

CHAPTER X

SILENT PRAYER AND ANXIOUS WATCHING

NICHIREN'S faith in his own mission was firmly established; all the events of his life proved to him the truth of Buddha's prophecies concerning the messenger of the Tathāgata in the Latter Days. In the later years, his thoughts turned more to the future of his religion and his country. His serene delight among the mountains of Minobu was an earnest of the terrestrial paradise that should come in all the world. Probably he offered prayers to Buddha for the fulfilment of this expectation, but he certainly did not lay much weight on any special form of prayer, much less on any ritual such as was employed by the Buddhists of the time. For him, his life in silent retirement was the greatest of prayers, because he believed that the concentrated thought of a true Buddhist ruled the realm of truth, and that by his thought and desire the fulfilment would be hastened.

Though thus living for the future, the present could not be excluded from his mind. In the autumn of the year in which Nichiren retired from the world, the Mongols invaded outlying islands in western Japan, devastated them, and massacred the inhabitants. The invaders, further, succeeded in landing on the larger island of Kyushu, the seat of the government of western Japan, and for a while, occupied that part of the country. The people were in consternation, and the government appealed for help to Shinto and Buddhist deities by dedicating offerings and

celebrating mysteries. Nichiren watched the passing events with anxiety, but with a confident faith. His anxiety was of a different nature from the apprehension of the people. He was sure that his country was destined to be a fountain of blessing for the whole world through all coming ages. Yet the government and the people were actually rebels against the true religion of the Lotus, and had not repented as yet of their grave sin in persecuting the prophet, the messenger of Buddha. Therefore, he was no less convinced that Japan was to suffer still greater calamities at the hands of the Mongols. He could welcome the Mongol invaders as instruments of chastisement for the sinful nation, yet he could not harden his heart to the fate of his people in their distress. Righteous indignation and yearning compassion were in conflict within him. He often expressed himself in words like the following: "Behold, now, the danger impending from the fierce Mongols! When they occupy the imperial residence and massacre the people as they did in the western islands, you will undoubtedly ask help of Nichiren. But it will then be too late. Repent, and be converted to the true faith before the hour of the utmost disaster arrives!"

He even went so far as to say that the Mongols were the messengers of Buddha, sent for the chastisement of the unbelievers living in his country. But he did not curse his fellow-countrymen and wish their ruin, nor did he believe that Japan was doomed to such a fate. For example, in a letter addressed to a lady he says: ¹

You would perhaps rejoice to see my prophetic warning fulfilled, and the Mongols occupying this country. But such a sentiment befits only the common herd (and should not be cherished by my followers). Every faithful follower of the Lotus of Truth should know that he is living in a winter, but also that spring is sure to come after winter.

¹ *Works*, p. 1186; dated the fifth month, 1275.

His thoughts concerning the threatening catastrophe seem to be somewhat conflicting, though his course was clear. He was a fervent patriot, but the country and nation he hoped to see was one completely purged from the sin of rejecting the Truth—the Japanese nation reconstructed and transformed according to his own ideal; while the actual nation was still false to Buddha and his religion. The prospective chastisement of the nation by a foreign invasion was something like a radical cure for a cancer. He saw in the invaders the surgeons, but he never believed that the patient would succumb to the operation. He cursed Japan, but exalted her at the same time, according to these two opposite points of view. This explains the paradoxical character of his expressions in those days of great anxiety. The paradoxes were never, in his own mind, contradictions, but were conceived to be steps toward the fulfilment of his aim.

During this crisis, especially in the year 1275, Nichiren wrote several essays on the future of Japan, explaining also his own attitude toward her perils. The most methodical of them is one entitled "*Sen-ji-Shō*,"¹ the "Selection of the Times." After reviewing the phases of Buddhist history since Buddha's death, he affirms again the conviction he had often expressed before, that his time was the most significant age in the propagation of Buddhism, being the fated fifth five hundred years, in which, as Buddha predicted, a decisive conflict was to take place between the true Buddhism and its opponents. The persecutions heaped upon the prophet, as well as the various calamities that befell the nation, were the signs of the crisis when decision must be made between the truth and falsehood, between the prophet

¹ *Works*, pp. 1189-1250.

and his malignant opponents. To all this Nichiren had borne witness, and now the greatest of the signs, the Mongol peril, heralded the final conflict, to be followed by a miraculous, or rather inevitable, conversion of the whole nation. In other words, the imminent peril was regarded as one of the preparatory steps to the establishment of the Holy See in Japan.

