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On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime



IF you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings. This truth is Myoho-rence-kyo. Chanting Myoho-rence-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life.

The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, true and correct in both word and principle. Its words are the ultimate reality, and this reality is the Mystic Law (*myoho*). It is called the Mystic Law because it reveals the principle of the mutually inclusive relationship of a single moment of life and all phenomena. That is why this sutra is the wisdom of all Buddhas.

Life at each moment encompasses the body and mind and the self and environment of all sentient beings in the Ten Worlds as well as all insentient beings in the three thousand realms, including plants, sky, earth, and even the minutest particles of dust. Life at each moment permeates the entire realm of phenomena and is revealed in all phenomena. To be awakened to this principle is itself the mutually inclusive relationship of life at each moment and all phenomena. Nevertheless, even though you chant and believe in

Myoho-rence-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching. “Inferior teaching” means those other than this [Lotus] sutra, which are all expedient and provisional. No expedient or provisional teaching leads directly to enlightenment, and without the direct path to enlightenment you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practice lifetime after lifetime for countless kalpas. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is then impossible. Therefore, when you chant *myoho* and recite *rence*,¹ you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-rence-kyo is your life itself.

You must never think that any of the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha’s lifetime or any of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three existences are outside yourself. Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least unless you perceive the true nature of your life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, then your performing even ten thousand practices and ten thousand good deeds will be in vain. It is like the case of a poor man who spends night and day counting his neighbor’s wealth but gains not even half a coin. That is why the T’ien-t’ai school’s commentary states, “Unless

one perceives the nature of one's life, one cannot eradicate one's grave offenses."² This passage implies that, unless one perceives the nature of one's life, one's practice will become an endless, painful austerity. Therefore, such students of Buddhism are condemned as non-Buddhist. *Great Concentration and Insight* states that, although they study Buddhism, their views are no different from those of non-Buddhists.

Whether you chant the Buddha's name,³ recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith. The Vimalakirti Sutra states that, when one seeks the Buddhas' emancipation in the minds of ordinary beings, one finds that ordinary beings are the entities of enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana. It also states that, if the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds.

It is the same with a Buddha and an ordinary being. When deluded, one is called an ordinary being, but when enlightened, one is called a Buddha. This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality. Arouse deep faith, and diligently polish your mirror day and night. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

What then does *myo* signify? It is

simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. When we look into our own mind at any moment, we perceive neither color nor form to verify that it exists. Yet we still cannot say it does not exist, for many differing thoughts continually occur. The mind cannot be considered either to exist or not to exist. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality. *Myo* is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and *ho*, to its manifestations. *Renge*, which means lotus flower, is used to symbolize the wonder of this Law. If we understand that our life at this moment is *myo*, then we will also understand that our life at other moments is the Mystic Law.⁴ This realization is the mystic *kyo*, or sutra. The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our life, which manifests either good or evil at each moment, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law.

If you chant Myoho-enge-kyo with deep faith in this principle, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. That is why the sutra states, "After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way."⁵ Never doubt in the slightest.

Respectfully.

Maintain your faith and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren

Background

This letter was written to Toki Jonin in the seventh year of Kencho (1255), two years after Nichiren Daishonin established his teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. At the time of this letter, the Daishonin was thirty-four years old and was living in Kamakura, the seat of the military government. Toki was a staunch follower of the Daishonin who lived in Wakamiya in Shimosa Province. He received some thirty letters, including *Letter from Sado* and one of the major treatises, *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*. A retainer of Lord Chiba, the constable of Shimosa, Toki had become a follower of the Daishonin around 1254.

Of all his writings from the mid-1250s, *On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime* focuses most clearly on the tenets of the Daishonin's Buddhism;

many of the other works of this period are aimed chiefly at refuting the erroneous doctrines of other schools and discussing theoretical questions. This short essay not only reflects the theories T'ien-t'ai formulated based on the Lotus Sutra, but also reveals the concrete practice for attaining Buddhahood—namely, chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo—that is missing in T'ien-t'ai's theoretical framework.

Myoho-enge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, but to the Daishonin it is much more; it is the essence of the sutra, the revelation of the supreme Law itself. Apparent in this work are both the depth of his thought and his conviction that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the only teaching that can lead people to Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Notes

1. "Chant *myoho* and recite *rengé*" means to chant the daimoku of the Mystic Law, or Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

2. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

3. As used here, "the Buddha's name"

denotes Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

4. This sentence can also be interpreted to read, "If one understands that one's life is *myo*, then one also understands that others' lives are all entities of the Mystic Law."

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

2

On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land



ONCE there was a traveler who spoke these words in sorrow to his host:

In recent years, there have been unusual disturbances in the heavens, strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the empire and spreading throughout the land. Oxen and horses lie dead in the streets, and the bones of the stricken crowd the highways. Over half the population has already been carried off by death, and there is hardly a single person who does not grieve.

All the while some put their whole faith in the “sharp sword”¹ of the Buddha Amida and intone the name of this lord of the Western Land; others believe that hearing the name of the Buddha Medicine Master will “heal all ills”² and recite the sutra that describes this Thus Come One of the Eastern Region. Some, putting their trust in the passage in the Lotus Sutra that says, “His illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age nor death,”³ pay homage to the wonderful words of that sutra; others, relying upon the sutra passage that reads, “The seven disasters will instantly vanish, and the seven blessings will instantly appear,”⁴ conduct ceremonies at which a hundred priests expound the sutra at a hundred preaching platforms.⁵ There

are those who follow the esoteric teachings of the True Word school and conduct rituals in which they fill five jars with water,⁶ and others who devote themselves entirely to seated meditation and try to perceive the emptiness of all phenomena as clearly as the moon.⁷ Some write out the names of the seven guardian spirits⁸ and paste them on a thousand gates, others paint pictures of the five mighty bodhisattvas⁹ and hang them over ten thousand thresholds, and still others pray to the heavenly gods and earthly deities in ceremonies conducted at the four corners of the capital and on the four boundaries of the nation. Taking pity on the plight of the common people, the rulers carry out government on the national and local levels in a benevolent manner.

But despite all these efforts, they merely exhaust themselves in vain. Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, and dead bodies lie side by side like planks on a bridge.

If we look about, we find that the sun and moon continue to move in their accustomed orbits, and the five planets¹⁰ follow the proper course. The three treasures of Buddhism continue to exist, and the period of a hun-

dred reigns has not yet expired.¹¹ Then why is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?

The host then spoke: I have been brooding alone upon this matter, indignant in my heart, but now that you have come, we can lament together. Let us discuss the question at length.

When a man leaves family life and enters the Buddhist way, it is because he hopes to attain Buddhahood through the teachings of the Buddha. But attempts now to move the gods fail to have any effect, and appeals to the power of the Buddhas produce no results. When I observe carefully the state of the world today, I see people who give way to doubt because of the lack of understanding [on the part of eminent priests]. They look up at the heavens and mouth their resentment, or gaze down at the earth and sink deep into despair.

I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have looked a little at the scriptures for an answer. The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that sages leave and do not return. And in their stead devils and demons come, and disasters and calamities occur. I cannot keep silent on this matter. I cannot suppress my fears.

The guest said: These disasters that befall the empire, these calamities of the nation—I am not the only one pained by them; the whole populace is weighed down with sorrow. Now I have been privileged to enter the orchid room¹² and listen to these enlightening words of yours. You speak of the gods and sages taking leave, and of disasters and calamities arising in

sequence—upon what sutras do you base your views? Could you describe for me the passages of proof?

The host said: There are numerous passages that could be cited and a wide variety of proofs. For example, in the Golden Light Sutra we read: “[The four heavenly kings said to the Buddha], ‘Though this sutra exists in the nation, its ruler has never allowed it to be propagated. In his heart he turns away from it, and he takes no pleasure in hearing its teachings. He neither makes offerings to it, honors it, nor praises it. Nor is he willing to honor or make offerings to the four kinds of Buddhists who embrace the sutra. In the end, he makes it impossible for us and the other countless heavenly beings who are our followers to hear this profound and wonderful teaching. He deprives us of the sweet dew of its words and cuts us off from the flow of the correct teaching, so that our majesty and strength are drained away. Thus the number of beings who occupy the evil paths increases, and the number who dwell in the human and heavenly realms decreases. People fall into the river of the sufferings of birth and death and turn their backs on the road to nirvana.

“‘World-Honored One, we, the four heavenly kings, as well as our various followers and the yakshas and other beings, observing this state of affairs, have decided to abandon this nation, for we have no heart to protect it. And it is not we alone who cast aside this ruler. All the great benevolent deities who guard and watch over the countless different regions of the country will also invariably reject him. And once we and the others abandon and desert this nation, then many different types of disasters will occur in the country, and the ruler will fall from power. Not a single person in the entire population will possess a heart of goodness; there will be nothing

but binding and enslaving, killing and injuring, anger and contention. People will slander each other or fawn upon one another, and the laws will be twisted until even the innocent are made to suffer. Pestilence will become rampant, comets will appear again and again, two suns will come forth side by side, and eclipses will occur with unaccustomed frequency. Black arcs and white arcs will span the sky as harbingers of ill fortune, stars will fall, the earth will shake, and noises will issue from the wells. Torrential rains and violent winds will come out of season, famine will constantly occur, and grains and fruits will not ripen. 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.”

The Great Collection Sutra says: “When the teachings of the Buddha truly become obscured and lost, then people will all let their beards, hair, and fingernails grow long, and the laws of the world will be forgotten and ignored. At that time, loud noises will sound in the air, and the earth will shake; everything in the world will begin to move as though it were a waterwheel. City walls will split and tumble, and all houses and dwellings will collapse. Roots, branches, leaves, petals, and fruits will lose their medicinal properties. With the exception of the heavens of purity,¹³ all the regions of the world of desire will become deprived of the seven flavors¹⁴ and the three kinds of vitality,¹⁵ until not a trace of them remains any more. All the good discourses that lead people to emancipation will at this time disappear. The flowers and fruits that grow in the earth will become few and will lose their flavor and sweetness. The wells, springs, and ponds will all go dry, the land everywhere will turn brackish and will crack open and warp

into hillocks and gullies. All the mountains will be swept by fire, and the heavenly beings and dragons will no longer send down rain. The seedlings of the crops will all wither and die, all the living plants will perish, and even the weeds will cease to grow any more. Dust will rain down until all is darkness and the sun and moon no longer shed their light.

“All the four directions will be afflicted by drought, and evil omens will appear again and again. The ten evil acts will increase greatly, particularly greed, anger, and foolishness, and people will think no more of their fathers and mothers than does the roe deer.¹⁶ Living beings will decline in numbers, in longevity, physical strength, dignity, and enjoyment. They will become estranged from the delights of the human and heavenly realms, and all will fall into the paths of evil. The wicked rulers and monks who perform these ten evil acts will curse and destroy my correct teaching and make it difficult for those in the human and heavenly realms to stay there. At that time the benevolent deities and heavenly kings, who would ordinarily take pity on living beings, will abandon this impure and evil nation, and all will make their way to other regions.”

The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: “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. Invaders come to plunder the country, and the common people face annihilation. The ruler, the high ministers, the crown prince, the other princes, and the hundred officials all quarrel with one another over right and wrong. Heaven and earth manifest prodigies and strange occurrences; the twenty-eight constellations, the stars, and the sun and moon appear at irregular times and in irregular positions; and numerous outlaws rise up.”

The same sutra also states: “Now when I use the five types of vision to clearly perceive the three existences, I see that in their past existences all the rulers served five hundred Buddhas, and that is the reason that they were able to become emperors and sovereigns. And that also is the reason that all the various sages and arhats are born in their nations and bring great benefits. But if a time should come when the good fortune of these rulers runs out, then all the sages will abandon them and depart. Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise.”

The Medicine Master Sutra states: “If disasters and calamities should befall members of the ruling Kshatriya class and anointed kings,¹⁷ such disasters will be as follows: the calamity of disease and pestilence among the populace; the calamity of invasion from foreign lands; the calamity of revolt within one’s own domain; the calamity of irregularities and strange occurrences among the stars and constellations; the calamity of eclipses of the sun and moon; the calamity of unseasonable wind and rain; and the calamity of rain that fails to fall even when the season for it has come and gone.”

In the Benevolent Kings Sutra [the Buddha addresses King Prasenajit with these words]: “Great King, the region where my teachings now hold sway consists of one billion Sumeru worlds with one billion suns and moons. Each of these Sumeru worlds comprises four continents. In the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, there are sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, and ten thousand small states. In these states, seven types of fearful disasters may occur. All the rulers of these states agree that these are indeed disasters. What, then, are these disasters?”

“When the sun and moon depart from their regular courses, when the seasons come in the wrong order,

when a red sun or a black sun appears, when two, three, four, or five suns appear at the same time, when the sun is eclipsed and loses its light, or when one, two, three, four, or five coronas appear around the sun, this is the first disaster.

“When the twenty-eight constellations do not move in their regular courses, when the Metal Star,¹⁸ the Broom Star, the Wheel Star, the Demon Star, the Fire Star, the Water Star, the Wind Star, the Ladle Star, the Southern Dipper, the Northern Dipper, the great stars of the Five Garrisons, and all the many stars that govern the ruler, the three high ministers, and the hundred officials—when each of these stars manifests some peculiar behavior, this is the second disaster.

“When huge fires consume the nation, and the people are all burned to death, or when there are outbreaks of demon fire, dragon fire, heavenly fire, mountain god fire, human fire, tree fire, or bandit fire¹⁹—when these prodigies appear, this is the third disaster.

“When huge floods drown the population; when the seasons come out of order and there is rain in winter, snow in summer, thunder and lightning in winter, and ice, frost, and hail in the sixth month;²⁰ when red, black, or green rain falls; when mountains of dirt and stones come raining down, or when it rains dust, sand, or gravel; when the rivers and streams run backward; when mountains are afloat and boulders are washed away—when freakish happenings of this kind occur, this is the fourth disaster.

“When huge winds blow the people to their death, and the lands, the mountains and rivers, and the trees and forests are all at one time wiped out; when great winds come out of season, or when black winds, red winds, green winds, heavenly winds, earthly winds, fire winds, and water

winds blow²¹—when prodigies of this kind occur, this is the fifth disaster.

“When heaven and earth and the whole country are stricken by terrible heat so that the air seems to be on fire, when the hundred plants wither and the five kinds of grain²² fail to ripen, when the earth is red and scorched and the inhabitants all perish—when prodigies of this kind occur, this is the sixth disaster.

“When enemies rise up on all four sides and invade the nation, when rebels appear in the capital and the outlying regions, when there are fire bandits, water bandits, wind bandits, and demon bandits,²³ and the population is subjected to devastation and disorder, and fighting and plundering break out everywhere—when prodigies of this type occur, this is the seventh disaster.”

The Great Collection Sutra says: “Though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practiced the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom, if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, then all the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned will be entirely wiped out, and his country will become the scene of three inauspicious occurrences. The first is high grain prices, the second is warfare, and the third is epidemics. All the benevolent deities will abandon the country, and although the ruler may issue commands, the people will not obey them. The country will constantly be invaded and vexed by neighboring nations. Violent fires will rage out of control, fierce winds and rains will abound, the waters will swell and overflow, and the inhabitants will be blown about by winds or swept away by floods. The paternal and maternal relatives of the ruler will join in plotting revolt. Before long, the

ruler will fall gravely ill, and after his life has come to an end, he will be reborn in the great hell. . . . And the same fate will befall the ruler’s consort, his heir, the high ministers of the state, the lords of cities, the village heads and generals, the magistrates of districts, and the other officials.”

The passages I have quoted from these four sutras are perfectly clear—what person in ten thousand could possibly doubt their meaning? And yet the blind and the deluded recklessly trust to distorted doctrines and fail to recognize the correct teaching. Therefore, throughout the empire these days people are inclined to turn away from the Buddhas and the sutras, and no longer endeavor to protect them. Because of this, the benevolent deities and sages abandon the nation and leave their accustomed places. As a result, demons and evil spirits²⁴ bring about disasters and cause calamities.

The guest thereupon flushed with anger and said: Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty, having comprehended the significance of his dream of a golden man, welcomed the teachings [of Buddhism] brought by white horses.²⁵ Prince Jogu, having put down the rebellion of Moriya [an opponent of Buddhism],²⁶ proceeded to construct temples and pagodas. Since that time, from the ruler on down to the common people, all have worshiped the Buddha images and devoted their attention to the scriptures. As a result, in the monasteries of Mount Hiei and the southern capital at Nara, at the temples of Onjo-ji and To-ji, throughout the land bounded by the four seas, in the five provinces of the capital area and along the seven marches, Buddha images and Buddhist scriptures have been ranged like stars in the sky, and halls of worship have spread like clouds. Those who belong to the lineage of Shariputra meditate on the moon atop Eagle Peak, while those

who adhere to the traditions of Hakle-nayashas transmit the teachings of Mount Kukkutapada.²⁷ How, then, can anyone say that the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime are despised, or that the three treasures of Buddhism have ceased to exist? If there is evidence to support such a contention, I would like to hear all the facts.

The host, anxious to clarify his words, replied: To be sure, Buddhist halls stand rooftop to rooftop, and sutra storehouses are ranged eave to eave. Priests are as numerous as bamboo plants and rushes, monks as common as rice and hemp seedlings. The temples and priests have been honored from centuries past, and every day respect is paid them anew. But the monks and priests today are fawning and devious, and they confuse the people and lead them astray. The ruler and his subjects lack understanding and fail to distinguish between what is correct and what is erroneous.

The Benevolent Kings Sutra, for example, says: "Evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit, in many cases appear before the ruler, the crown prince, or the other princes, and take it upon themselves to preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, listens to and puts faith in such doctrines, and proceeds to create regulations that are perverse in nature and that do not accord with the rules of Buddhist discipline. In this way he brings about the destruction of Buddhism and of the nation."

The Nirvana Sutra states: "Bodhisattvas, have no fear of mad elephants. What you should fear are evil friends! . . . Even if you are killed by a mad elephant, you will not fall into the three evil paths. But if you are killed by an evil friend, you are certain to fall into them."

The Lotus Sutra says: "In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked who will suppose they have attained what they have not attained, being proud and boastful in heart. Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement, who will claim they are practicing the true way, despising and looking down on all humankind. Greedy for profit and support, they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. . . . Because in the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us, they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, 'These are men of perverted views who preach non-Buddhist doctrines!' . . . In a muddied kalpa, in an evil age there will be many things to fear. Evil demons will take possession of others and through them curse, revile, and heap shame on us. . . . The evil monks of that muddied age, failing to understand the Buddha's expedient means, how he preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, will confront us with foul language and angry frowns; again and again we will be banished."²⁸

The Nirvana Sutra says: "After I have passed away and countless hundreds of years have gone by, the sages of the four stages²⁹ too will have all passed away. After the Former Day of the Law has ended and the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will

go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice. And they will constantly reiterate these words, 'I have attained arhatship!' Outwardly they will seem to be wise and good, but within they will harbor greed and jealousy. [And when they are asked to preach the teachings, they will say nothing.] like Brahmans who have taken a vow of silence. They are not true monks—they merely have the appearance of monks. Consumed by their erroneous views, they slander the correct teaching."

When we look at the world in the light of these passages of scripture, we see that the situation is just as they describe it. If we do not admonish the evil priests, how can we hope to do good?

The guest, growing more indignant than ever, said: A wise monarch, by acting in accord with heaven and earth, perfects his rule; a sage, by distinguishing between right and wrong, brings order to the world. The monks and priests of the world today enjoy the confidence of the entire empire. If they were in fact evil monks, then the wise ruler would put no trust in them. If they were not true sages, then worthies and learned persons would not look up to them. But now, since worthies and sages do in fact honor and respect them, they must be nothing less than paragons of their kind. Why then do you pour out these wild accusations and dare to slander them? To whom are you referring when you speak of "evil monks"? I would like an explanation.

The host said: In the time of the Retired Emperor Gotoba there was a priest named Honen who wrote a work entitled *The Nembutsu Chosen above All*. He contradicted the sacred teachings of the Buddha's entire lifetime and brought confusion to people in every direction. *Nembutsu Chosen*

above All states: "Regarding the passage in which the Meditation Master Taoch'o distinguished between the Sacred Way teachings and the Pure Land teachings and urged people to abandon the former and immediately embrace the latter, first of all, there are two kinds of Sacred Way teachings, [the Mahayana and the Hinayana]. . . . Judging from this, we may assume that the esoteric Mahayana teachings and the true Mahayana teachings are both included in the Sacred Way. If that is so, then the eight present-day schools—the True Word, Zen, Tendai, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra, and Summary of the Mahayana—all are included in the Sacred Way that is to be abandoned.

"The Dharma Teacher T'an-luan in his *Commentary on 'The Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure Land'* states, 'I note that Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra* says, "There are two ways by which a bodhisattva may reach the state of avaiavartika, or non-retrogression. One is the difficult-to-practice way, the other is the easy-to-practice way.'"

"The difficult-to-practice way is the same as the Sacred Way teachings, and the easy-to-practice way is the Pure Land teachings. Students of the Pure Land school should first of all understand this point. Though they may be people who have previously studied the Sacred Way teachings, if they wish to become followers of the Pure Land teachings, they must discard the Sacred Way and give their allegiance to the Pure Land teachings."

Honen also says: "Regarding the passage in which the Reverend Shantao distinguished between correct and sundry practices and urged people to abandon the sundry and embrace the correct: Concerning the first of the sundry practices, that of reading and reciting sutras, with the exception of

the recitation of the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra and the other sutras that preach rebirth in the Pure Land, the embracing, reading, and recitation of all other sutras, whether Mahayana or Hinayana, exoteric or esoteric, is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . Concerning the third of the sundry practices, that of worshipping, with the exception of worshipping the Buddha Amida, the worshipping or honoring of any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . In the light of his statement, I declare that one should abandon such sundry practices and concentrate upon the practice of the Pure Land teachings. What reason would we have to abandon the correct practices of the Pure Land teachings, which insure that out of a hundred persons all one hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land, and cling instead to the various sundry practices and procedures, which could not save even one person in a thousand? Followers of the way should ponder this carefully.”

Honen further states: “In *The Chen-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon* we find it recorded that, from the 600 volumes of the Great Wisdom Sutra to the Eternity of the Law Sutra, the exoteric and esoteric sutras of Mahayana, or the great vehicle, total 637 works in 2,883 volumes. The phrase [from the Meditation Sutra] ‘reading and reciting the great vehicle’ should be applied to all these works. You should understand that, when the Buddha was preaching according to the capacity of his various listeners, he for a time taught the two methods of concentrated meditation and unconcentrated meditation.³⁰ But later, when he revealed his own enlightenment, he ceased to teach these two methods. The only teaching that, once revealed, shall never cease to be taught is the single doctrine of the Nembutsu.”

Honen also states: “Regarding the passage that says that the practitioner of the Nembutsu must possess three kinds of mind,³¹ it is found in the Meditation Sutra. In his commentary on that sutra [Shan-tao says]: ‘Someone may ask, “If there are those who differ in understanding and practice from the followers of the Nembutsu, persons of distorted and mistaken belief, [how should we confront them]?’” I will now make certain that their perverse and differing views will not cause trouble. These persons of evil views with different understanding and different practices are compared to a band of robbers who call back the traveler who has already gone one or two steps along his journey.’ In my opinion, when this commentary speaks of different understanding, different practices, varying doctrines, and varying beliefs, they are referring to the teachings of the Sacred Way.”

Finally, in a concluding passage, Honen says: “If one wishes to escape quickly from the sufferings of birth and death, one should confront these two superior teachings and then proceed to put aside the teachings of the Sacred Way and choose those of the Pure Land. And if one wishes to follow the teachings of the Pure Land, one should confront the correct and sundry practices and then proceed to abandon all of the sundry and devote one’s entire attention to the correct.”

When we examine these passages, we see that Honen quotes the erroneous explanations of T’an-luan, Tao-ch’o, and Shan-tao, and establishes the categories of the Sacred Way and the Pure Land teachings, and of the difficult-to-practice and the easy-to-practice ways. He then takes all the 637 works in 2,883 volumes that comprise the Mahayana teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime, including those of the Lotus Sutra and the True Word sutras, along with all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the deities of this world,

and assigns them all to the categories of the Sacred Way teachings, the difficult-to-practice way, and the sundry practices, and urges people to “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” them. With these four injunctions, he leads all people astray. On top of that, he groups together all the sage monks of the three countries [of India, China, and Japan] as well as the students of Buddhism of the ten directions, and calls them a “band of robbers,” causing the people to insult them.

In doing so, he turns his back on the passage in the three Pure Land sutras, the sutras of his own school, which contains Amida’s vow to save the people “excepting only those who commit the five cardinal sins and those who slander the correct teaching.”³² More fundamentally, he shows that he fails to understand the warning contained in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra, the heart and core of the entire body of teachings the Buddha expounded in the five periods of his preaching life, which reads, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”³³

Now we have come to this latter age, when people are no longer sages. Each enters his own dark road, and all alike forget the direct way. How pitiful that no one cures them of their blindness! How painful to see them taking up these false beliefs in vain! As a result, everyone from the ruler of the nation on down to the common people believes that there are no true sutras outside the three Pure Land sutras, and no Buddhas other than the Buddha Amida with his two attendants.³⁴

Once there were men like Dengyo, Gishin, Jikaku, and Chisho who journeyed ten thousand miles across the waves to China to acquire the sacred teachings, and there visited the mountains and rivers to pay reverence to Buddhist statues [and carry them back].

In some cases they built holy temples on the peaks of high mountains in which to preserve those scriptures and statues; in other cases they constructed sacred halls in the bottoms of deep valleys where such objects could be worshiped and honored. As a result, the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Medicine Master³⁵ shone side by side, casting their influence upon present and future ages, while the bodhisattvas Space Treasury and Earth Repository brought benefit to the living and the dead. The rulers of the nation contributed districts or villages so that the lamps might continue to burn bright before the images, while the stewards of the great estates gave their fields and gardens as an offering.

But because of this book by Honen, this *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, the lord of teachings, Shakyamuni, is forgotten, and all honor is paid to Amida, the Buddha of the Western Land. The transmission of the Law [from Shakyamuni Buddha] is ignored,³⁶ and Medicine Master, the Thus Come One of the Eastern Region, is neglected. Attention is paid only to the three Pure Land sutras in four volumes, and all the other wonderful scriptures that Shakyamuni expounded throughout the five periods of his preaching life are cast aside. If temples are not dedicated to Amida, then people no longer have any desire to support them or pay honor to the Buddhas enshrined there; if priests are not practitioners of the Nembutsu, then people quickly forget all about giving those priests alms. As a result, the halls of the Buddha have fallen into ruin, scarcely a wisp of smoke rising above their moss-covered roof tiles; and the priests’ quarters have become empty and dilapidated, the dew deep on the grasses in their courtyards. And in spite of such conditions, no one gives a thought to protecting the Law or to restoring the temples. Hence the sage priests who once presided over the

temples leave and do not return, and the benevolent deities who guarded the nation depart and no longer appear. This has all come about because of this *Nembutsu Chosen above All* by Honen. How pitiful to think that, in the space of a few decades, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of people have been deluded by these devilish teachings and in so many cases confused as to the true teachings of Buddhism. If people favor what is only incidental and forget what is primary, can the benevolent deities be anything but angry? If people cast aside what is perfect and take up what is biased, can the world escape the plots of demons? Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil.

This time the guest was truly enraged and said: In the ages since our original teacher, the Buddha Shakyamuni, preached the three Pure Land sutras, the Dharma Teacher T'an-luan had originally studied the four treatises,³⁷ but abandoned them and put all his faith in the Pure Land teachings. Similarly, the Meditation Master Tao-ch'ō ceased to spread the varied practices of the Nirvana Sutra and devoted all his attention to propagating the practice that leads one to the Western Pure Land. The Reverend Shan-tao discarded the sundry practices and established the single practice of the Nembutsu, and the Supervisor of Priests Eshin collected essential passages from various sutras to form his work, making the single practice of the Nembutsu the essence of his teaching. Such was the manner in which these men honored and respected the Buddha Amida, and uncountable numbers of people as a result were able to gain rebirth in the Pure Land.

Of particular note was the Sage Honen, who as a child entered the monastery on Mount Hiei. By the time he was seventeen, he had worked

his way through all sixty volumes of Tendai literature,³⁸ and had investigated all the eight schools and mastered their essentials. In addition, he had read through the entire body of sutras and treatises seven times, and exhausted all the works of exegesis and biography. His wisdom shone like the sun and moon, and his virtue exceeded that of the earlier teachers.

In spite of all this, he was in doubt as to the proper path to emancipation and could not make out the true meaning of nirvana. Therefore, he read and examined all the texts he could, pondered deeply and considered every possibility, and in the end put aside all the sutras and concentrated on the single practice of the Nembutsu. In addition, he received confirmation of his decision when Shan-tao miraculously appeared to him in a dream,³⁹ and he proceeded to spread his doctrines among friends and strangers in all four corners of the land. Thereafter, he was hailed as a re-incarnation of Bodhisattva Great Power, or was revered as Shan-tao reborn. In every quarter, people of eminent and lowly birth alike bowed their heads in respect, and men and women from all over Japan sought him.

Since that time, the springs and autumns have succeeded each other, and the years have piled upon years. And yet you insist upon putting aside the venerable teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha [contained in the Pure Land sutras] and willfully speak evil of the passage describing the oath of the Buddha Amida. Why do you try to blame the sacred age of Honen for the disasters of recent years, going out of your way to slander the former teachers of Pure Land doctrines and to heap abuse on the Sage Honen? You are, as the saying goes, deliberately blowing back the fur and hunting for flaws in the leather, deliberately piercing the skin in hopes of drawing blood. From ancient times to the present, the world has

never seen such a speaker of evil. You had better learn a little caution and restraint. When you pile up such grave offenses, how can you hope to escape punishment? I am afraid even to sit here in your company. I must take up my staff and be on my way!

The host, smiling, restrained his guest and said: Insects that live on smartweed forget how bitter it tastes; those who stay long in privies forget how foul the smell is. Here you listen to my good words and think them wicked, point to a slanderer of the Law and call him a sage, mistrust a correct teacher and take him for an evil priest. Your confusion is great indeed, and your offense anything but light. Listen to my explanation of how this confusion arose, and let us discuss the matter in detail.

Shakyamuni Buddha expounded the five periods of doctrines, established the order in which they were preached, and divided them into the provisional and the true teachings. But T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao embraced the provisional teachings and forgot about the true ones, went by what had been taught in the earlier period of the Buddha's life and discarded what was taught later. They were not the kind of men who delve into the deep places of Buddhist doctrine.

Honen in particular, though he followed the practices advocated by these earlier men, was ignorant as to their source. How do we know this? Because he lumped together all the 637 Mahayana scriptures in 2,883 volumes and along with them all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the deities of this world, and urged people to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon" them, with these four injunctions corrupting the hearts of all people. Thus he poured out perverted words of his own invention and took absolutely no cognizance of the explanations put forth in the Buddhist scriptures. His is the worst

kind of baseless talk, a clear case of defamation. There are no words to describe it, no way to censure it that is not too mild. And yet people all put faith in this baseless talk of his, and without exception pay honor to his *Nembutsu Chosen above All*. As a consequence, they revere the three sutras of the Pure Land and cast all the other sutras aside; they look up to one Buddha alone, Amida of the Land of Perfect Bliss, and forget about the other Buddhas. A man such as Honen is in truth the archenemy of the Buddhas and the scriptures, and the foe of sage priests and ordinary men and women alike. And now his distorted teachings have spread throughout the eight regions of the country, permeating the ten directions.

You became quite horrified when I blamed an earlier period⁴⁰ for the disasters that have occurred in recent years. Perhaps I should cite a few examples from the past to show you that you are mistaken in your feelings.

The second volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* quotes a passage from *Records of the Historian* that says, "In the closing years of the Chou dynasty, there were persons who let their hair hang down, went about naked to the waist, and did not observe the rites and regulations." *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* in the second volume, explains this passage by quoting from *Tso's Commentary on "Spring and Autumn Annals"* as follows: "When King P'ing of the Chou first moved his capital to the east, he saw men by the Yi River who let their hair hang down and performed sacrifices in the fields. Someone who had great understanding said, 'In less than a hundred years the dynasty will fall, for the rites are already neglected.'" From this it is evident that the portent appears first, and later the disaster itself comes about.

[The *Great Concentration and Insight*

passage goes on to say:] “Juan Chi⁴¹ was a man of extraordinary talent, but he let his hair grow like a mass of brambles and left his belt undone. Later, the sons of the aristocracy all imitated him, until those who behaved in a churlish and insulting manner were thought to be acting quite naturally, and those who were restrained and proper in their behavior were ridiculed as mere peasants. This was a sign that the Su-ma family [the rulers of the Western Chin dynasty] would meet with their downfall.”

Similarly, *The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* by the Great Teacher Jikaku states that, in the first year of the Hui-ch’ang era (841), Emperor Wu-tsung of the T’ang dynasty commanded the priest Ching-shuang of Chang-ching-ssu temple to transmit the Nembutsu teachings of the Buddha Amida in the various temples. Ching-shuang spent three days in each temple, going about from one temple to another without ever ceasing.

In the second year of the same era, soldiers from the land of the Uighurs⁴² invaded the borders of the T’ang empire. In the third year of the same era, the regional commander in the area north of the Yellow River suddenly raised a revolt. Later, the kingdom of Tibet once more refused to obey orders from China, and the Uighurs repeatedly seized Chinese territory. On the whole, the conflicts and uprisings were like those that prevailed at the time when the Ch’in dynasty and the military leader Hsiang Yü were overthrown, and the towns and villages were devastated by fire and other disasters. What was even worse, Emperor Wu-tsung carried out a vast campaign to wipe out Buddhist teachings and destroyed a great many temples and pagodas. He was never able to put down the uprisings and died in agony shortly after. (This is the essence of Jikaku’s original passage.)

In view of these events, we should consider the fact that Honen belonged to the time of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, around the Kennin era (1201–1204). And what happened to the retired emperor is evident before our very eyes.⁴³ Thus T’ang China provided an earlier example of the fall of an emperor, and our own country offers similar proof. You should neither doubt this nor consider it strange. The only thing to do now is to abandon the evil ways and take up those that are good, to cut off this affliction at the source, to cut it off at the root.

The guest, looking somewhat mollified, said: Though I have not yet probed deeply into the matter, I believe I understand to some degree what you are saying. Nevertheless, throughout the area from Kyoto, the capital, to Kamakura, the headquarters of the shogun, there are numerous eminent Buddhist leaders and key figures in the clergy. And yet none of them has so far appealed to the shogun concerning this affair, or submitted a memorial to the throne. You, on the other hand, a person of humble position, think nothing of spewing out offensive accusations. Your assertion goes too far and your behavior is unreasonable.

The host said: Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of the Mahayana. A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet. I was born as the son of the one Buddha, Shakyamuni, and I serve the king of scriptures, the Lotus Sutra. How could I observe the decline of the Buddhist Law and not be filled with emotions of pity and distress?

Moreover, the Nirvana Sutra states: “If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust

him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer."

Although I may not be a "good monk," I certainly do not want to be accused of "betraying the Buddha's teaching." Therefore, in order to avoid such charges, I have cited a few general principles and given a rough explanation of the matter.

Earlier, in the Gennin era (1224–1225), petitions to the throne were submitted time and again by the two temples of Enryaku-ji and Kofuku-ji. And as a result, an imperial command and a letter of instruction from the shogunate were handed down, ordering that the woodblocks used in printing Honen's *Nembutsu Chosen above All* be confiscated and brought to the Great Lecture Hall of Enryaku-ji. There they were burned in order to repay the debt owed to the Buddhas of the three existences. In addition, orders were given that the menials at Kanjin-in Shrine should dig up and destroy Honen's grave. Then, Honen's disciples Ryukan, Shoko, Jokaku, Sassho, and others were condemned by the imperial court to exile in distant regions and were never pardoned.

In view of these facts, how can you say that no one has submitted a complaint to the authorities concerning these matters?

The guest, continuing to speak in a mild manner, replied: One could hardly say that Honen is the only one who disparages sutras and speaks ill of other priests [since you do the same thing yourself]. However, it is true that he takes the 637 Mahayana scriptures in 2,883 volumes, along with all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the deities of this world, and urges people to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon" them. There is no doubt that these four in-

junctions are his very words; the meaning of the passage is quite clear. But you keep harping on this one little "flaw in the jewel" and severely slandering him for it. I do not know whether he spoke out of delusion or out of enlightenment. Between you and Honen, I cannot tell which is wise and which is foolish, or determine whose assertions are right and whose are wrong.

However, you assert that all the recent disasters are to be traced to *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, speaking quite volubly on that point and elaborating on the meaning of your assertion. Now surely the peace of the world and the stability of the nation are sought by both ruler and subject and desired by all the inhabitants of the country. The nation achieves prosperity through the Buddhist Law, and the Law is proven worthy of reverence by the people who embrace it. If the nation is destroyed and the people are wiped out, then who will continue to pay reverence to the Buddhas? Who will continue to have faith in the Law? Therefore, one must first of all pray for the safety of the nation and then work to establish the Buddhist Law.⁴⁴ Now if you know of any means whereby disasters can be prevented and troubles brought to an end, I would like to hear about it.

The host said: There is no doubt that I am the foolish one—I would never dare claim to be wise. However, I would just like to quote some passages from the scriptures and offer some brief thoughts. Concerning the means for insuring order in the nation, there are numerous passages in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts, and it would be difficult to cite them all here. Since taking up the study of Buddhism, however, I have frequently given thought to this matter, and it seems to me that restraining those who slander the Law and respecting the followers of the correct way will assure

stability within the nation and peace in the world at large.

In the Nirvana Sutra, we read: "The Buddha said, 'With the exception of one type of person, you may offer alms to all kinds of persons, and everyone will praise you.'

"Chunda said, 'What do you mean when you speak of "one type of person"?"

"The Buddha replied, 'I mean the type described in this sutra as violators of the precepts.'

"Chunda spoke again, saying, 'I am afraid I still do not understand. May I ask you to explain further?'

"The Buddha addressed Chunda, saying, 'By violators of the precepts, I mean the icchantika. In the case of all other types of persons, you may offer alms, everyone will praise you, and you will achieve great rewards.'

"Chunda spoke once more, asking, 'What is the meaning of the term icchantika?'

"The Buddha said: 'Chunda, suppose there should be monks or nuns, lay men or women who speak careless and evil words and slander the correct teaching, and that they should go on committing these grave acts without ever showing any inclination to reform or any sign of repentance in their hearts. Persons of this kind I would say are following the path of the icchantika.

" 'Again there may be those who commit the four grave offenses⁴⁵ or are guilty of the five cardinal sins, and who, though aware that they are guilty of serious faults, from the beginning have no trace of fear or contrition in their hearts or, if they do, give no outward sign of it. When it comes to the correct teaching, they show no inclination to protect, treasure, and establish it over the ages, but rather speak of it with malice and contempt, their words replete with error. People of this kind too I would say are following the path

of the icchantika. With the exception of this one group of people called icchantika, however, you may offer alms to all others, and everyone will praise you.' "

Elsewhere in the same sutra, the Buddha spoke in these words: "When I recall the past, I remember that I was the king of a great state in this continent of Jambudvīpa. My name was Sen'yo, and I loved and venerated the great vehicle scriptures. My heart was pure and good and had no trace of evil, jealousy, or stinginess. Good men, at that time I cherished the great vehicle teachings in my heart. When I heard the Brahmins slandering these correct and equal sutras, I put them to death on the spot. Good men, as a result of that action, I never thereafter fell into hell."

In another passage it says, "In the past, when the Thus Come One was the ruler of a nation and practiced the way of the bodhisattva, he put to death a number of Brahmins."

Again it says: "There are three degrees of killings: the lower, middle, and upper degrees. The lower degree constitutes the killing of any humble being, from an ant to any of the various kinds of animals. But the killing of any being that a bodhisattva has chosen to be born as [to help other living beings] is excluded. As a result of a killing of the lower degree, one will fall into the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals, and will suffer all the pains appropriate to a killing of the lower degree. Why should this be? Because even animals and other humble beings possess the roots of goodness, insignificant though those roots may be. That is why a person who kills such a being must suffer full retribution for his offense.

"Killing any person from an ordinary mortal to an anagamin⁴⁶ constitutes what is termed the middle degree. As a consequence of such an act

of killing, one will fall into the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals, and will suffer all the pains appropriate to a killing of the middle degree. The upper degree of killing refers to the killing of a parent, an arhat, a pratyekabuddha, or a bodhisattva who has reached the stage of non-retrogression. For such a crime one will fall into the great Avichi hell. Good men, if someone were to kill an icchantika, that killing would not fall into any of the three categories just mentioned. Good men, the various Brahmans that I have said were put to death—all of them were in fact icchantikas.”

In the Benevolent Kings Sutra, we read: “The Buddha announced to King Prasenajit, ‘Thus I entrust the protection of my teachings to the ruler of the nation rather than to the monks and nuns. Why do I do so? Because they do not possess the kind of power and authority that the king has.’”

The Nirvana Sutra states: “Now I entrust the correct teaching, which is unexcelled, to the rulers, the ministers, the high officials, and the four kinds of Buddhists. If anyone should vilify the correct teaching, then the ministers and four kinds of Buddhists should reprimand him and bring him to order.”

It also states: “The Buddha replied: ‘[Bodhisattva] Kashyapa, it is because I was a defender of the correct teaching that I have been able to attain this diamond-like body. . . . Good man, defenders of the correct teaching need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows, halberds and lances.’”

Again the Buddha said: “Even though there may be those who observe the five precepts, they do not deserve to be called practitioners of the great vehicle. But even if one does not observe the five precepts, if one defends the correct teaching, then one

may be called a practitioner of the great vehicle. Defenders of the correct teaching ought to arm themselves with knives and swords, weapons and staves. Even though they carry swords and staves, I would call them men who observe the precepts.”

The Buddha likewise said: “Good man, in past ages in this very city of Kushinagara, a Buddha appeared whose name was the Thus Come One Joy Increasing. After this Buddha passed away, the correct teaching that he had taught remained in the world for countless millions of years. Finally, only forty more years were left before the Buddhist teaching was due to come to an end.

“At that time there was a monk named Realization of Virtue who observed the precepts. There were many monks at this time who violated the precepts, and when they heard this monk preaching, they all conceived evil designs in their hearts and, arming themselves with swords and staves, approached this teacher of the Law.

“At this time the ruler of the kingdom was named Possessor of Virtue. He received reports of what was happening, and, in order to defend the teaching, he went at once to the place where the monk was preaching the Law and fought with all his might against the evil monks who broke the precepts. As a result, the monk who had been preaching was able to escape grievous injury. But the king received so many wounds from the knives and swords, halberds and lances, that there was not a spot on his body the size of a mustard seed that remained unharmed.

“At this time the monk Realization of Virtue praised the king, saying: ‘Splendid, splendid! You, O king, are now a true defender of the correct teaching. In ages to come, this body of yours will surely become a boundless vessel of the Law!’

“At that time, the king had already heard the teaching, and he felt great joy in his heart. Thereupon his life came to an end, and he was reborn in the land of the Buddha Akshobhya, where he became the Buddha’s principal disciple. Moreover, all the military leaders, citizens, and associates of the king who had fought beside him or had rejoiced in his effort were filled with an unflagging determination to achieve enlightenment, and when they died, all of them were reborn in the land of the Buddha Akshobhya.

“Later, the monk Realization of Virtue also died, and he too was reborn in the land of the Buddha Akshobhya, where he became second among the Buddha’s voice-hearer disciples. Thus, if the correct teaching is about to come to an end, this is the way one ought to support and defend it.

“Kashyapa, the king who lived at that time was I myself, and the monk who preached was the Buddha Kashyapa.⁴⁷ Kashyapa, those who defend the correct teaching enjoy this kind of boundless reward. As a consequence, I have been able to obtain the distinguished characteristics that I possess today, to adorn myself with them, and to put on the Dharma body that can never be destroyed.”

Then the Buddha declared to Bodhisattva Kashyapa: “For this reason, laymen believers and others who wish to defend the Law should arm themselves with swords and staves and protect it in this manner.

“Good man, in the age of impurity and evil after I have passed away, the nation will fall into devastation and disorder, men will plunder and steal from one another, and the common people will be reduced to starvation. Because of hunger, many men at that time will declare their determination to leave their families and become monks. Men such as these may be called shavepates.⁴⁸ When this crowd of shavepates see any-

one who is attempting to protect the correct teaching, they will chase after him and drive him away, or even kill him or do him injury. That is why I now give permission for monks who observe the precepts to associate with and keep company with white-robed laymen who bear swords and staves. Even though they carry swords and staves, I would call them men who observe the precepts. But although they may carry swords and staves, they should never use them to take life.”

The Lotus Sutra says: “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”

The meaning of these passages from the sutras is perfectly clear. What need is there for me to add any further explanation? If we accept the words of the Lotus Sutra, then we must understand that slandering the Mahayana scriptures is more serious than committing the five cardinal sins countless times. Therefore, one who does so will be confined in the great citadel of the Avichi hell and cannot hope for release for an immeasurable length of time. According to the Nirvana Sutra, even though you may give alms to a person who has committed the five cardinal sins, you must never give alms to a person who has slandered the Law. One who kills so much as an ant will invariably fall into the three evil paths, but one who helps eradicate slander of the Law will ascend to the state from which there can be no retrogression. Thus the passage tells us that the monk Realization of Virtue was reborn as the Buddha Kashyapa, and that King Possessor of Virtue was reborn as the Buddha Shakyamuni.

The Lotus and the Nirvana sutras represent the very heart of the doctrines that Shakyamuni preached during the five periods of his teaching life.

Their warnings must be viewed with the utmost gravity. Who would fail to heed them? And yet those people who forget about the correct way and slander the Law put more trust than ever in Honen's *Nembutsu Chosen above All* and grow blinder than ever in their foolishness.

Thus some of them, remembering how their master looked in life, fashion wooden sculptures and paintings of him, while others, putting faith in his perverse teachings, carve woodblocks with which to print his ugly words. These writings they scatter about throughout the area bounded by the seas, carrying them beyond the cities and into the countryside until, wherever honor is paid, it is to the practices of this school, and wherever alms are given, it is to the priests of this school.

As a result, we see people cutting off the fingers of the images of Shakyamuni and refashioning them to form the gesture of Amida, or converting the temples formerly dedicated to Medicine Master, the Thus Come One of the Eastern Region, and replacing his statues with those of Amida, the Thus Come One of the Western Land. Or we find the ceremony of copying the Lotus Sutra, which had been carried out for over four hundred years on Mount Hiei, being suspended and the copying of the three Pure Land sutras substituted in its place, or the annual lectures⁴⁹ on the doctrines of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai being replaced by lectures on the teachings of Shan-tao. Indeed, the slanderous people and their associates are too numerous to count. Are they not destroyers of the Buddha? Are they not destroyers of the Law? Are they not destroyers of the Buddhist Order? And all their distorted teachings derive from *Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

Alas, how pitiful that people should turn their backs on the true words of prohibition spoken by the Thus Come

One [Shakyamuni]! How tragic that they should heed the gross and deluded words of this ignorant priest! If we hope to bring order and tranquillity to the world without further delay, we must put an end to these slanders of the Law that fill the country.

The guest said: If we are to put an end to these people who slander the Law and do away with those who violate the prohibitions of the Buddha, then are we to condemn them to death as described in the sutra passages you have just cited? If we do that, then we ourselves will be guilty of inflicting injury and death upon others, and will suffer the consequences, will we not?

