STARTING on the first day of the New Year, I will read the fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* and offer prayers for the people's "peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences." The text and commentary that you kindly sent me along with your letter were damaged, but I have had them repaired here. We have a great need for texts, so I would be grateful for any help you can give.

I have received the five strings of coins you sent me for the annual lecture on the doctrines of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. We began this annual lecture dedicated to the memory of the great teacher three or four years ago, but this year's has been the most successful.

Whether or not my teaching spreads will depend on the correctness or incorrectness of what I have predicted in my memorial. Though I wrote to a number of persons last year there were no replies, either positive or negative. But when I wrote to them in the eleventh month of this year, some actually wrote back. For the most part, people's attitudes have softened and it seems they think that perhaps what I have said may be true. Moreover, I think it is possible that the ruler may also have examined the matter.

Since what I have said is so outrageous, I know that one of two punishments, either exile or death, is absolutely certain, and hence I think it is strange that nothing has happened to me so far. Perhaps that is because my assertions represent the ultimate principle. And surely the sutra prediction of the calamity of revolt will also prove correct.

I have been told that places like the temple on Mount Hiei are experiencing turmoil a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than anything before.

But that is not all. There must be some profound reason for these things. Because China and Koryo have already become adherents of the Zen school and the Nembutsu school, and the protective deities have departed, they have been conquered by the Mongols and forced to submit to them.

In our own nation as well, because these erroneous doctrines have spread and people make light of and disregard the Tendai Lotus school, the temple on Mount Hiei enjoys neither peace nor security.

Because ours has become a nation where lay supporters turn against their teachers, it seems to me that it will, in all probability, be conquered. I have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being and have avoided becoming a teacher of misleading doctrines.
I have been exiled for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. The fact that I have so far not had to face the death sentence goes against all my expectations.

Having anticipated that this sort of thing would no doubt occur, I have thus far strived and have written to a number of persons using strong language. Already I am nearly fifty. Surely I have not much longer to live. Since in any case my body will in the end be tossed aimlessly into the fields, I wish to give my life for the one Buddha vehicle of the Lotus Sutra, to follow in the footsteps of the boy Snow Mountains and the bodhisattva Medicine King, and, just as King Sen’yo and King Possessor of Virtue had their names remembered in later ages,9 to be spoken of and included in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras of the future. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the eleventh month
Written in reply

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Ōta Kingo, also known as Ōta Jōmyō, on the twenty-eighth day of the eleventh month. With regard to the year of the letter, one view favors 1269, and another, 1270, but the former seems to match the sequence of events mentioned better. The statement “Though I wrote to a number of persons last year there were no replies” refers to the eleven letters of remonstrance written by the Daishonin in 1268. He apparently wrote such letters again in 1269 because he then states, “But when I wrote to them in the eleventh month of this year, some actually wrote back.” In this letter the Daishonin acknowledges receiving a text sent earlier by Ōta, and mentions a continuing need for such texts. He then refers to receiving Ōta’s offering and to the success of the annual lecture in memory of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai. The Daishonin explains in closing that, even though he is aware that the punishments of exile and death surely await him, in order to avoid further disaster in the nation, he has spoken out strongly time and again on behalf of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. The fifth volume of Great Concentration and Insight contains the first section of the “Correct Meditation” chapter, the seventh and most important chapter. The first section describes the ten meditations and the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.
2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.
3. “The text and commentary” apparently refers to Great Concentration and Insight and its commentary, The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”
4. Lectures held yearly on the anniversary of T’ien-t’ai’s death, the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month.
5. A reference to On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land. In this work the Daishonin says that if the rulers continue to support erroneous doctrines internal strife and foreign invasion will occur.
6. This is thought to refer to the eleven letters of remonstrance that the Daishonin sent to top government officials and religious leaders on the eleventh day of the tenth month in 1268, after an envoy from
the Mongol Empire arrived demanding tribute from Japan.

7. The “ruler” here refers to the leader of the government, the regent Hōjō Tokimune.

8. Lay supporters in the Tendai Lotus school were taking faith in the teachings of Nembutsu and Zen, thus turning against their Tendai teachers.

9. The bodhisattva Medicine King is described in the Lotus Sutra preached by Shakyamuni, and the other figures appear in his Nirvana Sutra. The Daishonin states that he wishes that, in like manner, his name will be included in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras preached by a Buddha of the future.