

Making Clear the Meaning of Establishing the Correct Teaching



In Nichiren, having observed the severe earthquake that occurred on the twenty-third day of the eighth month in the first year of the Shōka era [1257], cyclical sign *hinoto-mi*, pondered the reasons for this occurrence and wrote a work entitled *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.

In that work I stated: “Of the seven types of disasters described in the Medicine Master Sutra, five have already occurred. Only two have yet to appear, the calamity of invasion from foreign lands and the calamity of revolt within one’s own domain. And of the three calamities mentioned in the Great Collection Sutra, two have already made their appearance. Only one remains, the disaster of warfare.

“The different types of disaster and calamity enumerated in the Golden Light Sutra have arisen one after the other. Only that described as marauders from other regions invading and plundering the nation has yet to materialize. This is the only trouble that has not yet come. And of the seven disasters listed in the Benevolent Kings Sutra, six are now upon us in full force. Only one has not yet appeared, the calamity that occurs ‘when enemies rise up on all four sides and invade the nation.’

“Moreover [as the Benevolent Kings

Sutra says], ‘When a nation becomes disordered, it is the spirits that first show signs of rampancy. Because the spirits become rampant, all the people of the nation become disordered.’

“Now if we examine the present situation carefully in the light of this passage, we will see that the various spirits have for some time been rampant, and many of the people have perished. If the first predicted misfortune in the sutra has already occurred, as is obvious, then how can we doubt that the later disasters will follow? If, in punishment for the evil doctrines that are upheld, the troubles that have yet to appear should fall upon us one after the other, then it will be too late to act, will it not?

“Emperors and kings have their foundation in the state and bring peace and order to the age; ministers and commoners hold possession of their fields and gardens and supply the needs of the world. But if marauders come from other regions to invade the nation, or if revolt breaks out within the domain and people’s lands are seized and plundered, how can there be anything but terror and confusion? If the nation is destroyed and people’s homes are wiped out, then where can one flee for safety?”

(The above is quoted from *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.)

Now I wish further to record this: The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment made a prediction, saying, "The non-Buddhist leader Painfully Acquired will die seven days from now. After he dies, he will be reborn as a vomit-eating spirit."¹ Painfully Acquired said, "I will not die within seven days. I have attained the stage of arhat and will not be reborn in the realm of hungry spirits."

When the wife of a rich man of the city of Champā² was pregnant, the six non-Buddhist teachers said, "She will give birth to a girl." But the Buddha made this prediction: "She will give birth to a boy."

The Buddha made still another prediction, saying, "Three months from now I will enter nirvana."³ All the practitioners of non-Buddhist teachings said, "This is a lie!" But just as the Buddha had predicted, on the fifteenth day of the second month he entered nirvana.

And in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha said: "Shāriputra, in ages to come, after a countless, boundless, inconceivable number of kalpas have passed, . . . you will be able to become a Buddha with the name Flower Glow Thus Come One."⁴

In the third volume, he said: "This disciple of mine Mahākāshyapa in future existences will be able to enter the presence of three thousand billion Buddhas . . . And in his final incarnation he will be able to become a Buddha named Light Bright Thus Come One."⁵

And in the fourth volume, he said: "In addition, if after the Thus Come One has passed into extinction there should be someone who listens to the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, even one verse or one phrase, and for a moment thinks of it with joy, I will likewise bestow on him a prophecy that he will attain supreme perfect enlightenment."⁶

These passages from the sutras deal with predictions that the Buddha made regarding future events. But if the predictions regarding the non-Buddhist leader Painfully Acquired and the other two events⁷ had not proved true, then who would ever have had faith in the words of the Buddha? Even though Many Treasures Buddha testified to their truth and the emanation Buddhas extended their long tongues until they reached the Brahma heaven, people may have found his words difficult to believe.

In view of all this, though I, Nichiren, might command the eloquence of Pūrṇa and manifest the transcendental powers of Maudgalyāyana, if the predictions I made did not come true, who would believe my words?

In the fifth year of the Bun'ei era [1268], when the letter from the Mongol state was delivered to Japan, if there had been any worthy persons in the government, they ought to have been stirred to wonder [at the accuracy of my predictions]. And even if they did not believe my predictions, when I suffered the displeasure of the authorities on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of the same Bun'ei era, I delivered a strong warning,⁸ which in fact came true on the eleventh day of the second month of the following year.⁹

Persons of discernment ought to believe my words, particularly now, when enemy soldiers have already launched their attack and seized two of our provinces.¹⁰ Even a tree or stone, or a bird or beast would be moved and alarmed in such circumstances. This is no ordinary matter!

It would almost seem as though the heavenly devil had taken possession of our country, making it drunk or mad. It is a cause for weeping, for sorrow, for fear, and for loathing!

In my *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* I also stated, "If they do not

shake off these delusions that they cling to but continue to harbor erroneous views, then they will quickly leave this world of the living and surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.”

In view of the fact that my other predictions have come true, in the future we may expect that all the people in this country of Japan, in the ranks of both high and low, will fall into the great citadel of the Avīchi hell. This is as certain as that someone aiming at the great earth cannot fail to hit the mark.