In the Great Collection Sutra, the Buddha says: "If a person shaves his head and puts on clerical robes, then, whether that person observes the precepts or violates them, both heavenly and human beings should give him alms. In doing so, they are giving alms and support to me, for that person is my son. But if men beat that person, they are beating my son, and if they curse and insult him, they are reviling me."

If we stop to consider, we must realize that, regardless of whether one is good or bad, right or wrong, if he is a priest, then he deserves to have alms and nourishment extended to him. For how could one beat and insult the son and still not cause grief and sorrow to the father? The Brahmans of the Bamboo Staff school who killed the Venerable Maudgalyayana have for a long time been sunk in the depths of the hell of incessant suffering. Because Devadatta murdered the nun Utpalavarna, he has for a long time gasped in the flames of the Avichi hell. Examples from earlier ages make the matter perfectly clear, and later ages fear this offense most of all. You speak of punishing those who slander the Law, but to do so would violate the Buddha's

prohibitions. I can hardly believe that such a course would be right. How can you justify that?

The host said: You have clearly seen the sutra passages that I have cited, and yet you can ask a question like that! Are they beyond the power of your mind to comprehend? Or do you fail to understand the reasoning behind them? I certainly have no intention of censuring the sons of the Buddha. My only hatred is for the act of slandering the Law. According to the Buddhist teachings, prior to Shakyamuni slanderous monks would have incurred the death penalty. But since the time of Shakyamuni, the One Who Can Endure, the giving of alms to slanderous monks is forbidden in the sutra teachings. Now if all the four kinds of Buddhists within the four seas and the ten thousand lands would only cease giving alms to wicked priests and instead all come over to the side of the good, then how could any more troubles rise to plague us, or disasters come to confront us?

With this the guest moved off his mat in a gesture of respect, straightened the collar of his robe, and said: The Buddhist teachings vary greatly, and it is difficult to investigate each doctrine in full. I have had many doubts and perplexities, and have been unable to distinguish right from wrong.

Nevertheless, this work by the Sage Honen, *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, does in fact exist. And it lumps together all the various Buddhas, sutras, bodhisattvas, and deities, and says that one should "discard, close, ignore, and abandon" them. The meaning of the text is perfectly clear. And as a result of this, the sages have departed from the nation, the benevolent deities have left their dwelling places, hunger and thirst fill the world, and disease and pestilence spread widely.

Now, by citing passages from a wide variety of scriptures, you have clearly

demonstrated the rights and wrongs of the matter. Therefore, I have completely forsaken my earlier mistaken convictions, and my ears and eyes have been opened on point after point.

There can be no doubt that all people, from the ruler on down to the general populace, rejoice in and desire the stability of the nation and the peace of the world. If we can quickly put an end to the alms that are given to these *icchantikas* and insure that continuing support is instead given to the host of true priests and nuns, if we can still these "white waves"⁵⁰ that trouble the ocean of the Buddha and cut down these "green groves" that overgrow the mountain of the Law, then the world may become as peaceful as it was in the golden ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung, and the nation may flourish as it did under the sage rulers Yao and Shun.⁵¹ After that, there will be time to dip into the waters of the Law and to decide which are shallow doctrines and which are deep, and to pay honor to the pillars and beams that support the house of the Buddha.

The host exclaimed with delight: The dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam.⁵² How gratifying! You have associated with a friend in the orchid room and have become as straight as mugwort growing among hemp.⁵³ If you will truly give consideration to the troubles I have been describing and put entire faith in these words of mine, then the winds will blow gently, the waves will be calm, and in no time at all we will enjoy bountiful harvests.

But a person's heart may change with the times, and the nature of a thing may alter with its surroundings. Just as the moon on the water will be tossed about by the waves, or the soldiers in the vanguard will be cowed by the swords of the enemy, so, although at this moment you may say you believe in my words, I fear that later

you will forget them completely.

Now if we wish first of all to bring security to the nation and to pray for our present and future lives, then we must hasten to examine and consider the situation and take measures as soon as possible to remedy it.

Why do I say this? Because, 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 commanders 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? If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?

It seems to me that when people are in this world they all fear what their lot may be in the life to come. So it is that they put their faith in distorted doctrines and pay honor to slanderous teachings. It distresses me that they should be so confused about right and wrong, and at the same time I feel pity that, having embraced Buddhism, they should have chosen the wrong kind. With the power of faith that is in their hearts, why must they recklessly give credence to distorted doctrines? 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.

Thus the Great Collection Sutra says: "Though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practiced the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom, if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, then all the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned will be entirely wiped

out . . . Before long, the ruler will fall gravely ill, and after his life has come to an end, he will be reborn in the great hell. . . . And the same fate will befall the ruler's consort, his heir, the high ministers of the state, the lords of cities, the village heads and generals, the magistrates of districts, and the other officials."

The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: "If persons destroy the teachings of the Buddha, they will have no filial sons, no harmony with their six kinds of relatives,⁵⁴ and no aid from the heavenly deities and dragons. Disease and evil demons will come day after day to torment them, disasters will descend on them incessantly, and misfortunes will dog them wherever they go. And when they die, they will fall into the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals. Even if they should be reborn as human beings, they will be destined to become soldiers or slaves. Retribution will follow as an echo follows a sound, or a shadow follows a form. Someone writing at night may put out the lamp, but the words he has written will still remain. It is the same with the effect of the deeds we perform in the threefold world."

The second volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell." And in the "Never Disparaging" chapter in the seventh volume, it says, "For a thousand kalpas they underwent great suffering in the Avichi hell."

In the Nirvana Sutra, we read: "If a person separates himself from good friends, refuses to listen to the correct teaching, and instead embraces evil teachings, then as a result he will sink down into the Avichi hell, where the size of his body will become eighty-four thousand yojanas in total length and breadth."⁵⁵

When we examine this wide variety

of sutras, we find that they all stress how grave a matter it is to slander the correct teaching. How pitiful that people should all go out of the gate of the correct teaching and enter so deep into the prison of these distorted doctrines! How stupid that they should fall one after another into the snares of these evil doctrines and remain for so long entangled in this net of slanderous teachings! They lose their way in these mists and miasmas, and sink down amid the raging flames of hell. How could one not grieve? How could one not suffer?

Therefore, you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of the Lotus Sutra]. If you do so, then the threefold world will become the Buddha land, and how could a Buddha land ever decline? The regions in the ten directions will all become treasure realms, and how could a treasure realm ever suffer harm? If you live in a country that knows no decline or diminution, in a land that suffers no harm or disruption, then your body will find peace and security, and your mind will be calm and untroubled. You must believe my words; heed what I say!

The guest said: Since it concerns both this life and the lives to come, who could fail to be cautious in a matter such as this? Who could fail to agree with you? Now when I examine the passages you have cited from the sutras and see exactly what the Buddha has said, I realize that slandering the Law is a very grave fault indeed, that violating the Law is in truth a terrible offense. I have put all my faith in one Buddha alone, Amida, and rejected all the other Buddhas. I have honored the three Pure Land sutras and set aside the other sutras. But this was not due to any distorted ideas of my own conception. I was simply obeying the words of the eminent men of the past. And the

same is true of all the other persons in the ten directions.

But now I realize that to do so means to exhaust oneself in futile efforts in this life and to fall into the Avichi hell in the life to come. The texts you have cited are perfectly clear on this point, and their arguments are detailed—they leave no room for doubt. From now on, with your kind instruction to guide me, I wish to continue dispelling the ignorance from my

mind. I hope we may set about as quickly as possible taking measures to deal with these slanders against the Law and to bring peace to the world without delay, thus insuring that we may live in safety in this life and enjoy good fortune in the life to come. But it is not enough that I alone should accept and have faith in your words—we must see to it that others as well are warned of their errors.



Background

On the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month, 1253, Nichiren Daishonin established the teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo at Seicho-ji temple in his native province of Awa, and later he returned to Kamakura, the seat of the military government, to begin propagation. In examining the records, we find that in those days the era names were changed frequently. The year 1253 was in the Kencho era. Three years later, in 1256, the era name was changed to Kogen, and the next year, to Shoka. Then, two years later, in 1259, it was changed to Shogen, the following year to Bunno, and the year after that to Kocho. In the five years from 1256 to 1261, the era name changed five times. An era name was usually changed only on the accession of a new emperor, or when some natural disaster of severe proportions occurred; the frequency of these changes attests to the magnitude of the disasters that struck Japan during this period.

Soon after the Daishonin's arrival, Kamakura and the country as a whole faced a series of disasters and conflicts that served to emphasize his conviction that the Latter Day of the Law had indeed been entered upon. On the sixth day of the eighth month of 1256,

torrential rainstorms caused floods and landslides, destroying crops and devastating much of Kamakura. In the ninth month of the same year, an epidemic swept through the city, taking many lives. During the fifth, eighth, and eleventh months of 1257, violent earthquakes rocked the city, and the sixth and seventh months witnessed a disastrous drought. Most frightful of all was an earthquake of unprecedented scale that occurred on the twenty-third day of the eighth month. The year 1258 witnessed no lessening of natural calamities. The eighth month saw storms destroy crops throughout the nation, and floods in Kamakura drowned numerous people. In the tenth month of the same year, Kamakura was visited by heavy rains and severe floods. In the first month of 1258, fires consumed Jufuku-ji temple, and in 1259, epidemics and famine were rampant, and a violent rainstorm decimated crops.

Nichiren Daishonin sought answers to the cause of these disasters in the scriptural writings of Buddhism. In an effort to clarify it, he went to Jisso-ji temple at Iwamoto in Suruga Province, and he stayed there from 1258 through the middle of 1260. As a major temple of the Tendai school in eastern Japan,

Jisso-ji housed many important sutras in its scripture library. The Daishonin pored over them all.

As a result, Nichiren Daishonin found evidence for his theory in such sutras as the Benevolent Kings, Medicine Master, Great Collection, and Golden Light. He quotes passages from these sutras in the present text, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, chronologically the first of his five major works.

The work was originally written in classical Chinese and submitted to Hojo Tokiyori through the offices of high-ranking government official Yadoya Mitsunori on the sixteenth day of the seventh month in the first year of Bunno (1260). Tokiyori was then living in retirement, but was still the most influential member of the ruling Hojo clan. The work occasioned no immediate reaction, and no official response was made to the Daishonin. But the members of the government were incensed at the rational but unrelenting attack that the work made on the Pure Land teachings of Honen and his followers. Government officials who were Pure Land followers apparently encouraged an attack made on the Daishonin's dwelling at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura on the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month. The Daishonin narrowly escaped and made his way to the province of Shimosa to stay at the home of a follower. He returned to Kamakura early in the following year, 1261. He remained continually under the threat of persecution and was summarily banished to Izu on the twelfth day of the fifth month of the same year.

The work consists of a dialogue between a host and a visitor. The host

represents Nichiren Daishonin, and the visitor, it is thought, represents Hojo Tokiyori. At the outset, the host lays the blame for the disasters that have befallen the country on the belief in an erroneous religion, the Pure Land teachings of Honen. Presented are numerous scriptural references to disasters that will befall a nation that follows false teachings. The Daishonin puts particular emphasis on a passage in the Medicine Master Sutra that describes seven types of disasters that will strike such a nation. Of these calamities, he points out, five have already occurred, and two, the "calamity of invasion from foreign lands" and the "calamity of revolt within one's own domain," have yet to occur. The Daishonin cautions that these will come about if the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra are not followed. Later, the prophecies of internal strife and foreign invasion were fulfilled when Hojo Tokisuke revolted against his younger half brother, Regent Hojo Tokimune, in 1272, and when the Mongols attacked Japan twice, in 1274 and 1281.

In terms of its view of the relationship between the people's religious beliefs and the realization of a peaceful society, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* holds an important position in Nichiren Daishonin's writings. The Daishonin lived at a time of authoritarian government, and he probably felt that through an appeal to the most powerful members of the government he could help bring about a reformation of society. That his appeal was ignored only spurred his unremitting effort to propagate his teaching for the peace and happiness of society, a task he would pursue to the end of his life.

Notes

1. Reference is to a passage in Shantao's *Praising the Meditation to Behold the Buddha*, in which he says that calling on the

name of Amida Buddha serves as a sword to cut off earthly desires, karma, and suffering.

2. One of the twelve vows of the Buddha Medicine Master, which appear in the Medicine Master Sutra. As a bodhisattva he made these vows to cure all illnesses and lead all people to enlightenment.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23. This is a reference to a practice of the Tendai school.

4. Benevolent Kings Sutra. This is another reference to the Tendai school, which held a ritual of prayer based on this passage.

5. According to the Benevolent Kings Sutra, a type of ceremony originally held by the god Shakra to defeat the evil king Born from the Crown of the Head.

6. Ritual in which priests of the True Word school placed five jars, colored white, blue, red, yellow, and black, on a platform and put into them, respectively, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, pearls, and crystal. In addition, they placed in these jars the five grains, five herbs, and five types of incense, and then filled them with water and set flow-ers in them. The ritual of filling the jars in this manner was believed to drive away disasters.

7. Reference is to the practice of the Zen school.

8. The names of the seven guardian spirits appear in the Mysterious Spells for Eliminating the Illnesses of the Five Components Sutra.

9. The five mighty bodhisattvas enumerated in the Benevolent Kings Sutra. According to this sutra, if a ruler embraces the correct teaching of Buddhism, these five powerful bodhisattvas will protect him and the people of his country.

10. Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, and Saturn.

11. This refers to an oracle said to have been received from Great Bodhisattva Hachiman in the reign of the fifty-first sovereign, Emperor Heizei (r. 806–809). In it Hachiman vowed to protect the nation until the reign of the hundredth sovereign. *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* was written in the reign of the ninetieth sovereign, Emperor Kameyama (r. 1259–1274).

12. The orchid room indicates the dwelling of a virtuous person.

13. The heavens of purity refer to the five highest heavens in the world of form, the second division of the threefold world, located above the world of desire.

14. Sweet, pungent, sour, bitter, salty,

astrigent, and faint flavors.

15. The power of earth that nourishes grains and fruits, the power of living beings that raise the people and vitalize human society, and the power of the Buddhist Law that brings about peace and happiness.

16. In the Great Collection Sutra, the roe deer is described as a small deer so timid that it flees immediately whenever danger approaches, without giving a thought to the welfare of its parents or others.

17. Anointed kings refer to the rulers of major kingdoms. In ancient India, when the ruler of a powerful kingdom ascended the throne, the rulers of smaller kingdoms and their ministers poured water on his head.

18. The Metal Star is Venus. The Broom Star, the Fire Star, and the Water Star refer to comets, Mars, and Mercury, respectively. Most of the other stars mentioned make up parts of the twenty-eight celestial houses.

19. Demon fire refers to fires of unknown origin attributed to the anger of demons. Dragon fire means fires ascribed to the wrath of dragons, who were thought to be able to change water into fire at will. Heavenly fire is said to be caused by the wrath of heaven, and mountain god fire—possibly a reference to volcanic eruptions—by the wrath of mountain gods. Human fire refers to fires caused by human error or negligence. Tree fire probably indicates forest fires, and bandit fire means fires set by invaders.

20. According to the Japanese lunar calendar, the sixth month corresponds to the last month of summer.

21. Black, red, and green winds refer to winds that stir up and convey clouds of sand, while heavenly and earthly winds correspond to tornados or cyclones. Fire winds indicate hot air in the dry season, and water winds refer to rainstorms.

22. Wheat, rice, beans, and two types of millet. Also a generic term for all grains, which is the meaning here.

23. Bandits who do evil amid the confusion of disasters caused by fire, water, and wind, respectively. Demon bandits are said to be abductors.

24. The original word for evil spirits is *gedo*, which literally means “outside of the way” and usually indicates heretics and non-Buddhists. Here the word means something or someone that brings about disas-

ters. Hence the expression “evil spirits.”

25. This refers to the tradition that Emperor Ming (28–75) dreamed of a golden man levitating above the garden. He awakened and asked his ministers about the dream. One of them said that he had once heard of the birth of a sage in the western region (India) during the reign of King Chao of the Chou dynasty, and that this sage had been called the Buddha. The emperor sent eighteen envoys to the western region in order to obtain the Buddha’s teachings. And at the request of these envoys, two Indian Buddhist monks came to China in C.E. 67 with Buddhist scriptures and images on the backs of white horses.

26. In 587, while still a youth, Jogu, or Prince Shotoku, is said to have joined with Soga no Umako in attacking and killing Mononobe no Moriya, a powerful minister who opposed Buddhism and the Soga clan.

27. “Those who belong to the lineage of Shariputra” refers to those who attach greater importance to practicing meditation than to abiding by the teachings. “Those who adhere to the traditions of Haklenayashas” refers to those who hold doctrinal study to be more important than the practice of meditation. Haklenayashas was the twenty-third of Shakyamuni’s twenty-four successors. Kukkutapada is present-day Kurkihar, located about thirty kilometers northeast of Buddhagaya. Mahakashyapa is said to have transmitted the teachings to Ananda and to have died on this mountain.

28. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13. This is often called the “twenty-line verse of the ‘Encouraging Devotion’ chapter,” which enumerates the types of persecutions that will be met in propagating the Lotus Sutra in the fearful latter age. These persecutions were later summarized as the three powerful enemies by Miao-lo of China.

29. The sages of the four stages refer to the Buddhist teachers who embrace and propagate the correct teaching and benefit the people. Often this expression refers to the sages of Hinayana, who are classified into four ranks according to their level of understanding, but generally it indicates those successors of the Buddha who propagate his teachings and lead people to salvation.

30. “Concentrated meditation and unconcentrated meditation” refers to the sixteen types of meditation that are described

as practices leading people to rebirth in the Pure Land. In the first thirteen types of meditation, one concentrates one’s mind on the splendor of the Pure Land and the features of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. These are regarded as “concentrated meditation.” The other three types of meditation can be carried out even if one’s mind is not focused. Therefore, they are called “unconcentrated meditation.”

31. The three kinds of mind refer to the three requisites for reaching the Pure Land: a sincere mind, a mind of deep faith, and a mind resolved to attain the Pure Land.

32. This refers to the eighteenth of the forty-eight vows, described in the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, that Bodhisattva Dharmatraya, the name of Amida Buddha before his enlightenment, made to bring all people to the Pure Land, except those mentioned here.

33. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

34. The two attendants are the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World’s Sounds and Great Power.

35. Shakyamuni and Medicine Master were Buddhas whose images were enshrined in the head temple of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei. The images of the bodhisattvas Space Treasury and Earth Repository were also enshrined on Mount Hiei. Space Treasury is a bodhisattva said to possess immeasurable wisdom and blessings. Earth Repository is a bodhisattva entrusted by Shakyamuni Buddha with the mission of saving people.

36. At the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha transferred his teachings to the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching led by Medicine King and entrusted them with the mission of propagating them in the Middle Day of the Law. It is said that Bodhisattva Medicine King was later born as the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai in China and the Great Teacher Dengyo in Japan. On the basis of the parable of the skilled physician in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo used the Buddha Medicine Master, the lord of the Pure Emerald World in the eastern part of the universe, as an object of devotion for their school. In this sense, to neglect the Buddha Medicine Master and revere the Buddha Amida is to ignore Shakyamuni Buddha’s transmission.

37. The four treatises refer to Nagarjuna’s *Treatise on the Middle Way* and *Treatise*

on the *Twelve Gates*, and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* also attributed to Nagarjuna, as well as *The One-Hundred-Verse Treatise* attributed to Aryadeva.

38. T'ien-t'ai's three major works: *Great Concentration and Insight*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, consisting of thirty volumes, and Miao-lo's three commentaries on them, which also consist of thirty volumes.

39. According to Honen's biography, in a dream he received permission from Shantao to spread the practice of calling on the name of Amida and was entrusted with the Pure Land teachings.

40. "An earlier period" refers to the period in which Honen propagated the Pure Land teaching.

41. Juan Chi (210-263) was one of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove, a group of scholars who, in the troubled political times at the end of the Wei dynasty, are said to have gathered in a bamboo grove to drink, play music, write poems, and discuss philosophy, particularly the Taoist philosophy of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Juan Chi is also known as a noted poet.

42. Uighurs: A Turkish people of Central Asia who prospered from the eighth through the mid-ninth century.

43. In 1221, the Retired Emperor Gotoba played a leading role in a struggle for power between the imperial court in Kyoto and the Hojo clan in Kamakura, an incident known as the Jokyu Disturbance. The imperial forces were defeated, and he and two other retired emperors were sent into exile.

44. This statement by the guest, who represents the highest political authority in the land, reflects his position as a ruler who puts matters of government first. In contrast, the Daishonin teaches that the refutation of misleading teachings and the propagation of the correct teaching are the surest way to establish the true security of the nation.

45. The four grave offenses are those particularly grave among the ten evil offenses: killing, stealing, committing adultery, and lying.

46. An anagamin, or "non-returner," is one who has reached the third of the four stages that voice-hearers can attain. The fourth and highest stage is that of arhat.

47. Kashyapa was one of the seven ancient Buddhas or Buddhas of the past. Of these seven, the Buddha Kashyapa was the sixth to appear, and Shakyamuni Buddha was the seventh.

48. Shavepate refers here to someone who has received tonsure and become a monk for self-serving reasons, such as to gain personal security or financial comfort, and is negligent in the practice and study of Buddhism.

49. Lectures held on the anniversary of T'ien-t'ai's death on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of each year.

50. A Chinese term referring to rebels and outlaws. Here "white waves" indicates Honen and other priests of the Pure Land school, as well as the followers of other misleading schools. The "ocean of the Buddha" signifies Shakyamuni's teachings. The phrases "green groves" and "mountain of the Law" likewise refer to Honen and his followers and Shakyamuni's teachings, respectively.

51. Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, Yao, and Shun are legendary sage rulers of ancient China.

52. Expressions taken from early Chinese literature that indicate dramatic change.

53. "A friend in the orchid room" indicates a person of virtue. The implication is that the company of a virtuous person works as a good influence, just as one is imbued with fragrance on entering a room filled with orchids. It is said that mugwort supported by hemp plants grows upright.

54. The six kinds of relatives refer to a father, a mother, an elder brother, a younger brother, a wife, and a son or daughter.

55. According to the Nirvana Sutra, the place called the Avichi hell, or the hell of incessant suffering, measures eighty-four thousand yojanas in total length and breadth. It is said that when a person falls into this hell he or she alone is sufficient to fill it up completely. The great size of the body symbolizes the magnitude of the pain one suffers in this hell.

The Postscript to “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”



I COMPILED the above work in the first year of the Bunno era (1260), with the cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*. That is, I began the work during the Shoka era (1257–1259) and completed it in the first year of Bunno.

In the first year of the Shoka era, cyclical sign *hinoto-mi*, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, at the time when the hour of the dog gives way to the hour of the boar (around 9:00 P.M.), there was a severe earthquake. Observing this event, I conceived the work. Later, in the first year of Bunno, cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month, I presented it to His Lordship, the lay priest of Saimyo-ji,¹ who is now deceased, by way of the lay priest Yadoya.² Still later, in the first year of the Bun’ei era (1264), cyclical sign *kinoe-ne*, on the fifth day of the seventh month, when a great comet appeared, I became even more certain of the origins of these disasters. Then, on the eighteenth day of the intercalary first

month of the fifth year of Bun’ei, cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tatsu*, nine years after the first year of Bunno [when I submitted *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*], an official letter came from the great kingdom of the Mongols that lies to the west, threatening to attack our country. Again, in the sixth year of the same era (1269), a second letter arrived. Thus the prediction that I made in my memorial [*On Establishing the Correct Teaching*] has already proved to be true. In view of this, we may suppose that the predictions I made will continue to come true in the future as well.

This work of mine has now been substantiated by fact. But this is not solely due to Nichiren’s power. Rather it has come about as a response to the true words of the Lotus Sutra.

I copied this work on the eighth day of the twelfth month in the sixth year of Bun’ei (1269), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-mi*.



Background

In 1269, Mongol emissaries again arrived at Dazaifu, the government outpost on the southern island of Kyushu, pressing for an answer to their earlier demands. Nichiren Daishonin is believed to have sent off another round of letters to high officials, which again failed to elicit a response. On the

eighth day of the twelfth month of 1269, the Daishonin copied *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* and appended this postscript. In the postscript, he warns that the prophecies set forth in that document nine years earlier are now coming true.

Notes

1. The lay priest of Saimyo-ji indicates Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263), the fifth regent of the Kamakura shogunate. He became regent in 1246, but relinquished the regency to Hojo Nagatoki and took holy orders under Doryu, a naturalized Zen priest from China, in 1256. As a lay priest he lived

at Saimyo-ji temple, which he had built, but he continued as the de facto ruler. He was called the lay priest of Saimyo-ji.

2. Yadoya Mitsunori, also known as the lay priest Yadoya, was a ranking official close to Hojo Tokiyori.

3

A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering



WHEN I asked him about what you told me the other day, I found it to be exactly as you said. You should therefore strive in faith more than ever to receive the blessings of the Lotus Sutra. Listen with the ears of Shih K'uang and observe with the eyes of Li Lou.¹

In the Latter Day of the Law, the votary of the Lotus Sutra will appear without fail. The greater the hardships befalling him, the greater the delight he feels, because of his strong faith. Doesn't a fire burn more briskly when logs are added? All rivers flow into the sea, but does the sea turn back their waters? The currents of hardship pour into the sea of the Lotus Sutra and rush against its votary. The river is not rejected by the ocean; nor does the votary reject suffering. Were it not for the flowing rivers, there would be no sea. Likewise, without tribulation there would be no votary of the Lotus Sutra. As T'ien-t'ai stated, "The various rivers flow into the sea, and logs make a fire burn more briskly."²

You should realize that it is because of a profound karmic relationship from the past that you can teach others even a sentence or phrase of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra reads, "Nor will they hear the correct Law—such people are difficult to save."³ The "correct Law" means the Lotus Sutra; it is difficult to

save those who are deaf to the teachings of this sutra.

A passage from the "Teacher of the Law" chapter reads: "If one of these good men or good women [in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that] he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One." This means that anyone who teaches others even a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra is the envoy of the Thus Come One, whether that person be priest or layman, nun or laywoman. You are already a lay practitioner and therefore one of the "good men" described in the sutra. One who listens to even a sentence or phrase of the sutra and cherishes it deep in one's heart may be likened to a ship that crosses the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. The Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, "Even a single phrase cherished deep in one's heart will without fail help one reach the opposite shore. To ponder one phrase and practice it is to exercise navigation."⁴ Only the ship of Myoho-enge-kyo enables one to cross the sea of the sufferings of birth and death.

The Lotus Sutra speaks of "someone finding a ship in which to cross the water."⁵ This "ship" might be described as follows: As a shipbuilder of

infinitely profound wisdom, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, the lord of teachings, gathered the lumber of the four flavors and eight teachings, planed it by honestly discarding the provisional teachings, cut and assembled the planks, forming a perfect unity of both right and wrong,⁶ and completed the craft by driving home the spikes of the one true teaching that is comparable to the flavor of ghee. Thus he launched the ship upon the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. Unfurling its sails of the three thousand realms on the mast of the one true teaching of the Middle Way, driven by the fair wind of “the true aspect of all phenomena,”⁷ the vessel surges ahead, carrying aboard all people who can “gain entrance through faith alone.”⁸ The Thus Come One

Shakyamuni is at the helm, the Thus Come One Many Treasures takes up the mooring rope, and the four bodhisattvas led by Superior Practices row quickly, matching one another as perfectly as a box and its lid. This is the ship in “a ship in which to cross the water.” Those who are able to board it are the disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren. Believe this wholeheartedly. When you visit Shijo Kingo, please have an earnest talk with him. I will write you again in more detail.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the fourth month

To Shijji Shiro



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Kamakura in the first year of Kocho (1261), about two weeks before he was exiled to Ito in Izu. Virtually nothing is known about the recipient, Shijji Shiro, other than that he lived in the province of Suruga and was acquainted with two of the Daishonin’s leading disciples, Shijo Kingo and Toki Jonin.

The title of this letter is drawn from

a passage in the “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra that speaks of “a ship in which to cross the water.” In this letter, the Daishonin teaches that the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the “ship” that can unfailingly transport one across the sea of life’s inevitable sufferings to the distant shore of enlightenment.

Notes

1. Shih K’uang, in Chinese legend, was a court musician whose sense of hearing was so keen that he could judge the quality of a newly cast bell, where ordinary musicians could not. Li Lou’s sight was so acute that he could see the tip of a hair at a hundred paces.

2. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

4. *The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.”* “The opposite shore” represents nirvana, or enlightenment, while this shore where we live represents

illusion.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

6. “Forming a perfect unity of both right and wrong” means that both good and evil are eternally inherent in life. Provisional sutras hold that wicked people cannot attain enlightenment, but the Lotus Sutra reveals that even such people possess the Buddha nature, giving the example of Devadatta attaining Buddhahood.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

4

The Izu Exile



I HAVE received the rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves, sake, dried rice, peppers, paper, and other items from the messenger whom you took the trouble to send. He also conveyed your message that these offerings should be kept secret. I understand.

When, on the twelfth day of the fifth month, having been exiled, I arrived at that harbor I had never even heard of before, and when I was still suffering after leaving the boat, you kindly took me into your care. What karma has brought us together? Can it be that, because in the past you were a votary of the Lotus Sutra, now, in the Latter Day of the Law, you have been reborn as Funamori no Yasaburo and have taken pity on me? Though a man may do this, for your wife, as a married woman, to have given me food, brought me water to wash my hands and feet with, and treated me with great concern, I can only call wondrous.

What caused you to inwardly believe in the Lotus Sutra and make offerings to me during my more than thirty-day stay there? I was hated and resented by the steward and the people of the district even more than I was in Kamakura. Those who saw me scowled, while those who merely heard my name were filled with spite. And yet, though I was there in the fifth

month when rice was scarce, you secretly fed me. Have my parents been reborn in a place called Kawana, in Ito of Izu Province?

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “[I will send . . .] men and women of pure faith, to offer alms to the teachers of the Law.”¹ The meaning of this sutra passage is that the heavenly gods and benevolent deities will assume various forms such as those of men and women, and present offerings to help the persons who practice the Lotus Sutra. There can be no doubt that this refers to you and your wife being born as a man and a woman, and making offerings to Nichiren, the teacher of the Law.

Since I wrote to you in detail earlier,² I will make this letter brief. But I would like to mention one thing in particular. When the steward of this district sent me a request to pray for his recovery from illness, I wondered if I should accept it. But since he showed some degree of faith in me, I decided I would appeal to the Lotus Sutra. This time I saw no reason why the ten demon daughters should not join forces to aid me. I therefore addressed the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, and also the Sun Goddess, Hachiman, and other deities, both major and minor. I was sure that they

would consider my request and show some sign. Certainly they would never forsake me, but would respond as attentively as a person rubs a sore or scratches an itch. And as it turned out, the steward recovered. In gratitude he presented me with a statue of the Buddha that had appeared from the sea along with a catch of fish. He did so because his illness had finally ended, an illness that I am certain was inflicted by the ten demon daughters. This benefit too will surely become a benefit for you and your wife.

Living beings like ourselves have dwelt in the sea of the sufferings of birth and death since time without beginning. But they become votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and realize that their bodies and minds, which have existed since the beginningless past, are inherently endowed with the eternally unchanging nature; awaken to their mystic reality with their mystic wisdom; and attain the Buddha's body, which is as indestructible as a diamond. How then could they be different from that Buddha? Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who said numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, "I am the only person [who can rescue and protect others],"³ refers to living beings like ourselves. This is the Lotus Sutra's teaching of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and the action of "I am always here, preaching the Law."⁴ Even though such an admirable Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha exist, ordinary people are unaware of it. The passage in the "Life Span" chapter that reads, "I make it so that living beings in their befuddlement do not see me even when close by," refers to this. The disparity between delusion and enlightenment is like that between the four views in the grove of sal trees.⁵ What is called the Buddha of three thousand realms in a single moment of life means that the entire realm

of phenomena attains Buddhahood.

The demon who appeared before the boy Snow Mountains was Shakra in disguise. The dove that sought the protection of King Shibi was the god Vishvakarman. King Universal Brightness, who returned to the palace of King Spotted Feet [to be executed], was Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. While the eyes of ordinary people are blind to this, the eyes of the Buddha see it. A sutra passage states that there are paths by which birds and fish come and go in both the sky and the sea. A wooden statue [of the Buddha] is itself a golden Buddha, and a golden Buddha is a wooden statue. Aniruddha's gold turned into a hare and then a corpse.⁶ In the palm of Mahanama's hand, even sand turned into gold.⁷ These things are beyond ordinary understanding. An ordinary person is a Buddha, and a Buddha, an ordinary person. This is what is meant by three thousand realms in a single moment of life and by the phrase "I in fact attained Buddhahood."⁸

In that case, perhaps the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, the lord of teachings, has been reborn and has helped me as you and your wife. Though the distance between Ito and Kawana is short, our hearts are kept far apart. I write this letter for the sake of the future. Do not discuss it with others, but ponder it yourself. If people should learn anything at all about it, it will go hard with you. Keep it deep in your heart and never speak of it. With my deepest regards. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the sixth month in the first year of Kocho (1261)

Sent to Funamori Yasaburo.

Background

In the eighth month of 1260, infuriated by Nichiren Daishonin's refutation of the Pure Land school in his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, a group of Nembutsu followers attacked his dwelling at Matsu-bagayatsu in Kamakura. The Daishonin narrowly escaped and went to the home of his loyal disciple Toki Jonin in Shimosa Province. In the spring of 1261, however, he returned to Kamakura and resumed his propagation efforts.

On the twelfth day of the fifth month, 1261, without any official investigation, the government sentenced the Daishonin to exile in the Izu Peninsula, which was a stronghold of the Pure Land school. The Daishonin was taken to Kawana, a small fishing village on the northeastern coast of the Izu Peninsula. Here he was given shelter and

food by Funamori Yasaburo, a fisherman, and his wife, and the couple became his steadfast followers. The steward of Ito District in Izu, Ito Sukemitsu, learning of the Daishonin's presence a month after his arrival, had the Daishonin summoned in order that he might offer prayers for Sukemitsu's recovery from a serious illness. Sukemitsu regained his health, and it is said that he, too, became the Daishonin's follower.

Both Yasaburo and his wife were concerned about the Daishonin's safety when he went to Ito to pray for the steward's health. Yasaburo sent a messenger to the Daishonin at Ito with various offerings. *The Izu Exile* is the Daishonin's reply. The Daishonin's exile ended on the twenty-second day of the second month, 1263, and he returned to Kamakura.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.
2. Little is known about the letter referred to here; only the letter *The Izu Exile* is extant today.
3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, chap. 16.
5. Shakyamuni passed away after expounding his last teaching, the Nirvana Sutra, in a grove of sal trees. The Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law describes that grove of sal trees in four different ways: (1) as a grove composed of earth, trees, plants, and stone walls; (2) as a place adorned with the seven kinds of treasures, including gold and silver; (3) as a place where all Buddhas practice Buddhism; and (4) as the eternal, enlightened land of the Buddha. The different views arise in accordance with the capacity and state of life of the people.
6. Aniruddha was one of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples, known as the foremost in divine insight. This story is found in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*. Long ago, a pratyekabuddha named Rida was engaged in the practice of begging alms,

but could obtain nothing. Seeing this, a poor man offered him millet. Later, when the poor man went in search of more millet, a hare jumped on his back and then turned into a corpse. Frightened, the man tried to shake it off, but in vain. As soon as he returned home, however, the corpse fell off and turned into gold. Hearing of this, wicked men came to rob him, but to them it looked merely like a corpse. In the eyes of the poor man, however, it was genuine gold, and he became wealthy. Ninety-one kalpas later, he was born as Aniruddha.

7. Mahanama was one of the five monks who were ordered by Shakyamuni's father, the king, to accompany Shakyamuni when he forsook the secular world and entered religious life. They followed and practiced asceticism with Shakyamuni, but left him when he renounced this path. Shortly after Shakyamuni obtained enlightenment, however, he preached his first sermon to them at Deer Park, and they became his first disciples. According to the Increasing by One Agama Sutra, Mahanama was said to possess occult powers. The story of "sand in

his palm turning into gold” is found in Ts’ung-i’s *Supplement to T’ien-t’ai’s Three Major Works*.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16. About this phrase, Nichiren Daishonin states in *The*

Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings that “I” indicates all the people in each of the Ten Worlds, and that it means that the people of the Ten Worlds are all Buddhas eternally endowed with the three bodies.

5

The Universal Salty Taste



THERE are six kinds of flavors. The first is subtle, the second, salty, the third, pungent, the fourth, sour, the fifth, sweet, and the sixth, bitter. Even if one were to prepare a feast of a hundred flavors, if the single flavor of salt were missing, it would be no feast for a great king. Without salt, even the delicacies of land and sea are tasteless.

The ocean has eight mysterious qualities. First, it gradually becomes deeper. Second, being deep, its bottom is hard to fathom. Third, its salty taste is the same everywhere. Fourth, its ebb and flow follows certain rules. Fifth, it contains various treasure storehouses. Sixth, creatures of great size exist and dwell in it. Seventh, it refuses to house corpses. Eighth, it takes in all rivers and heavy rainfall without either increasing or decreasing.

[The Nirvana Sutra] compares “it gradually becomes deeper” to the Lotus Sutra leading everyone, from ordinary people who lack understanding to sages who possess it, to attain the Buddha way. The reason [the sutra uses the metaphor] “being deep, its bottom is hard to fathom” is that the realm of the Lotus Sutra can only be understood and shared between Buddhas, while those at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment or below are unable to master it. “Its salty taste is the same everywhere” com-

pares all rivers, which contain no salt, to all sutras other than the Lotus, which offer no way to attain enlightenment. [The Nirvana Sutra] compares the water of all the rivers flowing into the sea and becoming salty to the people of different capacities instructed through the various provisional teachings who attain the Buddha way when they take faith in the Lotus Sutra. It compares “its ebb and flow follows certain rules” to upholders of the Mystic Law who even though they were to lose their lives would attain the stage of non-regression. It compares “it contains various treasure storehouses” to the countless practices and good deeds of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the blessings of the various paramitas being contained in the Mystic Law. The reason for “creatures of great size exist and dwell in it” is that, because the Buddhas and bodhisattvas possess great wisdom, they are called “creatures of great size,” and that their great bodies, great aspiring minds, great distinguishing features, great evil-conquering force, great preaching, great authority, great transcendental powers, great compassion, and great pity all arise naturally from the Lotus Sutra. The reason for “it refuses to house corpses” is that with the Lotus Sutra one can free oneself for all eternity from slander and incorrigible disbelief. The reason for “without either increasing or decreas-

ing” is that the heart of the Lotus Sutra is the universality of the Buddha nature in all living beings.

The brine in a tub or jar of pickled vines ebbs and flows in accordance with the brine of the sea.¹ One who upholds the Lotus Sutra and is subjected to imprisonment is like the salt in a tub or jar, while the Thus Come One Shakyamuni who freed himself from the burning house² is like the salt of the sea. To condemn one who upholds the Lotus is to condemn the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. How aston-

ished Brahma, Shakra, and the four heavenly kings must be! If not now, when will the ten demon daughters’ vow to split the head of one who persecutes a follower of the Lotus into seven pieces³ be carried out?

Ajatashatru, who had imprisoned King Bimbisara, suddenly broke out in virulent sores in his present existence. How can one who has imprisoned an upholder of the Lotus not suffer from virulent sores in this existence?

Nichiren



Background

The date and recipient of this letter are unknown, as are the reasons for its writing. The statements “One who upholds the Lotus Sutra and is subjected to imprisonment” and “To condemn one who upholds the Lotus” indicate that Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at a time when he or his disciples were undergoing persecution. Several views exist concerning the year of its writing. One is that it was written in 1261 when the Daishonin was in exile in Izu; another, in 1271 when he was in exile on Sado Island; and a third, in 1279, during the worst period of the Atsuhara Persecution. Of these, 1261 seems most likely.

In this letter, the Daishonin says that there are six kinds of flavors, of which salt is the most important. Without salt, any food will be bland. In employing

this simile, the Daishonin is indicating that none of the sutras assume their true significance unless they are based on the truth revealed in the Lotus Sutra. Then he cites the eight mystic qualities of the ocean enumerated in the Nirvana Sutra. But while the Nirvana Sutra actually applies these qualities to itself, the Daishonin asserts that it is using them to praise the superiority of the Lotus Sutra.

In the final section, the Daishonin compares the salt in a jar or tub of pickled vines to a follower of the Lotus Sutra, and the salt of the ocean, to Shakyamuni Buddha. The brine in a jar or tub ebbs and flows exactly as the ocean does, and by analogy, to imprison a votary of the Lotus Sutra is to imprison Shakyamuni Buddha.

Notes

1. In the pickling process, salt is added to a jar of vines to draw out their water. This salty water is said to increase and decrease in accord with the rise and fall of the ocean tides.

2. “Burning house” refers to the passage

from the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, “There is no safety in the threefold world; it is like a burning house.”

3. This vow is made in chapter 26 of the Lotus Sutra.

6

The Four Debts of Gratitude



CONCERNING my present exile,¹ there are two important matters that I must mention. One is that I feel immense joy. The reason is that this world is called the saha world, saha meaning endurance. This is why the Buddha is also called “One Who Can Endure.” In the saha world,² there are one billion Mount Sumerus, one billion suns and moons, and one billion groups of four continents. Among all these worlds, it was in the world at the center—with its Mount Sumeru, sun and moon, and four continents—that the Buddha made his advent. Japan is a tiny island country situated in a remote corner of that world, to the northeast of the country in which the Buddha appeared.

Since all the lands in the ten directions, with the exception of this saha world, are pure lands, their people, being gentlehearted, neither abuse nor hate the worthies and sages. In contrast, this world is inhabited by people who were rejected from the pure lands in the ten directions. They have committed the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, slandered the worthies and sages, and have been unfilial to their fathers and mothers or disrespectful to the monks. For these offenses they fell into the three evil paths, and only after dwelling there for countless kalpas were they reborn in this world. Yet the resi-

due of the evil karma formed in their previous existences has not yet been eradicated, and they still tend to perpetrate the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, to revile the worthies and sages, and to be undutiful to their fathers and mothers or irreverent toward the monks.

For these reasons, when the Thus Come One Shakyamuni made his advent in this world, some people offered him food into which they had mixed poison. Others tried to harm him by means of swords and staves, mad elephants, lions, fierce bulls, or savage dogs. Still others charged him with violating women, condemned him as a man of lowly status, or accused him of killing. Again, some, when they encountered him, covered their eyes to avoid seeing him, and others closed their doors and shuttered their windows. Still others reported to the kings and ministers that he held erroneous views and was given to slandering exalted personages. These incidents are described in the Great Collection Sutra, the Nirvana Sutra, and other scriptures. The Buddha was innocent of all such evil deeds. Yet this world is peculiar or deficient in that those with bad karma are born into it and inhabit it in great numbers. Moreover, the devil king of the sixth heaven, scheming to prevent the people of this world from leaving it

for the pure lands, seizes every opportunity to carry out his perverse acts.

It appears that his scheming is ultimately intended to prevent the Buddha from expounding the Lotus Sutra. The reason is that the nature of this devil king is to rejoice at those who create the karma of the three evil paths and to grieve at those who form the karma of the three good paths.³ Yet he does not lament so greatly over those who form the karma of the three good paths, but he sorrows indeed at those who aspire to the three vehicles. Again, he may not sorrow so much over those who seek to attain the three vehicles, but he grieves bitterly at those who form the karma to become Buddhas and avails himself of every opportunity to obstruct them. He knows that those who hear even a single sentence or phrase of the Lotus Sutra will attain Buddhahood without fail and, exceedingly distressed by this, contrives various plots and restrains and persecutes believers in an attempt to make them abandon their faith.

Although the age in which the Buddha lived was certainly a defiled one, the five impurities had only just begun to manifest themselves; in addition, the devil stood in awe of the Buddha's powers. Yet, even in a time when the people's greed, anger, foolishness, and false views were still not rampant, a group of Brahmans of the Bamboo Staff school killed the Venerable Maudgalyayana, who was known as the foremost in transcendental powers; and King Ajatashatru, by releasing a mad elephant, threatened the life of the only one in all the threefold world who is worthy of honor.⁴ Devadatta killed the nun Utpalavarna, who had attained the state of arhat; and the Venerable Kokalika spread evil rumors about Shariputra, who was renowned as the foremost in wisdom. How much worse things became in the world as the five impurities steadily increased!

And now, in the latter age, hatred and jealousy toward those who believe even slightly in the Lotus Sutra will be all the more terrible. Thus the Lotus Sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁵ When I read this passage for the first time, I did not think that the situation would be as bad as it predicts. Now I am struck by the unfailing accuracy of the Buddha's words, especially in light of my present circumstances.

I, Nichiren, do not observe the precepts with my body. Nor is my heart free from the three poisons. But since I believe in this [Lotus] sutra myself and also enable others to form a relationship with it, I had thought that perhaps society would treat me rather gently. Probably because the world has entered into the latter age, even monks who have wives and children have followers, as do priests who eat fish and fowl. I have neither wife nor children, nor do I eat fish or fowl. I have been blamed merely for trying to propagate the Lotus Sutra. Though I have neither wife nor child, I am known throughout the country as a monk who transgresses the code of conduct, and though I have never killed even a single ant or mole cricket, my bad reputation has spread throughout the realm. This may well resemble the situation of Shakyamuni Buddha, who was slandered by a multitude of non-Buddhists during his lifetime.

It seems that, solely because my faith in the Lotus Sutra accords slightly more with its teachings than does the faith of others, evil demons must have possessed their bodies and be causing them to feel hatred toward me. I am nothing but a lowly and ignorant monk without precepts. Yet, when I think that such a person should be mentioned in the Lotus Sutra, which was expounded more than two thousand years ago, and

that the Buddha prophesied that that person would encounter persecution, I cannot possibly express my joy.

It is already twenty-four or twenty-five years since I began studying Buddhism. Yet I have believed wholeheartedly in the Lotus Sutra only for the past six or seven years. Moreover, although I had faith in the sutra, because I was negligent and because of my studies and the interruptions of mundane affairs, each day I would recite only a single scroll, a chapter, or the title. Now, however, for a period of more than 240 days—from the twelfth day of the fifth month of last year to the sixteenth day of the first month of this year—I think I have practiced the Lotus Sutra twenty-four hours each day and night. I say so because, having been exiled on the Lotus Sutra's account, I now read and practice it continuously, whether I am walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. For anyone born human, what greater joy could there be?

It is the way of ordinary people that, even though they spur themselves on to arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and wish for happiness in the next life, they exert themselves no more than one or two out of all the hours of the day, and this only after reminding themselves to do so. As for myself, I read the Lotus Sutra without having to remember to, and practice it even when I do not read its words aloud.

During the course of countless kalpas, while transmigrating through the six paths and the four forms of birth, I may at times have risen in revolt, committed theft, or broken into others' homes at night and, on account of these offenses, been convicted by the ruler and condemned to exile or death. This time, however, it is because I am so firmly resolved to propagate the Lotus Sutra that people with evil karma have brought false charges against me; hence my exile. Surely this will work in my

favor in future lifetimes. In this latter age, there cannot be anyone else who upholds the Lotus Sutra twenty-four hours of the day and night without making a deliberate effort to do so.