In one passage in this essay he writes: ¹

The Lord Śākya proclaimed to all celestial beings that when, in the fifth five hundred years after his death, all the truths of Buddhism should be shrouded in darkness, the Bodhisattva Viśiṣṭa-cāritra should be commissioned to save the most wicked of men who were degrading the Truth, curing the hopeless lepers by the mysterious medicine of the Adoration of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth. Can this proclamation be a falsehood? . . . If this promise be not vain, how can the rulers and the people of Japan remain in safety, who, being plunged in the whirlpool of strife and malice, have rebuked, reviled, struck, and banished the messenger of the Tathāgata and his followers commissioned by Buddha to propagate the Lotus of Truth?

When they hear me say this, people will say that it is a curse; yet, those who propagate the Lotus of Truth are indeed the parents of all men living in Japan. . . . I, Nichiren, am the master and lord of the sovereign, as well as of all the Buddhists of other schools. Notwithstanding this, the rulers and the people treat us thus maliciously. How should the sun and the moon bless them by giving them light? Why should the earth not refuse to let them abide upon it? . . . Therefore, also, the Mongols are coming to chastise them. Even if all the soldiers from the five parts of India were called together, and the mountain of the Iron Wheel (Cakra-vāla) were fortified, how could they succeed in repelling the invasion? It is decreed that all the inhabitants of Japan shall suffer from the invaders. Whether this comes to pass or not will prove whether or not Nichiren is the real propagator of the Lotus of Truth.

Further on he says: ²

See! Presently, it will not be long before the Great Mongols will send their warships, myriads in number, and attack this country. Then, the sovereign and the whole people will surely abandon all the

¹ *Works*, pp. 1204-1205.

² *Works*, p. 1240.

Buddhist and Shinto sanctuaries they used to revere, and join in crying *Namu Myōhō-renge-kyō, Namu Myōhō-renge-kyō!* and with folded hands, pray, "O Master Nichiren, save us; O Master Nichiren!"

Then he reviews the history of his persecutions, and the fulfilment of his former predictions, to prove again that to him was given the mission to establish the Buddhist Catholic Church. The conclusion is: ¹

The greatest of things is the establishment in Japan of this gateway of Truth. How could (the country) be safe, even for a day or an hour, if Śākya-muni, the Lord of the Paradise of Vulture Peak, with the Buddha Prabhūta-ratna, of the realm of Treasure-purity, their manifestations filling the space in the ten quarters, the Saints-out-of-Earth coming from the thousand worlds beneath, and the heavenly beings, such as Brahmā, Indra, the Sun, the Moon, and the four Guardian Kinds, should withdraw (from this country) their protection and assistance, visible and invisible?

All this, especially the last sentence, was a curse indeed. "Cursed be the nation which degrades and offends the Unique Truth!" — this was Nichiren's attitude toward the actual Japan. He rather welcomed the Mongols coming to apply their rude surgery to the deep-seated disease of his nation; yet he had entire confidence in the future destiny of his country, for which, indeed, he himself had a grave responsibility. For he was the messenger of Buddha, commissioned to establish the centre of the world's religion in Japan for the sake of the coming myriad of years. The task of awakening his countrymen rested solely upon his shoulders, and he would fail of his duty if the nation remained unfaithful to the religion. Although he saw in the coming Mongol invasion an agency working for his cause, the final burden of converting the nation was laid upon him. He thus inseparably linked the threatening danger with his

¹ *Works*, pp. 1249-1250.

idea of the future of Japan as well as with his own expiation — the remorseful expiation of his sin of not having thus far accomplished all that he was set to do for the Unique Truth.