But I will say no more of these matters. In the case of my own disciples there are also those who may have difficulty avoiding disaster. Those people who abused and attacked the bodhisattva Never Disparaging in the end, we are told, “took faith in him and willingly became his followers.”¹¹ But because they had earlier committed grave slander, they were first obliged to fall into the great citadel of the Avīchi hell and to undergo great suffering there for a thousand kalpas.

And today among my disciples there are those who seem to have faith, to give allegiance, and to willingly follow my teachings. But they do so in name only. If among them there are those whose hearts are not fully committed but who harbor only shallow faith,

then they will without doubt fall into the hell of incessant suffering, where they will be confined for one kalpa, two kalpas, ten kalpas, or a hundred kalpas, if not for a thousand kalpas.

If they hope to escape such a fate, they should burn their arms as did the bodhisattva Medicine King or peel off their skin like Aspiration for the Law; they should throw their bodies to the ground like the boy Snow Mountains or, like King Suzudan, serve with all their heart. If not this, then let them fling their five limbs to the earth, let the sweat pour from their whole body. Or if not this, then let them bring wonderful treasures and heap them before the Buddha, or let them become menials in the service of one who upholds the sutra. Or let them carry out practice in a timely manner in accord with the four ways of preaching.

If among my disciples there are those whose faith is weak and paltry, then when they are on their deathbed, they will manifest signs that they are destined for the Avīchi hell. And at that time, they must not hold me to blame!

Written by Nichiren.

The fifteenth day of the twelfth month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei [1274], cyclical sign *kinoe-inu*



Background

Nichiren Daishonin completed this work at Minobu on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month in 1274. Two months earlier, the forces of the Mongol Empire invaded two islands north of Kyushu, Iki and Tsushima, and then came ashore in Hakata Bay in Kyushu. But that same month a violent storm struck the Mongol fleet, severely damaging it, and the invaders withdrew.

Two years earlier, in the second month of 1272, a revolt had arisen against the regent Hōjō Tokimune, an attempt by his half brother, Tokisuke, to seize power.

In Nichiren Daishonin's memorial *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, which he submitted in 1260 to Hōjō Tokiyori, the retired regent of the Kamakura shō-

gunate, he predicted that foreign invasion and internal rebellion would occur. The memorial is one of the Daishonin's major writings, and he frequently refers to it in his later works.

The present work begins by quoting passages from the memorial, in which predictions of internal strife and foreign invasion are made. Next the Daishonin cites examples from Buddhist scripture in which predictions made by Shakyamuni Buddha were borne out to the letter. The Buddha predicted the death of the non-Buddhist leader Painfully Acquired within seven days, his own death three months before the event, and a Champā woman's giving birth to a boy. "If the predictions . . . had not proved true," the Daishonin says, "then who would ever have had faith in the words of the Buddha?" "In view of all this," he adds, "if the pre-

dictions I made did not come true, who would believe my words?" He concludes that because his predictions of revolt and invasion came true, his other prediction that those who cling to erroneous views will fall into the Avīchi hell will never prove false.

Finally, he offers strict counsel to his followers, stating that while there are some who may outwardly profess faith, unless they are fully committed, the past causes that destine them for hell in the future may not be fully eradicated. Therefore he urges his followers to dedicate themselves fully and sincerely to faith and practice, citing dramatic examples of devotion from the Buddhist scriptures, and instructing them to "carry out practice in a timely manner in accord with the four ways of preaching."

Notes

1. A summary of a passage from the Nirvana Sutra. "A vomit-eating spirit," or a vomit-eating hungry spirit, feeds on what people have vomited.

2. Champā was the capital city of Anga, one of the sixteen great states in the India of Shakyamuni's time, bordered on the west by the Magadha kingdom. This story of the rich man in Champā appears in the Nirvana Sutra. As Shakyamuni predicted, the woman bore a male child.

3. Universal Worthy Sutra.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

5. Ibid., chap. 6.

6. Ibid., chap. 10.

7. The child of the rich man's wife and the Buddha's own entry into nirvana.

8. This refers to the fact that when Nichiren Daishonin was seized by Hei no Saemon and his soldiers, he strongly warned them, as *The Selection of the Time* recounts,

"The second time was the twelfth day of the ninth month of the eighth year of the Bun'ei era [1271], at the hour of the monkey [3:00–5:00 P.M.], when I said to Hei no Saemon-no-jō: 'Nichiren is the pillar and beam of Japan. Doing away with me is toppling the pillar of Japan! Immediately you will all face "the calamity of revolt within one's own domain," or strife among yourselves, and also "the calamity of invasion from foreign lands"' (I, p. 579).

9. This refers to the internal strife, or strife among the leaders of the Kamakura shogunate, that occurred in the second month of 1272. Hōjō Tokisuke and other powerful members of the Hōjō clan were wiped out by Hōjō Tokimune, the regent and head of the clan.

10. Iki and Tsushima, island provinces off northern Kyushu.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.