There is one other thing for which I am most grateful. While transmigrating in the six paths for the duration of countless kalpas, I may have encountered a number of sovereigns and become their favorite minister or regent. If so, I must have been granted fiefs and accorded treasures and stipends. Never once, however, did I encounter a sovereign in whose country the Lotus Sutra had spread, so that I could hear its name, practice it and, on that very account, be slandered by other people and have the ruler send me into exile. The Lotus Sutra states, "As for this Lotus Sutra, throughout immeasurable numbers of lands one cannot even hear its name, much less be able to see it, accept and embrace, read and recite it."⁶ Thus those people who slandered me and the ruler [who had me banished] are the very persons to whom I owe the most profound debt of gratitude.

One who studies the teachings of Buddhism must not fail to repay the four debts of gratitude. According to the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra, the first of the four debts is that owed to all living beings. Were it not for them, one would find it impossible to make the vow to save innumerable living beings. Moreover, but for the evil people who persecute bodhisattvas, how could those bodhisattvas increase their merit?

The second of the four debts is that owed to one's father and mother. To be born into the six paths, one must have parents. If one is born into the family of a murderer, a thief, a violator of the rules of proper conduct, or a slanderer of the Law, then even though one may not commit these offenses oneself, one in effect forms the same karma as those

who do. As for my parents in this lifetime, however, they not only gave me birth but made me a believer in the Lotus Sutra. Thus I owe my present father and mother a debt far greater than I would had I been born into the family of Brahma, Shakra, one of the four heavenly kings, or a wheel-turning king, and so inherited the threefold world or the four continents, and been revered by the four kinds of believers in the worlds of human and heavenly beings.

The third is the debt owed to one's sovereign. It is thanks to one's sovereign that one can warm one's body in the three kinds of heavenly light⁷ and sustain one's life with the five kinds of grain⁸ that grow on earth. Moreover, in this lifetime, I have taken faith in the Lotus Sutra and encountered a ruler who will enable me to free myself in my present existence from the sufferings of birth and death. Thus, how can I dwell on the insignificant harm that he has done me and overlook my debt to him?

The fourth is the debt owed to the three treasures. When the Thus Come One Shakyamuni was engaged in bodhisattva practices for countless kalpas, he gathered all of the good fortune and virtue he had gained thereby, divided it into sixty-four parts, and took on their merit. Of these sixty-four, he reserved only one part for himself. The remaining sixty-three parts he left behind in this world, making a vow as follows: "There will be an age when the five impurities will become rampant, erroneous teachings will flourish, and slanderers will fill the land. At that time, because the innumerable benevolent guardian deities will be unable to taste the flavor of the Law, their majesty and strength will diminish. The sun and moon will lose their brightness, the heavenly dragons will not send down rain, and the earthly deities will decrease the fertility of the soil. The roots and

stalks, branches and leaves, flowers and fruit will all lose their medicinal properties as well as the seven flavors.⁹ Even those who became kings because they had observed the ten good precepts in previous lifetimes will grow in greed, anger, and foolishness. The people will cease to be dutiful to their parents, and the six kinds of relatives¹⁰ will fall into discord. At such a time, my disciples will consist of unlearned people without precepts. For this reason, even though they shave their heads, they will be forsaken by the tutelary deities and left without any means of subsistence. It is in order to sustain these monks and nuns [that I now leave these sixty-three parts behind]."

Moreover, as for the benefits that the Buddha had attained as a result of his practices, he divided them into three parts, of which he himself made use of only two. For this reason, although he was to have lived in this world until the age of 120, he passed away after eighty years, bequeathing the remaining forty years of his life span to us.¹¹

Even if we should gather all the water of the four great oceans to wet inkstones, burn all the trees and plants to make ink sticks, collect the hairs of all beasts for writing brushes, employ all the surfaces of the worlds in the ten directions for paper, and, with these, set down expressions of gratitude, how could we possibly repay our debt to the Buddha?

Concerning the debt owed to the Law, the Law is the teacher of all Buddhas. It is because of the Law that the Buddhas are worthy of respect. Therefore, those who wish to repay their debt to the Buddha must first repay the debt they owe to the Law.

As for the debt owed to the Buddhist Order, both the treasure of the Buddha and the treasure of the Law are invariably perpetuated by the Order. To illustrate, without firewood, there can be no fire, and if there is no earth,

trees and plants cannot grow. Likewise, even though Buddhism existed, without the members of the Order who studied it and passed it on, it would never have been transmitted throughout the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days into the Latter Day of the Law. Accordingly, the Great Collection Sutra states: "Suppose that, in the last of the five five-hundred-year periods, there should be someone who harasses unlearned monks without precepts by accusing them of some offense. You should know that this person is extinguishing the great torch of Buddhism." Therefore, the debt we owe to the Order is difficult to recompense.

Thus it is imperative that one repay one's debt of gratitude to the three treasures. In ancient times, there were sages such as the boy Snow Mountains, Bodhisattva Ever Wailing, Bodhisattva Medicine King, and King Universal Brightness, all of whom [offered their lives in order to make such repayment]. The first offered his body as food to a demon. The second sold his own blood and marrow. The third burned his arms, and the fourth was ready to part with his head. Ordinary people in this latter age, however, though receiving the benefits of the three treasures, completely neglect to repay them. How, then, can they attain the Buddha way? The Contemplation on the Mind-Ground, the Brahma Net, and other sutras state that those who study Buddhism and receive the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment must repay the four debts of gratitude without fail. I am but an ignorant ordinary person made of flesh and blood; I have not rid myself of even a fraction of the three categories of illusion. Yet, on account of the Lotus Sutra, I have been reviled, slandered, attacked with swords and staves, and sent into exile. In light of these persecutions, I believe I may be likened to the great sages who burned their arms, crushed their

marrow, or did not begrudge being beheaded. This is what I mean by immense joy.

The second of the two important matters is that I feel intense grief. The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: "If there should be an evil person who, his mind destitute of goodness, should for the space of a kalpa appear in the presence of the Buddha and constantly curse and revile the Buddha, that person's offense would still be rather light. But if there were a person who spoke only one evil word to curse or defame the lay persons or monks or nuns who read and recite the Lotus Sutra, then his offense would be very grave."¹² When I read this and similar passages, my belief is aroused, sweat breaks out from my body, and tears fall from my eyes like rain. I grieve that, by being born in this country, I have caused so many of its people to create the worst karma possible in a lifetime. Those who beat and struck Bodhisattva Never Disparaging came to repent of it while they were alive; yet, even so, their offenses were so difficult to expiate that they fell into the Avichi hell and remained there for a thousand kalpas. But those who have done me harm have not yet repented of it even in the slightest.

Describing the karmic retribution that such people must receive, the Great Collection Sutra states: "[The Buddha asked], 'If there should be a person who draws blood from the bodies of a thousand, ten thousand, or a million Buddhas, in your thinking, how is it? Will he have committed a grave offense or not?' The great king Brahma replied: 'If a person causes the body of even a single Buddha to bleed, he will have committed an offense so serious that he will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. His offense will be unfathomably grave, and he will have to remain in the great Avichi hell for so many kalpas that their number

cannot be calculated even by means of counting sticks. Graver still is the offense a person would commit by causing the bodies of ten thousand or a million Buddhas to bleed. No one could possibly explain in full either that person's offense or its karmic retribution—no one, that is, except the Thus Come One himself.' The Buddha said, 'Great King Brahma, suppose there should be a person who, for my sake, takes the tonsure and wears a surplice. Even though he has not at any time

received the precepts and therefore observes none, if someone harasses him, abuses him, or strikes him with a staff, then that persecutor's offense will be even graver than that [of injuring ten thousand or a million Buddhas].'"

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the first month in the second year of Kocho (1262), cyclical sign *mizunoe-inu*

To Kudo Sakon-no-jo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter while he was in exile in Ito on the Izu Peninsula. It was addressed to Kudo Sakon-no-jo Yoshitaka, known also as Kudo Yoshitaka, the lord of Amatsu in Awa Province.

Kudo Yoshitaka is said to have converted to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings around 1256, about the same time Shijo Kingo and Ikegami Munenaka did, a few years after the Daishonin first proclaimed his teachings. While the Daishonin was in exile on Izu, Yoshitaka sent offerings to him and continued to maintain pure faith. He was killed defending the Daishonin at the time of the Komatsubara Persecution in the eleventh month of 1264. *The Four Debts of Gratitude* is the only letter still extant that the Daishonin addressed to him.

In this letter, in light of the reason for his banishment, Nichiren Daishonin expresses his conviction that he is a true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. He mentions the "two important matters" that concern his Izu Exile. He states, "One is that I feel immense joy," and explains the reasons for his joy. The greater part of the letter consists of this explanation. Following this, he states,

"The second of the two important matters is that I feel intense grief." Citing passages from the Lotus and Great Collection sutras that reveal the gravity of the offense of slandering the Law and its devotees, the Daishonin explains that he grieves at the thought of the great karmic retribution his tormentors must undergo. This is the concluding part of the letter.

In the body of the letter, the Daishonin gives two reasons for his "immense joy." One is that he has been able to prove himself to be the votary of the Lotus Sutra by fulfilling the Buddha's prediction made in the sutra that its votary in the Latter Day of the Law will meet with persecution. The other reason is that, by suffering banishment for the sutra's sake, he can repay the four debts of gratitude. He declares that the ruler who condemned him to exile is the very person to whom he is the most grateful; thanks to the ruler, he has been able to fulfill the words of the Lotus Sutra and so prove himself to be its true votary.

Then, the Daishonin stresses the importance of repaying the four debts of gratitude set forth in the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra.

The four debts of gratitude are the debts owed to all living beings, to one's father and mother, to one's sovereign, and to the three treasures—the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist Order.

Among these four debts of gratitude, the Daishonin places special emphasis on the debt owed to the three treasures, without which one could not attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Reference is to the Daishonin's exile to Ito on the Izu Peninsula, from the twelfth day of the fifth month, 1261, to the twenty-second day of the second month, 1263.

2. Here "the saha world" indicates the major world system that surrounds our world.

3. The three good paths are those of asuras, human beings, and heavenly beings, in contrast to the three evil paths of hell, hungry spirits, and animals.

4. The story of Ajatashatru is included as one of the nine great persecutions suffered by Shakyamuni.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

7. The light of the sun, moon, and stars.

8. Wheat, rice, beans, and two types of millet. Also a generic term for all grains.

9. Sweet, pungent, sour, bitter, salty, astringent, and subtle flavors.

10. The six kinds of relatives refer to a father, a mother, an elder brother, a younger brother, a wife, and a son or daughter. Another classification gives a father, a son or daughter, an elder brother, a younger brother, a husband, and a wife.

11. The source of this statement has not been traced; presumably it is based on a passage in the Great Collection Sutra.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

7

The Teaching, Capacity, Time, and Country

Written by Nichiren, the shramana of Japan



WITH regard to the first item, the teaching consists of all the sutras, rules of monastic discipline, and treatises expounded by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, comprising 5,048 volumes contained in 480 scroll cases. The teachings of Buddhism, after circulating throughout India for a thousand years, were introduced to China 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing. During the 664-year period beginning with that year, the tenth of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67), cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, in the reign of Emperor Ming of the Later Han, and ending with the eighteenth year of the K'ai-yüan era (C.E. 730), cyclical sign *kanoe-uma*, in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang, all of the Buddhist teachings were introduced to China.

The contents of these sutras, rules of monastic discipline, and treatises can be divided into the categories of Hinayana and Mahayana teachings, provisional and true sutras, and exoteric and esoteric sutras, and one should carefully distinguish between them. Such designations did not originate with the later scholars and teachers of Buddhism; they derive from the preaching of the Buddha himself. Therefore, they should be employed without exception by all living beings in the worlds of the

ten directions. Anyone who fails to do so should be regarded as non-Buddhist.

The custom of referring to the teachings of the Agama sutras as Hinayana derives from the various Mahayana sutras of the Correct and Equal, Wisdom, and Lotus and Nirvana periods. In the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says that, if he had preached only the Hinayana teachings and withheld the Lotus Sutra, he would have been guilty of stinginess and greed. Moreover, the Nirvana Sutra states that those who accept only the Hinayana sutras and declare that the Buddha is characterized by impermanence will have their tongues fester in their mouths.

Second is the matter of capacity. One who attempts to propagate the teachings of Buddhism must understand the capacity and basic nature of the persons one is addressing. The Venerable Shariputra attempted to instruct a blacksmith by teaching him to meditate on the vileness of the body, and to instruct a washerman by teaching him to conduct breath-counting meditation.¹ Even though these disciples spent over ninety days in their respective meditations, they did not gain the slightest understanding of the Buddha's teachings. On the contrary, they took on erroneous views and end-

ed by becoming icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief.

The Buddha, on the other hand, instructed the blacksmith in breath-counting meditation, and the washerman in the meditation on the vileness of the body, and as a result both obtained understanding in no time at all. If even Shariputra, the foremost in wisdom among the disciples of the Buddha, failed to understand people's capacity, then how much more difficult must it be for ordinary teachers today, in the Latter Day of the Law, to have such an understanding! Ordinary teachers who lack an understanding of people's capacity should teach only the Lotus Sutra to those who are under their instruction.

Question: What about the passage in the Lotus Sutra that says, "Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom"?²

Answer: When I speak of understanding capacity, I am referring to preaching by a person of wisdom. Again, one should preach only the Lotus Sutra even to those who slander the Law, so that they may establish a so-called "poison-drum relationship" with it. In this respect, one should proceed as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did.

However, if one is speaking to persons who one knows have the capacity to become wise, then one should first instruct them in the Hinayana teachings, then instruct them in the provisional Mahayana teachings, and finally instruct them in the true Mahayana. But if speaking to those one knows to be ignorant persons of lesser capacity, then one should first instruct them in the true Mahayana teaching. In that way, whether they choose to believe in the teaching or to slander it, they will still receive the seeds of Buddhahood.

Third is the consideration of time. Anyone who hopes to spread the Buddhist teachings must make certain to understand the time. For example, if a farmer were to plant his fields in

autumn and winter, then, even though the seed and the land and the farmer's efforts were the same as ever, this planting would not result in the slightest gain but rather would end in loss. If the farmer planted one small plot in that way, he would suffer a minor loss, and if he planted acres and acres, he would suffer a major loss. But if he plows and plants in the spring and summer, then, whether the fields are of superior, medium, or inferior quality, each will bring forth its corresponding share of crops.

The preaching of the Buddhist teachings is similar to this. If one propagates the teaching without understanding the time, one will reap no benefit but, on the contrary, will fall into the evil paths. When Shakyamuni Buddha made his appearance in this world, he was determined to preach the Lotus Sutra. But though the capacities of his listeners may have been right, the proper time had not yet come. Therefore, he spent a period of more than forty years without preaching the Lotus Sutra, explaining, as he says in the Lotus Sutra itself, that "the time to preach so had not yet come."³

The day after the Buddha's passing begins the thousand-year period known as the Former Day of the Law, when those who uphold the precepts are many while those who break them are few. The day after the end of the Former Day of the Law marks the beginning of the thousand-year period known as the Middle Day of the Law, when those who break the precepts are many while those without precepts are few. And the day after the ending of the Middle Day of the Law begins the ten-thousand-year period known as the Latter Day of the Law, when those who break the precepts are few while those without precepts are many.

During the Former Day of the Law, one should cast aside those who break the precepts, or who have no precepts

at all, giving alms only to those who uphold the precepts. During the Middle Day of the Law, one should cast aside those without precepts and give alms only to those who break them. And during the Latter Day of the Law, one should give alms to those without precepts, treating them in the same way as if they were the Buddha.

However, whether in the Former, the Middle, or the Latter Day of the Law, one should never in any of these three periods give alms to those who slander the Lotus Sutra, whether they keep the precepts, break the precepts, or do not receive them at all. If alms are given to those who slander the Lotus Sutra, then the land will invariably be visited by the three calamities and seven disasters, and the persons who give such alms will surely fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

When the votary of the Lotus Sutra denounces the provisional sutras, it is like a ruler, a parent, or a teacher disciplining a retainer, a son, or a disciple. But when practitioners of the provisional sutras denounce the Lotus Sutra, it is like retainers, sons, or disciples attempting to punish their ruler, parent, or teacher.

At present, it has been 210 or more years since we entered the Latter Day of the Law. One should consider very carefully whether now is a time best suited for the provisional sutras or Nembutsu teachings, or whether it is the time when the Lotus Sutra should spread.

Fourth is the consideration of the country. One must never fail to take into account the kind of country in which one is spreading the Buddhist teachings. There are cold countries, hot countries, poor countries, rich countries, central countries, and peripheral countries, large countries and small countries, countries wholly given over to thieving, countries wholly given over to the

killing of living things, and countries known for their utter lack of filial piety. In addition, there are countries wholly devoted to the Hinayana teachings, countries wholly devoted to the Mahayana teachings, and countries in which both Hinayana and Mahayana are pursued. In the case of Japan, therefore, we must carefully consider whether it is a country suited exclusively to Hinayana, a country suited exclusively to Mahayana, or a country suited for the practice of both Hinayana and Mahayana.

Fifth is the sequence of propagation. In a country where the Buddhist teachings have never been introduced, there of course will be none who are familiar with Buddhism. But in a country where Buddhism has already been introduced, there will be those who believe in the Buddhist teachings. Therefore, one must first learn what kind of Buddhist doctrines have already spread in a particular country before attempting to propagate Buddhism there.

If the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings have already spread, then one should by all means propagate the true Mahayana teaching. But if the true Mahayana teaching has already spread, then one must not propagate the Hinayana or provisional Mahayana teachings. One throws aside shards and rubble in order to pick up gold and gems, but one must not throw aside gold and gems in order to pick up shards and rubble.

If one takes the five principles outlined above into account when propagating the Buddhist teachings, then one can surely become a teacher to the entire nation of Japan. To understand that the Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, the foremost among them all, is to have a correct understanding of the teaching.

Yet Fa-yün of Kuang-che-ssu temple and Hui-kuan of Tao-ch'ang-ssu temple claimed that the Nirvana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra. Ch'eng-

kuan of Mount Ch'ing-liang and Kobo of Mount Koya claimed that the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra. Chi-tsang of Chia-hsiang-ssu temple and the priest K'uei-chi of Tz'u-en-ssu temple claimed that the two sutras known as the Wisdom and the Pro-found Secrets are superior to the Lotus Sutra. One man alone, the Great Teacher Chih-che of Mount T'ien-t'ai, not only asserted that the Lotus Sutra is superior to all the other sutras, but urged that anyone claiming there is a sutra superior to the Lotus should be admonished; he said that, if such persons persist in their false claim, their tongues will surely fester in their mouths during the present existence, and after death they will fall into the Avichi hell. One who is able to distinguish right from wrong among all these different opinions may be said to have a correct understanding of the teaching.

Of all the thousand or ten thousand scholars of the present age, surely each and every one is confused as to this point. If so, then there must be very few who have a correct understanding of the teaching. If there are none with a correct understanding of the teaching, there will be none who read the Lotus Sutra. If there are none who read the Lotus Sutra, there will be none who can act as a teacher to the nation. If there is no one to act as a teacher to the nation, then everyone within the nation will be confused as to the distinctions within the body of sutras, such as those between the Hinayana and the Mahayana, the provisional and the true, and the exoteric and the esoteric sutras. Not a single person will be able to escape the sufferings of birth and death, and in the end they will all become slanderers of the Law. Those who, because of slandering the Law, fall into the Avichi hell, will be more numerous than the dust particles of the land, while those who, by embracing

the Law, are freed from the sufferings of birth and death, will number less than the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. What a fearful thing it is!

During the four hundred or more years since the time of Emperor Kammu, all the people in Japan have had the capacity to attain enlightenment solely through the Lotus Sutra. They are like those persons with capacities suited to the pure and perfect teaching who for a period of eight years listened to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak. (Confirmation of this may be found in the records of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, Prince Shōtoku, the Reverend Ganjin, the Great Teacher Kompon [Dengyo], the Reverend Annen, and Eshin.)⁴ To understand this is to have an understanding of the people's capacity.

Yet the Buddhist scholars of our time say that the people of Japan all have capacities fit only for the recitation of Amida Buddha's name, the Nembutsu. They are like Shariputra in the episode I mentioned earlier who, because he was misled as to the capacity of the persons under his instruction, in the end turned them into icchantikas.

In Japan at present, some 2,210 years after the passing of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, in the last of the five five-hundred-year periods after his passing, the hour has come for the widespread propagation of Myōhō-rengyō. To understand this is to have an understanding of the time.

Yet there are Buddhist scholars in Japan today who cast aside the Lotus Sutra and instead devote themselves exclusively to practicing the invocation of Amida Buddha's name. There are others who teach the Hinayana precepts and speak contemptuously of the priests [who were ordained with the Mahayana precepts] on Mount Hiei, as well as those who present what they describe as a separate transmission

outside the sutras, disparaging the correct doctrine of the Lotus Sutra. Such persons may surely be said to misunderstand the time. They are like the monk Superior Intent who slandered Bodhisattva Root of Joy, or the Scholar Gunaprabha who behaved with contempt toward Bodhisattva Maitreya,⁵ thus inviting the terrible sufferings of the Avichi hell.

Japan is a country related exclusively to the Lotus Sutra, just as the country of Shravasti in India was related solely to the Mahayana teachings. In India there were countries that were wholly devoted to Hinayana, those that were wholly devoted to Mahayana, and those that were devoted to both Hinayana and Mahayana teachings. Japan is a country that is exclusively suited to Mahayana, and among those teachings it should be dedicated solely to the Lotus Sutra. (The above statement is attested to in *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*, the writings of Seng-chao, and the records of Prince Shōtoku, the Great Teacher Dengyo, and Annen.)⁶ To understand this is to understand the country.

Yet there are Buddhist scholars in our present age who address the people of Japan and instruct them only in the precepts of the Hinayana, or who attempt to make them all into followers of the Nembutsu. This is like "placing impure food in a jeweled vessel." (This simile of the jeweled vessel is taken from *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation* by the Great Teacher Dengyo.)

In Japan during the 240 or more years from the time when Buddhism was first introduced from the Korean kingdom of Paekche in the reign of Emperor Kimmei to the reign of Emperor Kammu, only the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings were propagated throughout the country. Though the Lotus Sutra existed in Japan, its significance had not yet been made clear. This was similar to the

situation years before in China, where the Lotus Sutra had existed for more than 300 years before its significance was clarified.

In the time of Emperor Kammu, the Great Teacher Dengyo refuted the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings, and made clear the true significance of the Lotus Sutra. From that time on, opposing opinions ceased to prevail, and everyone single-mindedly put faith in the Lotus Sutra. Even those scholars of the earlier six schools [of Nara] who studied Hinayana and Mahayana teachings such as the Flower Garland, Wisdom, Profound Secrets, and Agama sutras regarded the Lotus Sutra as the ultimate authority. Needless to say, this was even more so with scholars of the Tendai and True Word schools, and of course with lay believers who had no special knowledge of the subject. In its relation to the Lotus Sutra, the country was like the K'un-lun Mountains where there is not a single worthless stone, or the mountain island of P'eng-lai where no poisons are known.

However, during the fifty or more years since the Kennin era (1201-1204), the priests Dainichi and Buddha⁷ have spread the teachings of the Zen school, casting aside all the various sutras and postulating a doctrine that is transmitted outside the scriptures. And Honen and Ryukan have established the Pure Land school, contradicting the teachings of the true Mahayana and setting up the provisional doctrines. These men are in effect casting aside gems and instead gathering stones, abandoning the solid earth and trying to climb up into the air. They know nothing about the order in which the various doctrines should be propagated. The Buddha warned of such persons when he said that it was better to encounter a mad elephant than an evil friend.⁸

In the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, it is record-

ed that, in the last five-hundred-year period, or two thousand or so years after the Buddha's passing, there will be three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra. Our present age corresponds to this last five-hundred-year period. And as I, Nichiren, ponder the truth of the Buddha's words, I realize that these three types of enemies are indeed real. If I allow them to remain hidden, then I will not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Yet if I cause them to appear, then I am almost certain to lose my life.

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁹ The fifth volume says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁰ The same volume also reads, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way."¹¹ And the sixth volume reads, "Not hesitating even if it costs them their lives."¹²

The ninth volume of the Nirvana Sutra states: "For example, it is like a royal envoy skilled in discussion and clever with expedient means who,

when sent on a mission to another land, would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler. Wise persons too do this. In the midst of ordinary people and without begrudging their lives, those who are wise should without fail proclaim the Thus Come One's prize teaching from the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle." The Great Teacher Chang-an, commenting on this passage, says: "[A royal envoy . . . would rather], even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler' means that one's body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one's life in order to propagate the Law."¹³

When I examine these passages, I know that, if I do not call forth these three enemies of the Lotus Sutra, then I will not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Only by making them appear can I be the votary. And yet if I do so, I am almost certain to lose my life. I will be like the Venerable Aryasimha or Bodhisattva Aryadeva.

Nichiren

The tenth day of the second month



Background

In the seventh month of 1260, Nichiren Daishonin submitted his treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* to the former regent Hojo Tokiyori, who, though retired from office, was still the most influential member of the ruling Hojo clan.

Infuriated at the Daishonin's criticism of the Pure Land school set forth in this treatise, a group of Pure Land believers attacked his dwelling at Matsubagayatsu, Kamakura, in an attempt

to do away with him. The Daishonin narrowly escaped to Toki Jonin's residence in the nearby province of Shimosa. When he reappeared in Kamakura in the spring of 1261 and resumed his propagation activities, the government arrested him and, without investigation, ordered him exiled to Ito on the Izu Peninsula. He remained in Izu from the twelfth day of the fifth month until he was pardoned and returned to Kamakura on the twenty-second day of the second month, 1263. This work is

dated simply “the tenth day of the second month,” but it is generally assumed that it was written in the second year of Kocho (1262) while he was in exile in Izu.

The Daishonin wrote this letter, reconfirming the correctness of his teaching in light of the five principles for propagation: the teaching, the people’s capacity, the time, the country, and the sequence of propagation. He also reaffirms his own mission in view of the Lotus Sutra’s predictions that its votary in the Latter Day of the Law will undergo persecutions at the hands of the three powerful enemies.

Buddhist scholars of the past had set

forth various criteria that one must understand and take into account in propagating Buddhism. Nichiren Daishonin organized these criteria into an integral system, establishing the five principles for propagation as a standard for the comparative evaluation of the various Buddhist teachings. In this letter he explains these five guides, demonstrating in terms of each why the Lotus Sutra is the supreme teaching. Although this letter refers only to the Lotus Sutra, in light of the Daishonin’s other writings we may understand this to mean the sutra’s essence, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and the practice and spirit it encompasses.

Notes

1. This story is found in the Nirvana Sutra. Mentioned are the five meditations to stop the mind’s disturbances and eliminate delusion. They are: meditation on the vileness of the body, meditation on compassion, meditation on dependent origination, meditation on the correct discernment of the phenomenal world, and breath-counting meditation. Meditation on the vileness of the body is concentrating on the impurity of the body to sever one’s attachment to it. Breath-counting meditation is a method of calming the mind by counting the breaths.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

3. Ibid., chap. 2.

4. This passage is given as a note in the text. The “records” may refer to the descriptions in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* by T’ien-t’ai; *The Biography of Prince Shotoku*; *The Life of the Great Priest of T’ang China Who Journeyed to the East*; *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation and The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra* by Dengyo; *An Extensive Commentary on the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts* by Annen; and *The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching* by Eshin.

5. The monk Superior Intent lived in the Latter Day of the Buddha Lion Sound King. He slandered Bodhisattva Root of Joy who taught the doctrine of the true aspect of reality, and was therefore said to have fallen into hell. The Scholar Guna-

prabha first studied the Mahayana, but converted to the Hinayana after reading *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma*. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, he ascended to the Tushita heaven in order to resolve his doubts concerning the Hinayana and the Mahayana. There he met Bodhisattva Maitreya, but did not respect him because Maitreya was not an ordained monk. Thus he failed to learn from Maitreya because of his arrogance.

6. *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* is a work attributed to Maitreya or Asanga. The “writings of Seng-chao” refers to *The Afterword to the Lotus Sutra Translation*. Seng-chao (384–414) was one of Kumara-jiva’s major disciples. The records of Shoto-ku, Dengyo, and Annen probably indicate the same sources cited in n. 4.

7. The priest Buddha is generally believed to refer to Butchi-bo Kakuan, a disciple of Dainichi (n.d.) who spread the Zen teachings in Japan before Eisai (1141–1215), the founder of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism. Dainichi, also called Nonin, named his school the Japanese Bodhidharma school.

8. Nirvana Sutra.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

10. Ibid., chap. 14.

11. Ibid., chap. 13.

12. Ibid., chap. 16.

13. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

8

Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra



QUESTION: I have had the rare opportunity to be born a human being and the good fortune to encounter Buddhism. But it is said that there are shallow teachings and there are profound teachings, and that some people rank high in capacity while others rank low. Just what teachings should I practice to attain Buddhahood as quickly as possible? I beg you to instruct me on this point.

Answer: Each family has its respected elders, and each province, its persons of noble station. But although people all look up to their particular lord and pay honor to their own parents, could anyone stand higher than the ruler of the nation?

In the same way, confrontations between the Mahayana and the Hinayana or between the provisional and true teachings are comparable to disputes among rival houses; but among all the sacred teachings expounded by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime, the Lotus Sutra alone holds the position of absolute superiority. It is the guidepost that points the way to the immediate attainment of perfect wisdom, the carriage that takes us at once to the place of enlightenment.

Question: As I understand it, a teacher is someone who has grasped the central meaning of the sutras and treatises and who writes commentaries

explaining them. If that is so, then it is only natural that the teachers of the various schools should each formulate doctrines according to their own understanding, and on that basis write their commentaries, establish principles, and dedicate themselves to the attainment of enlightenment. How could such efforts be in vain? To insist that the Lotus Sutra alone holds the position of absolute superiority is to adopt too narrow a view, I believe.

Answer: If you think that to proclaim the absolute superiority of the Lotus Sutra is to take too narrow a view, then one would have to conclude that no one in the world was more narrow-minded than Shakyamuni Buddha. I am afraid you are greatly mistaken in this matter. Let me quote from one of the sutras and from the commentary of one school, and see if I can resolve your confusion.

The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra says: “[Because people’s natures and desires are not alike], I preached the Law in various different ways. Preaching the Law in various different ways, I made use of the power of expedient means. But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.”

Hearing this pronouncement, Great Adornment and the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas replied in

unison, voicing their understanding that “[as for those living beings who are unable to hear this sutra . . .] though immeasurable, boundless, inconceivable asamkha kalpas may pass, they will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment.”

The point of this passage is to make clear that, no matter how much one may aspire to the Buddha way by calling upon the name of Amida Buddha, or by embracing the teachings of the Zen school—relying on the sutras of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods preached by the Buddha during the previous forty years and more—one will never succeed in attaining supreme enlightenment, even though a countless, limitless, inconceivable number of asamkha kalpas should pass.

And this is not the only passage of this type. The “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth.” It also says, “[In the Buddha lands of the ten directions] there is only the Law of the one vehicle, there are not two, there are not three.” These passages mean that only this [Lotus] sutra represents the truth.

Again, in the second volume it says, “I am the only person who can rescue and protect others.”¹ And it speaks of “desiring only to accept and embrace the sutra of the great vehicle and not accepting a single verse of the other sutras.”² These passages mean that only Shakyamuni Buddha can save and protect all living beings, and that one should wish to accept and uphold only the Lotus Sutra, and never even a verse from any other sutra.³

It also says, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”⁴

This passage means that, if one does not believe in the Lotus Sutra but instead turns against it, one will immediately destroy the seeds for attaining Buddhahood in this world. After death, one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Examining these passages, T'ien-t'ai concluded that it was statements such as these that had prompted the words, “Is this not a devil pretending to be the Buddha?”⁵ If we merely rely upon the commentaries of various teachers and do not follow the statements of the Buddha himself, then how can we call our beliefs Buddhism? To do so would be absurd beyond description!

Therefore, the Great Teacher Chisho stated that, if one claims that there is no division of Mahayana and Hinayana among the sutras and no distinction of partial and perfect among revelations of the truth, and therefore accepts all the words of the various teachers, then the preachings of the Buddha will have been to no purpose.⁶

T'ien-t'ai asserted, “That which has a profound doctrine and accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so.”⁷ He also said, “All assertions that lack scriptural proof are to be branded as false.”⁸ How would you interpret such statements?

Question: What you have just said may apply to the commentaries of the teachers. But what about the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra that state, “This is the foremost sutra” or “This is the king of sutras”? If one were to go by what you have said, then one would have to reject these pronouncements, which are the words of the Buddha himself. Is this not so?

Answer: Although these earlier sutras may include such statements as “this is the foremost sutra” or “this is the king of sutras,” they are all nevertheless provisional teachings. One

should not rely on such pronouncements. The Buddha himself commented on this point when he said, "Rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final."⁹ And the Great Teacher Miao-lo stated: "Though other sutras may call themselves the king among sutras, there is none that announces itself as foremost among all the sutras preached in the past, now being preached, or to be preached in the future."¹⁰ Thus one should understand them according to the principle of 'combining, excluding, corresponding, and including.'¹¹ This passage of commentary is saying in essence that even if there should be a sutra that calls itself the king of sutras, if it does not also declare itself superior to those preached before it and those to be preached after, then one should know that it is a sutra belonging to the expedient teachings.

It is the way of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra to say nothing concerning the sutras that would be preached in the future. Only in the case of the Lotus Sutra, because it is the final and ultimate statement of the Buddha's teachings, do we find a clear pronouncement that this sutra alone holds the place of absolute superiority "among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach."

Hence one commentary states, "Only in the Lotus Sutra did the Buddha explain the meaning of his earlier teachings and clarify the true meaning of this present teaching."¹² Thus we may see that, in the Lotus Sutra, the Thus Come One gave definite form both to his true intention and to the methods to be used in teaching and converting living beings.

It is for this reason that T'ien-t'ai stated: "After the Thus Come One attained enlightenment, for forty years and more he did not reveal the truth. With the Lotus Sutra, he for the first

time revealed the truth."¹³ In other words, for more than forty years after the Thus Come One went out into the world, he did not reveal the true teaching. In the Lotus Sutra, he for the first time revealed the true way that leads to the attainment of Buddhahood.

Question: I understand what you say about the Lotus Sutra being foremost among all the sutras that the Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach." But there is a certain teacher who says that the statement "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth" is meant to apply only to the voice-hearers, who were able to achieve Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. It does not apply to the bodhisattvas, who had already gained the benefit of enlightenment through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra. What is your opinion on this matter?

Answer: You are referring to the view that the Lotus Sutra was preached for the benefit of those of the two vehicles and not for bodhisattvas, and that the words "I have not yet revealed the truth" therefore apply only to the two vehicles. This was the opinion put forth by the Great Teacher Tokuitsu, a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school. It has been repudiated by the Great Teacher Dengyo, who wrote: "There is at present a certain feeder on lowly food who has composed several volumes of spurious writings, slandering the Law and slandering persons. How can he possibly escape falling into hell!"¹⁴ As a result of these words of censure directed at him, Tokuitsu's tongue split into eight pieces and he died.

Be that as it may, the assertion that the statement "I have not yet revealed the truth" was made for the sake of the people of the two vehicles is in itself completely reasonable. The reason is that, from the very beginning, the fundamental purpose of the Thus Come

One's preaching was to open the way to enlightenment for the people of the two vehicles. And the methods of instruction used throughout his teaching life, as well as the skillful means exhibited in his three cycles of preaching, were chiefly employed for them.

In the Flower Garland Sutra, beings dwelling in hell are deemed able to become Buddhas, but voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones are condemned as incapable of doing so. In the Correct and Equal sutras, it is stated that, just as lotus flowers cannot grow on the peak of a high mountain, so the people of the two vehicles have scorched the seeds of Buddhahood [and hence can never attain it]. And in the Wisdom sutras, we read that persons who have committed the five cardinal sins can attain Buddhahood, but that those of the two vehicles are rejected as unable to do so. The Thus Come One now declared as his true intention that these pitiful, abandoned persons could indeed attain Buddhahood, using this as a standard to demonstrate the superiority of the Lotus Sutra.

Therefore, T'ien-t'ai stated: "Neither the Flower Garland Sutra nor the Larger Wisdom Sutra could cure [the plight of these persons of the two vehicles]. The Lotus Sutra alone was able to produce the roots of goodness in those who have nothing more to learn,¹⁵ and to make it possible for them to attain the Buddha way. Therefore, the sutra is called *myo*, or wonderful. Again, the icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, nevertheless have minds, and so it is still possible for them to attain Buddhahood. But persons of the two vehicles have annihilated consciousness, and therefore cannot arouse the mind that aspires to enlightenment. And yet the Lotus Sutra can cure them, which is why it is called *myo*, or wonderful."¹⁶

There is no need for me to explain in detail the import of this passage.

One should understand once and for all that even the medicine of the teachings offered by the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Larger Wisdom sutras cannot cure the grave illness that afflicts persons of the two vehicles. Moreover, in the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, even guilty persons who are condemned to inhabit the three evil paths are regarded as bodhisattvas and therefore able to attain Buddhahood, but no such recognition is accorded to the persons of the two vehicles.

With regard to this point, the Great Teacher Miao-lo stated: "In the various sutras, it is sometimes taught that beings in all other paths are led to the true [path of Buddhahood], but there is absolutely no such hope offered to the two vehicles. Therefore, [in the Lotus Sutra] beings in the six paths are grouped with bodhisattvas [as being assured of Buddhahood], and the power of the sutra is set forth with respect to those of the two vehicles for whom Buddhahood is the most difficult to achieve."¹⁷ Indeed, T'ien-t'ai established that the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles is proof that all living beings without exception can become Buddhas.

Could one think it difficult for an asura to cross the great ocean? Could one possibly think it easy for a little child to overthrow a strong man? In like manner, the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra explain that persons who have the seeds of the Buddha nature may attain Buddhahood, but nowhere is it stated that those whose seeds are hopelessly scorched can ever do so. It is only the good medicine of the Lotus Sutra that can readily cure this grave affliction.

Now, if you wish to attain Buddhahood, you have only to lower the banner of your arrogance, cast aside the staff of your anger, and devote yourself exclusively to the one vehicle of the

Lotus Sutra. Worldly fame and profit are mere baubles of your present existence, and arrogance and prejudice are ties that will fetter you in the next one. Ah, you should be ashamed of them! And you should fear them, too!

Question: Since, by means of a single instance, one may surmise the nature of all, on hearing your brief remarks about the Lotus Sutra, I feel that my ears and eyes have been clearly opened for the first time. But how can one understand the Lotus Sutra, so as to quickly reach the shore of enlightenment?

I have heard it said that only one for whom the sun of wisdom shines unclouded in the great sky of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and for whom the water of wisdom in the broad pond of the threefold contemplation in a single mind is clear and never muddied, has the capacity to carry out the practice of this sutra. But I have never exerted myself to study the various schools of the southern capital of Nara, and so I know nothing of the doctrines of *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* and *The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*; and my eyes are equally unopened with respect to the teachings of the northern peak of Hiei, and so I am quite confused about the significance of the works *Great Concentration and Insight* and *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*. With regard to the Tendai and Dharma Characteristics schools, I am like a person with a pot over his head who is standing with his face to a wall. It would seem, therefore, that my capacity is not suited to the Lotus Sutra. What am I to do?

Answer: It is the way of scholars these days to assert that only those who possess superior wisdom and strenuously exert themselves in the practice of meditation have the capacity to benefit from the Lotus Sutra, and to discourage persons who lack wisdom from

even trying. But this is in fact an utterly ignorant and erroneous view. The Lotus Sutra is the teaching that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way. Therefore, the persons of superior faculties and superior capacity should naturally devote themselves to contemplation and to meditating on the Law. But, for persons of inferior faculties and inferior capacity, the important thing is simply to have a heart of faith. Hence the sutra states: "If there are good men or good women who . . . believe and revere it with pure hearts and harbor no doubts or perplexities, they will never fall into hell or the realm of hungry spirits or of beasts, but will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions."¹⁸ One should have complete faith in the Lotus Sutra and look forward to being born in the presence of the Buddhas in one's next life.

To illustrate, suppose that a person is standing at the foot of a tall embankment and is unable to ascend. And suppose that there is someone on top of the embankment who lowers a rope and says, "If you take hold of this rope, I will pull you up to the top of the embankment." If the person at the bottom begins to doubt that the other has the strength to pull him up, or wonders if the rope is not too weak and therefore refuses to put forth his hand and grasp it, then how is he ever to get to the top of the embankment? But if he follows the instructions, puts out his hand, and takes hold of the rope, then he can climb up.

If one doubts the strength of the Buddha when he says, "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others"; if one is suspicious of the rope held out by the Lotus Sutra when its teachings declare that one can "gain entrance through faith alone";¹⁹ if one fails to chant the Mystic Law which guarantees that "such a person assuredly and without doubt [will attain the

Buddha way],²⁰ then the Buddha's power cannot reach one, and it will be impossible to scale the embankment of enlightenment.

Lack of faith is the basic failing that causes a person to fall into hell. Therefore, the sutra states, "If with regard to this sutra one should harbor doubt and fail to believe, one will fall at once into the evil paths."²¹

When one has had the rare good fortune to be born a human being, and the further good fortune to encounter the teachings of Buddhism, how can one waste this opportunity? If one is going to take faith at all, then among all the various teachings of the Mahayana and the Hinayana, provisional and true doctrines, one should believe in the one vehicle, the true purpose for which the Buddhas come into the world and the direct path to attaining enlightenment for all living beings.

If the sutra that one embraces is superior to all other sutras, then the person who can uphold its teachings must likewise surpass other people. That is why the Lotus Sutra states, "A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings."²² There is no question about these golden words of the great sage. And yet people fail to understand this principle or to examine the matter, but instead seek worldly reputation or give way to suspicion and prejudice, thus forming the basis for falling into hell.

All I wish is that you will embrace this sutra and cast your name upon the sea of the vows made by the Buddhas of the ten directions, that you entrust your honor to the heaven that is the compassion of the bodhisattvas of the three existences. One who thus embraces the Lotus Sutra will cause the heavenly gods, dragons, and the others of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings, as well as all the great bodhisattvas, to become one's followers. Not only that,

but that person's physical body, still in the process of forming causes for achieving Buddhahood, will acquire the Buddha eye of one who has perfected that course; and this ordinary flesh that exists in the realm of the conditioned will put on the holy garments of the unconditioned. Then one need never fear the three paths²³ or tremble before the eight difficulties.²⁴ One will ascend to the peak of the mountain of the seven expedients and sweep away the clouds of the nine worlds. Flowers will bloom in the garden of immaculate earth, and the moon will shine brightly in the sky of the Dharma nature. One can rely on the passage that promises, "Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way," and there is no question about the Buddha's pronouncement that "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others."

The blessings gained by arousing even a single moment of faith in and understanding of the Lotus Sutra surpass those of practicing the five paramitas;²⁵ and the benefit enjoyed by the fiftieth person who rejoices on hearing the Lotus Sutra is greater than that acquired by giving alms for eighty years.²⁶ The doctrine of the immediate attainment of enlightenment far outshines the doctrines of other scriptures; and the pronouncements concerning the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment and his immeasurable life span are never found in any other teachings.

Thus it was that the eight-year-old dragon girl was able to come out of the vast sea and in an instant give proof of the power of this sutra, and Superior Practices, a bodhisattva of the essential teaching, emerged from beneath the great earth and thereby demonstrated the unfathomably long life span of the Buddha. This is the king of sutras, defying description in words, the won-

derful Law that is beyond the mind's power to comprehend.

To ignore the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra and assert that other sutras stand on a par with it is to commit the worst possible slander of the Law, a major offense of the utmost gravity. No analogy could suffice to illustrate it. The Buddhas, for all their powers of magical transformation, could never finish describing its consequences, and the bodhisattvas, with all the wisdom at their command, could not fathom its immensity. Thus, the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "If I were to describe the punishments [that fall on persons who slander this sutra], I could exhaust a kalpa and never come to the end." This passage means that not even a whole kalpa would be time enough to explain the full gravity of the offense of a person who acts even once against the Lotus Sutra.

For this reason, a person who commits this offense will never be able to hear the preaching of the Buddhas of the three existences, and will be cut off from the doctrines of the Thus Come Ones, who are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Such a person will move from darkness into greater darkness. How could he escape the pains and sufferings of the great citadel of the Avichi hell? Could a thoughtful person fail to dread the prospect of lengthy kalpas of misery?

Thus the sutra states, "If this person . . . on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell." This passage means that a person who despises, looks down on, hates, envies, or holds a grudge against those who read and embrace the Lotus Sutra will fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell after he dies.²⁷ Who could help but fear these golden words of the great sage? And who could doubt the

clear-cut pronouncement of the Buddha when he said, "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]"?²⁸

However, people all turn their backs on these sutra passages, and the world as a whole is completely confused with regard to the principles of Buddhism. Why do you persist in following the teachings of evil friends? T'ien-t'ai said that to accept and put faith in the doctrines of evil teachers is the same as drinking poison.²⁹ You should deeply consider this and beware!

Taking a careful look at the world today, we see that, although people declare that the Law is worthy of respect, they all express hatred for the person who upholds it. You yourself seem to be very much confused as to the source from which the Law springs. Just as all the different kinds of plants and trees come forth from the earth, so all the various teachings of the Buddha are spread by persons. As T'ien-t'ai said: "Even during the Buddha's lifetime, the Law was revealed by people. How, then, in the latter age, can one say that the Law is worthy of respect, but that the person who upholds it is to be despised?"³⁰

Hence, if the Law that one embraces is supreme, then the person who embraces it must accordingly be foremost among all others. And if that is so, then to speak ill of that person is to speak ill of the Law, just as to show contempt for the child is to show contempt for the parents.

You should realize from this that the people of today speak words that in no way match what is in their hearts. It is as though they were to beat their parents with a copy of *The Classic of Filial Piety*. When they know that, unseen by others, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are observing them, how can they fail to be ashamed of such actions! The pains of hell are frightful indeed. Beware of them! Beware of them!

When you look at those of superior capacity, do not disparage yourself. The Buddha's true intention was that no one, even those of inferior capacity, be denied enlightenment. Conversely, when you compare yourself with persons of inferior capacity, do not be arrogant and overproud. Even persons of superior capacity may be excluded from enlightenment if they do not devote themselves wholeheartedly.

One may think fondly of one's native village, but, paying no visit and with no particular reason to go, one in time gives up the idea of returning. Or one may pine for a particular person, but, with no hope of winning that person's love and having exchanged no vows, one abandons the thought of waiting. So in like manner we neglect to journey to the pure land of Eagle Peak, though it surpasses in grandeur the palaces of nobles and high ministers, and moreover is quite easy to reach. We fail to behold the gentle and benign figure of the Buddha, who has declared, "I am a father to you,"³¹ though we ought surely to present ourselves before him. Should we not grieve at this, until our sleeves are drenched with tears and our heart consumed by regret?

The color of the clouds in the sky as twilight falls, the waning light of the moon when dawn is breaking—these things make us ponder. In the same way, whenever events remind us of life's uncertainty, we should fix our thoughts on the existence to come. When we view the blossoms of spring or the snow on a winter morning, we should think of it, and even on evenings when winds bluster and gathering clouds tumble across the sky, we should not forget it even for an instant.