The sense of sin lay heavy upon Nichiren's mind, in view of the approaching danger. Japan would certainly suffer from the invaders, as the western islands had been devastated. Was not this because the nation still remained blind to the true Buddhism? Was not he himself chiefly or solely responsible for its blindness? Would not all these perils have been averted, if he had established the Holy See? "All the sufferings that befall my fellow-beings are, after all, my own sufferings."¹ This was his great remorse, caused by the sense of his own sinfulness as well as by concern for his countrymen. His curse was not a product of mere self-righteousness nor of mere hatred of others, but an expression of his deep regret for his country and of his own ideal. There was always, for him, a link between the present danger and the future destiny, between the nation's curse and his own expiation; and this connection was a result of his view of the inseparable tie uniting the individual to the community in which he lives. We have already touched on this point, in discussing Nichiren's ideas about the meaning of the community in human life and in religion.² Now, in his grave concern about the threatening invasion, this thought found emphatic expression. A letter which he wrote to a warrior follower, in 1280,³ is particularly instructive. After dwelling much on the offence committed by the nation against the

¹ *Works*, p. 2038, in the "Warning to the God Hachiman" — to be referred to again below.

² See above, p. 98.

³ *Works*, pp. 1929-1940; dated the twenty-seventh of the first month (February 28), 1280.

Lotus of Truth, he goes on to show how his sufferings were a part of his mission, while he himself cannot but be responsible for the people's folly and their calamities. The individual is never apart from his family and nation; how much more then, must the leader of the nation, the spiritual father of the coming ages, regret and hate his people's folly and suffering! Further, he says: ¹

While Japan is being threatened by the attacks of the Great Mongols, its people are having recourse to the mysteries which are doomed to perish (the Shingon rituals). Are not the ominous records (of their failures) plain in many previous cases? How can a man who knows this remain indifferent to the fact? How sad it is that we have to encounter great calamities, having been born in a country offending and degrading truth and righteousness! Even if we could be personally acquitted of the sin of degrading the truth, how could we be freed from the responsibility for the offence committed by our families and country? If you would be exempt from the offence committed by your family, endeavor to convert your parents and brothers and sisters! The issue will be either that you will be hated by them, or that you will finally convert them all. If you would be free from the offence committed by the country as a whole, make remonstrance to the rulers, and be yourself prepared for death or exile! Is it not said in the Scripture, "Never shrink from sacrificing the body for the sake of the Incomparable Way"? This is explained (by a commentator) as follows: "Insignificant is the bodily life compared with the grave and important cause of the Truth; therefore strive to perpetuate the Truth even at the sacrifice of the body!" That we have, from the remotest past down to the present, not attained Buddhahood, is simply due to our cowardice, in that we have always been afraid of these perils and have not dared to stand up publicly for the Truth. The future will never be otherwise, so long as we remain cowards. All this is deeply impressed upon me by my personal experience.

Even among my followers there are those who dare not to proclaim the Truth, but are content with personal faith alone, and even some who desert the cause, all because they are afraid of the dangers, and care too much for the bodily life, which is, in fact, as evanescent as the dew. Indeed, as is said in the Scripture, "difficult to believe and hard to grasp" is the Truth, and I know by my own experience how diffi-

¹ *Works*, pp. 1937-1938.

cult it is to live the life of the Truth. Traitors are as innumerable as the dust of the earth in all the world, while real believers are as rare as motes on the finger-nails. The offenders are like the waters of the ocean, while the defenders are only but a few drops of water.

Those who remain silent before the opponents of the Lotus of Truth . . . will surely sink to the nethermost hells. Men who, being cognizant of a treasonable plot, do not inform the rulers, are traitors, even if they themselves were not involved in the plot. . . . Remonstrances were made by me, Nichiren, because I knew this truth. A sentence of death, and repeated banishment, were the consequence. Seven years have now passed since I retired among these mountains, wishing to be redeemed from sins, and freed from offences.

To the end of his life, Nichiren never ceased to express these convictions in the strongest terms; but his faith in the destiny of Japan was in no way shaken, nor his self-confidence. On the contrary, the dangers threatening the country and the consternation of the people only strengthened his belief in his great cause and in his own mission. In one of the writings from his years of retirement, he says:¹

