

or any such thing; but baptize me, and that will be my recompense for my good news." The holy Azqîr 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 travelers, and found themselves in great tribulation, both they and their beasts, on the day of that dry stage. So they begged the holy Azqîr 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 Azqîr, "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 Tonâh, in the house of a spiritual descendant of Azqîr. This is the third miracle wrought by the holy Azqîr in the name of God, after his imprisonment.

III

Passing beyond there they came to Şefâr, to the king of Ḥamêr. 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 Azqîr, "What is this new religion that you have introduced into my country?" The holy Azqîr 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 Azqîr, 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 Azqîr 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 Azqīr said 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 Najrān, where his own people may see and fear." The king granted this request and wrote to the chiefs who were in Najrān, the She'ebān and the Qēfān. He sent the holy Azqīr to Najrān and wrote as follows, "When Azqīr 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 Azqīr 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 Najrān 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 Azqīr, "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 Azqīr 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 Azqīr. He and his wife were the first of all to hurl stones at the holy Azqīr. The stone did not reach the holy Azqīr, 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 Najrānite whom the same holy Azqīr 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 Azqīr 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 Azqîr stretched forth his neck, and the Jew struck with the sword and severed the head of the holy priestly martyr Azqîr. Many miracles were worked at his tomb. May his prayers be with us for ever 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 Najrân 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 Ḥedâr 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 Ḥirta de
Bêth Nu'mân

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 Ḥirta de Nu'mân 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 Ḥirta, 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 Ḥirta, having a letter full of vaunting, in which he told him what evil things he had done to the Christians of Najrān, 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 Najrān, 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 Najrān, 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 tranquillity 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 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 be-

came 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 Ḥirta just as we came to him in the desert with the excellent Mar Abrahām 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 Bēth Rūṣāfā, to make peace between the Persian Arabs and the Romans. Now when these things thus written were before Mundhir of Ḥirta, 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 spitefully did against the blessed martyrs and against the noble dame Dūmā 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 Ḥirta, (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 shouldest 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 Ḥirta.

When we came to Ḥirta de Nu'mān 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 Ḥirta de Nu'mān, heard of the death of that Christian ruler who had sent them. Wherefore they hired a man from Ḥirta and sent him to Najrān to see and find out the truth and bring them word from Najrān. So this man went and brought word thus. When the king had given the Najrānites 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 Ḥārith 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 Wādī, 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