Life lasts no longer than the time the exhaling of one breath awaits the drawing of another. At what time, what moment, should we ever allow ourselves to forget the compassionate vow

of the Buddha, who declared, "At all times I think to myself: [How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha]?"³² On what day or month should we permit ourselves to be without the sutra that says, "[If there are those who hear the Law], then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood?"³³

How long can we expect to live on as we have, from yesterday to today or from last year to this year? We may look back over our past and count the years we have accumulated, but when we look ahead into the future, who can for certain number himself among the living for another day or even for an hour? Yet, though one may know that the moment of one's death is already at hand, one clings to arrogance and prejudice, to worldly fame and profit, and fails to devote oneself to chanting the Mystic Law. Such an attitude is futile beyond description! Even though the Lotus Sutra is called the teaching that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way, how could a person such as this actually attain it? It is said that even the moonlight will not deign to shine on the sleeve of an unfeeling person.

Moreover, as life does not go beyond the moment, the Buddha expounded the blessings that come from a single moment of rejoicing [on hearing the Lotus Sutra]. If two or three moments were required, this could no longer be called the original vow of the Buddha endowed with great impartial wisdom, the single vehicle of the teaching that directly reveals the truth and leads all living beings to attain Buddhahood.

As for the time of its propagation, the Lotus Sutra spreads during the latter age, when the Buddha's Law is about to perish. As for what capacity of persons it is suited to, it can save even those who commit the five cardinal sins, or who slander the correct teach-

ing. Therefore, you must be guided by the intent of [the Lotus Sutra, which is] the immediate attainment of enlightenment, and never give yourself up to the mistaken views that stem from doubts or attachments.

How long does a lifetime last? If one stops to consider, it is like a single night's lodging at a wayside inn. Should one forget that fact and seek some measure of worldly fame and profit? Though you may gain them, they will be mere prosperity in a dream, a delight scarcely to be prized. You would do better simply to leave such matters to the karma formed in your previous existences.

Once you awaken to the uncertainty and transience of this world, you will find endless examples confronting your eyes and filling your ears. Vanished like clouds or rain, the people of past ages have left nothing but their names. Fading away like dew, drifting far off like smoke, our friends of today too disappear from sight. Should you suppose that you alone can somehow remain forever like the clouds over Mount Mikasa?³⁴

The spring blossoms depart with the wind; maple leaves turn red in autumn showers. All are proof that no living thing can stay for long in this world. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra counsels us, "Nothing in this world is lasting or firm but all are like bubbles, foam, heat shimmer."³⁵

"[At all times I think to myself]: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way?" These words express the Buddha's deepest wish to enable both those who accept the Lotus Sutra and those who oppose it to attain Buddhahood. Because this is his ultimate purpose, those who embrace the Lotus Sutra for even a short while are acting in accordance with his will. And if they act in accordance with the Buddha's will, they will be repaying the debt of gratitude they owe

to the Buddha. The words of the sutra, which are as full of compassion as a mother's love, will then find solace, and the cares of the Buddha, who said, "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others," will likewise be eased. Not only will Shakyamuni Buddha rejoice, but because the Lotus Sutra is the ultimate purpose for which all Buddhas appear in the world, the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences will likewise rejoice. As Shakyamuni said, "[If one can uphold it even for a short while] I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas."³⁶ Not only will the Buddhas rejoice, but the gods also will join in their delight. Thus, when the Great Teacher Dengyo lectured on the Lotus Sutra, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman presented him with a purple surplice,³⁷ and when the Honorable Kuya³⁸ recited the Lotus Sutra, the great deity of Matsuo Shrine was able to gain protection from the cold wind.

For this reason, when praying that "the seven disasters will instantly vanish, and the seven blessings will instantly appear,"³⁹ this sutra is the most effective of all. That is because it promises that its votaries "will enjoy peace and security in their present existence."⁴⁰ And when offering prayers to avert the disasters of foreign invasion and internal revolt, nothing can surpass this wonderful sutra, because it makes certain that persons who embrace it will "suffer no decline or harm within the area of a hundred yojanas."⁴¹

Nonetheless, the way that prayers are offered in our present age is the exact opposite of what it ought to be. Prayers today are based upon the provisional teachings, which were intended for propagation in previous ages, rather than upon the secret Law of the highest truth, which is intended for propagation in the latter age. To proceed in this way is like trying to make use of last year's calendar, or to employ a crow

for the kind of fishing that only a cormorant can do.

This situation has come about solely because the error-bound teachers of the provisional teachings are accorded high honor, while the teacher enlightened to the true doctrine has not been duly recognized. How sad to think that this rough gem, such as was presented by Pien Ho⁴² to the kings Wen and Wu, should find no place of acceptance! How joyful, though, that I have obtained in this life the priceless gem concealed in the topknot of the wheel-turning king,⁴³ for which Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in this world!

What I am saying here has been fully attested to by the Buddhas of the ten directions and is no mere idle talk. Therefore, knowing that the Lotus Sutra says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe,"⁴⁴ how can you retain even a trace of disbelief; and when it says, "Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way," how can you refuse to become a Buddha?

Since the remotest past up until now, you have merely suffered in vain the pains of countless existences. Why do you not, if only this once, try planting the wonderful seeds that lead to eternal and unchanging Buddhahood? Though at present you may taste only a

tiny fraction of the everlasting joys that await you in the future, surely you should not spend your time thoughtlessly coveting worldly fame and profit, which are as fleeting as a bolt of lightning or the morning dew. As the Thus Come One teaches, "There is no safety in the threefold world; it is like a burning house."⁴⁵ And in the words of a bodhisattva, "All things are like a phantom, like a magically conjured image."⁴⁶

Everywhere other than the Capital of Tranquil Light is a realm of suffering. Once you leave the haven of inherent enlightenment, what is there to bring you joy? I pray that you will embrace the Mystic Law, which guarantees that people "will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences."⁴⁷ This is the only glory that you need seek in your present lifetime, and is the action that will draw you toward Buddhahood in your next existence. Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nichiren



Background

Although there are different opinions concerning the date of this letter, it is generally accepted that Nichiren Daishonin wrote it in the third month of the third year of Kocho (1263), shortly after he had been pardoned and had returned to Kamakura following two years of exile on the Izu Peninsula. The Daishonin was then forty-two years old.

As the title indicates, this work discusses the significance of embracing the Lotus Sutra and is written in the form of five questions and answers. In the first section, the questioner asks: Which teaching should one practice in order to attain Buddhahood quickly? In answer, the Daishonin declares that the Lotus Sutra enables all people to achieve Buddhahood without excep-

tion and is therefore the highest of all the sutras.

In the second section, the questioner objects to such exclusive emphasis on the Lotus Sutra as narrow-minded. The Daishonin replies that his assertion of the sutra's supremacy among all the Buddhist teachings is based on the Buddha's own words as they appear in the sutras themselves, and not on the arbitrary theories or commentaries of later scholars and teachers. When the questioner points out that other sutras also identify themselves as "the foremost sutra" or "the king of sutras," the Daishonin explains that such statements are relative. Only the Lotus declares itself to be supreme among all the sutras preached in the past, now being preached, or to be preached in the future. Next, the Daishonin says that Shakyamuni Buddha did not reveal the truth during the first forty years and more of his preaching, and that only the Lotus Sutra is the true way that leads to Buddhahood.

The questioner then asks about an interpretation put forth by the Dharma Characteristics school, which claims that the Lotus Sutra is a provisional teaching, expounded solely for the purpose of leading to Buddhahood the people of the two vehicles, voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones, and not for the sake of the bodhisattvas, who had already gained benefit through the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. The Daishonin acknowledges that the Lotus Sutra was indeed expounded chiefly for the people of the two vehicles, whose capacity for supreme enlightenment had been denied in the earlier Mahayana sutras. However, he continues, this does not mean that the Lotus Sutra

is a provisional teaching, or that it benefits only the people of the two vehicles. Rather, by singling out those of the two vehicles, for whom Buddhahood is especially difficult to attain, and asserting that even these people can become Buddhas through the power of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni made clear that this sutra is the one vehicle that opens the way to Buddhahood for all people.

In the last section, the questioner, now convinced, asks how one should embrace the Lotus Sutra in order to reach enlightenment quickly. Nichiren Daishonin replies that one need not master the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, or perfect the threefold contemplation in a single mind, as the Tendai scholars asserted. Rather, the essential thing is simply to have a heart of faith in the sutra. Faith, he explains, is the fundamental cause for attaining enlightenment, and to slander the Lotus Sutra and its votary is an act that invites indescribable misery.

A concluding passage of great poetic beauty stresses the fleeting nature of human existence. To be born as a human and, moreover, to encounter the supreme teaching of Buddhism are rare opportunities. Rather than wasting one's brief yet precious life in the pursuit of worldly fame and profit, the Daishonin says, one should dedicate oneself to faith in the Lotus Sutra and so attain the everlasting joy of enlightenment. He declares that to chant *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* oneself and to enable others to do the same are the most important tasks in this present existence.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. *Ibid.*
3. In the Japanese text, the two passages from the Lotus Sutra are written in Chi-

nese original form, followed by the Daishonin's interpretation.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
5. *Ibid.*

6. *A Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings.*

7. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Nirvana Sutra.*

10. A summary of a passage in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

11. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* T'ien-t'ai's principle of "combining, excluding, corresponding, and including" clarifies the relationship between the four teachings of doctrine and the first four of the five periods, and shows that the Lotus Sutra is the only true, perfect teaching.

12. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

13. *Profound Meaning.*

14. A rephrasing of a passage in *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*. By referring to Tokuitsu as a "feeder on lowly food," Dengyo implies that his opponent is content with the four inferior flavors (the provisional teachings of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods), refusing to taste the finest delicacy of ghee, to which the Lotus Sutra is likened.

15. "Those who have nothing more to learn" refers to the people who have reached the state of arhat, the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment.

16. *Great Concentration and Insight.*

17. *On "The Profound Meaning."*

18. *Lotus Sutra*, chap. 12.

19. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

20. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

21. *Ibid.*, chap. 15.

22. *Ibid.*, chap. 23.

23. The three paths refer here to the path of fire, the path of blood, and the path of swords. Roads that the dead are said to travel. The term is used synonymously with the three evil paths of hell, hungry spirits, and animals.

24. Eight places, states, or circumstances wherein one is unable to see the Buddha or to listen to the Buddha's teaching. They are the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals; the heaven of long life, a division within the fourth meditation heaven in the world of form; Uttarakuru, the continent north of Mount Sumeru whose people experience many pleasures; obstruction of the sense organs; prejudice or false views

arising from attachment to secular knowledge; and the period before the Buddha's birth or after his death.

25. The five paramitas refer to the first five of the six paramitas or practices. According to the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, to arouse even a single moment of belief and understanding on hearing the Lotus Sutra produces benefit surpassing that of practicing the five paramitas for eight hundred thousand million nayutas of kalpas.

26. This refers to the following passage in chapter 18 of the Lotus Sutra: "Suppose there is a great dispenser of charity who bestows goods on immeasurable multitudes, doing this for a full eighty years, responding to each person's desires. . . . But the fiftieth person who hears one verse [of the Lotus Sutra] and responds with joy gains blessings that are far greater, beyond description by simile or parable." See also continual propagation to the fiftieth person in Glossary.

27. Here, because the Daishonin wrote the above sutra passage in Chinese, he then explains its meaning.

28. *Lotus Sutra*, chap. 2.

29. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

30. Probably a quote not from T'ien-t'ai but from Miao-lo, in *On "The Words and Phrases."* The wording here differs slightly from Miao-lo's.

31. *Lotus Sutra*, chap. 3.

32. *Ibid.*, chap. 16.

33. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

34. A mountain located in Nara. A place of great scenic beauty, it often appears in traditional Japanese poetry.

35. *Lotus Sutra*, chap. 18.

36. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

37. According to *The Biography of the Great Teacher Dengyo*, in 814 Dengyo visited Usa Hachiman Shrine in Kyushu, where he lectured on the Lotus Sutra. The deity, much moved, is said to have personally presented Dengyo with a purple robe.

38. Kuya (903-972) was a Nembutsu priest who spread the Pure Land teachings among the common people, traveling from one province to another. He chanted the name of Amida Buddha while dancing in the streets. According to *The Biographies of Eminent Priests of Japan*, when Kuya stayed at Unrin-in temple in Kyoto, he saw an elderly man, shivering with cold, who announced himself to be the deity of Ma-

tsuo Shrine. Though the man had heard the Wisdom sutras, he said, he had not yet been able to hear the Lotus Sutra; so he was still shivering in the wind of greed and delusion. Kuya recited the Lotus Sutra for him, whereupon the deity was relieved of his suffering.

39. These words appear in the Benevolent Kings Sutra. The "seven disasters" are: (1) extraordinary changes of the sun and moon, (2) extraordinary changes of the stars and planets, (3) fires, (4) unseasonable floods, (5) storms, (6) drought, and (7) war, including enemy attacks from without and rebellion from within. The "seven blessings" means averting or eradicating the seven disasters.

40. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

41. *Ibid.*, chap. 26.

42. Pien Ho was a native of the state of Ch'u in China during the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.). According to *Han Fei Tzu*, Pien Ho found a precious stone at Mount Ch'u and presented it to King Li. When the king had it appraised,

it was identified as a mere stone. So the king had Pien Ho's left leg cut off at the knee. After the king's death, Pien Ho again presented the precious stone, this time to King Wu, only to have his right leg cut off at the knee on a second charge of deception. Later, after King Wen had ascended the throne, Pien Ho wept for three days at the foot of Mount Ch'u, holding the precious stone and shedding tears of blood at the kings' ignorance. Hearing of this, King Wen asked for Pien Ho's stone and had it polished. It was then recognized as being genuine and, in consequence, is said to have been widely treasured by the populace.

43. This story appears in chapter 14 of the Lotus Sutra. The "priceless gem" indicates the one Buddha vehicle.

44. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

45. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

46. Probably a reference to a similar passage in Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, discussing the non-substantiality of all phenomena.

47. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

9

The Recitation of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters



IN the letter you sent by messenger, you say that you used to recite one chapter of the Lotus Sutra every day, completing the entire sutra in the space of twenty-eight days, but that now you read the “Medicine King” chapter¹ once a day. You ask if you should simply read each chapter in turn, as you were originally doing.

As for the Lotus Sutra, one may recite the entire sutra of twenty-eight chapters in eight volumes every day; or one may recite only one volume, or one chapter, or one verse, or one phrase, or one word; or one may simply chant the daimoku, Nam-myohorenge-kyo, only once a day, or chant it only once in the course of a lifetime; or hear someone else chant it only once in a lifetime and rejoice in the hearing, or rejoice in hearing the voice of someone else rejoice in the hearing, and so on in this manner to the fiftieth hearer.² And if one were to be at the end, even if one’s faith were weak and one’s sense of rejoicing diluted like the frailty of a child of two or three, or the inability of a cow or horse to distinguish before from after, the blessings one would gain would be a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than those gained by persons of keen faculties and superior wisdom who study other sutras, persons such as Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, Manjushri,

and Maitreya, who had committed to memory the entire texts of the various sutras.

We find this mentioned in both the Lotus Sutra and the sixty volumes of commentary³ by T’ien-t’ai and Miaolo. Thus the sutra states [concerning these blessings], “Even the Buddha wisdom could never finish calculating their extent.”⁴ Not even the wisdom of the Buddha can fathom the blessings such a person will obtain. The Buddha wisdom is so marvelous that it knows even the number of raindrops that fall in this major world system during a period, for instance, of seven days or twice seven days. And yet we read that the blessings acquired by one who recites no more than a single word of the Lotus Sutra are the one thing it cannot fathom. How, then, could ordinary people like ourselves, who have committed grave offenses, possibly understand these blessings?

However, it is now some twenty-two hundred years since the Thus Come One’s passing. For many years, the five impurities have flourished, and good deeds in any connection are rare. Though a person may do good, in the course of doing a single good deed he accumulates ten evil ones, so that in the end, for the sake of a small good, he commits great evil. And yet, in his heart, he prides himself on having

practiced great good—such are the times we live in.

Moreover, you were born in the remote land of Japan, a tiny island country in the east separated by two hundred thousand *ri* of mountains and seas from the country of the Thus Come One's birth. And you are a woman, burdened by the five obstacles and bound by the three obediences. How indescribably wonderful, therefore, that in spite of these hindrances you have been able to take faith in the Lotus Sutra!

Even the wise or the learned, such as those who have pored over all the sacred teachings propounded by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime, and who have mastered both the exoteric and esoteric doctrines, are these days abandoning the Lotus Sutra and instead reciting the Nembutsu. What good karma you must have formed in the past, then, to have been born a person able to recite even so much as a verse or a phrase of the Lotus Sutra!

When I read over your letter, I felt as though my eyes were beholding something rarer than the udumbara flower, something even scarcer than the one-eyed turtle encountering a floating log with a hollow in it that fits him exactly.⁵ Moved to heartfelt admiration, I thought that I would like to add just one word or one expression of my own rejoicing, endeavoring in this way to enhance your merit. I fear, however, that, as clouds darken the moon or as dust defiles a mirror, my brief and clumsy attempts at description will only serve to cloak and obscure the incomparably wonderful blessings you will receive, and the thought pains me. Yet, in response to your question, I could scarcely remain silent. Please understand that I am merely joining my one drop to the rivers and the oceans, or adding my torch to the sun and the moon, hoping in this way to increase even slightly the

volume of the water or the brilliance of the light.

First of all, when it comes to the Lotus Sutra, you should understand that, whether one recites all eight volumes, or only one volume, one chapter, one verse, one phrase, or simply the daimoku, or title, the blessings are the same. It is like the water of the great ocean, a single drop of which contains water from all the countless streams and rivers, or like the wish-granting jewel, which, though only a single jewel, can shower all kinds of treasures upon the wisher. And the same is true of a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million such drops of water or such jewels. A single character of the Lotus Sutra is like such a drop of water or such a jewel, and the hundred million characters⁶ are like a hundred million such drops or jewels.

On the other hand, a single character of the other sutras, or the name of any of the various Buddhas, is like one drop of the water of a particular stream or river, or like only one stone from a particular mountain or a particular sea. One such drop does not contain the water of countless other streams and rivers, and one such stone does not possess the virtues that inhere in innumerable other kinds of stones.

Therefore, when it comes to the Lotus Sutra, it is praiseworthy to recite any chapter you have placed your trust in, whichever chapter that may be.

Generally speaking, among all the sacred teachings of the Thus Come One, none has ever been known to contain falsehoods. Yet when we consider the Buddhist teachings more deeply, we find that even among the Thus Come One's golden words there exist various categories such as Mahayana and Hinayana, provisional and true teachings, and exoteric and esoteric doctrines. These distinctions arise from the sutras themselves, and accordingly, we find that they are roughly

outlined in the commentaries of the various scholars and teachers.

To state the essence of the matter, among the doctrines propounded by Shakyamuni Buddha in the fifty or more years of his teaching life, those put forward in the first forty or more years are of a questionable nature. We can say so because the Buddha himself clearly stated in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” And in the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha himself proclaims concerning its every word and phrase, “Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.”⁷

Moreover, Many Treasures Buddha sprang up from the earth to add his testimony, declaring, “The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni Buddha] have expounded is the truth!”⁸ And the Buddhas of the ten directions all gathered at the assembly where the Lotus Sutra was being preached and extended their tongues to give further support to the assertion that not a single word of the Lotus Sutra is false. It was as though a great king, his consort, and his most venerable subjects had all with one accord given their word.

Suppose that a man or a woman who has recited even a single word of the Lotus Sutra were to be dragged down by the unfathomably heavy karma of the ten evil acts, the five cardinal sins, or the four major offenses, and fall into the evil paths. Even if the sun and moon should never again emerge from the east, even if the great earth itself should turn over, even if the tides of the great ocean should cease to ebb and flow, even if broken stones are made whole, and even if the waters of the streams and rivers cease to flow into the ocean, no woman who believes in the Lotus Sutra could ever be dragged down by worldly faults and fall into the evil paths.

If a woman who believes in the Lotus Sutra should ever fall into the evil paths as a result of jealousy or ill temper or because of excessive greed, then the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, the Buddha Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions would immediately be guilty of breaking the vow they have upheld over the span of countless kalpas never to tell a lie. Their offense would be even greater than the wild falsehoods and deceptions of Devadatta or the outrageous lies told by Kokalika. But how could such a thing ever happen? Thus a person who embraces the Lotus Sutra is absolutely assured of its blessings.

On the other hand, even if one does not commit a single evil deed throughout one’s entire lifetime, and observes the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the ten good precepts, the two hundred and fifty precepts, the five hundred precepts, or countless numbers of precepts; even if one learns all the other sutras by heart, makes offerings to all the other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and accumulates immeasurable merit, if one but fails to put one’s faith in the Lotus Sutra; or if one has faith in it, but considers that it ranks on the same level as the other sutras and the teachings of the other Buddhas; or if one recognizes its superiority, but constantly engages in other religious disciplines, practicing the Lotus Sutra only from time to time; or if one associates on friendly terms with priests of the Nembutsu, who do not believe in the Lotus Sutra but slander it; or if one thinks that those who insist the Lotus Sutra does not suit the people’s capacity in the latter age are guilty of no fault, then all the merit of the countless good acts one has performed throughout one’s life will suddenly vanish. Moreover, the blessings resulting from one’s practice of the Lotus Sutra will for some time be obscured, and one will fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell as sure-

ly as rain falls from the sky or rocks tumble down from the peaks into the valleys.

Even if one has committed the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, so long as one does not turn one's back on the Lotus Sutra, one will without doubt be reborn in the pure land and attain Buddhahood. On the other hand, we read in the sutra that, even if one observes the precepts, embraces all the other sutras, and believes in the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas, if one fails to take faith in the Lotus Sutra, one is certain to fall into the evil paths.

Limited though my ability may be, when I observe the situation in the world these days, it seems to me that the great majority of both lay believers and members of the clergy are guilty of slandering the correct teaching.

But to return to your question. As I said before, though no chapter of the Lotus Sutra is negligible, among the entire twenty-eight chapters, the “Expedient Means” chapter and the “Life Span” chapter are particularly outstanding. The remaining chapters are all in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters. Therefore, for your regular recitation, I recommend that you practice reading the prose sections of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters. In addition, it might be well if you wrote out separate copies of these sections. The remaining twenty-six chapters are like the shadow that follows one's body or the value inherent in a jewel. If you recite the “Life Span” and “Expedient Means” chapters, then the remaining chapters will naturally be included even though you do not recite them. It is true that the “Medicine King” and “Devadatta” chapters⁹ deal specifically with women's attainment of Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land. But the “Devadatta” chapter is a branch and leaf of the “Expedient Means” chapter, and the “Medicine King” chapter is a branch and leaf of the “Expedi-

ent Means” and the “Life Span” chapters.¹⁰ Therefore, you should regularly recite these two chapters, the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters. As for the remaining chapters, you may turn to them from time to time when you have a moment of leisure.

Also in your letter, you say that three times each day you bow in reverence to the seven characters of the daimoku,¹¹ and that each day you repeat the words *Namu-ichijo-miyoten*¹² ten thousand times. At times of menstruation, however, you refrain from reading the sutra. You ask if it is unseemly to bow in reverence to the seven characters or to recite *Namu-ichijo-miyoten* without facing [the Gohonzon], or if you should refrain from doing even that during your menstrual period. You also ask how many days following the end of your period you should wait before resuming recitation of the sutra.

This is a matter that concerns all women and about which they always inquire. In past times, too, we find many persons addressing themselves to this question concerning women. But because the sacred teachings put forward by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime do not touch upon this point, no one has been able to offer any clear scriptural proof upon which to base an answer. In my own study of the sacred teachings, though I find clear prohibitions on certain days of the month against the impurity of things like meat or wine, the five spicy foods, or sexual acts, for instance, I have never come across any passage in the sutras or treatises that speaks of avoidances connected with menstruation.

While the Buddha was in the world, many women in their prime became nuns and devoted themselves to the Buddha's teachings, but they were never shunned on account of their menstrual period. Judging from this, I would say that menstruation does not represent

any kind of impurity coming from an external source. It is simply a characteristic of the female sex, a phenomenon related to the perpetuation of the seed of birth and death. Or in another sense, it might be regarded as a kind of chronically recurring illness. In the case of feces and urine, though these are substances produced by the body, so long as one observes cleanly habits, there are no special prohibitions to be observed concerning them. Surely the same must be true of menstruation. That is why, I think, we hear of no particular rules for avoidance pertaining to the subject in India or China.

Japan, however, is a land of the gods. And it is the way of this country that, although the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have manifested themselves here in the form of gods,¹³ strangely enough, in many cases they do not conform to the sutras and treatises. Nevertheless, if one goes against them, one will incur actual punishment.

When we scrutinize the sutras and treatises with care, we find that there is a teaching about a precept known as following the customs of the region¹⁴ that corresponds to this. The meaning of this precept is that, so long as no seriously offensive act is involved, then even if one were to depart to some slight degree from the teachings of Buddhism, it would be better to avoid going against the manners and customs of the country. This is a precept expounded by the Buddha. It appears that some wise men who are unaware of this point express extreme views, saying such things as, because the gods are demon-like beings they are unworthy of reverence, and that this has offended many lay supporters.

If so, since the gods of Japan have in most cases desired that prohibitions be observed during the period of menstruation, perhaps people born in this country should seriously observe such prohibitions.

However, I do not think that such prohibitions should interfere with a woman's daily religious devotions. I would guess that it is persons who never had any faith in the Lotus Sutra to begin with who tell you otherwise. They are trying to think of some way to make you stop reciting the sutra, but they do not feel that they can come right out and advise you to cast the sutra aside. So they use the pretext of bodily impurity to try to distance you from it. They intimidate you by telling you that, if you continue your regular devotions during a period of impurity, you will be treating the sutra with disrespect. In this way they mean to trick you into incurring an offense.

I hope you will keep in mind all that I have said regarding this matter. On this basis, even if your menstrual period should last as long as seven days, if you feel so inclined, dispense with the reading of the sutra and simply recite Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Also, when making your devotions, you need not bow facing the sutra.

On the other hand, if suddenly you should feel, for example, the approach of death, then even if you are eating fish or fowl,¹⁵ if you are able to read the sutra, you should do so, and likewise chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Needless to say, the same principle applies during your period of menstruation.

Though reciting the words *Namu-ichijo-myoten* amounts to the same thing, it would be better if you just chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, as Bodhisattva Vasubandhu and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai did.¹⁶ There are specific reasons why I say this.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The seventeenth day of the fourth month in the first year of Bun'ei (1264), cyclical sign *kinoe-ne*

To the wife of Daigaku Saburo

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in 1264, while living in Kamakura, to the wife of Hiki Daigaku Saburo Yoshimoto. Yoshimoto had studied Confucianism in Kyoto where he had served under the Retired Emperor Juntoku. He later went to Kamakura where he was employed by the military government as a Confucian scholar. He is said to have become the Daishonin's follower around 1260. Tradition has it that he resolved to embrace the Daishonin's teaching upon reading a draft of *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. Both Yoshimoto and his wife were strong believers.

The present letter was written in response to inquiries by Yoshimoto's wife about the formalities to be observed in her daily practice of Buddhism and about the recitation of the sutra and the daimoku during her menstrual period. Thus this letter is also referred to by the title *Letter on Menstruation*.

Judging from this letter, it appears that the Daishonin had early on established the formula of reciting the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters of the Lotus Sutra as the daily practice supporting the chanting of the daimoku. Yoshimoto's wife had at first been following the practice prevalent in her day, that is, continuously reading through the entire sutra, a chapter a day. She had then begun to read only the “Medicine King” chapter. The Daishonin praises her efforts and suggests reading the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters and reciting *Namyoho-enge-kyo* instead of *Namuchijyo-myoten*.

Both the question in connection with menstruation and the Daishonin's explanation are best understood in the historical context of Kamakura-era Japan. Shinto (literally, the way of the gods), the indigenous Japanese religion, strongly emphasized the observance

of ritual purity and had established numerous avoidances, or taboos, to this end. Death, illness, wounds, childbirth, menstruation, and so forth were all regarded as sources of impurity, and a person who experienced any of these, directly or indirectly, was required to undergo ritual purification before engaging in any form of worship. Women were accordingly prohibited from taking part in religious ceremonies during their menstrual period. These taboos were deeply rooted in the popular consciousness and were observed long after the introduction of Buddhism, ultimately becoming mixed with Buddhist practices to the point that few people were aware of their non-Buddhist origin. For example, it was partly out of concern for avoiding such “impurity” that women were often prohibited from entering the grounds of Buddhist monasteries.

In response to the question from Yoshimoto's wife, the Daishonin first states that no sutra mentions taboos concerning menstruation. Furthermore, he explains, from a Buddhist perspective no reason exists to consider the menses impure; it is simply a natural function of the body.

However, the Daishonin continues, the custom of observing such prohibitions and taboos has been firmly established in Japanese society, and one should not categorically reject social customs and observances simply because they are unrelated to Buddhism. In this connection, he refers to the Buddhist principle of respecting the customs of the region. According to this principle, even if one must depart in terms of minor details from the Buddhist teaching, one should avoid needlessly violating the rules of society. Such flexibility is characteristic of Buddhism, which concerns itself with enabling people to awaken to the fundamental truth of

all things, not with governing the details of their lives. Thus, as it has spread, Buddhism has adapted its peripheral aspects to the time and the place, embracing local customs while maintaining its essential message intact.

Nevertheless, though minor details in the practice of Buddhism may be adapted to fit the society, basic princi-

ples should not be compromised. The Daishonin therefore advises Yoshimoto's wife that honoring the social conventions—in this case, the observance of prohibitions concerning menstruation—does not mean that she should blindly obey them to the extent that they interfere with her daily Buddhist practice.

Notes

1. The “Medicine King” chapter is the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It contains a passage stating that after her death a woman who practices the Lotus Sutra will go directly to the pure land; thus, it was particularly appealing to women.

2. The Daishonin refers here to the principle of continual propagation to the fiftieth person, described in the “Responding with Joy” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Suppose, the sutra says, a person was to hear the Lotus Sutra and rejoice, then preach it to a second person, who also rejoices and in turn preaches it to a third, and so on, until the fiftieth person hears the sutra. The benefit received by that person on hearing the sutra and rejoicing, even at fifty removes, would be immeasurable.

3. Sixty volumes of commentary: T'ien-t'ai's three major works—*The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*—each consisting of ten volumes, and Miao-lo's three commentaries on those works, each also consisting of ten volumes.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

5. These are both Buddhist metaphors for something of very rare occurrence; they are mentioned frequently by the Daishonin. The udumbara is a legendary plant said to bloom once every three thousand years to herald the advent of a wheel-turning king or a Buddha. The one-eyed turtle is mentioned in the “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. For the one-eyed turtle, see also Glossary.

6. This is a figurative expression; the Lotus Sutra actually consists of 69,384 characters.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

8. Ibid., chap. 11.

9. The “Devadatta” chapter tells the

story of the dragon king's daughter, who attained supreme enlightenment in a single moment through the power of the Lotus Sutra. She was considered to represent women's potential for Buddhahood.

10. This statement derives from the Buddhist tradition of analyzing sutras or portions thereof so that they fall into “three divisions” (preparation, revelation, and transmission). In the theoretical teaching, or the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the “Expedient Means” chapter is characterized as revelation and the “Devadatta” chapter as transmission; hence the Daishonin says that the “Devadatta” chapter is a “branch and leaf” of the “Expedient Means” chapter. When the entire sutra is considered in terms of the three divisions, both the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters are characterized as revelation, and the “Medicine King” chapter as transmission; hence the “Medicine King” chapter is a “branch and leaf” of both the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters.

11. That is, the Gohonzon.

12. *Namu-ichijo-myoten* means “devotion to the wonderful sutra of the one vehicle.” It was an expression of devotion to the Lotus Sutra that was chanted as an invocation.

13. The Daishonin is referring to the widespread belief that the indigenous Japanese deities were local manifestations or incarnations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. This concept, which took firm hold around the tenth century, reflected a tendency toward the synthesis of Buddhist and Shinto elements.

14. The precept of adapting to local customs. It is mentioned in passages in *The Fivefold Rules of Discipline* and in the preface to *The Essentials of “The Fourfold Rules of Discipline.”* The precept states that, in matters

that the Buddha himself did not expressly either permit or forbid, one may act in accordance with local custom, provided that the fundamental principles of Buddhism are not violated.

15. Eating the flesh of either fish or fowl was also considered a source of impurity.

16. *The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, attributed to Vasubandhu, contains a salutation

in praise of the three treasures of the Lotus Sutra that the Daishonin may have interpreted as an expression of devotion to the Mystic Law. *The Method of Repentance through the Lotus Meditation*, a Chinese text usually attributed either to T'ien-t'ai or to his teacher Nan-yüeh, also contains in several places the phrase “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.”

Encouragement to a Sick Person



I HAVE heard that you are suffering from illness. Is this true? The impermanence of this world is such that even the healthy cannot remain forever, let alone those who are ill. Thoughtful persons should therefore prepare their minds for the life to come. Yet one cannot prepare one's mind for the next life by one's own efforts alone. Only on the basis of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, the original teacher of all living beings, can one do so.

The Buddha's teachings, however, are various, perhaps because people's minds also differ greatly. In any event, Shakyamuni Buddha taught for no more than fifty years. Among the teachings he expounded during the first forty and more years, we find the Flower Garland Sutra, which says, "The mind, the Buddha, and all living beings—these three things are without distinction"; the Agama sutras, which set forth the principles of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self; the Great Collection Sutra, which asserts the interpenetration of the defiled aspect and the pure aspect;¹ the Larger Wisdom Sutra, which teaches mutual identification and nonduality; and the Two-Volumed, Meditation, and Amida sutras, which emphasize rebirth in the Land of Perfect Bliss. All of these teachings were expounded specifically for the purpose of saving all living

beings in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law.

Nevertheless, for some reason of his own, the Buddha declared in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, "[Preaching the Law in various different ways], I made use of the power of expedient means. But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth." Like a parent who has second thoughts about the transfer deed he wrote out earlier, Shakyamuni looked back with regret upon all the sutras he had expounded during the previous forty and more years, including those that taught rebirth in the Land of Perfect Bliss, and declared that "though immeasurable, boundless, inconceivable asamkhya kalpas may pass, they will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment [through these sutras]."² He reiterated this in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, saying, "Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way." By "discarding expedient means," he meant that one should discard the Nembutsu and other teachings preached during those more than forty years.

Having thus undoubtedly regretted and reversed his previous teachings, he made clear his true intention, saying, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth,"³ and "For long he

remained silent regarding the essential, in no hurry to speak of it at once.”⁴ Thereupon Many Treasures Buddha sprang forth from beneath the earth and added his testimony that what Shakyamuni had said is true, and the Buddhas of the ten directions assembled in the eight directions⁵ and reached with their long broad tongues to the palace of the great heavenly king Brahma in testament. All the beings of the two worlds and the eight groups, who were gathered at the two places and the three assemblies, without a single exception witnessed this.

In light of the above sutra passages, setting aside evil people and non-Buddhists who do not believe in Buddhism, with regard to those who, though Buddhist believers, have devout faith in provisional teachings preached before the Lotus Sutra such as the Nembutsu, and devote themselves to reciting it ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or as many as sixty thousand times a day without chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo even once in the course of ten or twenty years, are they not like a person who, clinging to the transfer deed already nullified by his parent, refuses to accept its revised version? They may appear to others as well as to themselves to have faith in the Buddha’s teachings, but if we go by what the Buddha actually taught, they are unfilial people.

This is why the second volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “But now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others, but though I teach and instruct them, they do not believe or accept my teachings.”⁶

This passage means that to us living beings the Thus Come One Shakyamuni is our parent, our teacher, and our sovereign. Although Amida, Medicine Master, and other Buddhas are

sovereigns to us living beings, they are neither parents nor teachers. Shakyamuni is the only Buddha endowed with all three virtues and to whom we owe a profound debt of gratitude. There are parents and parents, yet none of them can equal Shakyamuni Buddha. There are all manner of teachers and sovereigns, but none as admirable as he is. Could those who disobey the teaching of this parent, teacher, and sovereign possibly not be abandoned by the heavenly gods and the earthly deities? They are the most unfilial of all children. It is for this reason that the Buddha said, “Though I teach and instruct them, they do not believe or accept my teachings.” Even if they follow the sutras preached before the Lotus and practice them for a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million kalpas, if they do not believe in the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo even once, they will be unfilial. They will therefore be abandoned by the sacred ones⁷ of the three existences and the ten directions, and hated by both the heavenly gods and the earthly deities. (This is the first of the five guides for propagation.)

Even those people who commit the five cardinal sins, the ten evil acts, or innumerable other wrongdoings may attain the way if only their faculties are keen. Devadatta and Angulimala represent such people. And even those of dull faculties may attain the way, provided they are free of misdeeds. Chudapanthaka is an example. The faculties of ordinary people like ourselves are even duller than those of Chudapanthaka. We are unable to discern the colors and shapes of things, as if we had a sheep’s eyes. In the vast depths of our greed, anger, and foolishness, we commit the ten evil acts every day, and though we may not commit the five cardinal sins, we also perpetrate offenses similar to these daily.

Moreover, every single person is

guilty of slander of the Law, an offense exceeding even the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins. Although few people slander the Lotus Sutra with actual words of abuse, there are none who accept it. Some appear to accept the sutra, but their faith in it is not as deep as their faith in the Nembutsu or other teachings. And even those with profound faith do not reproach the enemies of the Lotus Sutra. However great the good causes one may make, or even if one reads and copies the entirety of the Lotus Sutra a thousand or ten thousand times, or attains the way of perceiving three thousand realms in a single moment of life, if one fails to denounce the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, it will be impossible to attain the way. To illustrate, it is like the case of someone in the service of the imperial court. Even though he may have served for a decade or two, if he knows someone to be an enemy of the emperor but neither reports him to the throne nor shows personal animosity toward him, all the merit of his past services will be thereby negated, and he will instead be charged with an offense. You must understand that the people of this age are slanderers of the Law. (This is the second.)

The thousand years beginning from the day after the Buddha's passing are called the Former Day of the Law, a period when there were many who upheld the precepts, and people attained the way. The thousand years of the Former Day were followed by the Middle Day of the Law, which also lasted a thousand years. During this period, many people broke the precepts, and few attained the way. The thousand-year Middle Day is followed by the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. During this period, people neither uphold the precepts nor break them; only those without precepts fill the country. Moreover, it is called a defiled age, an age rife with

disorder. In an uncorrupted age, called a pure age, wrong is discarded while right is observed, just as crooked timber is planed according to the mark left by a thread stretched straight. During the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the five impurities began to appear, and in the Latter Day, they are rampant. They give rise to the great waves of a gale, which not only beat against the shore, but strike each other. The impurity of thought has been such that, as the Former and Middle Days of the Law gradually passed, people transmitted insignificant erroneous teachings while destroying the unfathomable correct teaching. It therefore appears that more people have fallen into the evil paths because of errors with respect to Buddhism than because of secular misdeeds.

Now the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law have passed, and it has been more than two hundred years since the Latter Day began. Now is the time when, because the impurity of thought prevails, more people fall into the evil paths with the intention of creating good causes than they do by committing evil. As for evil acts, even ignorant people, if they recognize them for what they are, may refrain from committing them. This is like extinguishing a fire with water. But people think that good deeds are all equal in their goodness; thus they adhere to lesser good and do not realize that, in doing so, they bring about major evil. Therefore, even when they see sacred structures related to Dengyo, Jikaku, and others that are neglected and in disrepair, they leave them as they are for the simple reason that they are not halls dedicated to the Nembutsu. Instead, they build Nembutsu halls beside those sacred structures, confiscate the lands that have been donated to them, and offer them to the halls they have erected. According to a passage of the Sutra on Resolving Doubts

about the Middle Day of the Law, such deeds will bring few benefits. You should understand from the above that even if one performs a good deed, should it be an act of lesser good that destroys great good, it will cause one to fall into the evil paths.

The present age coincides with the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. Gone completely are those people with the capacity to attain enlightenment through either the Hinayana or the provisional Mahayana sutras. There now remain only those whose capacity is suited solely to the true Mahayana sutra. A small boat cannot carry a large rock. Those who are evil or ignorant are like a large rock, while the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana sutras as well as the Nembutsu are like a small boat. If one tries to cure virulent sores with hot-spring baths, because the ailment is so serious, such mild treatment will be of no avail. For us in this defiled world of the latter age, embracing the Nembutsu and other teachings is like working rice paddies in winter; it does not suit the time. (This is the third.)

One should also have a correct understanding of the country. People's minds differ according to their land. For example, a mandarin orange tree south of the Yangtze River becomes a triple-leaved orange tree when it is transplanted to the north of the Huai River.⁸ Even plants and trees, which have no mind, change with their location. How much more, then, must beings with minds differ according to the place!

A work by the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang called *The Record of the Western Regions* describes many countries in India. In accordance with the customs of the country, there are ones whose inhabitants are undutiful to their parents, and ones where people observe filial piety. In some countries, anger and resentment prevail, while in others,

ignorance and foolishness are rampant. There are countries devoted solely to Hinayana, others devoted solely to Mahayana, and still others where both Mahayana and Hinayana are pursued. There are countries wholly given over to the killing of living creatures, countries wholly given over to thieving, countries where rice abounds, and countries that produce much millet. The variety of countries is great.

Then what teaching should the country of Japan learn if its people are to free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death? As for this question, the Lotus Sutra states, "After the Thus Come One has entered extinction, I will cause it [the Lotus Sutra] to be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa and will see that it never comes to an end."⁹ This passage means that the Lotus is the sutra related to the people of Jambudvīpa, the continent of the south. Bodhisattva Maitreya said, "There is a small country in the eastern quarter whose people are related solely to the Mahayana."¹⁰ According to this passage from his treatise, within Jambudvīpa there is a small country in the eastern quarter where the capacity of the people is especially suited to the Mahayana sutra. Seng-chao wrote, "This text is destined for a small country in the northeast."¹¹ This indicates that the Lotus Sutra has a connection with a country in the northeast. The Reverend Annen stated, "All in my country of Japan believe in the Mahayana."¹² Eshin said in his *Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching*, "Throughout Japan, all people share the same capacity to attain Buddhahood through the perfect teaching."

Thus according to the opinions of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Tripitaka Master Shuryasoma, the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva, the Dharma Teacher Seng-chao, the Reverend Annen, and the sage of former times Eshin, people

in the country of Japan have a capacity suited solely to the Lotus Sutra. Those who put into practice even a phrase or a verse of this sutra are certain to attain the way, for it is the teaching related to them. This may be likened to iron particles drawn to a magnet or dewdrops collecting on a mirror.¹³ Other good practices such as the Nembutsu are unrelated to our country. They are like a magnet that cannot attract iron, or a mirror that is unable to gather dew. For this reason, Annen stated in his commentary, "If it is not the true vehicle, one is doubtless deceiving both oneself and others."¹⁴ This passage means that one who instructs the people of Japan in a teaching other than the Lotus Sutra is deceiving not only oneself but others, too. One therefore must always consider the country when propagating the Buddhist teachings. One should not assume that a teaching suited to one country must inevitably be suited to another as well. (This is the fourth.)

Furthermore, in a country where Buddhism has already spread, one must also take into account the sequence of propagation. It is the rule in propagating Buddhism that one must always learn the nature of the teachings that have already spread. To illustrate, when giving medicine to a sick person, one should know what kind of medicine was administered before. Otherwise, different kinds of medicine may conflict and work against one another, killing the patient. Likewise, different teachings of Buddhism may conflict and interfere with one another, destroying the practitioner. In a country where non-Buddhist teachings have already spread, one should use Buddhism to refute them. For example, the Buddha appeared in India and defeated the non-Buddhists; Kashyapa Matanga and Chu Fa-lan went to China and called the Taoists to task; Prince Jōgu was born in the country of Japan and put Moriya to the sword.¹⁵

The same principle applies in the realm of Buddhism itself. In a country where the Hinayana has spread, one must refute it by means of the Mahayana sutras, just as Bodhisattva Asanga refuted the Hinayana teachings upheld by Vasubandhu. In a country where provisional Mahayana has been propagated, one must refute it with the true Mahayana, just as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che defeated the three schools of the south and the seven schools of the north in China. As for the country of Japan, it has now been more than four hundred years since the two schools of Tendai and True Word were propagated. During this period, it has been determined that all four categories of Buddhists—priests, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—have capacities suited to the Lotus Sutra. All people, whether good or evil, wise or ignorant, are endowed with the benefit of the fiftieth hearer. They are like the K'un-lun Mountains, where no worthless stone is to be found, or the mountain island of P'eng-lai, where no harmful potion is known.

Within the past fifty or so years, however, a man of flagrant slander named Honen has appeared. He deceived all the people by showing them a stone that resembled a gem and persuading them to discard the gem they already possessed in favor of it. This is what the fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* means when it says, "They revere shards and rubble, looking on them as bright gems." All the people are clutching ordinary rocks in their hands, convinced that they are precious gems. That is to say, they have discarded the Lotus Sutra to chant the name of Amida Buddha. But when I point this out, they become furious and revile the votary of the Lotus Sutra, thereby increasing all the more their karma to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. (This is the fifth.)

But you, heeding my assertion, dis-

carded the Nembutsu and embraced the Lotus Sutra. Nevertheless, no doubt you may have reverted to being a follower of the Nembutsu. Remember that to discard the Lotus Sutra and become a believer in the Nembutsu is to be like a rock hurtling down from a mountain peak into the valley below, or like rain falling from the sky to the ground. There is no doubt that such a person will fall into the great Avichi hell. Those related to the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence had to spend major world system dust particle kalpas there, and those who received the seeds of Buddhahood in the even more remote past had to spend numberless major world system dust particle kalpas there. This was because they met with companions of great evil and discarded the Lotus Sutra, falling back to provisional teachings such as the Nembutsu. As the members of your family seem to be Nembutsu adherents, they certainly must be urging it upon you. That is understandable, since they themselves believe in it. You should regard them, however, as people deluded by the followers of the diabolical Hōnen. Arouse strong faith, and do not heed what they say. It is the way of the great devil to assume the form of a venerable monk or to take possession of one's father, mother, or brother in order to obstruct happiness in one's next life. Whatever they may say, however cleverly they may try to deceive you into discarding the Lotus Sutra, do not assent to it.

Stop and consider. If the passages of proof offered to support the claim that the Nembutsu does in truth lead to rebirth in the Pure Land were reliable, then in the past twelve years during which I have been asserting that Nembutsu believers will fall into the hell of incessant suffering, would they have consistently failed to reproach me, though I spoke out everywhere possible? They are indeed feeble! Teach-

ings such as those left behind by Hōnen and Shan-tao have been known to me since I was seventeen or eighteen. And the arguments that people put forth these days are no improvement.

Consequently, since their teachings are no match for mine, they resort to sheer force of numbers in trying to fight against me. Nembutsu believers number in the thousands or ten thousands, and their supporters are many. I, Nichiren, am alone, without a single ally. It is amazing that I should have survived until now. This year, too, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, between the hours of the monkey and the cock (around 5:00 P.M.) on the highway called Matsubara in Tojo in the province of Awa, I was ambushed by several hundred Nembutsu believers and others.¹⁶ I was alone except for about ten men accompanying me, only three or four of whom were capable of offering any resistance at all. Arrows fell on us like rain, and swords descended like lightning. One of my disciples was slain in a matter of a moment, and two others were gravely wounded. I myself sustained cuts and blows, and it seemed that I was doomed. Yet, for some reason, my attackers failed to kill me; thus I have survived until now.

This has only strengthened my faith in the Lotus Sutra. The fourth volume of the sutra says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹⁷ The fifth volume states, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁸ In Japan there are many who read and study the Lotus Sutra. There are also many who are beaten in punishment for attempting to seduce other men's wives or for theft or other offenses. Yet not one person has ever suffered injury on account of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, the up-

holders of the sutra in Japan are not yet worthy of these sutra passages. I alone have read the sutra with my entire being. This is the meaning of the passage that says, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way."¹⁹ I am therefore the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in Japan.

