Arabs and the Romans. Now when these things thus written were before Mundhir of Hirta, and before many -- and there were many other things that the legate of the Himyarites said in mockery, laughing at and deriding the Christians and exulting, for these things that the king of the Himyarites despitefully did against the blessed martyrs and against the noble dame Duma and her daughters, all this the king of the Himyarites did not write in his letter, but the legate told these things to the king -- before Jews and pagans. Then was there great sorrow to all the Christians, and joy to the pagans and the Jews. And these things have we written from (what was in) the letter to Mundhir, and from the words of the legate.

Now after the reading of this letter, which had been sent from the king of the Himyarites, before Mundhir king of Hirta, (recounting) how the Christians there had been killed, and how persecution and great affliction had come upon them for the name of Christ, Mundhir the king waxed wroth, and in derision and scorning he cried out to all the Christian people of repute who were under his dominion, and said unto them, "Pay heed, ye Christians, to what I have said to you, and ye did not hearken, for I told you to forsake Christ, but ye were not willing. So forsake now the religion of Christ. Ye have already heard what happened to those who did not deny Christ, how the king of the Himyarites killed and destroyed them, and also burned their church. See how Christ has been rejected by Himyarites, Persians and Romans. Do ye not assent to forsake Christ? I am not better than the kings of the Persians and the Romans who have driven away and put out the Christians, nor than the king of the Himyarites, who has killed and exterminated them from his land. Pay heed to what I have said to you. But ye are not hearkening to me, nor are ye rejecting Christ."

When king Mundhir had said these things before all his grandees one of his grandees, a Christian, moved by great zeal, rose, and with great courage said to the king, "It is not fitting that thou speak thus O king. It was not in thy time that we became Christians, that thou shouldst counsel us to reject Christ and deny our Christianity. We indeed, are Christians, but so were our fathers and the fathers of our fathers." Then the king was moved to anger against him, and said to him, "Has thou made bold to speak before me?" Then that grandee who was a believer, answered and said before the king, "On behalf of the religion of God am I speaking, and I am not afraid; nor is any man able to hinder me, for my sword is not shorter than that of another. For the religion of God do I stand until death, and will fight, and I am not fearful." Then when king Mundhir saw his courage, and how he fearlessly spake before him, he was unable to say any more against him, because of his family, and because of his recognition, for he was a great man in the world, and one of the head men of Hirta.

When we came to Hirta de Nu'man on the Monday of the first week of Lent, we learned some things that were not written in the letter to Mundhir, for certain Himyarite believers, with a Christian ambassador who had been sent to king Mundhir from that Christian ruler whom the Cushites had set up to rule in the land of the Himyarites, when they were in Hirta de Nu'man, heard of the death of that Christian ruler who had sent them. Wherefore they hired a man from Hirta and sent him to Najran to see and find out the truth and bring them word from Najran. So this man went and brought word thus. When the king had given the Najranites an oath, and they had opened the gates of the city and come out to receive him and surrender the city to him, he was false to his oath, took their gold and their silver, burned the bones of the Bishop with fire, and burned the church with the monks and the people and all that was found in it. Next they brought all the chief people before him, to the number of 340 men, and he began to speak threateningly to the great and illustrious Harith b. Ka'b, who was their chief (saying), "Why did you desire to revolt against me and rely on that sorcerer and deceiver? Did you think that you would escape from my hands? But now spare your old age and deny that deceiver and His cross and thou shalt live; but if not thou shalt surely die an evil death, thou and thy companions, and all who will not deny Christ and the cross." The old man said to him, "Truly I am grieved for all the Christians my companions, who have been with me in the city, to whom I spake, but they would not hearken to me. For I was prepared to come out against thee to combat and fight with thee for the name of Christ, and either you kill me or I kill you; for I was relying on Christ my Lord to give me victory over you. But my companions would not allow me to do this. Again I desired to lead my family and servants alone and go out against you to fight you, but the Christians shut the city gates and would not allow me to go out. Again I told them to guard carefully the city, and not to open the gates to you, and was relying on Christ my Lord that the city be not subdued by you, seeing that in it there was nothing that lacked. But in this again my companions did not hearken to me. And when you sent them an oath, I told them not to believe you, telling them that you were false and the truth was not in you. But my companions would not be persuaded to hearken to me, and now in my old age you are telling me to deny Christ my God and become a Jew like you. Yet I should not survive a single hour or one day after I had denied (Him). You seek to alienate me from Christ my Lord in my old age. In truth thou hast not spoken like a king, nor acted like a king, for a king who is treacherous is no king. I have seen many kings, but I have not seen kings who are treacherous. I still am ruler over myself, and in my dominion I will not be false to Christ. Far be it from me to deny Christ, God, in Whom I have believed from my youth, in Whose name I was baptized, Whose cross I adore, and for Whose sake I die. In truth I am blessed, in that in my old age Christ has thought me worthy to die for Him. Now, indeed, I know that Christ has loved me, for long have I lived in this world through the bounty of Christ my Lord. Happily have I lived and I have lacked nothing. Children and grandchildren, lineage and all things has Christ my Lord given me abundantly in this world. In many battles have I been victorious through the power of the cross. I am confident that remembrance of me will not fail in this city, nor among my family, knowing now that I shall not die for ever. For I know and am assured that like as when a vine is pruned its shoots increase, so our Christian people shall increase in this city. Do not pride yourself that you have accomplished anything, for lo, I am telling you that this city shall wax eminent in Christian living, and there shall be built again this

