

Why No Protection from the Heavenly Gods?



Reply [to Toki]

I have no doubt what my final moments will be. When my head is cut off, I will experience a special joy. Having encountered great bandits, I know I will exchange their great poison for a precious jewel.¹

IHAVE received the strings of coins in the number that you indicated. I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. As for matters of doctrine, I have discussed them in the work² that I sent earlier to Shijō Saiburō Saemon-no-jō. You should read that work very, very carefully.

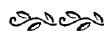
If we examine the sutra passages in general, there can be no doubt that I, Nichiren, am a votary of the Lotus Sutra. But now the heavenly gods do not lend me their protection. One reason may be that, because this is an evil country, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities have abandoned it. A second reason may be that, because the benevolent deities cannot taste the flavor of the Law, they have lost their

majesty and strength. A third reason may be that great evil demons have entered the hearts of the three powerful enemies, and hence the gods Brahmā and Shakra have no power to restrain them. I will write you later to show documentary and theoretical proofs for each of these cases.

But my life from the beginning has been based upon firm conviction. I have no intention now of reversing my course, nor will I ever reproach [those who persecuted me]. Evil persons too will be good friends to me. As to which of the two approaches, shōju or shakubuku, I should adopt, I rely upon the teachings of the Buddha. I would never dare to make an arbitrary decision of my own. All affairs will come to a conclusion in the pure land of Eagle Peak.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The tenth day of the fourth month
To Toki



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the fourth month of 1272, while in exile on Sado Island, after being trans-

ferred to the residence of the lay priest Ichinosawa. The Daishonin's victory over the Pure Land priests in a debate

earlier that year had intensified their enmity and that of their followers, posing a greater threat to his life. Worse, the lay priest Ichinosawa, who was also a Pure Land believer, appeared to be hostile to and fearful of the Daishonin at the beginning, though he later came to offer him food.

In this letter the Daishonin affirms his role as the votary of the Lotus Sutra and explains why he, the sutra's votary, does not receive the protection of the various gods and deities that the sutra promises. He gives three reasons here. Two months earlier, in *The Opening of*

the Eyes, which he refers to in this letter, the Daishonin discussed the same point, offering the following three reasons: (1) If the votary is guilty of past slander, the deities will not punish those who persecute him; (2) persecutors destined to fall into hell in their next existence will not suffer immediate punishment even if they commit grave offenses in this life; and (3) the guardian deities had departed from this country, as is stated in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.

Notes

1. Nichiren Daishonin may well have intended these lines as a postscript, but placed them here because of a lack of space at the end of the letter.

2. "The work" refers to *The Opening of the Eyes*, completed at Tsukahara on Sado in the second month of 1272.