Should you depart from this life before I do, you must report to Brahma, Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and King Yama. Declare yourself to be a disciple of the priest Nichiren, the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in Japan. Then they cannot possibly treat you discourteously. But if you should be of two minds, alternately chanting the Nembutsu and reciting the Lotus Sutra, and fear what others may say about you, then even though you iden-

tify yourself as Nichiren's disciple, they will never accept your word. Do not resent me later. Yet since the Lotus Sutra answers one's prayers regarding matters of this life as well, you may still survive your illness. In that case, I will by all means meet with you as soon as possible and talk with you directly. Words cannot all be set down in a letter, and a letter never adequately conveys one's thoughts, so I will stop for now.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the twelfth
month in the first year of Bun'ei
(1264)

To Nanjo Shichiro



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the twelfth month of 1264, when he was forty-three. Its recipient was Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, who was the steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province. He was also called Ueno and was the father of Nanjo Tokimitsu. Sometime between 1260 and 1261, or between 1263 and 1264, while on an official tour of duty in Kamakura, he met the Daishonin and was converted to his teaching. However, it appears from this letter that he still retained a lingering attachment to his earlier belief in the Nembutsu and hesitated to commit himself exclusively to the Lotus Sutra.

About one month had passed since Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of Tojo Village in Awa Province, had attempted to kill the Daishonin at Komatsubara. The Daishonin had first incurred the enmity of the steward, a confirmed

Nembutsu believer, when he proclaimed his teaching in 1253. Enraged, Tojo had ordered him arrested. The Daishonin had barely managed to escape, and since then he had not been able to return to Awa, his native province. In 1264, however, the year after he had been pardoned from his sentence of exile to Izu and had returned to Kamakura, the Daishonin learned that his mother was seriously ill and went to Awa despite the danger to himself. After praying successfully for her recovery, he remained there and resumed his propagation efforts. On his way to visit a believer named Kudo Yoshitaka, he and his group were attacked by Tojo Kagenobu and his men at Komatsubara. This incident is known as the Komatsubara Persecution.

Shortly after this incident, the Daishonin learned that Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro was suffering from a severe illness

and wrote this letter to strengthen his faith.

In his letter, the Daishonin sets forth the criteria known as the five guides for propagation—the teaching, the people’s capacity, the time, the country, and the sequence of propagation—factors that one must correctly understand and consider in propagating Buddhism. The Daishonin may have formulated the concept of the five guides while in exile on Izu, for they are explained in detail in *The Teaching, Capacity, Time, and Country*, which he wrote during that period. Elaborating on these five criteria in the present letter, he empha-

sizes the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra over all other teachings and encourages Nanjo Shichiro to completely discard his lingering attachment to his former belief in the Nembutsu and to arouse single-minded faith in the Mystic Law.

Then the Daishonin briefly describes the Komatsubara Persecution, which had taken place a month earlier, pointing out that he alone has suffered persecution for the sake of the Lotus Sutra exactly as the sutra itself predicts. He therefore declares himself to be the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in Japan.

Notes

1. In his *Diamond Scalpel*, Miao-lo defines the essence of the Great Collection Sutra as “the interpenetration of the defiled aspect and the pure aspect” and the essence of the Wisdom sutras as “mutual identification and nonduality.” Both statements can be interpreted to mean that because all phenomena have emptiness, or non-substantiality, as their true nature, they are without fixed substance, and thus there is no fundamental separation between delusion and enlightenment, or between ordinary people and the Buddha.

2. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra these words are spoken by Bodhisattva Great Adornment.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

5. North, south, east, west, northwest, northeast, southeast, and southwest. This means that all the Buddhas assembled at the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra were on the same horizontal plane.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3. This passage shows the Buddha’s three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent. “Now this three-fold world is all my domain” shows the virtue of sovereign; “The living beings in it are all my children,” the virtue of parent; and “Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others,” the virtue of teacher.

7. The sacred ones refer to Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

8. This phenomenon is referred to in such Chinese classics as *The Records of Yen Tzu*. It means that a person changes according to his or her circumstances. The Huai River flows eastward from the southern part of Honan Province north of the Yellow River into Lake Hungtse.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28. These words are spoken by Bodhisattva Universal Worthy in a vow he makes before Shakyamuni Buddha.

10. This passage is quoted in Annen’s *Extensive Commentary on the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts* as a citation from *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*. No such passage is found in the extant version of that text, but a different version may have been in circulation at that time, or the passage may have been omitted for some reason in the course of transcription.

11. *The Afterword to the Lotus Sutra Translation*. This passage quotes the words of Shuryasoma when he bequeathed the Lotus Sutra to Kumarajiva.

12. *On the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts*.

13. Vapor condenses on a mirror placed outdoors at night. It was believed that the mirror drew this water from the moon.

14. *On the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts*.

15. Mononobe no Moriya (d. 587), a high official of the Yamato court, is said to have ordered that all the temples and monasteries built by the Soga clan be burned.

He and his family were defeated and killed by an army led by Soga no Umako, not by Prince Jōgū, better known as Prince Shōtoku. But Nichiren Daishonin mentions his name here because Jōgū supported the pro-Buddhist Soga.

16. This refers to the Komatsubara Persecution, which occurred about a month before this letter was written.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

18. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

19. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

11

Opening the Eyes of Wooden and Painted Images



THE Buddha possesses thirty-two features. All of them represent the physical aspect. Thirty-one of them, from the lowest, the markings of the thousand-spoked wheel on the sole of each foot, up to the unseen crown of his head,¹ belong to the category of visible and non-coextensive physical attributes.² They can therefore be depicted in tangible form, such as pictures or statues. The remaining feature, the pure and far-reaching voice, belongs to the category of invisible and coextensive physical attributes.³ It therefore cannot be captured either in a painting or in a wooden image.

Since the Buddha's passing, two kinds of images, wooden and painted, have been made of him. They possess thirty-one features but lack the pure and far-reaching voice. Therefore, they are not equal to the Buddha. They are also devoid of the spiritual aspect. The Buddha in the flesh is as different from a wooden or painted image as the heavens are from the earth, or clouds from mud. Why, then, does *The Epilogue to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra* state that both the living Buddha and a wooden or painted image made of him after his passing bestow equal benefit? Indeed, the Jeweled Necklace Sutra absolutely declares that a wooden or painted image is inferior to the living Buddha.

When one places a sutra in front of a wooden or painted image of the Buddha, the image becomes endowed with all thirty-two features. Yet even though it has the thirty-two features, without the spiritual aspect it is in no way equal to a Buddha, for even some human and heavenly beings possess the thirty-two features. When the Five Precepts Sutra is placed before a wooden or painted image having thirty-one features, the image becomes equal to a wheel-turning king. When the discourse on the ten good precepts is placed before it, the image becomes equal to the lord Shakra. When the discourse on emancipation from the world of desire is placed before it, the image becomes equal to the king Brahma. But in none of these cases does it in any way become equal to a Buddha.

When an Agama sutra is placed in front of a wooden or painted image, the image becomes equal to a voice-hearer. When one of the common teachings on wisdom,⁴ which were preached at the various assemblies held during the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods, is placed before it, the image becomes equal to a cause-awakened one. When one of the specific or perfect teachings preached during the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, or Wisdom period is placed before it, the image becomes equal to a

bodhisattva. Yet in none of these cases, either, does it in any way become equal to a Buddha. Buddha Eye's⁵ mudra and Mahavairochana's mantra described in the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras are useless, for although their names represent the Buddha eye and the great sun, in reality they do not possess these qualities. Similarly, even the Buddha who appears in the Flower Garland Sutra is not the Buddha of the perfect teaching, though his name [Vairochana] suggests that he is.⁶

When the Lotus Sutra is placed before an image possessing thirty-one features, the image never fails to become the Buddha of the pure and perfect teaching. It is for this reason that the Universal Worthy Sutra, referring to the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, explains, "A Buddha's three types of bodies are born from this correct and equal sutra." The correct and equal sutra in this phrase does not mean the sutras of the Correct and Equal period; it indicates the Lotus Sutra. The Universal Worthy Sutra also states, "This great vehicle sutra is the eye of the Buddhas. It is through this sutra that the Buddhas are able to acquire the five types of vision."⁷

The written words of the Lotus Sutra express in visible and non-coextensive form the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice, which is itself invisible and coextensive, and so possess the two physical aspects of color and form. The Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice, which once vanished, has reappeared in the visible form of written words to benefit the people.

A person gives utterance to speech on two occasions: On one occasion, it is to tell other people what one does not oneself believe in an effort to deceive them. That person's voice in this case "accords with others' minds." On the other, it is to voice what one truly has in mind. Thus one's thoughts

are expressed in one's voice. The mind represents the spiritual aspect, and the voice, the physical aspect. The spiritual aspect manifests itself in the physical. A person can know another's mind by listening to the voice. This is because the physical aspect reveals the spiritual aspect. The physical and spiritual, which are one in essence, manifest themselves as two distinct aspects; thus the Buddha's mind found expression as the written words of the Lotus Sutra. These written words are the Buddha's mind in a different form. Therefore, those who read the Lotus Sutra must not regard it as consisting of mere written words, for those words are in themselves the Buddha's mind.

For this reason, T'ien-t'ai in his commentary states: "When the Buddha begins preaching after repeated entreaties from his listeners, he expounds the heart of his teaching. The heart of his teaching is the Buddha's mind, and the Buddha's mind is itself the Buddha's wisdom. The Buddha's wisdom is extremely profound. Therefore, the Buddha refuses three times to proceed with his preaching, and his listeners entreat him four times to continue to preach. The preaching of the Lotus Sutra was accompanied by such difficulties. Compared to the Lotus Sutra, the preaching of the other sutras was an easy matter."⁸ In this commentary, T'ien-t'ai uses the term "Buddha's mind" to indicate that the sutra, itself a physical entity, actually embodies the Buddha's spiritual aspect.

Because the Lotus Sutra manifests the Buddha's spiritual aspect, when one embodies that spiritual aspect in a wooden or painted image possessing thirty-one features, the image in its entirety becomes the living Buddha. This is what is meant by the enlightenment of plants.

It is for this reason that T'ien-t'ai states, "All things having color or fragrance are manifestations of the Middle

Way.”⁹ Commenting on this, Miao-lo adds: “However, although people may admit that all things having color or fragrance are manifestations of the Middle Way, they are nevertheless shocked and harbor doubts when they hear for the first time the doctrine that insentient beings possess the Buddha nature.”¹⁰ Ch’eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school stole T’ien-t’ai’s doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, using it to interpret the Flower Garland Sutra. Then he wrote: “Both the Lotus and Flower Garland sutras reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. The Flower Garland Sutra, however, is the teaching of enlightenment for people of the sudden teaching, because it was preached earlier, while the Lotus Sutra is the teaching of enlightenment for people of the gradual teaching, because it was preached later. The Flower Garland Sutra is the root, because it preceded all the other sutras. The Lotus Sutra consists of nothing but branches and leaves.”¹¹ He puffed himself up like a mountain, thinking that he alone had mastered the true teaching. In reality, however, he did not know about the enlightenment of plants, the heart of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Miao-lo ridiculed the ignorance Ch’eng-kuan showed in the above-quoted statement.

Our contemporary scholars of the Tendai school think that they alone have mastered the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Yet they equate the Lotus Sutra with the Flower Garland Sutra or with the Mahavairochana Sutra. Their arguments do not go beyond even Ch’eng-kuan’s views but remain on the same level as those of Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k’ung. In the final analysis, when the eye-opening ceremony¹² for a newly made wooden or painted image is conducted by True Word priests, the image becomes not a true Buddha but

a Buddha of the provisional teachings. It does not even become a Buddha of the provisional teachings. Even though it may resemble the Buddha in appearance, in reality it remains the same insentient plant from which it originated. Moreover, it does not even remain an insentient plant; it becomes a devil or a demon. This is because the erroneous doctrine of the True Word priests, expressed in mudras and mantras, becomes the mind of the wooden or painted image. This is like those instances in which the mind causes a person to alter and turn into a rock, as happened with Uluka or Kapila.

Unless one who has grasped the essence of the Lotus Sutra conducts the eye-opening ceremony for a wooden or painted image, it will be as if a masterless house were to be occupied by a thief, or as if, upon death, a demon were to enter one’s body. When, in present-day Japan, eye-opening ceremonies for the Buddha images are conducted according to the True Word rite, demons occupy them and deprive people of their lives, for a demon is also known as a robber of life. Moreover, devils enter those images and deprive people of benefits; another name for a devil is a robber of benefit. Because the people worship demons, they will bring the country to ruin in their present lifetime, and because they revere devils, they will fall into the hell of incessant suffering in the next.

When the spirit departs from the body after death, a demon may enter in its place and destroy one’s descendants. This is what is meant by a hungry demon that devours even itself. However, if a wise person extols the Lotus Sutra and inspirits the dead person’s remains, then, although the deceased’s body remains human, that person’s mind will become the Dharma body. This accords with the doctrine that one can in one’s present form attain the stage where one perceives the non-

birth and non-extinction of the phenomenal world. A wise person who has mastered the perfect teaching of the sutras of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, or Wisdom period can bring a dead person's remains into the stage of realizing the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena. This is what the Nirvana Sutra means when it states, "Although his body remains human, his mind will become equal to that of the Buddha." Chunda set an example of attaining in his present body the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena.

If a wise person enlightened to the Lotus Sutra conducts a service for a deceased person, the deceased's body, just as it is, will become the Dharma body. This is what the phrase "in one's present form" means. Then the wise person will retrieve the departed spirit, bring it back into the remains of the deceased, and transform it into the Buddha's mind. This is what the phrase "attaining Buddhahood" indicates. The words "in one's present form" repre-

sent the physical aspect, and "attaining Buddhahood," the spiritual. The deceased person's physical and spiritual aspects will be transformed into the mystic reality and mystic wisdom of beginningless time. This is attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.

Thus the Lotus Sutra states, "This reality [of all phenomena] consists of the appearance (the body of the dead person), nature (the mind), entity (the true entity of body and mind) . . ." ¹³ It also reads, "He profoundly understands the signs of guilt and good fortune / and illuminates the ten directions everywhere. / His subtle, wonderful pure Dharma body / is endowed with the thirty-two features." ¹⁴ In this last quotation, the first two lines indicate the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena, and the latter two, the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form. The model of the latter is the dragon king's daughter, while that of the former is Chunda.



Background

This letter is thought to have been written in the first year of Bun'ei (1264), while Nichiren Daishonin was living in Kamakura. But the recipient of the letter is not named. In this letter, the Daishonin deals with the concept of the enlightenment of insentient beings, first in terms of Buddha images and then in terms of the deceased.

The letter begins with reference to the thirty-two features that the Buddha is said to possess. They represent the Buddha's capacity, virtues, abilities, and so forth. Of the thirty-two features, thirty-one can be depicted in pictures or statues; only the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice cannot.

Next, Nichiren Daishonin compares a wooden or painted image to the living Buddha. Wooden and painted images of the Buddha are inferior to the living Buddha because they lack not only the feature of the pure and far-reaching voice but also the Buddha's mind, that is, his spiritual aspect. The pure and far-reaching voice is the manifestation of the Buddha's mind. The Buddha's compassion to save the people manifests itself in his voice, that is, in his teachings. Thus, when a sutra is placed before a Buddha image (that is, used to "open the eyes" of the image or consecrate it), it is the same as if it possessed the pure and far-reaching

voice. This is because a sutra embodies the Buddha's teachings conveyed by his voice.

However, the Daishonin goes on to explain that the kind of sutra used to consecrate an image will determine the nature of the spiritual aspect that the image manifests. He concludes that, since the Lotus Sutra embodies the Buddha's true spiritual aspect, when the Lotus Sutra is used to "open the eyes" of a Buddha image, that image will become equal to the living Buddha. This accords with the principle of the attainment of Buddhahood by plants, "plants" here representing all insentient life.

This concept of the enlightenment of plants in turn derives from the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which teaches that all life—insentient and sentient—possesses the Buddha nature.

Subsequently the Daishonin sharply attacks the use of True Word rituals to open the eyes of Buddha images. He points out that using distorted teachings such as those of the True Word to consecrate images will cause demons or devils to occupy them—that is, it will bring forth not the Buddhahood but the diabolical nature inherent in the insentient life of the image, causing

suffering for individual believers and disaster for the land in which they live.

In the final section, the Daishonin touches on the subject of prayers for the deceased. The idea of the spirit departing from the dead person's body and a demon taking its place actually stems from popular folk belief. The Daishonin employs it to make readily understandable to his contemporaries the concept that the religious conduct of the living has an influence on the lives of those who have passed away. In this context, he explains two levels of enlightenment: the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena and the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form. Both can of course be achieved while one is alive, but since the subject of this letter is the enlightenment of insentient beings, the Daishonin explains both in terms of the deceased—death being life's insentient phase—as represented by the dead person's remains. In the text, "a wise person [who simply] extols the Lotus Sutra" is anyone but "a wise person enlightened to the Lotus Sutra" that specifically indicates Nichiren Daishonin. The Daishonin embodied his perfect enlightenment to the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the form of the Gohonzon.

Notes

1. A Buddha is said to possess the markings of a wheel of the Law on the sole of each foot. The "unseen crown of his head" is also often cited as a protuberant knot of flesh resembling a topknot on the crown of the Buddha's head. The top of the Buddha's head is said to be invisible, indicating his inconceivably great wisdom, the boundlessness of his enlightened life, and so forth.

2. The category of visible and non-coextensive physical attributes is the first of the three categories of physical attributes enumerated in *The Heart of the Abhidharma*. "Non-coextensive" here means that the physical attributes in this category cannot simultaneously occupy the same space. The

second category is that of invisible and non-coextensive physical attributes, and the third, invisible and coextensive physical attributes. Mention of this third category immediately follows in the text.

3. According to *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*, all sounds and voices including the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice fall under the category of invisible and non-coextensive physical attributes. However, the Daishonin assigns the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice to the category of invisible and coextensive physical attributes, probably to emphasize that it embodies the Buddha's teaching.

4. "The common teachings on wisdom"

refers to the teachings on wisdom which were expounded in common for both voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones of the two vehicles and for novice bodhisattvas. Wisdom here means the wisdom that illuminates all phenomena and their essential truth. In terms of the four teachings of doctrine set forth by T'ien-t'ai, the common teachings on wisdom correspond to the connecting teaching.

5. Buddha Eye is one of the Buddhas who appear in the esoteric teachings. Also called Buddha Mother, this Buddha is said to give birth to all other Buddhas.

6. The Buddha of the perfect teaching refers to the Buddha expounded in the Lotus Sutra. Vairochana, the Buddha of the Flower Garland Sutra, means "coming from or belonging to the sun."

7. The Universal Worthy Sutra actually reads, "This correct and equal sutra is the eye of the Buddhas." "This great vehicle sutra" also means the Lotus Sutra.

8. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

9. *Great Concentration and Insight.*

10. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

11. This assertion appears in Ch'eng-kuan's *Meaning of the Flower Garland Sutra Based on An Earlier Commentary*, though the wording differs slightly. Ch'eng-kuan asserted that, although both the Lotus Sutra and the Flower Garland Sutra lead to enlightenment, the Buddha taught the former as the conclusion of a gradual process of instruction, but expounded the latter to people of superior capacity directly from his own enlightenment without giving any prior instruction. For this reason, he declared the Flower Garland Sutra superior to the Lotus Sutra.

12. Ceremony for consecrating a newly made Buddha image. By means of this ceremony, it is said, the image is endowed with the Buddha's spiritual property, thus making it an object of devotion.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

12

The Essence of the “Medicine King” Chapter



CONCERNING the general meaning of this chapter called the “Medicine King”: the “Medicine King” chapter is in the seventh volume and is the twenty-third of the twenty-eight chapters that make up the Lotus Sutra.

The first volume of the sutra contains two chapters, the “Introduction” chapter and the “Expedient Means” chapter. The “Introduction” chapter serves as a prologue to the entire twenty-eight chapters.

The eight chapters beginning with “Expedient Means” and continuing through “Prophecies” are concerned primarily with clarifying how persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, and secondarily with clarifying how bodhisattvas and ordinary people can attain Buddhahood.

The following five chapters, the “Teacher of the Law,” “Treasure Tower,” “Devadatta,” “Encouraging Devotion,” and “Peaceful Practices” chapters, explain how the teachings set forth in the preceding eight chapters are to be carried out by ordinary people in the latter age.

The ensuing “Emerging from the Earth” chapter serves as an introduction to the “Life Span” chapter. The subsequent twelve chapters, numbering from the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter on, serve primarily to explain

how the doctrines set forth in the “Life Span” chapter are to be carried out by ordinary people in the latter age, and secondarily to explain how those set forth in the eight chapters from “Expedient Means” on are to be carried out.

The “Medicine King” chapter, therefore, is a chapter that explains how one ought to carry out the teachings both of the eight chapters beginning with “Expedient Means” and of the “Life Span” chapter.

This chapter, the “Medicine King,” contains ten analogies, the first of which is the analogy of the great ocean. I will begin by explaining this analogy in outline form. In the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, there are 2,500 rivers; in the western continent of Godaniya, there are 5,000 rivers. In all the four continents, there are a total of 25,900 rivers. Some of these rivers are forty *ri* in length, some a hundred *ri*, some only one *ri*, one *cho*, or one fathom. However, concerning the matter of depth, not one of these rivers can match the great ocean.

Among all the sutras, such as the Flower Garland Sutra, the Agama sutras, the Correct and Equal sutras, the Wisdom, Profound Secrets, Amida, Nirvana, Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, Susiddhikara, and Secret Solemnity sutras, all the sutras preached by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni,

all the sutras preached by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, all the sutras preached by the Thus Come One Amida, all the sutras preached by the Thus Come One Medicine Master, and all the sutras preached by the various Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future—among all these sutras, the Lotus Sutra stands foremost. Thus these other sutras are analogous to the large rivers, middle-sized rivers, and small rivers, while the Lotus Sutra is likened to the great ocean.

The ocean possesses ten virtues, in which it surpasses the rivers. First, the ocean gradually becomes deeper, which is not true of rivers. Second, the ocean refuses to house corpses, which is not true of rivers. Third, the ocean obliterates the names of the various rivers that flow into it, while rivers retain their names. Fourth, the ocean's taste is the same everywhere, while this is not true of rivers. Fifth, the ocean contains various treasures that are not found in rivers. Sixth, the ocean is extremely deep, which is not true of rivers. Seventh, the ocean is boundless in breadth, which rivers are not. Eighth, the ocean houses creatures of great size, which is not true of rivers. Ninth, the ocean has tides that ebb and flow, but rivers do not. And tenth, the ocean absorbs the waters of torrential rains or huge rivers without ever overflowing, but this is not true of rivers.

The Lotus Sutra likewise has ten virtues, while the other sutras have ten faults. In the case of this sutra, the benefits gained from it increase in depth and bounty, and they continue down to the fiftieth person who hears of it. In the case of the other sutras, however, there is no benefit to be gained even by the first person who hears them, much less by the second, third, or fourth person, and so on down to the fiftieth person.

Though rivers may be deep, their

depth cannot match even the shallow places of the ocean. And though the various other sutras may claim that because of a single character, a single phrase, or the ten meditations¹ they encompass evil people who have committed the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, such benefits cannot match those gained by the fiftieth person who hears a single character or a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra and responds with joy.

In the case of the Lotus Sutra, just as the ocean refuses to house corpses, those who slander the Law by turning against the Lotus Sutra will be cast out by the sutra, even though in other respects they may be people of extreme goodness. And how much more so will this be true in the case of evil persons who, in addition to their other evil acts, slander the Law! Though one may speak slanderously of the other sutras, if one does not turn against the Lotus Sutra, one is certain to attain the Buddha way. But though one may put faith in all the other sutras, if one turns against the Lotus Sutra, one will invariably fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell.

I move now to the eighth virtue of the ocean, the fact that it can house creatures of great size. And we find that in the ocean there are huge fish such as the makara.² The place called the hell of incessant suffering measures eighty thousand yojanas in total length and breadth. But when a person falls into the hell of incessant suffering by committing the five cardinal sins, this person alone is sufficient to fill it up completely.³ Thus we know that the inhabitants of this hell, persons who have committed the five cardinal sins, are beings of very great size.

In the other sutras, which we have likened to small rivers or large rivers, no makara fish are to be found. However, in the great ocean that is the Lotus Sutra, they do exist. And in like

manner, the other sutras do not in fact state that persons who commit the five cardinal sins are capable of attaining the Buddha way. Or even if the sutras do state this, in fact the true principle has yet to be revealed in them.

Therefore, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che, who had memorized all the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, says in his commentary on the Lotus Sutra: "The other sutras only predict Buddhahood for bodhisattvas, but not for persons of the two vehicles. They only predict it for the good, but not for the evil; . . . This sutra predicts Buddhahood for all."⁴ But I will not go into details on this matter.

Second is the analogy of mountains. The sutra says that, among the Ten Treasure Mountains and all the other mountains, Mount Sumeru is foremost. The Ten Treasure Mountains are: first, the Snow Mountains; second, Mount Fragrant; third, Mount Khadira; fourth, the Mountain of Immortals and Sages; fifth, Mount Yugamdhara; sixth, Horse Ear Mountain; seventh, Mount Nimindhara; eighth, Mount Chakravada; ninth, the Mountain of Past Wisdom; and tenth, Mount Sumeru.

The first nine of these ten mountains are analogous to the various other sutras, which are like ordinary mountains. Each of these mountains contains treasures. But Mount Sumeru contains a multitude of treasures, treasures superior to those of the other mountains. For example, it is like Jambunada gold,⁵ to which ordinary gold cannot compare.

The Flower Garland Sutra has its teaching that "the phenomenal world is created by the mind alone"; the Wisdom sutras have their eighteen kinds of non-substantiality; the Mahavairochana Sutra has its fivefold meditation for attaining Buddhahood, and the Meditation Sutra has its doctrine of rebirth in the Pure Land. But the Lotus Sutra's teaching of the attainment of Buddha-

hood in one's present form surpasses all of these.

Mount Sumeru is golden in color. Every creature that comes to this mountain, whether ox or horse, human or heavenly being, bird or any other being, inevitably loses its original color and takes on the golden color of the mountain. This is not true of any of the other mountains. In the same manner, the various other sutras, when placed beside the Lotus Sutra, lose their original color. They are like black objects that, when exposed to the light of the sun or the moon, lose their color. So the teachings concerning rebirth in another land or the attainment of Buddhahood that color these other sutras inevitably lose their meaning when exposed to the light of the Lotus Sutra.

Third is the analogy of the moon. Among the various stars, some can light an area of no more than half a *ri*, some an area of no more than one *ri*, some an area of no more than eight *ri* or sixteen *ri*. But the moon can light an area of over eight hundred *ri*. Thus, although the various stars have their light, it cannot equal that of the moon.

Even if we were to assemble a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million stars, as well as all the stars from the world of the four continents, from a major world system, and from all the worlds of the ten directions, their light would not equal the light of a single moon. How then could the light of only one star equal the light of the moon?

Similarly, though we gather together all the various sutras, such as the Flower Garland Sutra, the Agama sutras, the Correct and Equal sutras, the Wisdom, Nirvana, Mahavairochana, and Meditation sutras, they could never equal even a single character of the Lotus Sutra.

Within the minds of all human beings, there exist the three categories of illusions of thought and desire, of illusions innumerable as particles of dust

and sand, and of illusions about the true nature of existence, as well as karma created by the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins—all of which are like a dark night. The Flower Garland and the other various sutras are like stars in this dark night, while the Lotus Sutra is like the moon. For those who have faith in the Lotus Sutra, but whose faith is not deep, it is as though a half moon were lighting the darkness. But for those who have profound faith, it is as though a full moon were illuminating the night.

On a night when there is no moon, but only the light of the stars, strong men or robust individuals may walk abroad, but elderly people and women will find it impossible to do so. But when there is a full moon, even women and the elderly may walk about anywhere they please, proceeding to a banquet or going to meet others. Similarly, in the various sutras it is said that bodhisattvas and ordinary persons of great capacity can attain enlightenment. But for persons of the two vehicles, ordinary people, women, and evil men, or people in the latter age who are elderly and lazy and do not observe the precepts, no assurance is given that they can ever attain rebirth in the pure land or achieve Buddhahood. This is not so of the Lotus Sutra, however. There even persons of the two vehicles, women, and evil men are assured of becoming Buddhas, to say nothing of bodhisattvas and ordinary persons of great capacity.

Again, the moon shines more brightly around dawn than it does in the early evening, and is more luminous in autumn and winter than in spring and summer. In a similar fashion, the Lotus Sutra is even more effective in bringing benefit to living beings in the Latter Day of the Law than it is during the two thousand years that make up the Former and Middle Days of the Law.

Question: What passages of proof can you offer?

Answer: The truth is plain to see. In addition, this chapter later states as follows: "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."⁶ This passage from the sutra, which states that it must be widely spread throughout Jambudvīpa, the southern continent, when two thousand years have passed, expresses the same meaning as the third analogy of the moon. The Great Teacher Kōmpon, also known as the Great Teacher Dengyō, was referring to this idea when he stated in his commentary: "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people."⁷

The benefits conferred by the Lotus Sutra surpass those of the various other sutras even during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law and the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law. But when the spring and summer of the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days are over, and the autumn and winter of the Latter Day of the Law have come, then the light of this moon will shine more brightly than ever.

Fourth is the analogy of the sun. When the moon appears in the sky where the stars are shining, although its light surpasses that of the stars, the stars do not actually lose their light. But when the sun appears, not only do the stars lose their light, but the moon, too, is deprived of its light and loses its glow.

The sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are like the stars, the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is like the moon, and the "Life Span" chapter is

like the sun. When the "Life Span" chapter makes its appearance, then the moon of the theoretical teaching cannot equal it, to say nothing of the stars that are the previous sutras.

During the night, the time of the stars and the moon, people do not pursue their occupations. But when dawn comes, they invariably go about their various tasks. Similarly, while the earlier sutras or the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra prevail, it will be difficult for people to free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death. But once the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching makes its appearance, then people are certain to free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death.

I will omit a discussion of the other six of the ten analogies.

In addition to these ten, there are many other analogies in this chapter. Among them is that of a traveler who finds a ship when he wishes to make a crossing. The meaning of this analogy is that, in the sea of the sufferings of birth and death, the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are like rafts or small boats. Although they can carry people from one shore in the realm of birth and death to another shore in that same realm, they are incapable of carrying them across the sea of birth and death to the distant shore of Perfect Bliss.⁸

These sutras are like the small boats of our world that can go from Kyushu to the Bando region, or from Kamakura to Enoshima,⁹ but cannot go as far as China. A China ship, on the other hand, is fully capable of going all the way from Japan to China without difficulty.

Again, there is the analogy that reads, "like the poor finding riches." The lands represented by the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are impoverished lands, and their inhabitants are like hungry spirits. The Lotus

Sutra, on the other hand, is a veritable mountain of riches, and its inhabitants are wealthy.

Question: When you say that the lands of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are impoverished lands, what passage of scripture are you referring to?

Answer: The "Bestowal of Prophecy" chapter [of the Lotus Sutra] states, "Suppose that someone coming from a land of famine should suddenly encounter a great king's feast."

Concerning rebirth in the pure land and the attainment of Buddhahood by women, a passage from the sutra has this to say: "If in the last five-hundred-year period after the Thus Come One has entered extinction there is a woman who hears this sutra and carries out its practices as the sutra directs, when her life here on earth comes to an end, she will immediately go to the World of Peace and Delight where the Buddha Amida dwells surrounded by the assembly of great bodhisattvas and there will be born seated on a jeweled seat in the center of a lotus blossom."¹⁰

Question: Why do this sutra and this chapter in the sutra make a particular point of discussing rebirth in the pure land by women?

Answer: The Buddha's intentions are difficult to fathom, and the significance of this matter is difficult to determine. But if I were to venture a guess, I would say that it is because women are looked upon as the root of various errors and the source of the downfall of the nation. Therefore, in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures, there are many prohibitions laid down with regard to women. Among these, for example, are the three obediences set forth in the non-Buddhist scriptures. The "three obediences" means to obey three times and refers to the fact that, when a woman is young, she must obey her parents; when she

marries, she must obey her husband; and in old age, she must obey her son. She is thus confronted with these three obstacles and cannot conduct herself freely in the world.

If we turn to the Buddhist scriptures, we find that they speak of the five obstacles. Of these five obstacles that confront women, the first is the fact that, in the course of being reborn again and again in the six paths, they cannot, like men, ever be reborn as the great heavenly king Brahma. Second, they can never be reborn as the heavenly king Shakra. Third, they cannot be reborn as a devil king. Fourth, they cannot be reborn as a wheel-turning king. And fifth, they must remain forever within the six paths, unable to emerge from the threefold world and become a Buddha. (This passage is found in the Meditation Outshining the Sun and Moon Sutra.)¹¹ The Silver-Colored Woman Sutra has this to say: "Even if the eyes of the Buddhas of the three existences were to fall to the ground, no woman in any of the realms of existence could ever attain Buddhahood."

Ordinary human beings though they are, worthy rulers and sages do not tell falsehoods. Thus Fan Yü-ch'i presented his head to Ching K'o, and Prince Chi-cha hung his sword on the grave of the lord of Hsü. They did these things so as not to go against their promises or be guilty of uttering falsehoods. And if such men do not utter falsehoods, how much more is this true of voice-hearers, bodhisattvas, or Buddhas!

In the past, when the Buddha was still an ordinary man and was practicing the teachings of the Hinayana sutras, he undertook to observe the five precepts. And among these five, the fourth is that one must never lie. He firmly observed this precept. Thereafter, even though it meant losing his property or his life, he never violated it.

When he was practicing the teachings of the Mahayana sutras, he observed the ten major precepts, and among these ten major precepts, the fourth is that one must never lie. He faithfully observed this precept without once violating it throughout countless kalpas, until in the end, through the power acquired by observing this precept, he was able to attain the body of a Buddha. And among the thirty-two features that distinguish the body of a Buddha, he was able to obtain that of a long and broad tongue.

This tongue of the Buddha's is so thin and broad and long that it can be extended to cover his face or reach up to his hairline, or even to reach to the Brahma heaven. On this tongue are five figures that are like embossed designs, and the tongue is the color of copper. Underneath it are two jewels that emit amrita.

This tongue was obtained by virtue of the fact that the Buddha observed the precept against lying. And with this tongue he stated that, though the eyes of all the Buddhas of the three existences might fall to earth, no woman in any of the realms of existence could become a Buddha. Thus we may suppose that no woman in any world whatsoever can ever hope to become a Buddha. And if so, then we must assume that, when one is born with the body of a woman, even if one were to rise to the position of one of the three generations of emperor's consorts,¹² it would not help one, and even if one were to perform meritorious acts and practice the teachings of Buddhism, it would do one no good.

Nevertheless, this "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra allows the attainment of rebirth in the pure land by women. This is very strange indeed! Is the other sutra lying? Or is this sutra lying? No matter how we look at it, we must suppose that one of them is lying. And if one of them is lying,

then the same Buddha is saying two different things, which is very hard to believe.

However, in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha says, “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” And in the Nirvana Sutra he says, “Though the Thus Come One does not speak untruths, if I knew that by speaking falsely [I could help living beings gain the benefits of the Law, then for their sake I would go along with what is best and speak such words as an expedient means].”

In view of these passages, it would appear that the Buddha was speaking falsely when he declared that women could not attain rebirth in the pure land and achieve Buddhahood. And if we consider the passages in the Lotus Sutra that state, “The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth,”¹³ and “The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth,”¹⁴ then we must conclude that the passage in the Lotus Sutra that declares that women can most assuredly attain rebirth in the pure land and achieve Buddhahood is a true statement and an expression of his observance of the precept against lying.

There are times when a worthy man of the secular world, because his son is behaving strangely or is guilty of some

error, will declare that he is no longer his son. To prove the truth of the assertion, the man may even write out a vow or swear an oath. But when the time of his death approaches, he will forgive his son. Though he does these things, we do not deny that he is a worthy man or accuse him of speaking falsely. And the Buddha, too, at times acts in this same manner.

During the more than forty years when the earlier sutras were being preached, the Buddha acknowledged that bodhisattvas could attain the way, that ordinary persons could do so, and that good persons and men could do so, but he would not admit that persons of the two vehicles, women, or evil men could do so. There were times, however, when he did seem to admit the possibility. Therefore, the truth of this matter remained undetermined. But when he had completed his first forty-two years of preaching, and he was ready to enter the eight-year period when he would preach the Lotus Sutra on Mount Gridhrakuta at Rajagriha in the kingdom of Magadha, he first of all preached the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. And in that sutra he stated, “In these more than forty years, [I have not yet revealed the truth].”

Nichiren



Background

This letter is thought to have been written in the second year of Bun’ei (1265), though different views exist regarding its date. The addressee is also uncertain, but because the attainment of Buddhahood by women is discussed in the latter part, it seems quite likely that it was directed to a woman believer, who may have been the mother of

Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in the Fuji area.

Nichiren Daishonin begins by outlining the general structure of the Lotus Sutra and by clarifying the specific role played by the “Medicine King” chapter of the sutra. He then explains the first four of the ten following analogies set forth in this

chapter: the analogies of the great ocean, mountains, the moon, the sun, the wheel-turning king, the god Shakra, the god Brahma, persons at the four stages of Hinayana enlightenment and pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and the Buddha. In this way he illustrates the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras and the benefits of belief in the Lotus Sutra.

In mentioning the analogy of the great ocean, the Daishonin refers to the ocean's ten virtues and to the description found in the "Responding with Joy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra concerning the great benefit conferred upon the fiftieth person who rejoices on hearing this sutra.

In this manner, through the four analogies of the ocean, mountains, the moon, and the sun, the Daishonin touches upon various principles of Buddhism, asserting that the benefit of the Lotus Sutra is immeasurable, and that it is the only scripture enabling all beings to attain Buddhahood in their present form. He points out that, among all

the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, only the "Life Span" can free human beings from the sufferings of birth and death.

Next, the Daishonin explains two additional analogies from the "Medicine King" chapter: the analogy of a ship that carries people across the sea of the sufferings of birth and death, and that of the poor finding riches. Thus, the Daishonin likens the Lotus Sutra respectively to a great ship and to a mountain of riches.

Toward the end of this letter, the Daishonin writes of the three obediences and the five obstacles. In secular and Buddhist thought, these were limitations traditionally believed to bind women. In the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, women are presented as being incapable of attaining Buddhahood. But the Daishonin, citing passages from the Immeasurable Meanings, Lotus, and Nirvana sutras, declares that women are indeed able to attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. "The ten meditations" here probably refers to the meditation that the Pure Land school teaches on the basis of the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra and the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra. It consists of chanting the name of Amida Buddha ten times and is said to lead to rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

2. The makara (Skt) is a huge legendary fish with eighteen heads and thirty-six eyes, described in *The Monastic Rules of the Sarvastivada School*.

3. The great size of the body symbolizes the magnitude of the suffering one undergoes in this hell.

4. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

5. Gold sifted from the sediment of the river running through the forest of jambu trees in Jambudvīpa.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

7. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

8. Perfect Bliss is the name of the land of Amida Buddha. The Daishonin uses the term here to indicate enlightenment.

9. Kyushu is an island in southern Japan. Bando is another name for Kanto, a region in east central Japan that includes present-day Tokyo. Enoshima is a small island located west of Kamakura.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23. The "World of Peace and Delight" is another name for the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss.

11. Probably the Meditation Outshining Sunlight Sutra.

12. The three generations of emperor's consorts mean the present emperor's consort, his father's consort, and his grandfather's consort.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

13

Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man



PART ONE

HAVING received life, one cannot escape death. Yet though everyone, from the noblest, the emperor, on down to the lowliest commoner, recognizes this as a fact, not even one person in a thousand or ten thousand truly takes the matter seriously or grieves over it. Suddenly confronted with evidence of the impermanence of life, we may be frightened at the thought that we have remained so distant from Buddhism and lament that we have been too engrossed in secular affairs.¹ Yet we assume that those who have preceded us in death are wretched, and that we who remain alive are superior. Busy with that task yesterday and this affair today, we are helplessly bound by the five desires of our worldly nature. Unaware that time passes as quickly as a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall,² ignorant as sheep being led to the slaughter, held hopeless prisoners by our concern for food and clothing, we fall heedlessly into the snares of fame and profit and in the end make our way back to that familiar village in the three evil paths, where we are reborn time after time in the realm of the six paths. What person of feeling could fail to grieve at such a state of affairs, or could fail to be moved to sorrow!

Alas! Neither young nor old know

what fate awaits them—such is the way of our saha world. All those who meet are destined to part again—such is the rule in this floating world we live in. Although none of this had just struck me for the first time, [I was appalled at] seeing all those who took early leave of this world in the beginning of the Shoka era.³ Some of them left little children behind them, while others were forced to abandon their aged parents. How sad their hearts must have been when, though still in the prime of life, they were obliged to set off on their journey to the Yellow Springs. It was painful for those who departed, and painful for those left behind.

The king of Ch'u's passion for the goddess remained as a wisp of morning cloud,⁴ and Liu's grief at remembering his meeting with the immortal visitor was consoled by the sight of his descendants of the seventh generation.⁵ But how can a person like myself win release from sorrow? I find myself recalling the poet of old who hoped that because he was a humble-hearted dweller in the mountains he might be free of such sadness.⁶ Now, gathering together my thoughts as the men of Naniwa gather seaweed to extract salt, I give them form with my writing brush as a memento for people in later ages.

How sad, how lamentable it is! From the beginningless past, we have been drunk on the wine of ignorance, re-born again and again in the six paths of existence and the four forms of birth. Sometimes we gasp amid the flames of the hell of burning heat or the hell of great burning heat;⁷ sometimes we are frozen in the ice of the hell of the crimson lotus or the hell of the great crimson lotus.⁸ Sometimes we must endure the hunger and thirst that torment those in the realm of hungry spirits, for five hundred lifetimes not so much as hearing the word "food" or "drink." Sometimes we suffer being wounded and killed in the realm of animals, the wounding and killing that occur when the small are swallowed up by the large, or the short engulfed by the long. Sometimes we face the contention and strife of the realm of asuras; sometimes we are born as human beings and undergo the eight sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, death, the pain of parting from loved ones, the pain of encountering those whom we hate, the pain of failing to obtain what we desire, and the pain that arises from the five components of body and mind.⁹ And sometimes we are born in the realm of heaven and experience the five signs of decay.

And so we go round and round like a cartwheel in this threefold world. Even among people once related as father and child, parents reborn do not know that they were parents, or children that they were children; and though husband and wife re-encounter each other, they do not know that they have already met. We go astray as though we had the eyes of sheep; we are as ignorant as though we had the eyes of wolves. We do not know our past relationship with the mother who gave us birth, and we are unaware of when we ourselves will succumb to death.

And yet we have obtained birth in

the human world, something difficult to achieve, and have encountered the sacred teachings of the Thus Come One, which are rarely to be met. We are like the one-eyed turtle finding a floating log with a hole in it that fits him exactly. How regrettable it would be, then, if we did not take this opportunity to sever the bonds of birth and death, making no attempt to free ourselves from the cage of the threefold world!¹⁰

Then a wise man appeared and addressed the unenlightened man, saying: "You are quite right to lament as you do. But those who understand the impermanence of this world in this way and turn their hearts to goodness are rarer than the ch'i-lin's horns, while those who fail to understand and instead give themselves to evil thoughts are more numerous than the hairs on a cow. If you wish to arouse the aspiration for enlightenment and to quickly free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death, then I know of the finest doctrine that there is for such a purpose. If you wish, I will explain it to you so that you may know of it."

The unenlightened man rose from his seat, pressed his palms together, and said: "For some time now I have been studying the classics of secular literature and giving all my attention to matters of poetry, so I have no detailed knowledge of the Buddhist teachings. I hope that you will be kind enough to explain them to me, sir."

At that time the wise man said: "You must listen with the ears of Ling Lun,¹¹ borrow the eyes of Li Chu,¹² and still your mind, and I will explain things to you. The sacred teachings of Buddhism number no less than eighty thousand, but the most important teaching, the father and mother of all the schools, is that concerning the precepts and rules of conduct. In India, the bodhisattvas Vasubandhu and Ash-

vaghosha and, in China, the priests Hui-k'uang and Tao-hsüan placed great emphasis on these. And in our own country, during the reign of the forty-fifth sovereign, Emperor Shomu, the Reverend Chien-chen [Ganjin] brought to Japan the teachings of the Precepts school, along with those of the T'ien-t'ai school, and established an ordination platform for administering the precepts at Todai-ji temple. From that time down to the present, the precepts have been revered over many long years, and the honor paid to them increases daily.

"In particular, there is the Honorable Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji. Everyone, from the supreme ruler on down to the common people, looks up to him as a living Thus Come One, and on observing his conduct, we find that it is indeed in keeping with such a reputation. He directed charitable activities at the port of Iijima, collected rice at the Mutsura Barrier,¹³ and used the funds to build roads in the various provinces. He set up barriers along the seven highways,¹⁴ collected a toll from everyone who passed by, and used the money to build bridges across a number of rivers. In such acts of compassion, he is equal to the Thus Come One, and his virtuous deeds surpass those of the sages of the past. If you wish to quickly free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death, then you should observe the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts, deepen your compassion for others, refrain from killing any living thing, and, like the Honorable Ryokan, engage in building roads and bridges. This is the finest of all teachings. Are you prepared to embrace it?"

The unenlightened man pressed his palms together more fervently than ever and said: "Indeed, I want very much to embrace it. Please explain it to me thoroughly. You speak of the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts, but I do not know what they

are. Please describe them to me in detail."

The wise man said: "Your ignorance is abysmal! Even a child knows what the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts are. However, I will explain them for you. The five precepts comprise, first, the prohibition against taking life; second, the prohibition against stealing; third, the prohibition against lying; fourth, the prohibition against unlawful sexual intercourse; and fifth, the prohibition against drinking intoxicants. The two hundred and fifty precepts are numerous, and so I will not go into them here."

At this the unenlightened man bowed low and with the deepest respect said, "From this day forward, I will devote myself to this doctrine with all my heart."

This man had an old acquaintance, a lay Buddhist believer living in retirement, who paid him a visit to cheer him up. At first the visitor spoke about the affairs of the past, likening them to a dream that is endless and hazy, and then he talked of the future, pointing out how vast and dark it is, how difficult to predict. After he had sought in this way to divert his listener and explain his own views, he said: "Most of us who live in this world of ours find we cannot help thinking about the life to come. May I ask what kind of Buddhist doctrine you have embraced in order to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death, or to pray for the welfare of those who have gone on to another life?"

The unenlightened man replied: "The other day an eminent priest called on me and instructed me in the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts. In truth I am deeply impressed with his teachings and find them most admirable. Although I know I can never equal the Honorable Ryokan, I have determined to do all I can to repair roads that are in poor

condition and to build bridges over rivers that are too deep for wading.”

Then the lay believer gave him words of advice, saying: “Your concern for the way would seem to be admirable, but your approach is foolish. The doctrine you have just described to me is the lowly teaching of the Hinayana. That is why the Buddha has set forth eight analogies,¹⁵ and why Bodhisattva Manjushri has described seventeen differences¹⁶ between the Hinayana and the Mahayana. The Buddha has said, for example, that the Hinayana is like the light of a firefly compared to the brilliance of the sun, or like plain crystal compared to emerald. Moreover, the teachers of India, China, and Japan have written not a few treatises refuting the Hinayana teachings.

