

## Reply to a Believer



I HAVE just received your letter. Considering how disasters have struck one after another in the wake of my exile, would they dare attempt to harass us any further? I feel they will do no more, but people on the brink of ruin are capable of anything. Should some persecution be about to occur, there will certainly be signs. Even if I were to be exiled again, it would bring me a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater good fortune than if my teachings were to be accepted. The next exile would be my third. Should it happen, the Lotus Sutra could never accuse me of being a negligent votary. I might well become heir to the blessings of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, as well as those of the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth. How wonderful if that were to come about!

I will follow in the path of the boy Snow Mountains and live as did Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. In comparison to such a life, how wretched and meaningless it would be to fall victim

to an epidemic or simply to die of old age! I would far rather suffer persecution from this country's ruler for the sake of the Lotus Sutra and thereby free myself from the sufferings of birth and death. Then I could test the vows that the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the gods of the sun and moon, Shakra, Brahma, and other deities made in the presence of the Buddha. Above all, I will urge them to protect every one of you.

If you continue living as you are now, there can be no doubt that you will be practicing the Lotus Sutra twenty-four hours<sup>1</sup> a day. Regard your service to your lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by "No worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality."<sup>2</sup>

I hope you will deeply consider the meaning of this passage.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the fourth  
month

**Background**

This letter is thought to have been written at Minobu in the fourth month

of the first year of Koan (1278), when Nichiren Daishonin was fifty-seven.

The year and recipient of the letter are not certain. Judging from its content, it is probable that it was addressed to Shijo Kingo, one of the Daishonin's staunch followers in Kamakura. Shijo Kingo, who was then in a precarious situation, must have wished to abandon the secular world to escape from his trouble with his lord and fellow war-

riors. However, the Daishonin teaches him to regard his service to his lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra. As a ranking samurai, Shijo Kingo's service to his lord was his vocation and occupation. In modern terms, therefore, "service to one's lord" would equate to one's job.

## Notes

1. The Japanese text says "twelve hours each day" and means "around the clock" because an hour in those days in China and Japan was equal to two hours today. Hence the translation, "twenty-four hours each day."

2. This passage appears in T'ien-t'ai's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* as a summary of the following passage from the

"Benefits of the Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "The doctrines that they preach during that time will conform to the gist of the principles and will never be contrary to the true reality. If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or occupations that sustain life, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law."