

Distinguishing the Lotus Sutra from the True Word Sutras



MY prediction of the calamity of domestic revolt and the calamity of invasion from abroad has now been proven true. In light of this, it seems that matters correspond to the sutra passage that reads, "Marauders from many other regions will invade and plunder the nation, the people will suffer all manner of pain and affliction, and no place will exist where one may live in safety."¹

Everyone will be in the same situation as the residents of Iki and Tsushima find themselves in now. This is entirely due to erroneous views of the Buddha's teachings. Erroneous views of the Buddha's teachings mean a mistaken understanding of the relative superiority of the True Word teaching and the Lotus teaching. My criticizing the Zen teaching and the Nembutsu teaching was a preparatory step leading to the revelation of this matter.

In China, due to the deception and delusion of the three Tripitaka masters, Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung, the doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai Lotus school was stolen and grafted onto the Mahāvairochana Sutra of the True Word school. By doing so those men covered up the heart and soul of the Lotus Sutra and the virtue of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, and consequently, China went to ruin.

In Japan, the Great Teacher Jikaku

designated the Mahāvairochana Sutra, Diamond Crown Sutra, and Susiddhikara Sutra as the three texts that would ensure the security of the nation and rejected the texts that the Great Teacher Dengyō had said would ensure the security of the nation. From this time on, evil doctrines arose on Mount Hiei, and eventually, the rule of the imperial court came to an end. These evil doctrines have come down to Kamakura, where they will again surely cause the ruin of Japan.

Because the misguided views of the Great Teacher Kōbō are so utterly transparent, not everyone is fooled. But the Great Teacher Jikaku's interpretation concerning the Lotus and Mahāvairochana sutras, which states that though equal in terms of principle, the Mahāvairochana Sutra is superior in terms of practice, has already been accepted by men of wide learning. How then could ignorant people fail to take faith in it?

This is what is referred to when it is said that the Great Teacher Jikaku, praying fervently to decide upon the relative superiority of the Lotus and Mahāvairochana sutras, saw himself in a dream shooting an arrow into the sun. But was this not because an asura had taken possession of the Great Teacher Jikaku and shot his arrow into the great sun of the Lotus Sutra?

Should present-day Mount Hiei and the people of Japan accept this teaching?

If this teaching were true, how would I be any different from one who is trying to fling aside Mount Sumeru? Should my disciples accept it? I say this because it is the last time. You must

bear me no grudge.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twentieth day of the eleventh month

To the lay priest Soya



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Soya Kyōshin, a follower in Shimōsa Province, on the twentieth day of the eleventh month in 1274. It was six months after he arrived at Minobu. In the tenth month the Mongol forces had overrun the islands of Tsushima and Iki, and attacked Kyushu, just as the Daishonin had predicted. The reason for these sufferings, the Daishonin points out, lies solely in a widespread misconception about the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the True

Word sutras. He says that both the ruin of China and the current troubled state of Japan can be traced to this false view that the True Word teachings are superior to the Lotus teaching. This view dominated thinking at Enryaku-ji temple, the temple founded on Mount Hiei for the protection of the imperial court, and eventually the imperial court was rendered powerless. Now that this false view has spread to Kamakura, warns the Daishonin, Japan will again be headed for ruin.

Note

1. Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light Sutra.