church which today has by you been burned with fire. Christianity will have dominion and will command kings and rule, and will extinguish your Judaism. Your kingdom will pass and your dominion fail."

When the honourable and illustrious old man had said these words, he faced around behind him, and said in a loud voice to the faithful who were around him, "Have ye heard, my brethren, what I have said to this Jew?" And they all cried out "We have heard everything that thou hast said, our father." Again he said to them, "Are these words true or not?" And they all cried out, "True and in truth are they." Again he cried and said unto them, "How does it seem to you? Is there perhaps among you someone who fears the sword and would deny Christ? Let him come out from among us." But they all cried out, "Far be it from us, far be it from us, to deny Christ. Be of good cheer, our father, be of good cheer. Do not be grieved about this for we are all like thee, and with thee will die for Christ. There is no man of us who will remain alive after you." Again he cried aloud and said, "Hearken unto me all of you, Christians, pagans, Jews. If any one, whether my wife or my sons or my daughters, or any of my race or family, deny Christ and remain alive with this Jew who disbelieves in Him, he is not of my lineage or of my family, and I have with him no portion or share in anything. Everything that I possess, let it be for the church that later shall be built in this city after us. But if my wife or any of my sons or daughters remain alive by any chance, yet have not denied Christ, let everything be theirs, but those three properties that the church will choose let them be for the church."

Having said these things to all the people, the old man turned toward the king and said to him, "Lo, thou hast heard for thyself all these things; do not now recommence asking us anything of this kind. Far be it from us to deny Christ our God. Behold now there is no obstacle to our dying for Christ. Behold the moment of eternal life. Rejected be everyone who denies Christ. Rejected be everyone who does not confess that Christ is God and the Son of God. Rejected be everyone who submits to you and to the Jews your companions. Behold we stand before you. Whatsoever you desire to do, do. Truly I tell you, I am wont to drink the first cup at the banquet before my companions, so now this cup of death for Christ's sake, let it be mixed first for me. Behold I seal myself and all my companions, as is our custom, with the life-giving sign of the cross, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then they all cried out, "Amen and Amen," and sealed themselves with the sign of the cross. And all cried out, "Rejected be everyone who denies Christ. Be of good cheer, our father, be of good cheer. Behold Abraham the Patriarch, an old man like thyself, gazes upon thee. Rejected be everyone who denies Christ and remains alive after thee."