So far as, and so much as, my—Nichiren's—compassion is vast and comprehensive, the Adoration of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth shall prevail beyond the coming ages of ten thousand years, nay, eternally in the future. This is the merit I have achieved, which is destined to open the blind eyes of all beings in Japan (the world), and to shut off the ways to the nethermost Avīci hell. These merits surpass those of Dengyō and Tendai, and are far beyond those of Nāgārjuna and Kāśyapa. Is it not true that one hundred years' training in a heavenly paradise does not compare with one day's work in the earthly world, and that all service done to the Truth during the two thousand years of the ages of the Perfect Law and the Copied Law is inferior to that done in one span of time in the ages of the Latter Law? All these differences are due, not to Nichiren's own wisdom, but to the virtues inherent in the times. Flowers bloom in spring, and fruits are ripe in autumn; it is hot in summer, and cold in winter. Is it not time that makes these differences? Buddha announced, "This Truth shall be

¹ In a letter addressed and dedicated to his old master Dōzen, after his death in 1276. The letter is entitled, "*Ho-on-jō*," or "In Recompense of Indebtedness." (*Works*, pp. 1451-1512; the passage quoted, pp. 1509-1510).

proclaimed and perpetuated in the whole Jambu-dvīpa, in the fifth five hundred years after my death; and it will avail to save all kinds of devils and demons, celestial beings and serpent tribes," etc.¹ If this prediction should not be fulfilled, all other prophecies and assurances will prove false, the Lord Śākya-muni will fall to the Avīci hell, the Buddha Prabhūta-ratna will be burned in the infernal fires, while all other Buddhas in the ten quarters will transfer their abodes to the eight great hells, and all Bodhisattvas will suffer from pains, one hundred and thirty-six in kind. How should all this be possible? If it is not, the whole of Japan (the world) will surely be converted to the Adoration of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth.

Flowers finally return to the root, and the essence abides in the earth. Let all these merits be dedicated to the soul of the deceased master Dōzen (who had once instructed Nichiren, and is the earth which had nourished Nichiren's wisdom). Adoration be to the Lotus of the Perfect Truth!

This letter illustrates Nichiren's idea that his best attainment should be dedicated to all those to whom he was in any way indebted. But he regarded any such dedication as vain, unless associated with, and practised as a part of, the highest ideal of his religion, the establishment of the Three Great Mysteries. Thus, preceding this conclusion, he reaffirms his own mission to achieve that great task, and expresses his confidence in the approaching fulfilment of his ideal.

Nichiren had a keen sense of thankfulness for benefits of every kind, just as he never excused those who did him wrong. We have seen how he based his ethical theory on the three relations in human life, namely, the relation of a man to his lord, his master, and his parents, and how earnestly he desired to dedicate all his merits to his parents and friends, and even to his persecutors. We have also noted how he spoke of the men and women who supported him in the

¹ This is a quotation from the "*Daishuk-kyō*," or the *Mahā-sannipāta* (Nanjio, no. 6r), which Nichiren often quoted in connection with the Lotus.

worst days of his banishment as if they were reincarnations of his own parents. Similarly, the letters written during his retirement are full of expressions of affectionate gratitude toward those who sent him food or clothing. To a nun who sent him a bag of seaweed, the sight of which made him homesick for his native place, he wrote:¹

When I had nearly forgotten my native place, these seaweeds you kindly sent me awakened in me yearning memories of the familiar scenes of my boyhood. The weeds are like those I used to see in the waters of my native province, the same in color, form, taste, and smell. May it be that they have been sent by my dear parents? I cannot help thinking so, foolish as it may seem.

In short, every one who nourishes him, the man who is living for the sake of the Truth, is father or mother, and is thus contributing to the Buddhist cause. In this way his sense of personal indebtedness was always combined with the consciousness of his high mission; there was nothing in his life that did not present itself in these two aspects — the immediate benefits, and the eternal cause; all practised in the communion of the believers.

The close union of religion and ethics was a characteristic feature in Nichiren's thought and life, and it appears in a harmonious combination of his human sentiments with his religious aspirations. An episode in these years of retirement may serve as an illustration of this union. As has been mentioned in connection with Nichiren's execution, one of his warrior disciples, Shijō Kingo, was always a great favorite of Nichiren. In the sixth month of 1277, Kingo was slandered to his lord by religious opponents. Nichiren wrote to his disciple, admonishing him never to waver in his faith on account of the accusation, and composed for him a defence to be presented to his lord. The lord remained in-

¹ *Works*, pp. 1088-1094; dated the sixteenth of the second month (his birthday), 1274.

flexible, and Kingo was finally deprived of his position and emoluments; yet the faithful warrior not only remained steadfast in his religion, but continued to show admirable fidelity to the lord who had done him injustice. This fidelity made such an impression on his lord that in the following year he restored Kingo to his former position.

