NOW the Buddhist halls stand side by side, the Buddhist teachings filling them to the roof; Buddhism flourishes in a fashion surpassing anything known in India or China; and the rites and ceremonies of the sacred priesthood resemble those of arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. In spite of this fact, however, it has yet to be decided which among the various sutras preached in the Buddha's lifetime are superior and which inferior, which are profound and which shallow, and in this sense we are hardly different from the birds or beasts. People make haste to cast aside the Thus Come One Shakyamuni with his three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, and instead put their faith in some Buddha or bodhisattva in another realm. Are they not like the Anti-Lokāyata believers of ancient India?

Belief in the Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering; the Zen school is the work of the heavenly devil; True Word is an evil doctrine that will ruin the nation; and the Precepts school is a false creed that is traitorous to the nation. In the past, around the first year of the Bunnō era [1260], I wrote a work entitled On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land, which I handed to the lay priest Yadoya for presentation to the late lay priest of Saimyō-ji.

In this work, I stated in effect that it is because persons are putting faith in evil teachings such as the Nembutsu and the doctrines of the True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools that calamities and disasters occur again and again in our world today. Moreover, I predicted that this country of ours would suffer attack from a foreign nation. And then, on the eighteenth day of the first month of this year, an official announcement arrived from the Mongol nation. All has happened just as I predicted, without the slightest discrepancy.

Is it because the prayers for safety being offered up by the various temples and mountain monasteries have lost their effectiveness, or because evil doctrines are prevalent? Both the rulers and the multitude of common people in Kamakura pay reverence to the Sage Dōryū as though he were a Buddha, and look up to the Sage Ryōkan as though he were an arhat. Yet these men, along with the elders of Jufuku-ji, Tahō-ji, Jōkōmyō-ji, Chōraku-ji, and Daibutsu-den, "being proud and boastful in heart, supposing they have attained what they have not attained," are in fact great evil persons of overbearing arrogance.

How could they hope to overcome and subdue the vast military might of the Mongol nation? On the contrary,
both rulers and common people of this country of Japan will all be taken prisoner. In their present existence they will see their nation overthrown, and in their next existence they will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

If you do not heed Nichiren's warnings, you will undoubtedly regret it later. I have written letters explaining this and have respectfully submitted them to the regent, the lord of Kamakura; to the lay priest Yadoya; to Hei no Sae-mon-no-jō, and others. I would hope that these persons may all gather in one place to discuss the matter.

I, Nichiren, do not venture to express some mere private and prejudiced opinion; I state only what is based upon the texts of the sutras and treatises.

It is difficult to explain this matter in full in a letter, and therefore I look forward to meeting with you in public debate. Writing does not fully express what is in words, and words do not fully express what is in the heart.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Bun'ei [1268], cyclical sign tsuchinoe-tatsu

Respectfully presented to the attendant of the Sage Dōryū of Kenchō-ji

Background

One of the Daishonin's eleven letters of remonstrance, this was sent to Dōryū (Chin Tao-lung) of Kenchō-ji temple. Dōryū was a prominent priest of the Rinzai (Lin-chi) branch of the Zen school. A native of China, he went to Japan in 1246 and in 1253 became chief priest of Kenchō-ji in Kamakura at the invitation of the regent Hōjō Tokiyori, who, himself a Zen practitioner, had built the temple. In this letter the Daishonin introduces what are known as the four dictums, characterizing the harmful effects of the four major schools of Buddhism then prevalent in Japan. He also declares their prayers for the safety of the nation to be totally ineffective. He expresses his hope that the chief priests of major temples in Kamakura, to whom he had also sent letters of remonstrance, will gather in one place to hold an official religious debate.

Notes

1. Here regarded as representative of those who went against their teacher. The Anti-Lokāyata school was a non-Buddhist school in ancient India that is thought to have arisen from and in opposition to the Lokāyata school.


4. The lord of Kamakura refers to Hōjō Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

5. Though the intended recipient of this letter was actually the Sage Dōryū of Kenchō-ji temple, the Daishonin in accord with the manners and customs of the day noted the recipient as the attendant of Dōryū, rather than Dōryū himself.