When the king saw that there was no hope that they would deny Christ, he commanded that they be brought near to the valley that is called Wadi, and ordered their heads to be cut off, and their corpses cast into the valley. When they came to the valley they stood all of them together and stretched forth their hands to the heavens and said, "Christ, our God, come to our help. Christ, our God, give us strength. Christ, our God, receive our spirits. Christ, our God, may the blood of Thy servants, which is being shed for Thy sake, be acceptable unto Thee. Christ, our God, make us worthy of the vision of Thyself. Christ, our God, behold we have confessed Thee as Thou hast taught us, do Thou confess us before Thy Father as Thou hast promised us. Christ, our God, build this church that has been burned this day by this Jew. Christ, our God, appoint a Bishop for this city in place of the saintly Mar Paul, whose bones have been burned this day by this Jew." And they all cried out, "Let us salute one another." Then after they had saluted one another, the old man stretched out his hand to them and spake, crying out, "The salvation of Christ, which was given to the thief on the cross be with our brethren." And the robust men, the companions of the old man, ran and were supporting him, and bringing him near to the executioners like the master of a banquet, rejoicing and saying, "Christ receive our father, and us with him, for we are being put to death for Thy sake." Then the old man knelt down on his knees, while his companions were holding and supporting his hands, like to Moses on the top of the mountain. Then the executioner smote and cut off his head, while his companions ran and took his blood and rubbed

it on their faces and on their bodies as an act of piety. And everyone of them, wherever he saw a sword unsheathed, ran and knelt on his knees to receive the sword. Thus did they all receive the sword. Now the name of that illustrious victor was Harith b. Ka'b.

This also that follows was not written in the letter to Mundhir, but that man who came from Najran, told as follows. There was a child of three years whose mother was brought out to be put to death, and his mother was holding on to him as he was running along. But when he saw the king sitting clothed in royal robes, he broke from his mother and ran and embraced the knees of the king. The king took him and began to caress him and say to him, "What do you desire, to go and die with your mother or to remain with me?" The child said to him, "O Lord, O Lord, with my mother do I wish to die, and for this did I come out with my mother, for she said to me, 'Come my son, let us go to die for Christ's sake.' But let me go and return to my mother, lest she die and I see her not, for she told me that the king of the Jews had given command that all who would not deny Christ should die, and, O Lord, I am not denying Christ." The King said to him, "And how do you know Christ?" The child answered, "O Lord, every day I see Him in the church with my mother, and if you will come to the church I will show Him to you." The king said to him, "Do you love me or your mother?" The child answered, "O Lord, it is my mother I love better than you." The king said to him, "Do you love me or Christ?" The child answered, "O Lord, O Lord, the Christ do I love better than you, and He is better than you." The king said to him, "Then why did you come to embrace my knees?" The child answered, "Because I thought you were that Christian king whom I had seen in the church. No, O Lord, had I known that you were a Jew I would not have come to you." The king said to him, "I will give you nuts and almonds and figs and everything you desire." The child answered, "No, by Christ, I will not eat the nuts of Jews." The king said to him, "Why?" The child answered, "Because the nuts of the Jews are unclean; but let me go to my mother that she may not die and leave me alone." The king said to him, "Remain with me and be my son." The child answered, "No, by Christ, I will not remain with you, for your breath stinks, and my mother's breath is more pleasant than yours."

Then the king said to those who were standing before him, "See this evil root; he speaks thus even from his infancy. See how that deceiver and sorcerer has been able to deceive even a child." Then said one of the king's grandees to the child, "Come with me, and I will take you to the queen, and she shall be a mother to you." But the child answered, "May your face be buffeted. By the Lord, I prefer my mother to the queen, for my mother takes me to the church. But let me go, for behold my mother has gone and left me alone." And when the child saw that the king would not let him go, he bit the king on the thigh, saying to him, "Let me go, Jew, evil one; let me go to my mother. Let me go, for my mother is dead and I want to die with her." Then the king lifted up the child and gave him to one of his grandees, saying to him, "Keep him, and when he is grown, if he deny Christ he shall live, but if not he shall die." So that man, who was his servant, took him, while he was howling and kicking his legs and crying to his mother, saying, "My lady, my lady, the Jews are taking me away. Come and get me that I may go with thee to church." Then the mother when she beheld him, cried to him, saying, "Come, my son, I commit thee to Christ. Weep not, my son, behold I am coming to thee. Go, my son, and wait for me in the church near Christ, until I come, my son. Lo, I am making my way to you. Do not weep, my beloved. Behold, Christ is there in the church; beside Him wait for me, beside Him wait for me, my son, I am coming after thee." When she had thus spoken they cut off her head.