“Next, concerning your reverence for those who observe these practices, a teaching is not necessarily worthy of honor simply because its practitioners are respected. It is for this reason that the Buddha laid down the principle, ‘Rely on the Law and not upon persons.’¹⁷

“I have heard it said that the sages of ancient times who observed the precepts could not bear even to utter the words ‘kill’ or ‘hoard,’ but would substitute some pure-sounding circumlocution, and when they happened to catch sight of a beautiful woman, they would meditate upon the image of a corpse.¹⁸ But if we examine the behavior of the priests of today who supposedly observe the precepts, we find that they hoard silks, wealth, and jewels, and concern themselves with lending money at interest. Since their doctrines and their practices differ so greatly, who would think of putting any faith in them?

“And as for this matter of building roads and constructing bridges, it only causes people trouble. The charitable activities at the port of Iijima and the collecting of rice at the Mutsura Bar-

rier have brought unhappiness to a great many people, and the setting up of barriers along the seven highways of the various provinces has imposed a hardship upon travelers. These are things that are happening right in front of your eyes. Can’t you see what is going on?”

The unenlightened man thereupon flushed with anger and said, “You with your little bit of wisdom have no cause to speak ill of that eminent priest and to defame his teachings! Do you do so knowingly, or are you simply a fool? It is a fearful thing you are doing.”

Then the lay believer laughed and said: “Alas, you are the foolish one! Let me briefly explain to you the biased views of that school. You should understand that, when it comes to the Buddhist teaching, there is the Mahayana division and the Hinayana division, and that in terms of schools there are those based upon the provisional teachings and those based upon the true teaching. Long ago, when the Buddha taught the Hinayana doctrines in Deer Park, he was opening the gate to a phantom city.¹⁹ But later, when the mats were spread for the teaching of the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak, then those earlier doctrines ceased to be of any benefit.”

The unenlightened man looked at the lay believer in perplexity and said: “Both the documentary evidence and the evidence of actual fact indeed support what you have said. But then what kind of Buddhist teaching ought one to embrace in order to free oneself from the sufferings of birth and death and quickly attain Buddhahood?”

The other replied: “Although I am only a layman, I have given myself earnestly to the practice of Buddhism, and from the time of my youth, I have listened to the words of many teachers and have done a certain amount of reading in the sacred scriptures. For those of us of this latter age, who have committed all manner of evil, there is

nothing that can compare with the Nembutsu teachings that lead to rebirth in the Pure Land. Thus, the Supervisor of Priests Eshin says, "The teachings and practices that lead to rebirth in the Land of Perfect Bliss are the eyes and feet for those who live in this defiled latter age of ours."²⁰ The Honorable Honen collected key passages from the various sutras and spread the doctrine of exclusive devotion to the practice of the Nembutsu. In particular, the original vows²¹ of the Buddha Amida surpass the vows of all other Buddhas in their worth and importance. From the first vow, that the three evil paths will not exist in his land, down to the last vow, that bodhisattvas will be enabled to attain the three types of perception,²² all of Amida's compassionate vows are to be greatly welcomed. But the eighteenth vow is particularly effective on our behalf. In addition, even those who have committed the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins are not excluded, nor is any distinction made between those who have recited the Nembutsu only one time and those who have recited it many times. For this reason, everyone from the ruler on down to the common people favors this school far above the other schools. And how many countless people have gained rebirth in the Pure Land as a result of it!"

The unenlightened man said: "Truly one should be ashamed of the small and yearn for the great, abandon the shallow and embrace the profound. This is not only a principle of Buddhism but a rule of the secular world as well. Therefore, I would like to shift my allegiance without delay to this school you have described. Please explain its principles to me in greater detail. You say that even those who have committed the five cardinal sins or the ten evil acts are not excluded from the Buddha's compassionate vows. What, may I ask, are the five cardinal sins and the ten evil acts?"

The wise lay believer replied: "The five cardinal sins are killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, shedding a Buddha's blood, and disrupting the harmony of the Buddhist Order. As for the ten evil acts, there are three acts of the body, four acts of the mouth, and three acts of the mind. The three evil acts of the body are killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse. The four evil acts of the mouth are lying, flattery, defaming, and duplicity. The three evil acts of the mind are greed, anger, and foolishness."

"Now I understand them," said the unenlightened man. "From this day forward, I will place all my trust in this power of another, of the Buddha Amida, to bring me to rebirth in the Pure Land."

At that time there was a practitioner of the esoteric school who was extraordinarily diligent in upholding its teachings. He too came to call on the unenlightened man to console him. At first he spoke only of "wild words and ornate phrases,"²³ but in the end he discoursed on the differences between the two types of Buddhist teachings, those of the exoteric schools and those of the esoteric school. He inquired of the unenlightened man, "What sort of Buddhist doctrines are you practicing, and what sutras and treatises do you read and recite?"

The unenlightened man replied, "Recently, in accordance with the instruction of a lay believer I know, I have been reading the three Pure Land sutras and have come to put profound trust in Amida, the lord of the Western Paradise."

The practitioner said: "There are two kinds of Buddhist teachings, the exoteric teachings and the esoteric teachings. The most profound doctrines of the exoteric teachings cannot compare even to the elementary stages of the esoteric teachings. From what you tell me, it seems that the doctrine

you have embraced is the exoteric teaching put forth by Shakyamuni. But the doctrine that I adhere to is the secret teaching of Mahavairochana, the King of Enlightenment. If you are truly fearful of this burning house that is the threefold world we live in and long for the wonderful Land of Tranquil Light, then you should cast aside the exoteric teachings at once and put faith in the esoteric teachings."

The unenlightened man, greatly startled, said: "I have never heard of this distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrines. What are the exoteric teachings? What are the esoteric teachings?"

The practitioner replied: "I am a hardheaded and foolish person, and am not learned at all. Nevertheless, I would like to cite one or two passages and see if I can dispel your ignorance. The exoteric teachings are the doctrines preached in response to the request of Shariputra and the other disciples by the Thus Come One of the manifested body. But the esoteric teachings are those that Mahavairochana, the Thus Come One of the Dharma body, preached spontaneously out of his boundless joy in the Law, with Vajrasattva as his listener. These teachings constitute the Mahavairochana Sutra and the others of the three esoteric sutras."²⁴

The unenlightened man said, "What you say stands to reason. I think I should correct my former error and hasten to embrace these more worthy teachings."

There was a mendicant priest who drifted about from province to province like floating grass, who rolled on from district to district like tumbleweed. Before anyone realized it, he appeared on the scene and stood leaning on the pillar of the gate, smiling but saying nothing.

The unenlightened man, wondering at this, asked what he wanted. At first

the priest made no reply, but after the question was repeated, he said, "The moon is dim and distant, the wind brisk and blustery." His appearance was quite out of the ordinary and his words made no sense, but when the unenlightened man inquired about the ultimate principle behind them, he found that they represented the Zen teachings as they are expounded in the world today.

He observed the priest's appearance, listened to his words, and asked what he considered a good cause for entering the Buddha way. The mendicant priest replied: "The teachings of the sutras are a finger pointing at the moon. Their doctrinal nets are so much nonsense that has been captured in words. But there is a teaching that enables you to find rest in the essential nature of your own mind—it is called Zen."

"I would like to hear about it," said the unenlightened man.

"If you are truly in earnest," said the priest, "you must face the wall, sit in Zen meditation, and make clear the moon of your original mind. That the Zen lineage of the twenty-eight patriarchs was passed on without break in India, and that the line of transmission was handed down through the six patriarchs²⁵ in China is clear for all to see. It would be pitiful indeed if you should fail to understand what they have taught and remain caught in the nets of doctrine. Since the mind itself is the Buddha, and the Buddha is none other than the mind, what Buddha could there be outside yourself?"

When the unenlightened man heard these words, he began to ponder various things and to quietly consider the principles he had heard. He said: "There are a great many different Buddhist doctrines, and it is very difficult to determine which are sound and which are not. It is only natural that Bodhisattva Ever Wailing should have gone east to inquire about the truth,

that the boy Good Treasures should have sought for it in the south, that Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his arms as an offering, and that the ascetic Aspiration for the Law stripped off his skin. A good teacher is truly difficult to find. Some say that one should go by the teachings of the sutras, while others say that the truth lies outside the sutras. In pondering the rights and wrongs of these doctrines, one who has not yet fathomed the depths of Buddhism and stands gazing over the waters of the Law is in doubt as to how deep they may be; one who assesses a teacher does so with all the anxiety of a person walking on thin ice. That is why the Buddha has left us those golden words, 'Rely on the Law and not upon persons,' and why it is said that those who encounter the correct teaching are as few as the grains of earth that can be placed on a fingernail. If there is someone who knows which of the Buddhist teachings are true and which are false, then I must seek him out, make him my teacher, and treat him with appropriate respect."

They say that it is as difficult to be born in the realm of human beings as it is to thread a needle by lowering the thread from the heavens, and as rare to see and hear the Buddha's teachings as it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log with a hole just the right size to hold him. Having this in mind and believing that one must regard the body as insignificant and the Law as supreme, the unenlightened man climbed numerous mountains, impelled by his anxiety, going from one temple to another as his feet would carry him. In time he arrived at a rocky cave with green mountains rising sheer behind it. The wind in the pines played a melody of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity, and the emerald stream that bubbled along in front sent its waves striking against the bank with echoes of the perfection of these four virtues.

The flowers carpeting the deep valley bloomed with the hue of the true aspect of the Middle Way, and from the plum blossoms just beginning to open in the broad meadow wafted the fragrance of the three thousand realms. Truly it was beyond the power of words to describe, beyond the scope of the mind to imagine. One might have thought it the place where the Four White-Haired Elders of Mount Shang lived, or the site where some ancient Buddha had walked about after meditation. Auspicious clouds rose up at dawn, a mysterious light appeared in the evening. Ah, the mind cannot grasp it nor words set it forth!

The unenlightened man wandered about, pondering what was before him, now pausing in thought, now resuming his steps. Suddenly he came upon a sage. Observing his actions, he saw that the sage was reciting the Lotus Sutra; his voice stirred the seeker deeply. Peering in at the quiet window of the sage's retreat, he found that the sage was resting his elbows on his desk, pondering the sutra's profound meaning.

The sage, divining that the unenlightened man was searching for the Law, asked in a gentle voice, "Why have you come to this cave among these far-off mountains?"

The other replied, "Because I attach little importance to life but great importance to the Law."

"What practices do you follow?" asked the sage.

The unenlightened man answered: "I have lived all my life amid the dust of the secular world and have not yet learned how to free myself from the sufferings of birth and death. As it happened, however, I encountered various good teachers, from whom I learned first the rules of discipline and then the Nembutsu, True Word, and Zen teachings. But though I have learned these teachings, I am unable to determine their truth or falsity."

The sage said: "When I listen to

your words, I find that it is indeed just as you have said. To hold life lightly but value the Law is the teaching of the sages of former times, and one that I myself know well.

“From the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought²⁶ above the clouds to the very bottom of hell, is there any being who receives life and yet succeeds in escaping death? Thus, even in the unenlightened secular writings we find it said, ‘Though you may set out at dawn on the journey of life with pride in the beauty of your rosy cheeks, by evening you will be no more than a pile of white bones rotting on the moor.’²⁷ Though you may move among the most exalted company of court nobles, your hair done up elegantly like clouds and your sleeves fluttering like eddies of snow, such pleasures, when you stop to consider them, are no more than a dream within a dream. You must come to rest at last under the carpet of weeds at the foot of the hill, and all your jeweled daises and brocade hangings will mean nothing to you on the road to the afterlife. The famed flower-like beauty of Ono no Komachi²⁸ and Soto’ori Hime²⁹ was in time scattered by the winds of impermanence. Fan K’uai and Chang Liang, in spite of their skill in the military arts, in the end suffered beneath the staves of the wardens of hell. That is why men of feeling in former times wrote poems such as these:

How sad, the evening smoke
from Mount Toribe!
Those who see off the dead one—
how long will they remain?³⁰

Dew on the branch tips,
drops on the trunk—
all sooner or later
must vanish from this world.³¹

“This rule of life, that if one does not die sooner one will surely die later, should not at this late date come as a

surprise to you. But the thing that you should desire above all is the way of the Buddha, and what you should continually seek are the teachings of the sutras. Now, from what you have told me about the Buddhist doctrines you have encountered, I can see that some of them belong to the Hinayana division of Buddhism and some to the Mahayana. But, leaving aside for the moment the question of which is superior and which inferior, I can say that, far from bringing you deliverance, the practice of these teachings will lead to rebirth in the evil paths.”

At this the unenlightened man exclaimed in surprise: “But were not all the sacred teachings that the Buddha expounded throughout his lifetime designed to benefit living beings? From the time of the preaching of the Flower Garland Sutra at the seven places and eight assemblies, down to the ceremony in which the Nirvana Sutra was expounded on the banks of the Ajitavati River, all the doctrines were taught by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. Though one may perhaps be able to distinguish certain small degrees of relative merit among them, how could any of them possibly be the cause for rebirth in the evil paths?”

The sage replied: “The sacred teachings that the Thus Come One proclaimed in the course of his lifetime may be divided into the categories of provisional and true, Hinayana and Mahayana. In addition, they may be classified according to the two paths of the exoteric and the esoteric. Thus they are not all of the same sort. Let me for a moment explain the general nature of the teachings and thus relieve you of your misunderstandings.

“When Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings in the threefold world, was nineteen years old, he left the city of Gaya and went into retreat on Mount Dandaka,³² where he carried out various difficult and painful austerities. He

attained enlightenment at the age of thirty and, at that time, instantly banished the three categories of illusion and brought to an end the vast night of ignorance. It might appear that he should at that time have preached the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in order to fulfill his original vow. But he knew that the people varied greatly in their capacities, and that they did not have the receptivity to understand the Buddha vehicle. Therefore, he devoted the following forty years and more to developing the people's inherent capacity. Then, in the last eight years of his life, he fulfilled the purpose of his advent in the world by preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.

"Thus it was that, when the Buddha was seventy-two, he preached the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra and therein stated: 'In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation for six years under the bodhi tree and was able to gain supreme perfect enlightenment. With the Buddha eye I observed all phenomena and knew that this enlightenment could not be explained or described. Why? Because I knew that living beings are not alike in their natures and their desires. And because their natures and desires are not alike, I preached the Law in various different ways. Preaching the Law in various different ways, I made use of the power of expedient means. But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.'

"The meaning of this passage is that, when the Buddha was thirty years of age, seated in the place of enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he observed the inner heart of all living beings with the Buddha eye and realized that it was not the proper time to preach to them the Lotus Sutra, which reveals the direct way to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. Therefore, as one would wave an emp-

ty fist about to humor a little baby, he resorted to various expedient means, and for the following forty years and more he refrained from revealing the truth. Thus he defined the period of the expedient teachings as clearly as the sun rising in the blue sky or the full moon coming up on a dark night.

"In view of this passage, why should we, with the very same faith that could just as easily be directed toward the Lotus Sutra, cling to the provisional teachings of the sutras that preceded the Lotus, those doctrines defined by the Buddha to be empty, and as a result keep returning to the same old dwelling in the threefold world, with which we are already so familiar?

"Therefore, in the 'Expedient Means' chapter in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha says, 'Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.' This passage indicates that one should honestly discard the teachings that the Buddha set forth in the various sutras preached in the previous forty-two years, namely, the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts doctrines to which you referred.

"The meaning of this passage is perfectly clear. And, in addition, we have the warning delivered in the 'Simile and Parable' chapter in the second volume, 'desiring only to accept and embrace the sutra of the great vehicle and not accepting a single verse of the other sutras.' This passage is saying that, no matter what year of the Buddha's life a sutra may have been preached in, one should not accept even a single verse from any of the sutras other than the Lotus Sutra.

"The varying doctrines of the eight schools are as numerous as so many orchids and chrysanthemums, and priests and lay believers differ in appearance, yet they all agree in claiming to cherish the Lotus Sutra. But how do they interpret these passages from

the Lotus Sutra that I have just cited? These passages speak of 'honestly discarding' the earlier teachings and forbid one to accept so much as a single verse from any of the other sutras. But are the doctrines of Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts not based on the 'other sutras'?

"Now this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law I have been speaking of represents the true reason why all Buddhas make their advent in the world and teaches the direct way to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. Shakyamuni Buddha entrusted it to his disciples, Many Treasures Buddha testified to its veracity, and the other Buddhas extended their tongues up to the Brahma heaven, proclaiming, 'All that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!'³³ Every single character in this sutra represents the true intention of the Buddhas, and every brushstroke of it is a source of aid to those who repeat the cycle of birth and death. There is not a single word in it that is untrue.

"Is not one who fails to heed the warnings of this sutra in effect cutting off the tongues of the Buddhas and deceiving the worthies and sages? This offense is truly fearful. Thus, in the second volume it says, 'If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world.'³⁴ The meaning of this passage is that, if one turns one's back on even one verse or one phrase of this sutra, one is guilty of a crime equal to that of killing all the Buddhas of the ten directions in the three existences of past, present, and future.

"If we use the teachings of the sutras as a mirror in which to examine our present world, we will see that it is a difficult thing to find one who does not betray the Lotus Sutra. And if we understand the true meaning of these matters, we can see that even a person

of disbelief cannot avoid being reborn in the hell of incessant suffering. How much more so is this true, then, for someone like the Honorable Honen, the founder of the Nembutsu school, who urged people to discard the Lotus Sutra in favor of the Nembutsu! Where, may I ask, in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras is there any passage that instructs us to discard the Lotus Sutra?

"The Reverend Shan-tao, who was revered as a practitioner who had gained enlightenment through the attainment of meditation and honored as a living incarnation of Amida Buddha, designated five kinds of sundry practices that are to be discarded, and said of the Lotus Sutra that 'not even one person in a thousand' could be saved by it; by which he meant that if a thousand people put faith in that sutra not a single one of them will attain Buddhahood. And yet the Lotus Sutra itself says, 'If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.'³⁵ This indicates that if they hear this sutra then all beings in the Ten Worlds, along with their environments, will attain the Buddha way. Hence the sutra predicts that Devadatta, though he has committed the five cardinal sins, will in the future become a Buddha called the Thus Come One Heavenly King, and tells how the dragon king's daughter, though as a woman subject to the five obstacles and thought to be incapable of attaining Buddhahood, was able instantly to achieve the Buddha way in the southern realm. Thus even the dung beetle can ascend through the six stages of practice and is in no way excluded from achieving Buddhahood.³⁶

"In fact, Shan-tao's words and the passages of the Lotus Sutra are as far apart as heaven and earth, as different as clouds from mud. Which one are we to follow? If we stop to ponder the logic of the matter, we will realize that

Shan-tao is the deadly enemy of all Buddhas and sutras, and the foe of wise priests and humble lay believers alike. If the words of the Lotus Sutra are true, then how can he escape the hell of incessant suffering?"

At these words, the unenlightened man flushed with anger and said: "You are a person of no more than humble station in life, and yet you dare to utter such ugly accusations. I find it very difficult to judge whether you speak out of true understanding or out of delusion, and to tell whether your words stand to reason or not. It behooves us to remember that the Reverend Shan-tao is said to have been a transformed body of Amida the Well Attained³⁷ or of his attendant Bodhisattva Great Power. And the same is said of the Honorable Honen, or that he was a reincarnation of Shan-tao. These were both outstanding men of antiquity, and in addition they had acquired extraordinary merit through their religious practices and commanded the most profound degree of understanding. How could they possibly have fallen into the evil paths?"

The sage replied: "What you say is quite correct, and I too had great respect for these men and believed in them as you do. But in matters of Buddhist doctrines one cannot jump to conclusions simply on the basis of the eminence of the person involved. The words of the sutras are what must come first. Do not make light of a teaching just because the person who preaches it is of humble station. The fox of the kingdom of Bima who recited the twelve-character verse that goes, 'There are those who love life and hate death; there are those who love death and hate life,' was hailed as a teacher by the god Shakra,³⁸ and the demon who recited the sixteen-character verse that begins, 'All is changeable, nothing is constant,' was treated with great honor by the boy Snow Mountains. This was

done, however, not because the fox or the demon was of such eminence, but simply out of respect for the doctrines they taught.

"Therefore, in the sixth volume of the Nirvana Sutra, his final teaching delivered in the grove of sal trees, our merciful father Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, said, 'Rely on the Law and not upon persons.' Even when great bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy and Manjushri, men who have returned³⁹ to the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, expound the Buddhist teachings, if they do not do so with the sutra text in hand, then one should not heed them.

"The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, 'That which accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so.'⁴⁰ Here we see that one should accept what is clearly stated in the text of the sutras, but discard anything that cannot be supported by the text. The Great Teacher Dengyo says, 'Depend upon the preachings of the Buddha, and do not put faith in traditions handed down orally,'⁴¹ which expresses the same idea as the passage from T'ien-t'ai's commentary. And Bodhisattva Nagarjuna says that one should rely on treatises that are faithful to the sutras, but not rely on those that distort the sutras.⁴² This passage may be understood to mean that, even among the various sutras, one should discard the provisional teachings put forth prior to the Lotus Sutra and put one's faith in this sutra, the Lotus. Thus both sutras and treatises make it perfectly clear that one should discard all scriptures other than the Lotus.

"Nowhere in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras listed in the K'ai-yüan era catalog⁴³ do we find a single scriptural passage that expresses disapproval of the Lotus Sutra and advises one to discard it or to cast

it aside, nor any passage that says it is to be classified among the sundry practices and abandoned. If you disagree, you had better find some reliable passage from the sutras that will support your view, so that you may rescue Shan-tao and Honen from their torments in the hell of incessant suffering.

“The practitioners of the Nembutsu in our present day, priests as well as ordinary lay men and women, not only violate the words of the sutras but also go against the instructions of their own teachers. Shan-tao produced a commentary in which he described five kinds of sundry practices that should be abandoned by practitioners of the Nembutsu. Referring to these sundry practices, *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* says: [Shan-tao states as follows:] “Concerning the first of the sundry practices, that of reading and reciting sutras, with the exception of the recitation of the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra and the other sutras that preach rebirth in the Pure Land, the embracing, reading, and recitation of all other sutras, whether Mahayana or Hinayana, exoteric or esoteric, is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . Concerning the third of the sundry practices, that of worshipping, with the exception of worshipping the Buddha Amida, the worshipping or honoring of any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice. Concerning the fourth of the sundry practices, that of calling on the name, with the exception of calling on the name of the Buddha Amida, calling on the name of any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice. Concerning the fifth of the sundry practices, that of praising and giving offerings, with the exception of praises and offerings directed to the Buddha Amida, the praising of and giving of offerings to any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of

this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice.”’

“This passage of commentary is saying that with regard to the first sundry practice, that of reading and reciting sutras, there are fixed rules for priests and lay believers of the Nembutsu, both men and women, concerning which sutras are to be read and which are not to be read. Among the sutras that are not to be read are the Lotus, Benevolent Kings, Medicine Master, Great Collection, Heart, Woman Born as a Man to Become a Buddha, and Life-Prolonging Northern Dipper sutras, and in particular, among the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, the so-called Perceiver of the World’s Sounds Sutra,⁴⁴ which is commonly read by so many people. If one reads so much as a single phrase or a single verse of these sutras, then, although one may be a devoted practitioner of the Nembutsu, one is in fact grouped among those who follow sundry practices and cannot be reborn in the Pure Land. Yet now, as I observe the world with my own eyes, among those who chant the Nembutsu I see many people who read these various sutras, thus going against their teachers and thereby committing one of the seven cardinal sins.⁴⁵

“In addition, in the passage concerning the third kind of sundry practice, that of worshipping, it is said that with the exception of the worship of Amida flanked by two honored bodhisattvas,⁴⁶ the worshipping or honoring of any of the earlier mentioned Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or heavenly gods and benevolent deities is to be regarded as a sundry practice and is forbidden to practitioners of the Nembutsu. But Japan is a land of the gods. It was created by the august deities Izanagi and Izanami,⁴⁷ the Sun Goddess deigns to have her dwelling here, and the Mimosuso River⁴⁸ for many long ages down to the present has continued to flow [through the grounds on which her

shrine is located]. How could anyone who was born in this country heed such an erroneous doctrine! In addition, as we have been born under the all-encompassing sky and enjoy the benefits of the three kinds of luminous bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars, it would be a most fearful thing if we should show disrespect to the gods of these heavenly bodies.

“Again, in the passage concerning the fourth kind of sundry practice, that of calling on the name, it says that there are certain names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas that the Nembutsu believer is to call on, and certain names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas that he is not to call on. The names he is to call on are those of the Buddha Amida and his two honored attendants. The names he is not to call on are those of Shakyamuni, Medicine Master, Mahavairochana, and the other Buddhas; those of the bodhisattvas Earth Repository, Universal Worthy, and Manjushri, the gods of the sun, moon, and stars; the deities of the shrines in Izu and Hakone, Mishima Shrine, Kumano Shrine, and Haguro Shrine; the Sun Goddess; and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. If anyone so much as once recites any of these names, then, although he may recite the Nembutsu a hundred thousand or a million times, because he committed the error of calling on the name of one of these Buddhas, bodhisattvas, the gods of the sun and moon, and other deities, he will fall into the hell of incessant suffering and fail to be reborn in the Pure Land. But when I look about at the world, I find Nembutsu believers who call on the names of these various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly gods, and benevolent deities. Thus, in this matter as well, they are going against the instructions of their own teachers.

“In the passage concerning the fifth sundry practice, that of praising and giving offerings, the Nembutsu believer is enjoined to make offerings to the

Buddha Amida and his two bodhisattva attendants. But if he should offer even a little bit of incense or a few flowers to the earlier mentioned Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or heavenly gods and benevolent deities, then, although the merit he has gained from the Nembutsu practice may be laudable, because of the error he has committed, he is condemned to be classified among those who carry out sundry practices. And yet, when I look around the world, I see the Nembutsu believers paying visits to various shrines and offering streamers of paper or cloth, or entering various Buddhist halls and bowing in reverence there. In this, too, they are going against the instructions of their teachers. If you doubt what I say, then look at the text of *Nembutsu Chosen above All*. It is very clear on these points.

“Again, *The Teaching on Meditation Sutra*⁴⁹ by the Reverend Shan-tao says: ‘With regard to intoxicants, meat, and the five strong-flavored foods,⁵⁰ one must vow never to lay a hand on them, never to let one’s mouth taste them. One must pledge, “If I should go against these words, then may foul sores break out on both my body and mouth!”’ The meaning of this passage is that the Nembutsu believers, men and women lay believers, nuns and priests alike, must not drink wine and must not eat fish or fowl. In addition, they must not eat any of the five strong-flavored foods, the pungent or strong-smelling foods such as leeks or garlic. If any Nembutsu believers fail to abide by this rule, then in their present life they will find foul sores breaking out on their bodies, and in the next life they will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. In fact, however, we find many Nembutsu laymen and laywomen, nuns and priests, who pay no heed to this prohibition but drink as much wine and eat as much fish and fowl as they please. They are in

effect swallowing knives with which to wound themselves, are they not?"

Thereupon the unenlightened man said: "In truth, as I listen to your description of the doctrine, I can see that, even if the Nembutsu teaching could in fact lead one to rebirth in the Pure Land, its observances and practices are very difficult to carry out. And of course, since the sutras and treatises upon which it is based all belong to the category of provisional expositions, it is perfectly clear that it can never lead to rebirth in the Pure Land. But surely there is no reason to repudiate the True Word teachings. The Mahavairochana Sutra constitutes the secret teaching of Mahavairochana, the King of Enlightenment. It has been handed down in an unbroken line of transmission from the Thus Come One Mahavairochana to Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung. And in Japan the Great Teacher Kobo spread the teachings concerning the mandalas of the Diamond Realm and the Womb Realm. These are secret and arcane teachings that concern the thirty-seven honored ones.⁵¹ Therefore, the most profound doctrines of the exoteric teachings cannot compare even to the elementary stages of the esoteric teachings. Hence the Great Teacher Chisho of Goto-in temple⁵² stated in his commentary, 'Even the Lotus Sutra cannot compare [to the Mahavairochana Sutra], much less the other doctrines.'⁵³ Now what is your view on this matter?"

The sage replied: "At first I too placed my trust in the Thus Come One Mahavairochana and desired to carry out the teachings of the True Word school. But when I investigated the basic doctrines of the school, I found that they are founded on views that in fact are a slander of the correct teaching.

"The Great Teacher Kobo of Mount Koya, of whom you have spoken, was a teacher who lived in the time of

Emperor Saga. He received a mandate from the emperor directing him to determine and explain the relative profundity of the various Buddhist teachings. In response, he produced a work in ten volumes entitled *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*. Because this work is so broad and comprehensive, he made a condensation of it in three volumes, which bears the title *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*. This work describes ten stages in the development of the mind, from the first stage, the 'mind of lowly man, goatish in its desire,'⁵⁴ to the last stage, the 'glorious mind, the most secret and sacred.'⁵⁵ He assigns the Lotus Sutra to the eighth stage, the Flower Garland Sutra to the ninth stage, and the True Word teachings [of the Mahavairochana Sutra] to the tenth stage. Thus he ranks the Lotus Sutra as inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra, and as two stages below the Mahavairochana Sutra. In this work, he writes, 'Each vehicle that is put forward is claimed to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but when examined from a later stage,⁵⁶ they are all seen to be mere childish theory.' He also characterizes the Lotus Sutra as a work of 'wild words and ornate phrases,' and disparages Shakyamuni Buddha as being lost in the region of darkness.

"As a result, Kobo's disciple in a later age, Shokaku-bo, the founder of Dembo-in temple, was led to write that the Lotus Sutra is not fit even to be a sandal-tender for the Mahavairochana Sutra, and that Shakyamuni Buddha is not worthy even to serve as an ox-driver for the Thus Come One Mahavairochana.⁵⁷

"Still your thoughts and listen to what I say. In all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras that the Buddha preached during his lifetime, or the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist scriptures, is there anywhere a passage clearly stating that the Lotus Sutra is

a doctrine of 'childish theory,' or that it ranks two stages below the Mahavairochana Sutra, being inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra as well, or that Shakyamuni Buddha is lost in the region of darkness and is not worthy even to serve as an ox-driver to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana? And even if such a passage did exist, one would certainly have to examine it with great care.

"When the Buddhist sutras and teachings were brought from India to China, the manner of translation depended upon the inclination of the particular translator, and there were no fixed translations for the sutras and treatises. Hence the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva of the Later Ch'in dynasty always used to say: 'When I examine the Buddhist teachings as they exist in China, I find that in many cases they differ from the Sanskrit originals. If the sutra translations that I have produced are free from error, then, after I am dead and cremated, my body, since it is impure, will no doubt be consumed by the flames, but my tongue alone will not be burned.' And when he was finally cremated, his body was reduced to a pile of bones, but his tongue alone remained, resting on top of a blue lotus blossom and emitting a brilliant light that outshone the rays of the sun. What a wonderful thing!

"Thus it came about that the translation of the Lotus Sutra made by the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva in particular spread easily throughout China. And that is why, when the Great Teacher Kompon [Dengyo] of Enryakuji attacked the teachings of the other schools, he refuted them by saying, 'We have proof in the fact that the tongue of the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva, the translator of the Lotus Sutra, was not consumed by the flames. The sutras that you rely upon are all in error.'

"Again, in the Nirvana Sutra the Buddha says that, when his teachings are transmitted to other countries,

many errors are bound to be introduced into them. Even if among sutra passages we were to find the Lotus Sutra characterized as useless, or Shakyamuni Buddha described as a Buddha lost in the region of darkness, we should inquire very carefully to see whether the text that makes such statements belongs to the provisional teachings or the true teaching, to the Mahayana or the Hinayana, whether it was preached in the earlier or the later part of the Buddha's life, and who the translator was.

"It is said that Lao Tzu and Confucius thought nine times before uttering a single word, or three times before uttering a single word. And Tan, the Duke of Chou, was so eager to receive his callers that he would spit out his food three times in the course of a meal and wring out his hair three times in the course of washing it [in order not to keep them waiting]. If even the people described in the shallow, non-Buddhist writings behaved with such care and circumspection, then how much more so should those who study the profound doctrines of the Buddhist scriptures!

"Now nowhere in the sutras and treatises do we find the slightest evidence to support this contention [that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra]. The Great Teacher Kobo's own commentary says that one who slanders persons and disparages the correct teaching will fall into the evil paths.⁵⁸ A person like Kobo will invariably fall into hell—there can be no doubt of it."

The unenlightened man seemed to be dazed, and then suddenly began to sigh. After some time, he said: "The Great Teacher Kobo was an expert in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings and a leader of the masses. In virtuous practices he excelled the others of his time, and his reputation was known everywhere. It is said that when

he was in China he hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder⁵⁹ all the way across the more than eighty thousand *ri* of the ocean until it reached Japan, and that when he expounded the meaning of the Heart Sutra so many sufferers from the plague recovered their health that they filled the streets. Thus he was surely no ordinary person, but a manifestation of a great sage in temporal form. We can hardly fail to hold him in esteem and put faith in his teachings."

The sage replied: "I at first thought the same way. But after I entered the path of the Buddha's teachings and began to distinguish what accords with its principles from what does not, I realized that the ability to perform miraculous acts at will does not necessarily constitute a basis for determining the truth or falsity of Buddhist teachings. That is why the Buddha laid down the rule that we should 'rely on the Law and not upon persons,' which I mentioned earlier.

"The ascetic Agastya poured the Ganges River into one ear and kept it there for twelve years, the ascetic Jinu drank the great ocean dry in a single day, Chang Chieh exhaled fog, and Luan Pa exhaled clouds.⁶⁰ But this does not mean that they knew what is correct and what is not in the Buddhist teachings, or that they understood the principle of cause and effect. In China, when the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün lectured on the Lotus Sutra, in no time at all flowers came raining down from the heavens. But the Great Teacher Miao-lo said, 'Though he could bring about a response in this way, his understanding still did not accord with the truth [of the Lotus Sutra].'⁶¹ Thus Miao-lo accused him of having failed to understand the truth of Buddhism.

"The Lotus Sutra rejects the three categories of preaching—that done by the Buddha in the past, the present, and the future.⁶² It refutes the sutras

preached before it, saying that in them the Buddha had 'not yet revealed the truth.'⁶³ It attacks the sutras of the same period by declaring itself superior to those 'now being preached,' and repudiates the sutras expounded later by stating that it excels all those 'to be preached.' In fact, the Lotus Sutra is first among all sutras preached in the three periods of past, present, and future.

"In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra, we read, 'Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!'⁶⁴ This passage means that at the gathering on Eagle Peak the Buddha addressed Bodhisattva Medicine King and told him that, beginning with the Flower Garland Sutra and ending with the Nirvana Sutra, there were countless sutras numbering as many as the sands of the Ganges, but that among all these the Lotus Sutra that he was then preaching held first place. But evidently the Great Teacher Kobo took the word 'first' to mean 'third.'

"In the same volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha says, 'For the sake of the Buddha way in immeasurable numbers of lands from the beginning until now I have widely preached many sutras, and among them this sutra is foremost.'⁶⁵ This passage means that Shakyamuni Buddha has appeared in countless lands, taking different names, and assuming varying life spans. And it establishes that, among all the sutras he has preached in the various forms in which he manifested himself, the Lotus Sutra holds first place.

"In the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, it is stated that 'it holds the highest place,'⁶⁶ making clear that this sutra stands above the Mahavairocana, Diamond Crown, and all the other countless sutras. But evidently the Great Teacher Kobo read this as 'it holds the lowest place.' Thus Shakyamuni and Kobo, the Lotus Sutra and *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, are in fact com-

pletely at odds with each other. Do you intend to reject Shakyamuni and follow Kobo? Or will you reject Kobo and follow Shakyamuni? Will you go against the text of the sutra and accept the words of an ordinary teacher? Or will you reject the words of an ordinary teacher and honor the golden words of the Buddha? Think carefully before you decide what to accept and what to reject.

“Furthermore, in the ‘Medicine King’ chapter in volume seven, ten similes are offered in praise of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The first simile concerns water, and in it streams and rivers are likened to the other various sutras and the great ocean to the Lotus Sutra. Thus, if anyone should assert that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior and the Lotus Sutra inferior, he is in effect saying that the great ocean holds less water than does a little stream. Everyone in the world today understands that the ocean exceeds the various rivers in size, and yet they fail to realize that the Lotus Sutra is the foremost among sutras.

“The second simile concerns mountains. Ordinary mountains are likened to the other sutras and Mount Sumeru to the Lotus Sutra. Mount Sumeru measures 168,000 yojanas from top to bottom; what other mountain could compare with it? To say that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra is like saying that Mount Fuji is bigger than Mount Sumeru.

“The third simile deals with the moon and stars. The other sutras are likened to the stars, and the Lotus Sutra is likened to the moon. Comparing the moon and the stars, can anyone be in doubt as to which is superior?

“Later on in the series of similes, we read, ‘This sutra likewise is foremost among all the sutra teachings preached by all the Thus Come Ones, preached by all the bodhisattvas, or preached by all the voice-hearers.’

“This passage tells us that the Lotus Sutra not only is the foremost among all the doctrines preached by Shakyamuni Buddha in the course of his lifetime, but also holds first place among all the teachings and sutras preached by Buddhas such as Mahavairochana, Medicine Master, or Amida, and by bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy or Manjushri. Therefore, if anyone should assert that there exists a sutra superior to the Lotus, you must understand that he is expounding the views of the followers of non-Buddhist teachings or of the heavenly devil.

“Moreover, as to the identity of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who had been enlightened from remote ages past, for forty-two years dimmed his light and mingled with the dust of the world, adapting himself to the capacities of the people of the time, he, a Thus Come One who unites the three bodies in one, temporarily assumed the form of Vairochana.⁶⁷ Therefore, when Shakyamuni Buddha revealed the true aspect of all phenomena,⁶⁸ it became clear that Vairochana was a temporary form that Shakyamuni had manifested in response to the capacities of the people. For this reason, the Universal Worthy Sutra says that Shakyamuni Buddha is given the name Vairochana Pervading Everywhere, and that the place where that Buddha lives is called Eternally Tranquil Light.

“Now the Lotus Sutra expounds the doctrines of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, a single moment of life comprising the three thousand realms, the unification of the three truths, and the inseparability of the four kinds of lands. Moreover, the very essence of all the sacred teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha in his lifetime—the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles can achieve Buddhahood, and that the Buddha attained

enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past—is found only in this one sutra, the Lotus. Is there any mention of these most important matters in the three esoteric sutras you have been talking about, the Mahavairochana Sutra, the Diamond Crown Sutra, and so forth? Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung stole these most important doctrines from the Lotus Sutra and contrived to make them the essential points of their own sutras. But in fact this is a fraud; their own sutras and treatises contain no trace of these doctrines. You must make haste and remedy your thinking on this point.

“The fact is that the Mahavairochana Sutra includes each of the four types of teachings⁶⁹ and expounds the kind of precepts whose benefit is exhausted

when the bodily form comes to an end.⁷⁰ It is a provisional teaching, designated by Chinese teachers⁷¹ as a sutra belonging to the Correct and Equal category, the group of sutras that, according to T'ien-t'ai's classification, were preached in the third period. How shameful [to hold it above the Lotus]! If you really have a mind to pursue the way, you must hurry and repent of your past errors. In the final analysis, this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law sums up all the teachings and meditational practices of Shakyamuni Buddha's entire lifetime in a single moment of life, and encompasses all the living beings of the Ten Worlds and their environments in the three thousand realms.”

PART TWO

AT this, the unenlightened man looked somewhat mollified and said: “The words of the sutra are clear as a mirror; there is no room to doubt or question their meaning. But although the Lotus Sutra surpasses all the other sutras that the Buddha taught before, at the same time, or after, and represents the highest point in his preaching life, still it cannot compare with the single truth of Zen, which cannot be bound by words or confined in the text of a sutra, and which deals with the true nature of our minds. In effect, the realm where the countless doctrines are all cast aside and where words cannot reach is what is called the truth of Zen.

“Thus, on the banks of the Ajitavati River, in the grove of sal trees, Shakyamuni Buddha stepped out of his golden coffin, twirled a flower, and, when he saw Mahakashyapa's faint smile, entrusted this teaching of Zen to him. Since then, it has been handed down

without any irregularity through a lineage of twenty-eight patriarchs in India, and was widely propagated by a succession of six patriarchs in China. Bodhidharma is the last of the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and the first of the six patriarchs of China. We must not allow this transmission to be lost, and founder in the nets of doctrine.

“So, in the Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma's Questions, the Buddha says: ‘I have a subtle teaching concerning the eye and treasury of the correct teaching, the wonderful mind of nirvana, the true aspect of reality that is without characteristics. It represents a separate transmission outside the sutras, independent of words or writing. I entrust it to Mahakashyapa.’

“Thus we see that this single truth of Zen was transmitted to Mahakashyapa apart from the sutras. All the teachings of the sutras are like a finger pointing at the moon. Once we have seen the

moon, what use do we have for the finger? And once we have understood this single truth of Zen, the true nature of the mind, why should we concern ourselves any longer with the Buddha's teachings? Therefore, a man of past times has said, "The twelve divisions of the scriptures are all idle writings."

"If you will open and read *The Platform Sutra* of Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of this school, you will see that this is true. Once one has heard even a single word and thereby grasped and understood the truth, what use does one have for the teachings? How do you consider this principle?"

The sage replied: "You must first of all set aside the doctrines for the moment and consider the logic of the matter. Can anyone, without inquiring into the essential meaning of the Buddha's lifetime teachings or investigating the basic principles of the ten schools, presume to admonish the nation and teach others? This Zen that you are talking about is something that I have studied exhaustively for some time. In view of the extreme doctrines that it teaches, I must say that it is a highly distorted affair.

"There are three types of Zen, known respectively as Thus Come One Zen, doctrinal Zen, and patriarchal Zen.⁷² What you are referring to is patriarchal Zen, and I would therefore like to give you a general idea of it. So listen, and understand what it is about.

"It speaks of transmitting something apart from the teachings. But apart from the teachings there are no principles, and apart from principles there are no teachings. Don't you understand the logic of this, that principles are none other than teachings and teachings none other than principles? This talk about the twirled flower, the faint smile, and something being entrusted to Mahakashyapa is in itself a teaching, and the four-character phrase about its being 'independent of words or writ-

ing' is likewise a teaching and a statement in words. This sort of talk has been around for a long while in both China and Japan. It may appear novel to you, but let me quote one or two passages that will clear up your misconceptions.

"Volume eleven of *The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works* states: 'If one says that we are not to hamper ourselves by the use of verbal expressions, then how, for even an instant in this saha world, can we carry on the Buddha's work? Do the Zen followers themselves not use verbal explanations when they are giving instruction to others? If one sets aside words and phrases, then there is no way to explain the meaning of emancipation, so how can anyone ever hear about it?'

"Farther on, we read: 'It is said that Bodhidharma came from the west and taught the "direct pointing to the mind of man" and "perceiving one's true nature and attaining Buddhahood." But are these same concepts not found in the Flower Garland Sutra and in the other Mahayana sutras? Alas, how can the people of our time be so foolish! You should all put faith in the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, tell no lies!'

"To restate the meaning of this passage: if one objects that we are hampering ourselves with doctrinal writings and tying ourselves down with verbal explanations, and recommends a type of religious practice that is apart from the teachings of the sutras, then by what means are we to carry on the Buddha's work and make good causes in this saha world of ours? Even the followers of Zen, who advocate these views, themselves make use of words when instructing others. In addition, when one is trying to convey an understanding of the Buddha way, one cannot communicate the meaning if one sets aside words and phrases. Bodhidharma came to China from the west,

pointed directly to people's minds, and declared that those minds were Buddha. But this principle is enunciated in various places even in the provisional Mahayana sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra, such as the Flower Garland, Great Collection, and Great Wisdom sutras. To treat it as such a rare and wonderful thing is too ridiculous for words. Alas, how can the people of our time be so distorted in their thinking! They should put their faith in the words of truth spoken by the Thus Come One of perfect enlightenment and complete reward, who embodies the principle of the Middle Way that is the true aspect of all things.

"In addition, the Great Teacher Miao-lo in the first volume of his *Annotations on 'Great Concentration and Insight'* comments on this situation by saying, "The people of today look with contempt on the sutra teachings and emphasize only the contemplation of truth, but they are making a great mistake, a great mistake indeed!"

"This passage applies to the people in the world today who put meditation on the mind and various other things first, and do not delve into or study the teachings of the sutras. On the contrary, they despise the teachings and make light of the sutras. This passage is saying that this is a mistake.

"Moreover, I should point out that the Zen followers of the present age are confused as to the teachings of their own school. If we open the pages of *The Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests*, we find that in the biography of the Great Teacher Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Zen in China, it states, 'By means of the teachings one can understand the essential meaning.' Therefore, one should study and practice the principles embodied in the sacred teachings preached by the Thus Come One in the course of his lifetime and thereby gain an understanding of the substance of the various doctrines

and the nature of the different schools.

"Furthermore, in the biography of Bodhidharma's disciple, Hui-k'o, the second of the six Chinese patriarchs, it states that the Meditation Master Bodhidharma handed over the four volumes of the Lankavatara Sutra to Hui-k'o, saying: 'Observing this land of China, I find only this sutra to be of real worth. If you base your practice on it, you will be able to bring salvation to the world.' Here we see that, when the Great Teacher Bodhidharma came from India to China, he brought the four volumes of the Lankavatara Sutra and handed them over to Hui-k'o, saying: 'When I observe the situation in this country, I see that this sutra is of outstanding superiority. You should abide by it and put it into practice and become a Buddha.'

"As we have just seen, these patriarch-teachers placed primary emphasis on the sutra texts. But if we therefore say that one must rely on the sutras, then we must take care to inquire whether those sutras belong to the Mahayana or the Hinayana, whether they are the provisional teachings or the true teaching.

"When it comes to making use of sutras, the Zen school relies on such works as the Lankavatara Sutra, the Shurangama Sutra, and the Diamond Wisdom Sutra. These are all provisional teachings that were preached before the Lotus Sutra, doctrines that conceal the truth.

"These various sutras expound partial truths such as 'the mind itself is the Buddha, and the Buddha is none other than the mind.' The Zen followers have allowed themselves to be led astray by one or two such sentences and phrases, failing to inquire whether they represent the Mahayana or the Hinayana, the provisional teachings or the true teaching, the doctrines that reveal the truth or the doctrines that conceal it. They merely advance the

principle of nonduality without understanding the principle of duality,⁷³ and commit an act of great arrogance, claiming that they themselves are equal to the Buddha. They are following in the tracks of the Great Arrogant Brahman of India and imitating the old ways of the Meditation Master San-chieh of China. But we should recall that the Great Arrogant Brahman, while still alive, fell into the hell of incessant suffering, and that San-chieh, after he died, turned into a huge snake. How frightful, how frightful indeed!

“Shakyamuni Buddha, with his understanding that had penetrated the three existences, and by the light of the clear wisdom-moon of perfect enlightenment and complete reward, peered into the future and, in the Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law, made this prediction: ‘Among the evil monks there will be those who practice meditation and, instead of relying on the sutras and treatises, heed only their own view of things, declaring wrong to be right. Unable to distinguish between what is correct and what is erroneous, all they will do is face monks and lay believers and declare in this fashion, “I can understand what is right, I can see what is right.” You should understand that it is people like this who will destroy my teachings in no time at all.’