All Nichiren's letters about this affair, especially the last ones, expressing his great joy at hearing of Kingo's restoration, exhibit his affection for his disciples, as well as the way in which he counselled and encouraged them. The most touching of these letters is that which was written after Kingo's visit at Minobu, whither he had come to express his gratitude to the spiritual father after the lord had reinstated him. Nichiren had been anxious about Kingo's return journey to Kamakura, fearing that his enemies might attempt his life on the way through mountain-passes. News had now come of his safe arrival, and Nichiren rejoiced at the tidings, but advised continued caution.¹

When you left me here to go back, my soul almost died in me; and now I hear of your return to Kamakura without any danger. What a joy and relief it is to me! I was so anxious about you that I asked everybody that came from along your route. My anxiety was relieved, step by step, when I was told that you had been seen at Yumoto, then at Kōzu, and at last at Kamakura. Hereafter, you must not come over here, unless on urgent business. If you have anything to consult me about, send a messenger! Indeed, your coming here the last time caused me too much anxiety; think of my concern about you!

Commonly, your enemies have their eye on you when you are beginning to forget them. If you should hereafter go on a journey, never leave your horse behind you! Select your retainers and furnish them with armor! You yourself must go on horseback.

It is said, "The protection of the gods is given to those who are strong and prepared." The Lotus of Truth is a sharp sword, but its effectiveness rests with the one who uses it. . . . Therefore, be strong

¹ *Works*, pp. 1817-1820; dated the twenty-second of the intercalary tenth month (December 7), 1278.

and discipline your mind! . . . If your faith in the Lotus of Truth be firm and strong, all perils will vanish before it. Thus thinking, be steadfast in your faith!

One month before this visit, when Nichiren was informed of Kingo's restoration, he wrote him a letter of encouragement, which well shows how human sentiment and religious aspiration were connected in Nichiren's mind.¹

He who endures constant persecutions, in the beginning, in the middle, and to the end, is the messenger of the Tathāgata. I, Nichiren, am not quite the messenger of the Tathāgata, for I am a common man. Yet something like the messenger am I, who have twice been exiled on account of the hatred of the three classes of my opponents. I am something like the messenger, because my mouth utters the Sacred Title of the Lotus, although, for my person, I am just a common mortal, inflamed by the three kinds of passions.² To seek a parallel in the past, I am like the Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta; and in my present life are being fulfilled the prophecies about the one who should suffer from sticks, and swords, and stones. Can I, then, entertain any doubt about the fulfilment of the promise of being taken to the Holy Place? How, then, shall not those who are nourishing me (like you) enjoy the communion of the Land of Purity?

Thus, all those who live in communion, united by the Adoration of the Lotus of Truth, are fellows of the universal and eternal fraternity. Within the communion, however, there are relations of parents and children, of master and disciples — the aspects of human life which remain through eternity, as in the case of the primeval Buddha and his disciples, and similarly in that of the prophet and his followers. Yet this relation does not mean mere subordination on the part of the disciples, but gratitude, and its fruit, the perpetuation of the truth transmitted and committed to them. This idea has already come out in the relations

¹ *Works*, p. 1792; dated the fifteenth of the ninth month (October 6), 1278.

² Greed, hatred, and stupidity.

between Buddha and other beings, when we were considering Nichiren's conception of the Supreme Being.¹ Applied to the fellowship of believers in the Buddhist Church, the same kind of reciprocity of benefaction and gratitude, of entrusting and perpetuation, exists between Nichiren and his followers forever. Consequently, the Church is the organ for perpetuating Nichiren's ideals through the efforts of his followers. Seen in this light, every quickening and inspiring legacy of thought left to his disciples was Nichiren's preparation for the future establishment of the Holy See; and he believed that the approaching Mongol invasion would hasten the realization of his ideal, which was to come about through the repentance and conversion of the Japanese people.