The following also was not in the letter of the king of the Himyarites to king Mundhir, but he who came from Najran spoke thus, (telling) of how the little daughter of the blessed Duma, who was a girl of nine years of age, when she heard how the king told her mother to spit on the cross and deny Christ, filled her mouth with spittle and spat in the king's face, saying to him, "May you be spat at, who wert not ashamed to tell the queen my mother to spit on the life-giving cross and to deny Christ. May you be rejected, and all the Jews your companions; and may everyone who denies Christ and the cross be rejected like you. Christ knows that my mother is better than thy mother, and that my lineage is better than thine, yet thou hast presumed to tell my mother to deny

Christ and spit on the cross. May thy mouth be closed, Jew, killer of his Lord." Thus spake the daughter of that blessed one to the king, and straightway she was slain, and her sister, as was written above. The name of that worthy and victorious matron was Duma, daughter of Azmeni.

Now when letters such as these were read before Mundhir the king, and before many, there was great sorrow among all the Christians. And straightway we wrote a copy thereof, and sent it to you, beloved, urging that swiftly and in haste, without delay or negligence, these matters be made known to the reverend and holy bishops, fugitives with Christ in Egypt, that by their hands the Patriarch of Alexandria may get to know of all these things, that they may stir him up to write to the king of the Cushites not to neglect the affairs of the Himyarites, but swiftly and in haste may march (to their aid). These things have also been made known to the cities of the faithful : Antioch, Tarsus of Cilicia, Caesarea of Cappadocia and Edessa, and other cities of the faithful, that they may make commemoration of the holy martyrs, male and female, of whom we have written above, and that they may pray for the tranquility and peace of the holy church and the kingdom. Let the Bishops also know how the Jews are destroying the asylum of the church and the oratory of the Roman martyrs. These evil deeds the Jews and their companions are doing to the Christian people who are in the land of the Himyarites. Yet the Bishops of all the Roman cities, ancient and modern, in order to gain a few pieces of money, sell to the Jews the church buildings and oratories of the martyrs, and they pull them down beneath the cross (i.e., even in lands under Christian rule). Those Jews who are in Tiberias send priests of theirs year by year and season by season to stir up commotion against the Christian people of the Himyarites. If the Bishops are Christian and desire to see Christianity flourishing, and are not partners with the Jews, let them urge the king and his grandees to take revenge on the chief priests of Tiberias and the other cities, so that they be shut up in prison. Yet we do not bid them to render evil for evil, but make them give security that they will not send letters or persons of quality to the king of the Himyarites, he who did all these evil things that we have written above to the Christian people of the Himyarites. Let them say to them that if they will not do this they will burn their synagogues, and they shall be expelled from beneath the cross, and the Christians shall have dominion over them. When the king of the Himyarites hears this perhaps he will wish to spare his Jewish companions and cease from persecuting the Christians. But I know that Jewish gold is flowing and covering up the truth, and that the vaunting of Jews and pagans is exceedingly great. Also love of silver and gold is strong in the church, and the love of the pastors has grown cold, for which reason the flocks are bereft of pastors who will suffer for their flocks. But what we say let them themselves do. That which has appeared is Christ, God, and a good pastor who gave Himself for His sheep, who provides help for His flock, bought by His precious blood. To Him be glory and honour, renown and reverence, now and at all times, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Says) the writer--These things I found and searched out and learned from those who had gone and come from that region, who had been sent from the king. They say that the Cushites came upon that Jewish king, bound to his neck pottery vessels of great weight, and cast him from a boat into the midst of the sea. Then there reigned a king named Alparna who built a church and an oratory for those blessed ones, by whose prayers may the humble writer be kept from all evil. Amen.

Finished is the story of the Himyarites.