“This passage is saying that there will be evil monks who put all their faith in Zen and do not delve into the sutras and treatises. They will base themselves on distorted views and fail to distinguish between false and true doctrines. Moreover, they will address themselves to men and women believers, monks and nuns, declaring, ‘I can understand the doctrines, but other people do not,’ in this way working to spread the Zen teachings. But you should understand that these people will destroy the correct teaching of the Buddha. If we examine this passage and observe the

state of the world today, we see that the two match each other as perfectly as do the two halves of a tally. Be careful! There is much to fear here.

“You spoke earlier of twenty-eight patriarchs of India who orally transmitted this Zen doctrine, but on what evidence is such a statement based? All the texts I have seen speak of twenty-four or, in some cases, twenty-three persons who transmitted the Buddha’s teachings. Where is the translation that establishes the number of patriarchs as twenty-eight? I have never seen such a statement. This matter of the persons who were involved in the line of transmission of the Buddha’s teachings is not something that one can simply write about arbitrarily. The Thus Come One himself left a clear record of what the line of transmission would be.

“Thus, in *A History of the Buddha’s Successors*, it states: ‘There will be a monk by the name of Aryasimha living in the kingdom of Kashmir who will strive vigorously to accomplish the Buddha’s work. At that time the ruler of the kingdom will be named Mirakutsu,⁷⁴ a man who gives himself up wholly to false views and has no reverence or faith in his heart. Throughout the kingdom of Kashmir, he will destroy Buddhist temples and stupas and slaughter monks. He will take a sharp sword and use it to cut off Aryasimha’s head. But no blood will spurt from his neck; only milk will come flowing out. With this, the line of persons who transmit the Law will be cut off.’

“To restate this passage: The Buddha says that, after he passes into nirvana, there will be a succession of twenty-four persons who will transmit his teachings. Among these, the last to carry on the line of transmission will be a monk named Aryasimha, who will work to spread the Buddha’s teachings throughout the kingdom called Kashmir. The ruler of this state will be a

man named King Dammira. He will be a person of false views and profligate ways, who has no faith in the Buddha's teachings and no reverence for the monks. He will destroy Buddhist halls and stupas and use a sword to cut off the heads of the monks. And when he cuts off the head of the monk Aryasimha, there will be no blood in his neck; only milk will come flowing out. The Buddha declares that at this time the line of persons who transmit his teachings will be cut off.

"The actual events did not in any way differ from the Buddha's predictions; the Venerable Aryasimha's head was in fact cut off. And as his head fell to the ground, so too did the arm of the king.

"It is a gross error to speak of twenty-eight patriarchs. This is the beginning of the errors of the Zen school. The reason that Hui-neng lists twenty-eight patriarchs in his *Platform Sutra* is that, when he decided to treat Bodhidharma as the first patriarch of Chinese Zen, he found that there were too many years between the time of Aryasimha and that of Bodhidharma. He therefore arbitrarily inserted the names of three Zen teachers to fill up the interval, so that he could make it seem as though the Law had been transmitted from India to China without any break or irregularity in the line of transmission. It was all a fabrication designed to make people respect the Zen teachings.

"This deception was put forth long ago in China. Thus, the eleventh volume of *Three Major Works* states: 'In our [T'ien-t'ai] school, we recognize a transmission through twenty-three patriarchs. How could there be any error in this view? Concerning the claim that there were twenty-eight patriarchs, we can find no translation of a source that supports such a view. Recently Zen priests have even produced carvings in stone and wood-

block engravings, each with a sacred verse attached, which represent the seven Buddhas and the twenty-eight patriarchs, handing these down to their disciples. Alas, how can there be such blatant falsehoods! If persons of understanding have any power at all, they should do everything they can to correct such abuses.'

"This text is saying that to assert a transmission through a line of twenty-eight patriarchs and to produce stone carvings and wood-block engravings of them to indicate the line of transmission are highly mistaken undertakings, and that anyone who understands this should work to correct such errors. This is why I say that patriarchal Zen is a gravely erroneous affair.

"Earlier, you quoted a passage from the Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma's Questions to prove your contention that Zen is 'a separate transmission outside the sutras.' But by quoting a sutra passage you were already contradicting your own assertion. Moreover, this sutra represents the provisional teachings, and in addition, it is not listed either in the K'ai-yüan or the Chen-yüan era catalog of Buddhist works. Thus we see that it is a work unlisted in the catalogs and a provisional teaching as well. Hence the scholars of our time do not refer to it; it cannot be used to prove anything.

"Coming now to the Lotus Sutra, we should note the groups that benefited when it was preached. When the doctrine of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, or three thousand realms in a single moment of life, was expounded in the theoretical teaching, the people of the two vehicles, who had been likened to rotten seeds, had the seeds of Buddhahood sprout. In the previous forty-two years of the Buddha's preaching, these persons had been condemned as incapable of ever attaining Buddhahood. In every gathering

and assembly, they heard nothing but curses and slander spoken against them and were shunned by all those of the human and heavenly realms, until it seemed that they were destined to die of hunger. But now, when the Lotus Sutra was preached, it was predicted that Shariputra would become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Maudgalyayana would become the Thus Come One Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance, that Ananda would become Mountain Sea Wisdom Unrestricted Power King Buddha, that Rahula would become the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers, that the five hundred arhats would become the Thus Come Ones Universal Brightness, and that the two thousand voice-hearers would become the Thus Come Ones Jewel Sign. And on the day when the Buddha's life span from the time he attained enlightenment in the remote past was revealed, the bodhisattvas who were as countless as particles of dust increased in their understanding of the way, discarded their still remaining illusions, and attained the last stage before the level of supreme enlightenment.

"Now, if we examine the commentary of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, it states: 'The other sutras tell us that although the bodhisattvas may become Buddhas those persons of the two vehicles can never do so. Good people can become Buddhas, we are told, but there is no indication that evil ones can do likewise. Men, it is said, can become Buddhas, but women are branded as messengers of hell. Human and heavenly beings can attain Buddhahood, but it is nowhere stated that nonhuman creatures can do so. And yet, in this sutra, it is stated that all of these beings can attain Buddhahood.'⁷⁵

"What a wonderful thing this is! Though we have been born in the impure world in the Latter Day of the Law, we have committed neither the

five cardinal sins nor the three cardinal sins⁷⁶ as Devadatta did. And yet it was predicted that even Devadatta would in time become the Thus Come One Heavenly King, so how much more should it be possible for persons like us, who have committed no such sins, to attain Buddhahood! And the eight-year-old dragon king's daughter, without changing her reptilian form, attained the wonderful fruit of Buddhahood in the southern realm.⁷⁷ Therefore, how much more likely is it that women who have been born into the human realm should be able to do so!

"It is most difficult to be born in human form, and extremely rare to encounter the correct teaching. Now, if you want to rid yourself quickly of erroneous beliefs and adhere to what is correct, transform your status as a common mortal and attain that of Buddhahood, then you should abandon the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts teachings and embrace this wonderful text of the single vehicle.⁷⁸ If you do so, you will without a doubt be able to shake off the dust and defilement of delusion and impurity, and manifest yourself as a pure embodiment of enlightenment."

Then the unenlightened man said: "Listening to the teachings and admonitions of a sage like you, I find that the misunderstandings I have labored under in recent days are all suddenly dispelled. It is as though inherent wisdom had awakened within me. When right and wrong are made so clear, who could fail to take faith?"

"And yet, when I look at the world around me, I find that, from the supreme ruler on down to the numberless common people, all place deep trust in the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts teachings. Since I have been born in this land, how could I go against the example of the ruler?"

"Moreover, my parents and ancestors all put their faith in the principles of

the Nembutsu and other teachings, and in that faith they ended their lives and vanished into the clouds of the other world.

"Here in Japan, there are, to be sure, a great many people, both eminent and humble. Yet, while those who adhere to the provisional teachings and the schools based upon them are numerous, I have yet to hear the name of a single individual who puts faith in the teachings that you have been explaining. Therefore, leaving aside the question of which teachings will lead to good places in the next life and which will lead to bad ones, and not attempting to inquire which teachings are true and which false, we find that the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of the Buddhist scriptures and the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist writings all emphasize the importance of obeying the orders of the ruler and complying with the wishes of one's parents.

"In India, Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, expounded the principles of carrying out filial conduct and repaying one's obligations, and in China, Confucius set forth the way of giving loyal service to the ruler and honoring one's parents as filial offspring should. Persons who are determined to repay the debt of gratitude they owe to their teachers would not hesitate to slice off a piece of their own flesh or cast their bodies away. Among those who were aware of the debt of gratitude they owed to their lords, Hung Yen cut open his stomach, and Yü Jang fell on his sword. And among those who were truly mindful of their obligations to their parents, Ting Lan fashioned a wooden image of his deceased mother, and Han Po-yü wept [upon realizing how feeble his aged mother had become] when she beat him with her staff. Though Confucianism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism all differ in their doctrines, they are alike in teaching

one to repay debts of kindness and give thanks for favors received.

"Thus, if I were to be the first one to place faith in a doctrine that neither the ruler, my teacher, nor my parents put faith in, I would surely be guilty of the charge of turning against them, would I not? At the same time, the passages from the sutras that you have quoted make perfectly clear the truth of this doctrine, and all my doubts about it have been resolved. And if I do not prepare myself for the life hereafter, then in my next existence I will find myself submerged in suffering. Whether I try to go forward or to retreat, my way is beset by difficulties. What am I to do?"

The sage replied: "You understand this doctrine, and yet you can say a thing like that. Have you failed to comprehend the logic of the matter? Or is it simply beyond your understanding?"

"Ever since I began to study the Law handed down from Shakyamuni Buddha and undertook the practice of the Buddhist teachings, I have believed it is most important to understand one's obligations to others, and made it my first duty to repay such debts of kindness. In this world, we owe four debts of gratitude. One who understands this is worthy to be called human, while one who does not is no more than an animal.

"As I wish to assist my father and mother to a better life in their next existence and repay the debt that I owe to my country, I am willing to lay down my life, simply because I understand the debt that I owe them and for no other reason.

"Now let me ask you to close your eyes, still your mind, and apply your thoughts to the logic of the matter. If, knowing the best path, one sees one's parents or sovereign taking an evil path, can one fail to admonish them? If a fool, crazed with wine, is about to

drink poison, can one, knowing this, not try to stop him? In the same way, if one understands the truth of the Buddhist teachings and knows the sufferings of fire, blood, and swords,⁷⁹ can one fail to lament at seeing someone to whom one owes a debt of gratitude about to fall into the evil paths? Rather one should cast away one's body and lay down one's life in an effort to save such a person. One will never grow weary of admonishing him, nor will there be limits to one's grief.

"The sufferings that meet our eyes in this present world are lamentable enough. How much more lamentable are those that one will encounter on the long road of death! How can we fail to be pained at the thought of it? A thing to be boundlessly feared is the life hereafter; a matter of greatest concern is the existence to come.

"And yet you say that, without inquiring into what is right and what is wrong, you will follow your parents' orders; without attempting to determine what is correct and what is erroneous, you will obey the words of the sovereign. To a fool, such conduct may appear to be loyal and filial, but in the opinion of a wise person, there can be no greater disloyalty, no greater departure from filial piety.

"Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was a descendant of wheel-turning kings, the grandson of King Simhahanu, and the heir of King Shuddhodana, and should by rights have become a great ruler of the five regions of India. But he awakened to the truth of the impermanence of life and grew to abhor the world, desiring a way to escape this realm of suffering and attain emancipation. King Shuddhodana, grieving at this, cleverly contrived to have the sights of the four seasons displayed to their best advantage in the four directions so that the prince might be diverted from his intention.

"First, in the east, where a break

appeared in the trailing mist, he pointed out the wild geese crying as they made their way back north; the plums blooming by the window, their fragrance wafting through the beaded blinds; the entrancing hues of the flowers; the countless calls of the bush warblers; and the other sights of spring.

"In the south he showed him the crystal colors of the fountains, the deutzia flowers blooming beside the clear-flowing streams, the cuckoos of Shinoda forest,⁸⁰ and the other signs of summer.

"In the west there were the autumn-reddened leaves mingling with the evergreens to weave a pattern of brocade, the breezes blowing gently over the reed flowers, or the stormy winds that swept wildly through the pines. And as if to remind one of the departed summer, there were the fireflies glimmering by the swampside, so numerous that one might mistake them for the stars in the heavens, and the repeated voices of the pine cricket and the bell cricket, bringing one to tears.

"And in the north, before one knew it, there was the melancholy color of withered fields, the rims of the ponds sealed with ice, and the sad sound of the little streams in the valley.

"Not only did the king attempt to console his son's mind by presenting the world to him in this way, he also assigned five hundred soldiers to guard each of the four gates of the palace. But, in the end, when the prince was nineteen, at midnight on the eighth day of the second month, he summoned his groom Chandaka, ordered him to saddle his horse, Kanthaka, and made his way out of the city of Gaya.

"He entered Mount Dandaka, where for twelve years he gathered firewood on the high slopes, drew water in the deep valleys, and performed various austerities and difficult practices. At the age of thirty he attained the wonderful fruit of enlightenment, becom-

ing the only one worthy of honor in the threefold world and the lord of all the teachings that he expounded throughout his life. He brought salvation to his father and mother and opened the way for all living beings. Could such a man be called unfilial?

"The ninety-five schools of Brahmanists were the ones who accused the Buddha of being unfilial. But by disobeying the command of his father and mother and entering the realm of the unconditioned, he was, on the contrary, able to lead his father and mother to salvation, thus demonstrating that he was in fact a model of filial piety.

"King Wonderful Adornment, the father of Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, adhered to the non-Buddhist teachings and turned his back on the teachings of the Buddha. His two sons and heirs disobeyed their father's orders and became disciples of Cloud Thunder Sound King Buddha, but in the end they were able to guide their father so that he became a Buddha called Sal Tree King.⁸¹ Could anyone say, then, that these were unfilial sons?

"There is a passage in a sutra that says, 'By renouncing one's obligations and entering the Buddhist life one can truly repay those obligations in full.'⁸² Thus we see that one who casts aside all bonds of indebtedness and love in this present life and enters into the true path of Buddhism is the one who really understands the meaning of obligations.

"Moreover, I know the depth of the obligation owed to one's ruler far better than you do. If you really wish to show that you understand your debt of gratitude, then you should admonish the ruler from the depths of your heart and forcefully advise him. To follow his orders even when these are contrary to what is right is the act of an utter sycophant and the height of disloyalty.

"King Chou of the Yin dynasty was an evil ruler, and Pi Kan, his loyal min-

ister. When Pi Kan saw that the king was going against what was right in ruling the nation, he vigorously admonished him. As a result, Pi Kan's breast was ripped open, but after his death, King Chou was overthrown by the king of the Chou. To the present day, Pi Kan has been known as a loyal minister, and King Chou as an evil ruler.

"When Kuan Lung-feng admonished his sovereign, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, he was beheaded. But King Chieh has come to be known as an evil ruler, and Kuan Lung-feng as a loyal minister. We are taught that, if one admonishes one's sovereign three times and still one's advice is not heeded, then one should retire to the mountain forests.⁸³ Why do you nevertheless remain silent while the ruler commits misdeeds in your full view?

"I have gathered together a few examples of worthies of ancient times who did in fact retire from the world to dwell in the mountain forests. Open your obstinate ears and listen a moment! During the Yin dynasty, T'ai-kung Wang hid himself in a valley called P'o-ch'i; in the Chou dynasty, Po I and Shu Ch'i secluded themselves on Mount Shou-yang; Ch'i Li-chi⁸⁴ of the Ch'in dynasty retired to Mount Shang; Yen Kuang⁸⁵ of the Han dynasty lived in a solitary lodge; and Chieh Tzu-sui⁸⁶ of the state of Chin became a recluse on Mount Mien-shang. Are we to call these men disloyal? Anyone who would do so is a fool. If you understand what it means to be loyal, you will admonish your sovereign, and if you want to be filial, you must speak up.

"Earlier you said that those who adhere to the provisional teachings and to the schools based on them are very numerous, while those who adhere to the school I have been recommending are few, and you ask why one would abandon the teachings favored by many and take up those favored by few. But

the many are not necessarily worthy of honor, nor the few, deserving of contempt.

"People of wisdom and goodness are rare indeed, while fools and evil persons are numerous. A ch'i-lin is the finest of beasts and a phoenix the finest of birds, yet they are very few in number. On the other hand, cows and sheep, crows and pigeons are among the lowlier and commoner of creatures, and yet they are extremely plentiful. If the many are always worthy while the few are to be despised, should one then cast aside a ch'i-lin in favor of cows and sheep, or pass over a phoenix and instead select crows and pigeons?"

"The mani jewel and the diamond are the most wondrous of all precious stones. These gems are rare, while shards and rubble, clods of earth and common stones are the most useless of objects, and at the same time abound. Now if one follows your advice, ought one to discard the precious jewels and instead content oneself with shards and rubble? How pitiful and meaningless that would be!

"A sage ruler is a rare thing, appearing only once in a thousand years, while a worthy minister appears once in five hundred years. The mani jewel is so rare that we have only heard of it, and who, for that matter, has ever actually seen a ch'i-lin or a phoenix? In both secular and religious realms, as is plain to see, good persons are rare while evil persons are numerous. Why, then, do you insist upon despising the few and favoring the many? Dirt and sand are plentiful, but rice and other grains are rare. The bark of trees is available in great quantities, but hemp and silk fabrics are hard to come by. You should put the truth of the teaching before everything else; certainly you should not base your judgment on the number of adherents."

The unenlightened man thereupon moved off his mat in a gesture of

respect, straightened his sleeves, and said: "I have heard what you stated about the principles of the sacred teachings. Truly it is more difficult to be born as a human being than it is to lower a thread from the heavens above and pass it through the eye of a needle at the bottom of the sea, and it is rarer for one to be able to hear the Law of the Buddha than it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log [with a hole in it that fits him exactly]. Now I have already obtained birth in the human realm, something difficult to achieve, and have had the privilege of hearing the Buddhist teachings, which are seldom encountered. If I should pass my present life in idleness, then in what future life could I possibly free myself from the sufferings of birth and death and attain enlightenment?"

"Though, in the course of a kalpa, the bones I have left behind in successive existences may pile up higher than a mountain, to this day I have not yet sacrificed so much as a single bone for the sake of the Buddha's Law. And though, in the course of these many lifetimes, I have shed more tears over those I loved or was indebted to than there is water in the sea, I have never spilled so much as a single tear for the sake of my future existences. I am the most stupid of the stupid, truly a fool among fools. Though I may have to cast aside my life and destroy this body of mine, I am determined to hold life lightly and to enter the path of the Buddha's teachings, to assist in bringing about the enlightenment of my father and mother, and to save my own person from the bonds of hell. Please teach me exactly how I should go about it. How should one practice if one takes faith in the Lotus Sutra? Of the five practices, which one should I concentrate on first? Please give me careful instruction in your worthy teachings."

The sage replied: "You have been

imbued with the fragrance of your orchid-room friend;⁸⁷ you have become upright like mugwort growing in a field of hemp.⁸⁸ Truly, the bare tree is not really bare: once spring comes, it bursts into blossom. The withered field is not really withered. With the coming of summer, it turns fresh and green again. If you have repented of your former errors and are ready to adhere to the correct doctrine, then without doubt you can swim in the calm and quiet depths [of nirvana], and dwell at ease in the palace of the unconditioned.

“Now, in widely propagating the Buddhist teachings and bringing salvation to all people, one must first take into consideration the teaching, the capacity of the people, the time, the country, and the sequence of propagation. The reason is as follows. In terms of the time, there are the periods of the Former, the Middle, and the Latter Days of the Law, and in terms of the teachings, there are the Hinayana and the Mahayana doctrines. In terms of the practices to be adopted, there are shoju and shakubuku. It is a mistake to practice shakubuku at a time when shoju is called for, and equally erroneous to practice shoju when shakubuku is appropriate. The first thing to be determined, therefore, is whether the present period is the time for shoju or the time for shakubuku.

“Shoju is to be practiced when throughout the entire country only the Lotus Sutra has spread, and when there is not even a single misguided teacher expounding erroneous doctrines. At such a time, one may retire to the mountain forests, practice meditation, or carry out the five, the six, or the ten practices.⁸⁹ But the time for shakubuku is very different from this. It is a time when many different sutras and teachings spring up here and there like so many orchids and chrysanthemums, when the various schools command

a large following and enjoy renown, when truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku.

“If, failing to understand this principle, one were to practice shoju or shakubuku at an inappropriate time, then not only would one be unable to attain Buddhahood, but one would fall into the evil paths. This is firmly laid down in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras, and is also clearly stated in the commentaries by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo. It is, in fact, an important principle of Buddhist practice.

“We may compare these two kinds of practice to the two ways of the civil and the military used in governing a nation. There is a time when military measures should take precedence, and a time when civil measures ought to be emphasized. When the world is at peace and calm prevails within the country, then civil measures should take precedence. But when the barbarian tribes to the east, south, west, and north, fired by wild ambitions, rise up like hornets, then military measures should come first.

“Though one may understand the importance of both civil and military arts, if one does not understand the time, donning armor and taking up weapons when all countries are calm and peaceful and there is no trouble anywhere throughout the world, then one's actions will be wrong. On the other hand, one who lays aside one's weapons on the battlefield when enemies are marching against one's ruler and instead takes up a writing brush and inkstone is likewise failing to act in accordance with the time.

“The methods of shoju and shakubuku are also like this. When the correct teaching alone is propagated and

there are no erroneous doctrines or misguided teachers, then one may enter the deep valleys and live in quiet contentment, devoting one's time to reciting and copying the sutra and to the practice of meditation. This is like taking up a writing brush and inkstone when the world is at peace. But when there are provisional schools or slanderers of the correct teaching in the country, then it is time to set aside other matters and devote oneself to rebuking slander. This is like taking up weapons on the battlefield.

"Therefore, the Great Teacher Chang-an in his commentary on the Nirvana Sutra states: 'In past times the age was peaceful, and the Law spread throughout the country. At that time it was proper to observe the precepts and not to carry staves. But now the age is perilous, and the Law is overshadowed. Therefore, it is proper to carry staves and to disregard the precepts. If both past and present were perilous times, then it would be proper to carry staves in both periods. And if both past and present were peaceful times, then it would be proper to observe the precepts in both of them. You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other.' The meaning of this passage of commentary is perfectly clear.

"In past times the world was honest, people were upright, and there were no erroneous teachings or erroneous doctrines. Therefore, one could behave in a proper manner and carry out one's religious practices peacefully and amicably. There was no need to take up staves and berate others, no occasion to attack erroneous teachings.

"But the present age is a defiled one. Because the minds of people are warped and twisted, and provisional teachings and slander alone abound, the correct teaching cannot prevail. In times like these, it is useless to practice the reading, reciting, and copying [of

the Lotus Sutra] or to devote oneself to the methods and practices of meditation. One should practice only the shakubuku method of propagation, and if one has the capacity, use one's influence and authority to destroy slander of the correct teaching, and one's knowledge of the teachings to refute erroneous doctrines.

"As we have seen, it is said that one should let one's choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other. Therefore, we must look at the world today and consider whether ours is a country in which only the correct doctrine prevails, or a country in which erroneous doctrines flourish.

"In answering this we should note that Honen of the Pure Land school says that one should 'discard, close, ignore, and abandon' the Lotus Sutra in favor of the Nembutsu. And Shantao in his writings calls the Lotus Sutra a 'sundry practice,' saying that 'not even one person in a thousand' can be saved by it, by which he means that, if a thousand people take faith in it, not a single one of them will gain enlightenment.

"Kobo of the True Word school states in his writings that the Lotus Sutra is inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra and ranks two steps beneath the Mahavairochana Sutra, designating it a piece of 'childish theory.' And Shokaku-bo of the same school declares that the Lotus Sutra is not fit even to serve as the sandal-tender of the Mahavairochana Sutra, and that Shakyamuni Buddha is not worthy to be an ox-driver to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana.

"The priests of the Zen school disparage the Lotus Sutra by calling it so much saliva that has been spit out of the mouth, a finger pointing at the moon, or a net of doctrine that serves only to entangle. The priests of the Precepts, a Hinayana school, call the Lotus Sutra an erroneous teaching and label

it the preaching of the heavenly devil.

“Are persons such as these not slanderers of the correct teaching? One can never be too severe in condemning them, or admonish them too strongly.”

The unenlightened man said: “Throughout the more than sixty provinces of Japan, there are many kinds of people and a variety of Buddhist doctrines. What with the Nembutsu priests, the True Word teachers, and the followers of Zen or the Precepts teachings, there is truly hardly a single person who does not slander the correct teaching. But then, why should I criticize other people? My task, it seems to me, is simply to cherish deep faith within my own heart and to look on other people’s errors as no concern of mine.”

The sage replied: “What you say is quite true, and I would be inclined to hold the same opinion. But when we examine the sutras, we find that they tell us not to begrudge our lives [for the sake of the Law], and also say that [one should spread the Buddha’s teachings] even at the cost of one’s life.⁹⁰ The reason they speak in this way is because if one does not hesitate on account of others but propagates the principles of Buddhism just as they are set forth in the sutras, then in an age when there are many people who slander the correct teaching, three types of enemies will invariably appear and in many cases deprive one of life. But if, as the sutras tell us, one observes deviations from the Buddha’s teachings and yet fails to censure them or to appeal to the ruler to take measures against them, then one is being untrue to the teachings and is not worthy to be looked on as a disciple of the Buddha.

“The third volume of the Nirvana Sutra says: ‘If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that

that monk is betraying the Buddha’s teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer.’

“The meaning of this passage is that, if a person striving to propagate the correct teaching of the Buddha should hear and see others propounding the teachings of the sutras in a mistaken manner and fail to reproach them himself or, lacking the power to do that, fail to appeal to the sovereign and in this way take measures to correct them, then he is betraying the Buddha’s teaching. But if, as the sutras direct, he is not afraid of others but censures these slanderers himself and appeals to the sovereign to take measures against them, then he may be called a disciple of the Buddha and a true priest.

“Being therefore determined to avoid the charge of ‘betraying the Buddha’s teaching,’ although I have incurred the hatred of others, I have dedicated my life to Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, extending compassion to all living beings and rebuking slanders of the correct teaching. Those who cannot understand my heart have tightened their lips and glared at me with furious eyes. But if you are truly concerned about your future existence, you should think lightly of your own safety and consider the Law above all. Thus the Great Teacher Chang-an states, ‘[A royal envoy . . . would rather], even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler’⁹¹ means that one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.⁹²

“This passage is saying that, even if one must give up one’s life, one should not conceal the correct teaching; this is because one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. Though one’s body be destroyed, one should strive to propagate the Law.

“How sad is this lot of ours, that all who are born must perish! Though one may live to a great age, in the end one cannot escape this impermanence. In this world of ours, life lasts a hundred years or so at most. When we stop to think of it, it is a mere dream within a dream. Even in the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought, where life lasts eighty thousand years, no one escapes the law of mutability, and in the heaven of the thirty-three gods, too, where life lasts a thousand years, it is swept away at last by the winds of change and decay. How much sadder, then, is the lot of the human beings living on this land of Jambudvīpa, whose life is more fleeting than the dew, more fragile than the plantain leaf, more insubstantial than bubbles or foam! Like the moon reflected in the water, one is not even certain whether one exists or not; like the dew on the grass, one may vanish at any moment.

“Anyone who grasps this principle should know that it is of utmost importance to take thought for the existence to come. In the latter age of the Buddha Joy Increasing, the monk Realization of Virtue propagated the correct teaching. Countless monks who were guilty of violating the precepts deeply resented this votary and attacked him, but the ruler, King Possessor of Virtue, determined to protect the correct teaching, fought with these slanderers. In the end, he lost his life and was reborn in the land of the Buddha Akshobhya, where he became the foremost disciple of that Buddha. Similarly, King Sen’yo, because he honored the Mahayana teachings and punished the slander of five hundred Brahmans, was able to reach the stage of non-regression. How reassuring, that those who respect the monks of the correct teaching and admonish those who are evil and in error receive such blessings as these!

“But if, in our present age, one were to practice shoju [rather than shakubuku], then without doubt that person would fall into the evil paths together with those who slander the correct teaching. The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh in his *Four Peaceful Practices* states, ‘If there should be a bodhisattva who protects evil persons and fails to chastise them . . . then, when his life comes to an end, he will fall into hell along with those evil persons.’

“The meaning of this passage is that, if a practitioner of Buddhism should fail to chastise evil persons who slander the Law but give himself up entirely to meditation and contemplation, not attempting to distinguish between correct and incorrect doctrines, or provisional and true teachings, but rather pretending to be a model of compassion, then such a person will fall into the evil paths along with the other doers of evil. Now a person who fails to correct the True Word, Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts adherents who are slanderers of the correct teaching and instead pretends to be a model of compassion will meet just such a fate as this.”

Thereupon the unenlightened man, cherishing his resolve in mind, spoke out in these words: “To admonish one’s sovereign and set one’s family on the correct course is the teaching of the worthies of former times and is clearly indicated in the texts you have cited. The non-Buddhist writings all emphasize this point, and the Buddhist scriptures are in no way at variance with it. To see evil and fail to admonish it, to be aware of slander and not combat it, is to go against the words of the sutras and to disobey the Buddhist patriarchs. The punishment for this offense is extremely severe, and therefore, from now on, I will devote myself to faith.

“But it is truly difficult to put this sutra, the Lotus, into practice. If there

is some essential point to be observed, could you explain it to me?"

The sage replied: "I can tell that your aspiration for the way is very earnest and sincere. The essential thing the Buddhas needed in order to attain the true way or enlightenment is nothing other than the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. It was solely because of these five characters that King Suzudan relinquished his jeweled throne [and attained Buddhahood], and the dragon king's daughter transformed her reptilian characteristics [into those of a Buddha].⁹³

"When we stop to consider it, we find that the sutra itself says, concerning how much or how little of it is to be embraced, that a single verse or phrase is sufficient, and, concerning the length of practice [necessary to reach enlightenment], that one who rejoices even for a moment on hearing it [is certain to become a Buddha]. The eighty thousand teachings in their vast entirety and the many words and phrases of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra were all expounded simply in order to reveal these five characters. When Shakyamuni Buddha in the clouds above the Sacred Mountain, in the mists of Eagle Peak, summed up the essence of the doctrine and entrusted it to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, what do you suppose that teaching was? It was nothing other than these five characters, the essential Law.

"The six thousand leaves⁹⁴ of commentary by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, like strings of jewels, and the several scrolls of exegesis by Tao-sui and Hsing-man, like so much gold, do not go beyond the meaning of this teaching. If you truly fear the sufferings of birth and death and yearn for nirvana, if you carry out your faith and thirst for the way, then the sufferings of change and impermanence will become no more than yesterday's dream, and the awakening of enlightenment will become today's

reality. If only you chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, then what offense could fail to be eradicated? What blessing could fail to come? This is the truth, and it is of great profundity. You should believe and accept it."

The unenlightened man, pressing his palms together and kneeling respectfully, said: "These priceless words of yours have moved me deeply, and your instruction has awakened my mind. And yet, in light of the principle that superior things encompass those that are inferior, it would seem that the broad should also encompass the narrow and the many should take in the few. However, when we examine the matter, we find that these five characters you have mentioned are few, while the words in the sutra text are many, and that the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra is narrow, while its eight scrolls are very broad. How then can the two be equal in the blessings that they bring?"

The sage said: "How foolish you are! Your attachment to this belief that one should abandon the few in favor of the many towers higher than Mount Sumeru, and your conviction that the narrow should be despised and the broad honored is deeper than the vast ocean. In the course of our discussion, I have already demonstrated that something is not necessarily worthy of honor simply because it is many in number or despicable simply because it is few. Now I would like to go a step farther and explain how the small can actually encompass the great, and the one be superior to the many.

"The seed of the nyagrodha tree, though one-third the size of a mustard seed, can conceal five hundred carts within itself.⁹⁵ Is this not a case of the small containing the large? The wish-granting jewel, while only one in number, is able to rain down ten thousand treasures without a single thing lacking. Is this not a case of the few encompassing the many? The popular

proverb says that 'one is the mother of ten thousand.' Do you not understand the principle behind these matters? The important thing to consider is whether or not a doctrine conforms with the principle of the true aspect of all things. Do not be blindly attached to the question of many or few!

"But since you are so extremely foolish, let me give you an analogy. Myoho-rence-kyo is the Buddha nature of all living beings. The Buddha nature is the Dharma nature, and the Dharma nature is enlightenment. The Buddha nature possessed by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions; by Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth; by Universal Worthy, Manjushri, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the others; by the great Brahma and the lord Shakra; by the deities of the sun and moon, the morning star, the seven stars in the Big Dipper in the northern sky, the twenty-eight constellations, and the countless other stars; by the heavenly gods, the earthly deities, the dragon deities, the eight kinds of nonhuman beings, and the human and heavenly beings who gathered in the great assembly to hear the Buddha's preaching; by King Yama—in short, by all living beings from the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought above the clouds down to the flames in the lowest depths of hell—the Buddha nature that all these beings possess is called by the name Myoho-rence-kyo. Therefore, if you recite these words of the daimoku once, then the Buddha nature of all living beings will be summoned and gather around you. At that time the three bodies of the Dharma nature within you—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body—will be drawn forth and become manifest. This is called attaining Buddhahood. To illustrate, when a caged bird sings, the many birds flying in the

sky all gather around it at once; seeing this, the bird in the cage strives to get out."

The unenlightened man said, "You have now explained to me in detail the benefits of the daimoku and the significance of the Mystic Law. But I would like to ask whether these matters are explained in this manner in the sutra."

The sage replied: "Since you have already understood the principle involved, there is really no need to go on and inquire what scriptural passages it is based on. However, I will cite a passage from the sutra as you request.

"The 'Dharani' chapter in the eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, 'If you can shield and guard those who accept and uphold the mere name of the Lotus Sutra, your merit will be immeasurable.' In this passage, the Buddha is praising the Mother of Demon Children and the ten demon daughters for their vow to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and saying that the blessings from their vow to protect those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra are beyond even the Buddha wisdom, which completely comprehends the three existences, to fathom. While by rights nothing should be beyond the grasp of the Buddha wisdom, the Buddha says here that the blessings that accrue from accepting and embracing the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra are the one thing that wisdom cannot measure.

"The blessings of the entire Lotus Sutra are all contained solely within the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. While the words in the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra differ according to the contents of the twenty-eight chapters, the five characters of the daimoku remain the same throughout. To illustrate, within the two characters for Japan are included the more than sixty provinces and the two islands. Are there any districts or provinces that

are not contained within this name?

"If one uses the term 'birds,' people know that one is talking about creatures that fly in the sky; if one says 'beasts,' people understand that one is referring to animals that run over the ground. In all things, names are of great importance precisely because they can convey general meanings in this way. This is what the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai meant when he said that names convey the basic nature of a thing while phrases describe how it differs from other things, or when he said that names designate the fundamental character of a thing.

"In addition, names have the virtue of being able to summon the things to which they refer, and things as a matter of function respond to the name that refers to them. In similar fashion, the name, or daimoku, of the Lotus Sutra has the power [to summon the Buddha nature to which it refers]."

The unenlightened man said: "If it is as you say, then the blessings of the daimoku are very great indeed. But these blessings must differ according to whether or not one understands the significance of the daimoku. I am a man who carries a bow and arrows and devotes himself to the profession of arms. I have no understanding of the true nature of the Buddhist teachings. How could a person such as I gain any great amount of good fortune?"

The sage replied: "According to the principle of the perfect and immediate enlightenment, there is no essential difference between the earlier and later stages of practice, and the blessings of the advanced stages are inherent in the initial stages as well. To carry out one practice is to carry out all practices, and there is no blessing that is not included therein.

"If the situation were as you say and one could not obtain good fortune until after one had understood the truth of Buddhism, then no one, from

the bodhisattvas at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment on down to those at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth, would be able to obtain any good fortune at all. This is because, as the Lotus Sutra says, the truth can only be understood "between Buddhas."⁶

"In the 'Simile and Parable' chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares, 'Even you, Shariputra, in the case of this sutra were able to gain entrance through faith alone. How much more so, then, the other voice-hearers!'

"This passage is saying that even Shariputra, who was known for his great wisdom, was, with respect to the Lotus Sutra, able to gain entrance through faith and not through the power of his wisdom. How much more so, therefore, does this hold true with the other voice-hearers!

"Thus, with the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, Shariputra, because he had faith, was able to rid himself of the name of one who could never attain Buddhahood and was told that he would in time become the Thus Come One Flower Glow.

"It is like the case of a baby being given milk to drink. Even though the baby may not understand the flavor of milk, the milk naturally nurtures the baby's growth. Similarly, if a physician gives medicine to a sick person, even though the sick person may not know the origin and nature of the medicine, if he takes it, then in the natural course of events his illness will be cured. But if he objects that he does not know the origin of the medicine that the physician gives him and for that reason declines to take it, do you think his illness will ever be cured? Whether he understands the medicine or not, so long as he takes it, he will in either case be cured.

"The Buddha has already been called a skilled physician, and the Law has been likened to good medicine and

all living beings to people suffering from illness.⁹⁷ The Buddha took the teachings that he had preached in the course of his lifetime, ground and sifted them, blended them together, and compounded an excellent medicine, the pill of the Mystic Law. Regardless of whether one understands it or not, so long as one takes the pill, can one fail to be cured of the illness of delusion? Even though the sick person may not understand the medicine or even know the nature of the disease from which he suffers, if he takes the medicine, he is bound to recover.

"It is the same way with the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra. Though they may not understand the principles of Buddhism and may not know that they are suffering from delusion, if only they have faith, then without a doubt they will be able to free themselves simultaneously from the illnesses of the three categories of illusion—illusions of thought and desire, illusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand, and illusions about the true nature of existence. They will reach the lands of Actual Reward and Tranquil Light, and cause the three bodies of a Thus Come One that they inherently possess to shine.

"Therefore, the Great Teacher Denryo says: 'Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form.'⁹⁸ This means that both the teacher who expounds the principles of the Lotus Sutra and the disciple who receives his teachings will, in no long time, together become Buddhas through the power of the Lotus Sutra.

"The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai produced *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, thirty volumes of commentary on the

Lotus Sutra. And the Great Teacher Miao-lo in addition produced the thirty volumes of *The Annotations on 'The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,' The Annotations on 'The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,'* and *The Annotations on 'Great Concentration and Insight'* to comment on T'ien-t'ai's works. Together these works are known as 'the sixty volumes of the T'ien-t'ai school.'

"In *Profound Meaning*, T'ien-t'ai established the five major principles of name, entity, quality, function, and teaching, and in their light explained the power and efficacy of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. In the section on the third of the five major principles, that dealing with the quality of the Lotus Sutra, he writes, 'When one pulls on the main cord of a net, there are no meshes that do not move, and when one raises a single corner of a robe, there are no threads in the robe that are not lifted up.' The meaning of this passage is that, when one carries out the single practice of exercising faith in Myoho-enge-kyo, there are no blessings that fail to come to one, and no good karma that does not begin to work on one's behalf. It is like the case of a fishing net: though the net is composed of innumerable small meshes, when one pulls on the main cord of the net, there are no meshes that do not move. Or it is like a garment: though the garment is composed of countless tiny threads, when one pulls on a corner of the garment, there are no threads that are not drawn along.

"In *Words and Phrases*, T'ien-t'ai explains the various words and phrases in the Lotus Sutra, from the opening words 'This is what I heard' to the final words 'they bowed in obeisance and departed.' He explains them in terms of four categories, namely, causes and conditions, correlated teachings, the theoretical and essential teachings, and the observation of the mind.⁹⁹

"Next, in *Great Concentration and*

Insight, he expounds the meditation on the region of the unfathomable, namely, on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, based on his thorough understanding of the Lotus Sutra. This is a practice that derives from the Buddha's original enlightenment and represents a principle of truth inherent in one's being. I will not go into it in detail here.

"What an occasion for rejoicing! Though born into an evil age that is stained with the five impurities, we have been able to see and hear the true words of the one vehicle. We read that a person who has planted roots of good fortune [under Buddhas] equal in number to the sands of the Hiranyavati or the Ganges River is able to encounter this sutra and take faith in it.¹⁰⁰ Now you have aroused the mind that rejoices in faith. Thus without a doubt, just as a box and its lid fit together, so will your own faith evoke the Buddha's compassionate response, and the two will unite as one."

The unenlightened man bowed his head, pressed his palms together, and said: "From now on I will accept and uphold this king of the sutras, the Lotus of the one truth, and revere the Buddha, who in the threefold world is alone worthy of honor, as my true teacher. From my present body as a common mortal until the time when I

attain the body of a Buddha, I will never venture to turn aside from this faith. Though the clouds of the five cardinal sins should hang heavy above me, I will strive to emulate the example of Devadatta in attaining Buddhahood. Though the waves of the ten evil acts should buffet me, I will desire to be like those who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra by listening to the princes' preaching."¹⁰¹

The sage said: "The human heart is like water that assumes the shape of whatever vessel it occupies, and the nature of beings is like the reflection of the moon undulating on the waves. Now you insist that you will be firm in this faith, but another day you are bound to waver. Though devils and demons may come to tempt you, you must not allow yourself to be distracted. The heavenly devil hates the Buddha's Law, and the non-Buddhist believers resent the path of the Buddhist teachings. But you must be like the golden mountain that glitters more brightly when scraped by the wild boar, like the sea that encompasses all the various streams, like the fire that burns higher when logs are added, or like the kalakula insect that grows bigger when the wind blows. If you follow such examples, then how can the outcome fail to be good?"



Background

This treatise is generally thought to have been written in the second year of Bun'ei (1265). Its recipient is unknown. However, toward the end of the work, the unenlightened man refers to himself as "a man who carries a bow and arrows and devotes himself to the profession of arms," so it has been suggested that Nichiren Daisho-

nin may have written it for someone of the samurai class.

The treatise consists of two parts and is written chiefly in question-and-answer form. The "sage" in the title indicates the votary of the Lotus Sutra, or Nichiren Daishonin himself, while the "unenlightened man" represents all ordinary people of the Latter Day

of the Law. In the first part, the unenlightened man, who has realized life's impermanence and is seeking the truth, is visited in succession by a priest of the Precepts school, a lay believer of the Pure Land school, a practitioner of the True Word school, and a priest of the Zen school. Through their conversations, the Daishonin outlines the basic tenets of these four major Buddhist schools of his day.

The Precepts priest, who is the first visitor, asserts that the teachings concerning the precepts are the most important of the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Buddhism. He holds up Ryokan, the chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple, as an example and exhorts the unenlightened man to observe the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts and devote himself to charitable works as Ryokan does.

The next visitor, a Pure Land believer, praises the Nembutsu teachings, which enable one to be reborn in Amida Buddha's Pure Land and thereby gain emancipation from the sufferings of birth and death. He singles out the eighteenth of Amida Buddha's forty-eight vows as the sole source of salvation for ordinary people in the Latter Day and asserts that even persons guilty of the ten evil acts and the five cardinal sins can attain rebirth in the Pure Land by calling on this Buddha's name.

The True Word practitioner, who visits next, says that even the most profound doctrines of the exoteric teachings are no more than an introduction to the esoteric teachings. The exoteric teachings, he says, were expounded by Shakyamuni, the Buddha of the manifested body, in accordance with his disciples' capacities, while the esoteric teachings were preached by Mahavairochana, the Buddha of the Dharma body, out of his spontaneous joy in the Law. He accordingly urges the unenlightened man to discard the exoteric

teachings and take faith in the more profound esoteric teachings.

The last to come calling is a mendicant Zen priest. He likens the sutras to a finger pointing at the moon and denounces the doctrines contained in them as so much nonsense, exhorting the unenlightened man to sit in meditation to perceive the true nature of his mind in accordance with the "wordless teaching" of Zen.

Troubled by the contradictions in what he has heard, and determined to discover which teaching is correct, the unenlightened man then sets out on a journey in search of a teacher who can clarify matters for him. After visiting various temples one after another, he finally encounters a sage who embraces the Lotus Sutra. The title *Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man* refers to the subsequent dialogue that unfolds between them. The unenlightened man confesses that, although he has learned the teachings of the Precepts, Nembutsu, True Word, and Zen schools, he cannot determine whether or not those teachings are true. In reply, the sage declares that the doctrines of all four schools are the cause for rebirth in the evil paths, because they are based on provisional teachings, while only the true teaching, the Lotus Sutra, enables all people without exception to attain Buddhahood.

This comparison of the true and provisional teachings forms the focus of this treatise. The sage refutes the doctrines of those schools that are based on the provisional teachings and cites sutra passages to demonstrate that the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra was set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. His rebuttal of the Nembutsu and True Word doctrines concludes part one of this treatise. Part two begins with his refutation of Zen.

By this time, the unenlightened man has become convinced of the truth of the Lotus Sutra. But he hesitates to

embrace it out of considerations of loyalty and filial piety; he points out that everyone from the ruler on down to the common people has faith in other schools, and his own parents and ancestors embraced the Pure Land teachings. The sage replies that one can best repay one's debts of gratitude to one's parents and sovereign by embracing the correct Buddhist teaching and thus leading them to salvation. Next, one should evaluate the Buddhist teachings on their own merits and not according to the number of their adherents. The sage also explains that there are two ways of Buddhist practice—*shoju* and *shakubuku*—depending upon the time. The present period, when distorted teachings flourish, is the time for *shakubuku*, he says.

Notes

1. The Japanese text could also be construed to mean, "We may be terrified by the prospect of the unknown and lament that the world we are familiar with should pass so quickly."
2. *Chuang Tzu*, "Knowledge Wandered North": "Man's life between heaven and earth is like the passing of a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall—whoosh!—and that's the end."
3. This refers to the great earthquakes, heavy floods, and other disasters that occurred during the Shoka era (1257–1259), claiming many lives.
4. The king of Ch'u is King Huai (r. 328–299 B.C.E.). In a dream he had a romantic encounter with a goddess. When she left, she told the king that she would always be with him as a cloud in the morning and as rain in the evening.
5. In the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 58–75), during the reign of Emperor Ming, Liu Ch'en lost his way on Mount T'ien-t'ai, where he encountered a female immortal being and lived together with her in bliss. When Liu Ch'en returned home after half a year, he found himself in the time of his descendants of the seventh generation.
6. Which poet the Daishonin refers to is uncertain. The implication of the verse alluded to is that, being a lowly woodcutter

The unenlightened man now having resolved to embrace the Lotus Sutra, the sage reveals to him that the essence of the sutra lies in the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo that form its title. Myoho-enge-kyo, he explains, is the Buddha nature inherent in all beings. When one chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the Buddha nature inherent in all things will be summoned forth, and one's own Buddha nature will simultaneously emerge. Even without profound understanding of the Buddhist teachings, one can by this practice attain Buddhahood in one's present form. The sage concludes by exhorting the unenlightened man to maintain faith throughout life, without wavering in his resolve.

and therefore ignorant of religion, the poet hopes he will not be called upon to bear great sorrow in life.

7. The hell of burning heat and the hell of great burning heat are the sixth and seventh of the eight hot hells—the eighth being the hell of incessant suffering.

8. The hell of the crimson lotus and the hell of the great crimson lotus are the seventh and eighth of the eight cold hells. In these two hells, the cold is said to make one's flesh crack open, so that it has the appearance of red lotus flowers.

9. The five components of body and mind refer here to the five components of life: form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness that unite temporarily to form an individual living being.

10. After this opening passage, the text shifts to third-person narrative.

11. Ling Lun was a subject of Huang Ti (the Yellow Emperor), a legendary ruler of ancient China. Endowed with remarkably acute hearing, he is said to have excelled in music and been able to distinguish minute differences in pitch.

