

The Episode of the Bell

1. It is reported that al-Harith al-A'war said, "I was travelling with the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abu Talib ('a) in Hirah when we came upon a monk who was ringing a church bell.

'Ali ibn Abu Talib ('a) said, 'O Harith! Do you know what this church bell is saying?' I said, 'Allah, His Apostle and the son of the uncle of His Apostle know better.' He said, 'It strikes the metaphor of this world and its destruction and it says, "There is no god but Allah, really, really, truly, truly. Surly this world has beguiled us, has occupied us, has made itself alluring to us.

O son of this world! Take your time! Take your time! Ring, ring. O son of this world! Gather, gather. The world is annihilated moment by moment. No day passes us without a pillar falling. We have ruined the everlasting house and we made our homes in a transitory realm. We do not know how much we have fallen short in it until we die.'^{[1](#)}

Harith said, 'O Commander of the Faithful! Do the Christians know this?' He said, 'If they knew it, they would not have taken Christ as a god other than Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent.'

Harith said, 'Then I went to the monk and said to him, "By the right of Christ over you! Ring the church bell in the way that you do."

Then he started ringing it, and I said word for word [what Imam 'Ali had told him] to 'until we die.' Then the monk said, 'By the right of your Prophet over you! Who informed you of this?' I said, 'That man who was with me yesterday.'

He said, 'Is that man kin to the Prophet?' I said, 'He is the son of his uncle.' He said, 'By the right of your Prophet! Did he hear this from your prophet?' I said, 'Yes.' Then he became a Muslim. Then he said to me, 'By Allah! I found in the Torah that at the end of the prophets there is a prophet who interprets what the church bell says.'"^{[2](#)}

¹. This interpretation of the sound of the church bell is in a rhymed sing-song rhythm.

². Bihar, 14, 334, 1

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