Nichiren's great aim was to achieve his ideal of the Catholic Church, with its centre in his own country. Believing that he was himself the man to do this, and that the true import and end of Buddhism had not been apprehended in earlier times, even in India, he saw in vision a return of Buddhism from Japan to India, and its propagation thence throughout the world. He himself was always the cardinal factor in this new era, but the time and place were essential conditions of the realization of this universal Buddhism. Thus, he writes: ²

That India was called the country of the Moon-tribe ³ was prophetic of the appearance of Buddha (in that country). Our *Fusō*⁴ is

¹ See above, p. 79.

² In a treatise entitled, "*Kangyō Hachiman Shō*," or "Warnings given to the God Eight Banners"; written in 1280. *Works*, 2021-2041; quotation from p. 2040.

³ That is, the Yuechis. The idea that India was the country of the Moon-tribe was combined with another tradition identifying the name India with Indu, the moon.

⁴ The name of a certain kind of tree called *fusō* was sometimes employed by the Chinese as an appellation of Japan.

called Japan, the Land of Sunrise. Must it not be the country where the (predestined) Sage should appear? The transit of the moon shifts from west to east; this symbolizes the transmission of the Buddha's religion to the East. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west; this is an omen that the Buddhist religion shall return from the Land of Sunrise to the country of the Moon-tribe. The moon is not bright all the time, and just so (Buddha proclaimed the Perfect Truth) only during eight years of his life.¹ The sun surpasses the moon in brilliancy, and in like manner (the light of the eastern Sage) is destined to illumine the dark ages after the fifth five hundred years.

While Nichiren's thought was soaring on in such visions of the coming Church, the Mongol menace also engaged his mind. The "Warning to the God Hachiman," above cited, was indeed meant to be an emphatic monition — now, not to the prejudiced people, but to the god who was believed to be the guardian of the country, and an embodiment of the nation's militant virtues. Indeed, while the "Warning" was in hand,² the Mongols were busily engaged in preparations for sending their "Invincible Armada," as the last attempt upon the island nation. When, in the year following (1281), the prophet committed to writing the "Three Great Mysteries," as his spiritual legacy, the armada had already left the shores of China and were swarming along the Korean coasts. One month later (in the fifth month, June), four thousand warships appeared on Japanese waters, and came to anchor in the bay of Hakata, in western Japan. The excitement was great, and undoubtedly the news reached the prophet's hermitage. The circular sent by him to his followers is very characteristic.³

¹ Buddhist tradition puts the preaching of the Lotus of Truth in the last eight years of Buddha's ministry.

² It is dated the twelfth month, and therefore was written either in December of 1280 or in January of 1281.

³ "The Circular about the Little Mongols"; *Works*, p. 2055.

Now the *Little Mongols* have come to attack *Great Japan*. All my disciples and followers should keep silence, and not discuss the matter either with others, or among themselves. Any one who violates this command shall be excommunicated. Let this be made known to all.

The circular is dated the sixteenth of the sixth month (July 3), 1281, when the defenders on the western coasts were struggling against the arrows and bombs of the Mongols. The expression is so terse that it can be taken in more than one way, especially when we remember that Nichiren had always seemed to hail the Mongols as an instrument to awaken the nation. But one thing is clear; in this letter he used for the first time the phrase, "the *Little Mongols*," the opposite of the usual designation, the "*Great Mongols*." The Mongols, physically great and formidable, were little from the prophet's point of view; while, as is evident from his previous writings, the actual Japan was for him a degenerate nation, doomed to ruin, but the ideal Japan was great and impregnable.

It was on the first of the intercalary seventh month (August 15) of 1281 that a storm destroyed the Mongol armada, which had not effected a landing, and thus the invasion proved a total failure. On the very day when the Mongol warships were being shattered by the hurricane, Nichiren wrote to a warrior disciple, who was probably setting out to join the defenders, saying: ¹

When the Mongols sent their ultimatum, coming on top of the previous calamities of earthquakes, etc., I gave warning to the authorities, but they did not give heed. Now, Nichiren's predictions are being fulfilled, and the battle is raging. All the people of the country will certainly become in this present life *Asuras* (furious spirits), and fall hereafter to the nethermost hells. You may die in the battle. . . . Yet be sure that we shall meet in the Paradise of Vulture Peak! Even if you should share in the calamity, your soul is in communion with

¹ *Works*, p. 2061.

Buddha's soul. In this life you are participating in the life of the "furious spirits," and yet you will surely be born in Buddha's land after death.

All other letters written during a few months after the great event are full of this sentiment. The prophet seems not to attach much importance to the "great victory" won by the help of a storm, which was believed by the people to have been sent by divine intervention. In one of these letters he says:¹

An autumn gale destroyed the enemy's ships, and now the people boast of a great success, as if the commander of the enemy had been captured; while the priests pretend that it was due to the efficacy of their mysteries. Ask them whether they took the head of the Mongol king? Whatever they may say, make no other reply than this!

In reality, the defeat of the invaders was of momentous consequence; most of the soldiers were drowned, though the story that only three men escaped must be an exaggeration. The people rejoiced, and the priests gloried in their achievements in prayer; but Nichiren looked at the event with a cool aloofness, probably thinking how remote the fulfilment of his ideal was. He still insisted that the nation could not really be saved, except by complete conversion.

Nichiren may have been mistaken, if he thought that the success of an invasion by the Mongols would prove the truth of his predictions; but he was certainly right in not being elated by the victory. He was far-sighted enough to recognize that the curse that rested on the nation was a long way from being removed by the defeat of the Mongols. Historians know today that the evils of the superstitious mysteries against which Nichiren fulminated increased in consequence of the unexpected end of the Mongol armada,

¹ Sent to Lord Toki, the old warrior, and dated the twenty-second of the tenth month (December 4) of 1281.

because the authorities were themselves too superstitious to resist the exorbitant demands made by the Shinto and Buddhist priests and sorcerers for further contributions toward the support of mysteries and supplications, on which much wealth was lavished. Priests were prized more highly for their prayers than the fighters who had prevented the Mongols from landing and kept them for three months on the sea, until the storm came. Measures for defence against future attacks, were concerted; but unwisely, from the strategic point of view, these measures were confined to the land, little attention being paid to the navy. Yet a worse thing was the extravagant outlay in building and decorating the temples and shrines of those deities who were believed to have rescued the country; the expenditure on them being estimated to have been much more than for any other purpose. Discontent was growing among the warriors, financial difficulties became more and more serious, and the final result was the collapse of the Hōjō government in 1333, which was followed by social disintegration. The defence was successful only by chance. Subsequent events proved that that "miraculous" relief was largely responsible for the age of war which lasted three hundred years after the fall of the Hōjōs.

Whatever might have been the effect of the victory on Nichiren's mind, it is interesting to notice that one of his letters written not long after the event (dated the eleventh day of the ninth month — October 22), takes a high flight, and may be regarded as the crowning expression of his ideas about himself and the transfiguration of this world.¹

¹ *Works*, pp. 2069-2070. There are many other passages dealing with the coming transformation of this world. It was his belief that the conversion of the whole world would result in the transformation of the earthly realm into a paradise. Cp. *Works*, pp. 391, 402, 476, 1052, 2051, 2078, etc.

This spot among the mountains is secluded from the worldly life, and there is no human habitation in the neighborhood—east, west, north, or south. I am now living in such a lonely hermitage; but in my bosom, in Nichiren's fleshly body, is secretly deposited the great mystery which the Lord Śākya-muni revealed on Vulture Peak, and has entrusted to me. Therefore I know that my breast is the place where all Buddhas are immersed in contemplation; that they turn the Wheel of Truth upon my tongue; that my throat is giving birth to them; and that they are attaining the Supreme Enlightenment in my mouth. This place is the abode of such a man, who is mysteriously realizing the Lotus of Truth in his life; surely such a place is no less dignified than the Paradise of Vulture Peak. As the Truth is noble, so is the man who embodies it; as the man is noble, so is the place where he resides. We read in the chapter on the "Mysterious Power of the Tathāgata" as follows:¹

"Be it in a forest, or at the foot of a tree, or in a monastery, . . . on that spot erect a *stupa* dedicated to the Tathāgata. For such a spot is to be regarded as the place where all Tathāgatas have arrived at the Supreme Perfect Enlightenment; on that spot all Tathāgatas have turned the Wheel of Truth; on that spot all Tathāgatas have entered the Great Decease." Lo, whoever comes to this place will be purged of all sins and depravities which he has accumulated from eternity, and all his evil deeds will at once be transformed into merits and virtues.

¹ The twenty-first chapter, Yam., p. 564; Text, p. 391; SBE., p. 367.