12. Li Chu, also called Li Lou, was a legendary figure of ancient China whose sight was so acute that he could see the tip of a hair at a hundred paces.

13. The port of Iijima was the only port

servicing Kamakura in the Daishonin's time. The Mutsura Barrier was a checkpoint at Mutsura in what is presently Yokohama in Kanagawa Prefecture.

14. Seven roads leading to Kamakura.

15. Comparisons by which Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized the superiority of the Mahayana precepts over the Hinayana, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts practiced by voice-hearers do not even produce benefit as small as the print of a cow's hoof, while the Mahayana precepts upheld by bodhisattvas produce benefit as vast as the ocean.

16. "Seventeen differences" refers to the reasons why the Hinayana precepts are inferior to the Mahayana precepts, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts reflect abhorrence of the threefold world, the realm inhabited by unenlightened beings, while the Mahayana precepts do not; the Hinayana precepts show disdain for benefits, while the Mahayana precepts encompass them all.

17. Nirvana Sutra.

18. One of the five meditations to extinguish miscellaneous thoughts, meditation on a corpse was thought to extinguish sexual desire.

19. The Daishonin uses an image from chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra, in which the provisional teachings are likened to a phantom city magically conjured by a guide to allow his party of weary travelers to rest en route to the treasure land (one Buddha vehicle), which is their true destination.

20. *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land.*

21. The forty-eight vows that Amida Buddha is said to have made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury.

22. The first vow states, "If, after I attain Buddhahood, there are any beings of hell, the realm of hungry spirits, or the realm of animals to be found in my land, then let me not attain supreme enlightenment." So there are said to be no beings of the three evil paths in Amida's Pure Land. The three types of perception are: (1) one understands the truth one hears, (2) one follows the truth, and (3) one realizes the true aspect of things that neither is born nor dies.

23. This refers to a phrase used by the

poet Po Chü-i to describe his secular writings. Buddhists and Confucians often used this expression in reference to poetry and prose that were lacking in didactic worth.

24. The three esoteric sutras are the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras.

25. The twenty-eight patriarchs inherited and passed on that teaching of Shakyamuni that was not expounded in words but instead was transmitted from mind to mind. The first is Mahakashyapa, and the last, Bodhidharma, the founder of Chinese Zen. The six patriarchs are Bodhidharma, Hui-k'o, Seng-ts'an, Tao-hsin, Hung-jen, and Hui-neng.

26. This refers to the last of the four realms into which the realm of formlessness is divided, the realm of formlessness being the highest division of the threefold world.

27. A poem by Fujiwara no Yoshitaka, appearing in *A Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing*, compiled around 1013.

28. A poet of the mid-ninth century. Many romantic legends have grown up around her.

29. A legendary woman appearing in *The Chronicles of Japan* and *The Records of Ancient Matters*.

30. The original source of this poem is unknown. Mount Toribe, located in Kyoto, was used as a cremation site.

31. A poem by the Administrator of Priests Henjo (816-890), which appears in *Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing*.

32. In other writings, the Daishonin speaks of the nineteen-year-old Shakyamuni as leaving his father's palace in the capital of Kapilavastu, which description is consistent with the traditional account. It is not certain why he says here that the young prince "left the city of Gaya." However, it is generally held that, after leaving Kapilavastu, Shakyamuni first went south to the kingdom of Magadha where Gaya was located. Mount Dandaka was said to be in Gandhara in northern India.

33. These words are actually spoken by Many Treasures Buddha in the "Treasure Tower" chapter. However, since the Buddhas' act of extending their tongues, described in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, was also meant to affirm the truth of the sutra, the Daishonin attributes this statement to all the Buddhas.

34. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

35. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

36. The statement to this effect appears in Ssu-ming Chih-li's commentary on the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra.

37. The Well Attained is one of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha, meaning one who has gone to the world of enlightenment.

38. This story appears in the Unheard-of Causal Relationship Sutra. Countless kalpas ago, a fox in the country of Bima fell into a well while fleeing from a lion. Faced with the prospect of starvation, he awakened to the impermanence of all things and recited a verse to this effect. Hearing this verse, Shakra came down from heaven and honored the fox as his teacher.

39. The Japanese text reads, "have returned," but it may simply mean to "have reached." The original text of this piece is no longer extant.

40. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

41. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra.*

42. *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra.*

43. The K'ai-yüan era catalog refers to *The K'ai-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*, a comprehensive index of Buddhist texts in Chinese compiled by Chih-sheng and finished in 730, the eighteenth year of the K'ai-yüan era, during the reign of the T'ang emperor Hsüan-tsung.

44. Another name for the "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It was also used as an independent sutra.

45. Seven cardinal sins: According to *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* killing a priest and killing a teacher, plus the five cardinal sins. The "teachers" referred to here are Shan-tao and Honen.

46. Two honored bodhisattvas are Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Great Power.

47. Izanagi and Izanami are a male deity and a female deity who appear in Japanese mythology as the progenitors of Japan and of its gods.

48. A river flowing through the compound of the Inner Shrine of Ise, which is dedicated to the Sun Goddess. That the Mimosuso River has continued to flow implies that the imperial lineage, said to

originate with the Sun Goddess, has continued unbroken.

49. Actually it is not a sutra but a work on the benefits gained by meditation on Amida Buddha.

50. The five strong-flavored foods refer to five kinds of pungent roots—leek, scallions, onions, garlic, and ginger. They were said to produce irritability, anger, or sexual desire and were accordingly forbidden for Buddhist monks and nuns.

51. The thirty-seven honored ones refer to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who constitute the central section of the Diamond Realm mandala, which is composed of nine sections.

52. Literally Later T'ang Hall, a building that Chisho, the fifth chief priest of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, the head temple of the Tendai school, erected on the grounds of Mii-dera temple in what is now Shiga Prefecture. To-in (T'ang Hall) on the grounds of Enryaku-ji, which had been erected earlier by Jikaku, the third chief priest of Enryaku-ji, is referred to as Zento-in (Former T'ang Hall).

53. *The Essentials of the Mahavairochana Sutra.*

54. This refers to the stage of the human mind, before the awakening of moral or religious consciousness, in which one is governed, like an animal, by passions and instincts.

55. This refers to the supreme stage at which one unlocks the immeasurable benefits inherent in one's life through the secret doctrine of Mahavairochana Buddha.

56. "A later stage" means the tenth and supreme stage of the ten stages of the mind, that is, the stage of realizing the esoteric teaching.

57. *The Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics.*

58. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury.*

59. A ritual implement used for prayers in esoteric True Word Buddhism. This story appears in *The Biography of the Great Teacher Kobo.* According to this work, before Kobo left China, he hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder into the air. Returning to Japan, he went to Mount Koya to carry out the practice of the esoteric teachings. There he found the same diamond-pounder resting in a tree's branches.

60. Agastya is an Indian ascetic who practiced the Brahmanistic teachings. His occult powers are mentioned in the Nir-

vana Sutra. Jīnu is another Brahmanist ascetic of India, also mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra. According to *The History of the Later Han Dynasty*, Chang Chieh of the Later Han dynasty excelled in the occult arts of Taoism and caused a thick fog to appear, extending over five Chinese *ri* (about 2 km). According to *Lives of Saints with Mysterious Powers*, Luan Pa of the Later Han dynasty drank wine at a banquet and blew it out facing southwest. He explained that he had done so to extinguish a fire that had broken out in the city of Ch'eng-tu, which lay in that direction. On investigation, it was found that rain, mixed with wine, had fallen heavily in that city and extinguished a fire there.

61. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

62. In *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai interprets those sutras preached in the past as the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, preached over forty-two years; those preached at the same time as the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra; and those preached in the future as the Nirvana Sutra.

63. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

64. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

65. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

66. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

67. A Buddha mentioned in the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, and other sutras. In esoteric True Word Buddhism, he is identified with Mahavairochana Buddha.

68. A reference to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra.

69. The four types of teachings are the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, the specific teaching, and the perfect teaching. The point here is that the Mahavairochana Sutra is not a pure perfect teaching. See eight teachings in Glossary.

70. A reference to the Hinayana precepts.

71. A reference to Kuang-hsiu (771-843) and Wei-chüan (n.d.). Kuang-hsiu was the eighth patriarch in the lineage of the T'ien-t'ai school, and Wei-chüan was his leading disciple.

72. "Thus Come One Zen" refers to the Buddha's meditation as described in the sutras. According to the Lankavatara Sutra, this meditation gives rise to the mystic powers with which the Buddha saves the people. "Doctrinal Zen" refers to the methods of meditation formulated on the basis of the sutras, and "patriarchal Zen," to

the Zen teaching deriving from Bodhidharma, in which enlightenment is said to be transmitted wordlessly from master to disciple.

73. Here "nonduality," as taught by the Zen school, refers to the oneness of the Buddha and the ordinary person. The Daishonin says that the Zen followers do not understand "duality," that is, the difference between the Buddha who is awakened to the ultimate truth and ordinary people who are deluded about it.

74. Mirakutsu's Sanskrit name is unknown. King Dammira, mentioned in the subsequent paragraph, is another name for the same individual.

75. *Words and Phrases*. The Daishonin slightly rephrases the original passage. "This sutra" in the quotation refers to the Lotus Sutra.

76. Three of the five cardinal sins: (1) injuring a Buddha, (2) fomenting disunity within the Buddhist Order, and (3) killing an arhat. Devadatta committed these three.

77. This is described in chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra.

78. "This wonderful text of the single vehicle" refers to the Lotus Sutra.

79. The sufferings of fire, blood, and swords are the sufferings of the three evil paths, which represent hell, the realm of animals, and the realm of hungry spirits, respectively.

80. A forest on Mount Shinoda in Izumi in the Osaka area of Japan, known for its scenic beauty.

81. This story appears in chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra.

82. Salvation by Men of Pure Faith Sutra, cited in *The Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Law*. The sutra itself is no longer extant. "The Buddhist life" in the sutra's context means a monastic life, but here the Daishonin interprets it as a life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

83. This appears in *The Book of Rites*.

84. Ch'i Li-chi (n.d.) was one of the Four White-Haired Elders who, grieved by the social turmoil at the end of the Ch'in dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.), secluded themselves on Mount Shang. After the Ch'in dynasty was replaced by the Han dynasty, they were invited by Empress Lü, the consort of Emperor Kao-tsu, founder of the Han dynasty, to become advisers to Emperor Hui, who was her son and Kao-tsu's successor.

85. Yen Kuang (39 B.C.E.—C.E. 41) was a companion in study to Liu Hsiu, who later became Emperor Kuang-wu, the first emperor of the Later Han dynasty. After Liu Hsiu became emperor, Yen Kuang changed his name and went into seclusion. Emperor Kuang-wu begrudged the loss of Yen Kuang's abilities and entreated him to serve as his minister. However, Yen Kuang refused and spent the rest of his life in seclusion on Mount Fu-ch'un.

86. Chieh Tzu-sui (n.d.) was a retainer of Duke Wen in the Spring and Autumn period (770–403 B.C.E.), who served the duke in exile for nineteen years. When Duke Wen returned and assumed the rulership of Chin, he gave rewards to those who had followed him in exile. However, he overlooked Chieh Tzu-sui. The latter reproached him by saying that rewards should be dispensed by heaven and not by humans. Then he retired to Mount Mien-shang.

87. An "orchid-room friend" indicates a person of virtue. The implication is that the company of a virtuous person works as a good influence, just as one is imbued with fragrance on entering a room filled with orchids.

88. It is said that mugwort in a field of hemp is supported by the hemp plants and thus grows upright.

89. The six practices, mentioned in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, are accepting, upholding, reading, reciting, teaching, and transcribing. In the five practices, accepting and upholding are combined as one practice. The ten practices, set forth in the Heavenly King Supremacy Wisdom Sutra, are transcribing, making offerings, disseminating and transmitting, listening, reading, bearing in mind, widely preaching, reciting, contemplating, and self-exertion.

90. These admonitions appear in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras.

91. Nirvana Sutra.

92. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

93. This means that the dragon king's daughter acquired the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics of a Buddha.

94. The six thousand leaves comprise T'ien-t'ai's three major works, *Profound Meaning, Words and Phrases*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, and Miao-lo's commentaries on them.

95. *Great Perfection of Wisdom* states that the nyagrodha, or banyan tree, is large enough to provide shade for five hundred carts, yet the seed from which it grows is only one-third the size of a mustard seed.

96. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

97. The Daishonin refers here to the parable of the skilled physician in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

98. *Outstanding Principles*.

99. T'ien-t'ai's four guidelines for interpreting the words and phrases of the Lotus Sutra. "Causes and conditions" means to interpret the words and phrases of the sutra in terms of the causes and conditions that brought the Buddha to expound them. "Correlated teachings" means to interpret the sutra's words and phrases in terms of the four teachings of doctrine and the five periods. "Theoretical and essential teachings" is to interpret them in light of the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra; and "the observation of the mind" is to perceive their truth within one's own life through the practice of meditation.

100. The Daishonin slightly modifies the wording of the Nirvana Sutra, which says that one who has aroused the aspiration for enlightenment under Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Hiranyavati River will be able to embrace a sutra such as this in the evil age.

101. A reference to the sixteen sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, who appears in chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra.

The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra

Nichiren, follower of the Great Teacher
Kompon [Dengyo]



NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO.
Question: Is it possible, without understanding the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, but merely by chanting the five or seven characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo once a day, once a month, or simply once a year, once a decade, or once in a lifetime, to avoid being drawn into trivial or serious acts of evil, to escape falling into the four evil paths, and instead to eventually reach the stage of non-regression?

Answer: Yes, it is.

Question: You may talk about fire, but unless you put your hand in a flame, you will never burn yourself. You may say “water, water!” but unless you actually drink it, you will never satisfy your thirst. Then how, just by chanting the daimoku of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo without understanding what it means, can you escape from the evil paths of existence?

Answer: They say that, if you play a koto strung with a lion’s sinews, then all the other kinds of strings will snap. And if you so much as hear the words “pickled plum,” your mouth will begin to water. Even in everyday life there are such wonders, so how much greater are the wonders of the Lotus Sutra!

We are told that parrots, simply by twittering the four noble truths of the

Hinayana teachings, were able to be reborn in heaven,¹ and that men, simply by respecting the three treasures, were able to escape being swallowed by a huge fish.² How much more effective, then, is the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, which is the very heart of all the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Buddhism and the eye of all the Buddhas! How can you doubt that by chanting it you can escape from the four evil paths?

The Lotus Sutra, wherein the Buddha honestly discarded expedient means, says that one can “gain entrance through faith alone.”³ And the Nirvana Sutra, which the Buddha preached in the grove of sal trees on the last day of his life, states, “Although there are innumerable practices that lead to enlightenment, if one teaches faith, then that includes all those practices.”

Thus faith is the basic requirement for entering the way of the Buddha. In the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, the first ten stages, dealing with faith, are basic, and the first of these ten stages is that of arousing pure faith. Though lacking in knowledge of Buddhism, a person of faith, even if dull-witted, is to be reckoned as a person of correct views. But even though one has some knowledge of Buddhism, if one is without faith, then one is to be

considered a slanderer and an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief.

The monk Sunakshatra observed the two hundred and fifty precepts, mastered the four stages of meditation, and was versed in all the twelve divisions of the scriptures, while Devadatta memorized the sixty thousand non-Buddhist teachings and the eighty thousand Buddhist teachings, and could manifest eighteen miraculous powers⁴ with his body. And yet it is said that these men, because they had knowledge but no faith, are now in the great citadel of the Avichi hell. Mahakashyapa and Shariputra on the other hand lacked knowledge but had faith, and the Buddha accordingly predicted that they would become the Thus Come Ones Light Bright and Flower Glow, respectively. The Buddha stated, "If one should harbor doubt and fail to believe, one will fall at once into the evil paths."⁵ These words refer to those who have knowledge but are without faith.

And yet contemporary scholars ask, "How is it possible, simply by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with faith but no understanding, to avoid the evil paths?" If we accept the words of the sutra, these scholars themselves can hardly avoid falling into the great citadel of the Avichi hell.

Thus, as we have seen, even those who lack understanding, so long as they chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, can avoid the evil paths. This is like lotus flowers, which turn as the sun does, though the lotus has no mind to direct it, or like the plantain that grows with the rumbling of thunder, though this plant has no ears to hear it.⁶ Now we are like the lotus or the plantain, and the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is like the sun or the thunder.

People say that, if you tie a piece of living rhinoceros horn to your body and enter the water, the water will not come within five feet of you.⁷ They

also say that, if one leaf of the sandalwood tree unfurls, it can eradicate the foul odor of the eranda trees for a distance of forty yojanas. In this case, our evil karma may be likened to the eranda trees or the water, and the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra may be likened to the rhinoceros horn or the sandalwood leaf.

Diamonds are so hard that almost no substance will cut them, and yet they can be cut by a sheep's horn or a turtle's shell. The limbs of the nyagrodha⁸ tree are so stout that the largest birds can perch on them without breaking them, and yet they are vulnerable to the tailorbird,⁹ which is so tiny it could almost build its nest on the eyelashes of a mosquito. Here, our evil karma is analogous to the diamond or the nyagrodha tree, and the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, to the sheep's horn or the tailorbird. Amber draws dust, and a magnet attracts iron particles; here our evil karma is like the dust or iron, and the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is like the amber or the magnet. If we consider these [analogies, we can see why] we should always chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

The first volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "Throughout incalculable, innumerable kalpas it is rare that one may hear this Law."¹⁰ And the fifth volume says, "As for this Lotus Sutra, throughout immeasurable numbers of lands one cannot even hear its name."¹¹ Thus it is an extremely rare thing to hear the name of the Lotus Sutra. Though the Buddhas Sushanta¹² and Many Treasures made their appearance in the world, they did not utter so much as the name of the Lotus Sutra. And though the Thus Come One Shakyamuni made his advent expressly for the purpose of preaching the Lotus Sutra, he kept the name of that sutra a secret and never referred to it for a period of forty-two years. It was only when he reached the age of seventy-two that he

first began to intone Myoho-*renge-kyo*, the daimoku of the sutra. However, the people of faraway countries such as China and Japan were unable to hear of it at that time. It was over a thousand years before China heard so much as the name of the sutra, and another three hundred and fifty or more years before it was heard in Japan.

Thus, encountering this sutra is as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara flower, which occurs but once in three thousand years, or the one-eyed turtle finding a floating piece of sandalwood, which happens only once in innumerable, boundless kalpas.

Suppose one were to place a needle in the earth point up and throw down tiny mustard seeds at it from the palace of the great king Brahma in the heavens. One could sooner impale a mustard seed on the point of a needle in this way than encounter the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra. Or suppose one were to place a needle upright on top of the Mount Sumeru in one world and then, standing atop the Mount Sumeru of another world on a very windy day, were to try to cast a thread so that it reached the other mountain and passed through the eye of the needle. One could sooner thread a needle in this way than encounter the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Therefore, when you chant the daimoku of this sutra, you should be aware that it is a more joyful thing than for one who was born blind to gain sight and see one's father and mother, and a rarer thing than for a man who has been seized by a powerful enemy to be released and reunited with his wife and children.

Question: What passages of proof can be cited to show that one should chant only the daimoku?

Answer: The eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law states that one who accepts and upholds the mere name of the Lotus Sutra

will enjoy immeasurable good fortune. The Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law says that, if one hears this sutra and proclaims and embraces its title, one will enjoy merit beyond measure. And the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law says that one who accepts and upholds the name of the Lotus Sutra will enjoy immeasurable good fortune. These statements indicate that the good fortune one receives from simply chanting the daimoku is beyond measure.

To accept, uphold, read, recite, take delight in, and protect all the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra is called the comprehensive practice. To accept, uphold, and protect the "Expedient Means" chapter and the "Life Span" chapter is called the abbreviated practice. And simply to chant one four-phrase verse or the daimoku, and to protect those who do so, is called the essential practice. Hence, among these three kinds of practice, comprehensive, abbreviated, and essential, the daimoku is defined as the essential practice.

Question: How great are the blessings contained within the five characters of Myoho-*renge-kyo*?

Answer: The great ocean contains all the numerous rivers that flow into it, the great earth contains all sentient and insentient beings, the wish-granting jewel is capable of showering down innumerable treasures, and the heavenly king Brahma rules over all the three-fold world. The five characters of Myoho-*renge-kyo* are comparable to these. All beings of the nine worlds, as well as those in the world of Buddhahood, are contained within them. And since all beings of the Ten Worlds are contained within them, so are their environments.

Let us first examine the fact that the five characters, Myoho-*renge-kyo*, contain within them all teachings. The single character *kyo*, or "sutra," is the king

of all sutras, and all the other sutras are encompassed by it. The Buddha appeared in the world and over a period of fifty years preached eighty thousand sacred teachings. At that time the life span of human beings is said to have been one hundred years. The Buddha passed away in the middle of the night on the fifteenth day of the second month of the year with the cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*.¹³ Thereafter, during some ninety days of summer, or the period from the eighth day of the fourth month until the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the same year, one thousand arhats gathered at the compilation hall and set down all the sutras.

After that, during the one thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, all these various sutras spread throughout the five regions of India, but they did not reach as far as China. It was only in the fifteenth year of the Middle Day of the Law [1,015 years after the Buddha's passing] that Buddhist sutras were first introduced to China. This was in the year with the cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67) in the reign of Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty. From that time until the year with the cyclical sign *kanoe-uma*, the eighteenth year of the K'ai-yüan era (C.E. 730) in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty, a total of 176 translators went over to China, taking with them 1,076 sutras, works on discipline, and treatises comprising 5,048 volumes contained in 480 scroll cases. All of these sacred writings are followers of the single character *kyo* of the Lotus Sutra.

Among the sutras that the Buddha preached during the more than forty years before he expounded the Lotus Sutra, there is one called the Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra. This sutra is preserved in the dragon king's palace in three versions. The first version contains as many chapters as the dust particles of ten major world

systems. The second version contains 498,800 verses, and the third version contains 100,000 verses in forty-eight chapters. Outside of these three versions, only the smaller texts such as the eighty-volume and sixty-volume versions¹⁴ are preserved in China and Japan.

In addition, there are the Hinayana Agama sutras, and the various Mahayana sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods. Among the latter, the Sanskrit text of the Mahavairochana Sutra devotes a total of thirty-five hundred verses simply to the explanation of the five characters of the mantra *avarahakha*,¹⁵ to say nothing of the countless verses it uses to describe the seeds, august forms, and samayas¹⁶ of the various honored ones. In China, however, the text exists in a mere six- or seven-volume form. The Nirvana Sutra, which the Buddha preached in the sal grove on his last day, is preserved in China in a version that is only forty volumes long, though in this case, too, the Sanskrit versions of the text have many more volumes. All these various sutras are followers of the Lotus Sutra, the most profound teaching of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. In addition, all the sutras expounded by the seven Buddhas of the past,¹⁷ the thousand Buddhas, or the Buddhas of countless kalpas ago, as well as those expounded by the Buddhas presently living in the ten directions, are followers of the single character *kyo* of the Lotus Sutra.

Thus, in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha addresses Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower, saying that, just as the ocean is foremost among all the rivers, streams, and other bodies of water, just as Mount Sumeru is foremost among all the mountains, and just as the moon is foremost among the heavenly bodies, [so the Lotus Sutra is likewise among all the sutras]. The Great Teacher

Miao-lo says in his commentary that the Lotus Sutra is "foremost among all the sutras preached in the past, now being preached, or to be preached in the future."¹⁸

Within this single character *kyo* are contained all the sutras in the worlds throughout the ten directions. It is like the wish-granting jewel that contains within it all manner of treasures, or the vastness of space that encompasses all phenomena. And because this single character *kyo* of Myoho-enge-kyo is the supreme achievement of the Buddha's lifetime of teaching, the other four characters, Myo-ho-ren-ge, likewise surpass all the other eighty thousand doctrines that the Buddha taught.

Coming now to the character *myo*, the Lotus Sutra says, "This sutra opens the gate of expedient means and shows the form of true reality."¹⁹ The Great Teacher Chang-an states, "*Myo* means to reveal the depths of the secret storehouse."²⁰ The Great Teacher Miao-lo says of this, "To reveal means to open."²¹ Hence the character *myo* means to open.

If there is a storehouse full of treasures but no key, then it cannot be opened, and if it cannot be opened, then the treasures inside cannot be seen. The Buddha preached the Flower Garland Sutra, but he did not therein expound the key to open this sutra. Likewise, in the more than forty years that followed, he preached the sutras of the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods as well as the Meditation Sutra, but he did not reveal their meaning. Their doors remained closed, and therefore no one could understand these sutras. Even though people thought they understood, their understanding was in fact distorted.

But then the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra and in this way opened the storehouses of the sutras. And for the first time in more than forty years, all the people of the nine worlds were able

to view the treasures that lay within. To give an analogy, even though there are people and animals, plants and trees on the earth, without the light of the sun or moon, even those with good eyes cannot make out their shapes and colors. It is when the sun or moon rises that one can discern for the first time what these things really look like. The sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra were shrouded in the darkness of a long night, and the essential and theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra were like the sun and moon.

Among the bodhisattvas with their two good eyes, the cross-eyed people of the two vehicles, ordinary people with their blind eyes, or icchantikas who have been blind since birth, there were none who could make out the true color or shape of things by means of the earlier sutras. But when the Lotus Sutra was preached and the moon of the theoretical teaching came forth, first the bodhisattvas with their two good eyes gained enlightenment, and then the cross-eyed people of the two vehicles. Next the blind eyes of ordinary people were opened, and then even icchantikas, who had been blind from birth, were able to establish a relationship with the Lotus Sutra that assured them that their eyes would one day open. All this was due entirely to the virtue of the single character *myo*.

There are two *myo*, or mystic, principles expounded in the Lotus Sutra, one in the first fourteen chapters, which constitute the theoretical teaching, and one in the latter fourteen chapters, which constitute the essential teaching.²² From another point of view, there are twenty mystic principles,²³ ten in the theoretical teaching and ten in the essential teaching; or there are sixty mystic principles,²⁴ thirty in the theoretical teaching and thirty in the essential teaching. From yet other points of view, forty mystic principles²⁵ may be discerned in each half of the

Lotus Sutra. By adding these to the forty mystic principles concerning the observation of the mind,²⁶ the single character *myo* will be found to contain fully one hundred and twenty *myo*, or mystic, principles.

One fundamental *myo*, or mystic, principle underlies every one of the 69,384 characters that make up the Lotus Sutra. Hence the Lotus Sutra comprises a total of 69,384 mystic principles.

Myo in India is rendered as *sad*, and in China, as *miao*. *Myo* means to be fully endowed, which in turn has the meaning of "perfect and full." Each word and each character of the Lotus Sutra contains within it all the 69,384 characters that compose the sutra. To illustrate, one drop of the great ocean contains within it the waters of all the various rivers that flow into the ocean, and a single wish-granting jewel, though no bigger than a mustard seed, is capable of showering down the treasures that one could wish for with all the wish-granting jewels.

To give another analogy, plants and trees are withered and bare in autumn and winter, but when the sun of spring and summer shines on them, they put forth branches and leaves, and then flowers and fruit. Before the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, the people in the nine worlds were like plants and trees in autumn and winter. But when the single character *myo* of the Lotus Sutra shone on them like the spring and summer sun, then the flower of the aspiration for enlightenment blossomed, and the fruit of Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land emerged.

Bodhisattva Nagarjuna in his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine." This quotation occurs in a passage in *Great Perfection of Wisdom* that explains the virtues inherent in the character *myo* of the Lotus Sutra.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo remarks, "Because it can cure what is thought to be incurable, it is called *myo*, or wonderful."²⁷

In general, there are four kinds of people who have great difficulty in attaining Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land. First are those predestined for the two vehicles,²⁸ second are icchantikas, third are those who cling to the doctrine of void,²⁹ and fourth are those who slander the Law. But through the Lotus Sutra, all of these people are able to become Buddhas. That is why the Lotus Sutra is called *myo*.

Devadatta was the eldest son of King Dronodana and a nephew of King Shuddhodana [the father of the Buddha Shakyamuni], which made him the Buddha's cousin. He was also the elder brother of the Buddha's disciple, the Venerable Ananda. He was thus by no means a person of low station in the southern continent, Jambudvīpa. He became a disciple of the monk Sudaya³⁰ and entered the religious life. From the Venerable Ananda he learned the eighteen miraculous powers, and he committed to memory the sixty thousand teachings of the non-Buddhist schools and the eighty thousand teachings of Buddhism. He observed the five ascetic practices³¹ and appeared almost more saintly than the Buddha himself. Thinking to make himself a leader like the Buddha, he dared to commit the crime of disrupting the Buddhist Order by establishing his own ordination platform on Mount Gayashirsha³² and inviting the Buddha's disciples over to his side. He confided to Crown Prince Ajatashatru: "I intend to kill the Buddha and become the new Buddha. You must kill your father, the king [Bimbisara], and become the new king in his place!"

After Crown Prince Ajatashatru had in fact killed his father, Devadatta kept watch on the Buddha's activities and with a large stone caused his blood to flow. He also struck and killed the nun

Utpalavarna who had reached the state of arhat. Thus he committed fully three of the five cardinal sins.

In addition, with the Venerable Kokalika as his disciple and King Ajata-shatru as his patron, Devadatta began to attract followers from everywhere, until throughout the five regions of India with its sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, and ten thousand small states, every soul guilty of one, two, or three of the cardinal sins was a member of his group. They gathered about him as the various rivers gather in the great ocean, or as plants and trees gather on a great mountain. As the wise gathered about Shariputra, and those with transcendental powers flocked to Maudgalyayana, so did evil persons throw in their lot with Devadatta.

As a result, the great earth, which is 168,000 yojanas thick and rests on a windy circle³³ as hard as a diamond, nevertheless split open, plunging Devadatta alive into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. His leading disciple Kokalika also fell into hell alive, as did the Brahman's daughter Chinchā, King Virudhaka, and the monk Sunakshatra. Moreover, the people of India with its five regions and sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, and ten thousand small states all observed this. Those in the six heavens of the world of desire and in the four meditation heavens, all beings in both the worlds of form and formlessness,³⁴ including Brahma, Shakra, the devil king of the sixth heaven, and King Yama, likewise witnessed their fate.

All the beings throughout the major world system and the worlds of the ten directions heard about this, and unanimously concluded that, even though as many kalpas should pass as there are dust particles of the land, Devadatta and the others would never escape from the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering, and that, though the stone that

marks the duration of a kalpa might be worn completely away, they would continue to suffer in the Avichi hell. How astounding, then, that in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha should reveal that Devadatta was his teacher in a past existence and should predict that he would attain enlightenment in the future as a Thus Come One called Heavenly King! If the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are true, then the Lotus Sutra must be an outrageous lie. But if the Lotus Sutra is true, then the previous sutras must be guilty of perpetrating the wildest deceptions.

If Devadatta, who committed three of the five cardinal sins and in addition was guilty of countless other grave offenses, could become the Thus Come One Heavenly King, then there can be no doubt that the other evildoers who committed only one or two of the cardinal sins will surely attain the way as well. For if the great earth itself could be overturned, then the plants and trees on it would as a matter of course be overturned. And if one can crush the hardest stone, one can certainly bend the pliant grasses. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra is called *myō*.

Coming now to the subject of women, we find that they are strongly condemned in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings. The works known as the *Three Records* and the *Five Canons* of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of ancient China depict them as fawning and crooked. For this reason, disaster is said to have come about because of the three women of antiquity.³⁵ Thus women are identified as the cause of the downfall of a nation and its people.

The Flower Garland Sutra, the first great teaching that the Buddha preached following his enlightenment, states, "Women are messengers of hell who can destroy the seeds of Buddhahood. They may look like bodhisattvas, but at

heart they are like yaksha demons.”³⁶ The Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha’s last teaching that he delivered in the grove of sal trees, says, “All rivers and streams are invariably winding and devious, and all women are invariably fawning and crooked.” It also says, “If all the desires and delusions of all the men throughout the major world system were lumped together, they would be no greater than the karmic impediment of one single woman.”

When the Flower Garland Sutra says that women “can destroy the seeds of Buddhahood,” it means that they scorch and burn the seeds that would otherwise allow them to become Buddhas. When clouds mass in the sky in a time of great drought and heavy rain falls to earth, then countless withered plants and trees everywhere will put forth blossoms and bear fruit. But this is not true of seeds that have been scorched. They will never sprout; rather the heavy rain makes them rot.

Now the Buddha is like the masses of clouds, his teachings are like the heavy rain, and the withered plants and trees are like all living beings. When they are watered by the rain of the Buddhist teachings and observe the five precepts, the ten good precepts, and the meditational practices, all of which bring merit, they will put forth blossoms and bear fruit. The scorched seeds that never sprout even though the rain falls on them, but instead rot, are comparable to women, who, though they encounter the Buddhist teachings, cannot free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death, but instead turn away from the truth of Buddhism and fall into the evil paths. This is what the sutra means when it says that women “can destroy the seeds of Buddhahood.”

The passage in the Nirvana Sutra cited above says that, just as all rivers and streams twist and wind, so too are women perverse and devious. Because

water is a pliant substance, when its path is blocked by some hard object such as a rock or a mountain, it will split into two streams or turn aside, flowing now this way, now that. Women are the same; their minds are soft and weak. Though they may believe that a certain course is right, if they come up against the strong will of a man and find their way blocked, then they will turn in some direction quite different from the one they originally intended.

Again, though you may trace pictures on the surface of the water, nothing of what you have drawn will remain. Women are the same, for lack of steadfastness is their basic character. Hence they will think a certain way at one moment, and then a moment later have quite a different view. But the basic character of a Buddha is honesty and straightforwardness. Hence women, with their devious ways, can never become Buddhas.

Women are doomed to the five obstacles and the three types of obedience. Hence the Silver-Colored Woman Sutra says that, even if the eyes of the Buddhas of the three existences were to fall to the ground, no woman could ever attain Buddhahood. *Great Perfection of Wisdom* says that one could sooner catch the wind than grasp the mind of a woman.

Yet though all female beings were so despised in the various sutras, when Bodhisattva Manjushri spoke the single character *myo*, a woman was instantly able to become a Buddha. So extraordinary was this occurrence that Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated, the foremost disciple of the Buddha Many Treasures in the World of Treasure Purity, and the Venerable Shariputra, who was known among the Thus Come One Shakyamuni’s disciples as the foremost in wisdom, protested. They said that, according to all the Mahayana and Hinayana sutras that the

Buddha had preached in the previous forty years and more, the dragon king's daughter could not possibly become a Buddha. And yet in the end their arguments were of no avail, and in fact she did become a Buddha.

Thus the passage in the Buddha's first sutra declaring that women "can destroy the seeds of Buddhahood," and that in his final sermon in the sal grove about how "all rivers and streams are invariably winding and devious," were utterly contradicted, and the views reflected in the Silver-Colored Woman Sutra and *Great Perfection of Wisdom* were proven to be nonsense. Wisdom Accumulated and Shariputra were obliged to still their tongues and shut their mouths, while all the human and heavenly beings present at the great gathering where the Lotus Sutra was preached pressed their palms together in an excess of joy. All this was due entirely to the virtue of the single character *myo*.

In this southern continent of Jambudvīpa there are twenty-five hundred rivers, and every single one of them is winding. They are devious like the minds of the women of Jambudvīpa. And yet there is one river called the Sahaya³⁷ that follows a course as straight as a taut rope, flowing directly into the western sea. A woman who has faith in the Lotus Sutra will be like this river, proceeding directly to the Pure Land in the west.³⁸ Such is the virtue inherent in the single character *myo*.

Myo means to revive, that is, to return to life. For example, it is said that, though the chick of a yellow crane may die, if the mother crane calls the name of Tzu-an,³⁹ then the dead chick will come back to life. Or, in the case of the fish and shellfish that have been killed because a poisonous bird called a chen⁴⁰ has entered the water, it is said that, if they are touched with a rhinoceros horn, they will all be brought back to life. Similarly, persons

of the two vehicles, icchantikas, and women were described in the sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra as having scorched and killed the seeds that would have allowed them to become Buddhas. But by holding fast to this single character *myo*, they can revive these scorched seeds of Buddhahood.

T'ien-t'ai says: "The icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, nevertheless have minds, and so it is still possible for them to attain Buddhahood. But persons of the two vehicles have annihilated consciousness, and therefore cannot arouse the mind that aspires to enlightenment. And yet the Lotus Sutra can cure them, which is why it is called *myo*, or wonderful."⁴¹ Miao-lo says: "The reason that the other sutras are called 'great' but not *myo* is simply that it is easy to cure those who have a mind, but difficult to cure those who are without a mind. Because it [the Lotus Sutra] can cure what is thought to be incurable, it is called *myo*, or wonderful."⁴²

These passages refer to the fact that sutras such as the Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra, the Great Collection Sutra, the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, and the Great Nirvana Sutra all have the character "great" in their titles but not the character *myo*, or wonderful. This is because they can only cure the living but are unable to cure the dead. The Lotus Sutra, however, can cure the dead as well as the living, and therefore it has the character *myo* in its title [Myoho-enge-kyo].

Thus, with the other sutras, persons who should by rights become Buddhas cannot do so. But with the Lotus Sutra, even those who would ordinarily find it impossible to do so can attain Buddhahood, not to mention those for whom it is relatively easy. This being the case, in the time since the Lotus Sutra was preached, there ought not to be a single person who adheres to the other sutras.

Now the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law have passed, and we have entered the Latter Day of the Law. In such an age, it is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more difficult for ordinary people to attain Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land than it was for even the persons of the two vehicles or icchantikas who lived when the Buddha was alive. And yet people nowadays think that, by relying on the Meditation Sutra or some other of the sutras preached in the more than forty years before the Lotus Sutra, they can escape the sufferings of birth and death. How futile, how utterly futile!

Women, whether they live at the time of the Buddha or in the Former, Middle, or Latter Day of the Law, cannot attain Buddhahood through any teaching but the Lotus Sutra. None of the other sutras expounded by any of the Buddhas anywhere can help them. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che, who heard the Buddha's teachings at Eagle Peak⁴³ and later attained an awakening in the place of meditation, has stated unequivocally, "The other sutras only predict Buddhahood . . . for men, but not for women; . . . This sutra predicts Buddhahood for all."⁴⁴

The Thus Come One Shakyamuni, in the presence of Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions, preached the Lotus Sutra over a period of eight years at the place called Eagle Peak northeast of Rajagriha in the kingdom of Magadha. The Great Teacher [T'ien-t'ai] Chih-che was present and heard him preach. "During my fifty years of teaching," said the Buddha, "I have preached various sacred doctrines, all in order to bring benefit to living beings. In the sutras of the first forty-two years, I taught that it was not possible for women to attain Buddhahood. But now with the Lotus Sutra, I declare that women can become Buddhas."

Northeast of Eagle Peak, at a distance of some 108,000 *ri* beyond the mountains and seas, there is a country called Mahachina [in Sanskrit]. We know it as China. Some fifteen hundred years after the Buddha's passing, there appeared in this country a messenger of the Buddha called the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che, who declared that women could never attain Buddhahood through any teaching other than the Lotus Sutra.

Three thousand *ri* to the east of China, there is a country called Japan. Some two hundred years after the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai passed away, he was reborn in this country and bore the name of the Great Teacher Dengyo.⁴⁵ He then wrote a work entitled *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra* in which he stated: "Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form." Thus he made clear why the dragon king's daughter was able to become a Buddha.

It may seem somewhat difficult for women of the age we live in to attain Buddhahood in their present form. But if they put their trust in the Lotus Sutra, there is no doubt that they will be reborn in the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss. They will reach it more readily than the rivers and streams flowing into the great ocean, or more swiftly than the rain falling from the sky.

And yet we find that the women throughout Japan do not chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. Instead they put their faith in works such as the Two-Volumed Sutra or the Meditation Sutra, which can never lead women to the pure land or to Buddhahood. They intone the name of the Buddha Amida sixty thousand or a hundred thousand times a day. Amida is indeed the name of a Buddha, and to invoke it would

seem to be a laudable practice. But because the women who do so are relying upon sutras that can never lead women to Buddhahood or to rebirth in the pure land, they are in effect merely counting other people's riches. This comes about solely because they are led astray by evil teachers. All the women of Japan face an enemy more fearful than tigers or wolves, mountain bandits or pirates at sea, their parents' foes or their husbands' concubines. Their real enemies are those who, instead of teaching them the Lotus Sutra, teach them the Nembutsu.

Only after chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo sixty thousand, a hundred thousand, or even ten million times a day, may women who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra, if they still have some time to spare, now and then murmur to themselves the name of Amida or one of the other Buddhas. But women these days spend their whole lives constantly reciting the name of Amida and busying themselves with matters concerning the Nembutsu. They never recite the Lotus Sutra or give alms for its sake. True, there are a few who have the Lotus Sutra read by those who uphold its teachings. But they look up to the Nembutsu priests as though they

were their parents or brothers, and treat the upholders of the Lotus Sutra with less respect than they would their retainers or followers. And yet they claim that they are believers in the Lotus Sutra.

By contrast, Lady Pure Virtue gave permission for her sons, the two princes, to enter the Buddhist Order and encouraged them to propagate the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, the dragon king's daughter took a vow, saying, "I unfold the doctrines of the great vehicle to rescue living beings from suffering."⁴⁶ These women surely took no vow to practice only the teachings of the other sutras and to neglect the practice of the Lotus Sutra. Nevertheless, that is what the women of today do, paying all their attention to the practice of other sutras and none to that of the Lotus Sutra. You must reform your thinking immediately. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren

Completed at the hour of the sheep (1:00–3:00 P.M.) at Seicho-ji temple on the sixth day of the first month in the third year of Bun'ei (1266), cyclical sign *hinoe-tora*.



Background

This letter was written in the first month, 1266, for a woman of advanced years. Nothing is known about her other than that she was a new believer in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and lived in Amatsu of Awa Province. This letter explains in plain terms the rewards of the simple practice of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo by saying that this phrase and its components contain all the powers of the Buddha, and that one who chants it can tap all the benefits of

Buddhism and thus revitalize one's life.

In the fall of 1264, one year after he had been pardoned from his exile in Izu, Nichiren Daishonin returned to his birthplace in Awa Province. News of his mother's grave illness and the lessening of official pressures prompted his decision to return home. However, Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of this district and a passionate believer in the Nembutsu, was still incensed over the Daishonin's refutation of the Pure Land

teachings eleven years earlier and was lying in wait for him.

The Daishonin's primary concern was to visit his mother, and their reunion seems to have had a great effect upon her and she quickly recovered. Kudo Yoshitaka and the other disciples in the area were anxious to see him and urged him to visit Kudo's manor. On the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1264, accompanied by messengers sent to guide them, the group set out. When they reached a place known as Komatsubara, they were ambushed by Tojo Kagenobu and his Nembutsu followers. Kudo, who came rushing to the Daishonin's aid, and another disciple lost their lives. The Daishonin suffered a sword slash on his forehead and had his left hand broken.

At considerable personal risk, the Daishonin remained in Awa from 1264 through 1267 and conducted vigorous propagation activities, working with and among the people. In 1266, the Daishonin stayed for a while at his old temple, Seicho-ji, where he wrote several doctrinal treatises, including the present letter.

This letter consists of two sections. In the first section, the Daishonin addresses the question of whether or not one can benefit from chanting the daimoku (Nam-myoho-enge-kyo) without understanding the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, and stresses the necessity of faith in attaining Buddhahood.

Citing the examples of Mahakashyapa and Shariputra, he states that, even without understanding, one can eradicate any evil karma and accumulate boundless benefit, as long as one carries out the practice of chanting the daimoku with firm faith.

In the second section, the Daishonin clarifies the great blessings contained in the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra. He explains three meanings of the character *myo*: to open, to be fully endowed, and to revive. Finally, he states that only the Lotus Sutra enables women to attain Buddhahood, and urges the recipient of this letter to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and forsake her attachment to the Nembutsu.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin calls himself a "follower of the Great Teacher Kompon." Kompon, meaning fundamental, is another name for the Great Teacher Dengyo. He was the founder of the Japanese Tendai school, which he based on the teachings of T'ien-t'ai of China. He traveled to China to master T'ien-t'ai's doctrines and, after returning to Japan, repudiated all the schools based on the Buddha's provisional teachings and devoted himself to propagating the Lotus Sutra. The phrase "follower of the Great Teacher Kompon" implies that the Daishonin is the legitimate successor to the Buddha's teaching contained in the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. This story appears in the Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish. According to the sutra, while Shakyamuni was staying at Shravasti, his disciple Ananda one day taught the four noble truths to two parrots kept at the house of the Buddha's patron Sudatta. That evening, an animal attacked and ate them, but they were said to have been reborn in the heaven of the four heavenly kings because of the benefit obtained by repeating the four noble truths.

2. This story appears in the Great Compassion Sutra. According to the sutra, once when a merchant was sailing the ocean, a huge fish called a makara was about to swallow up his ship. Although the other people aboard were in despair, he fixed his mind upon the three treasures and called upon the mercy of all the Buddhas. Seeing him, the others joined him in sincere prayers with their palms joined, and the makara ceased attacking them.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
4. The eighteen miraculous powers are a variety of actions and appearances that Buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest in order to lead people to enlightenment. Explanations vary depending on the sutra.
5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.
6. The Nirvana Sutra says, "Though the plantain grows with the rumbling of thunder, it has neither the ears to hear it nor the mind to feel it." The sight of plantains refreshed after a thundershower may well have given rise to the belief that "the plantain grows with the rumbling of thunder."
7. According to *Pao-p'u Tzu*, when put into the water, a rhinoceros horn made into the form of a fish keeps the water away by three feet.
8. The banyan tree, which is found in tropical and subtropical Asiatic regions, usually around thirty to forty feet tall. Its abundant foliage offers cool shade from the sun.
9. An imaginary bird. It is also said to be the name of a kind of worm. The source of this passage has not been traced.
10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
11. *Ibid*, chap. 14.
12. A Buddha mentioned in the Larger Wisdom Sutra and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.
13. According to *The Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou*, Shakyamuni died on the fifteenth day of the second month in the fifty-second year of the reign of King Mu (949 B.C.E.) of the Chou dynasty.
14. The eighty-volume Flower Garland Sutra, called the new translation, was translated by Shikshananda (652-710) in the T'ang dynasty, and the sixty-volume Flower Garland Sutra, called the old translation, was translated by Buddhahadra (359-429) in the Eastern Chin dynasty.
15. The five characters of *a*, *va*, *ra*, *ha*, and *kha* indicate, respectively, the five universal elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. The esoteric True Word school holds this to be one of the secret truths revealed by Mahavairocana Buddha. This one word was used as a mantra (secret word or syllable) and was said to express the Buddha's quality, wisdom, appearance, and practice.
16. The seeds refer here to Sanskrit orthographic symbols used to represent various Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the esoteric teaching. The samayas are various

attributes of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, in particular, their vows to lead all people to supreme enlightenment. The term is often used in the esoteric teaching.

17. The seven Buddhas of the past are Shakyamuni and the six Buddhas who preceded him.

18. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

19. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

20. Preface by Chang-an to *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

21. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

22. The mystic principle of the theoretical teaching is that the Buddha discards the provisional teachings and reveals the true teaching, the Lotus Sutra, which allows people of the two vehicles to attain Buddhahood. The mystic principle of the essential teaching is that the Buddha discards his transient status and reveals his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago.

23. Principles set forth by T'ien-t'ai in his *Profound Meaning*. The ten mystic principles of the theoretical teaching are based on the concepts of the true aspect of all phenomena and the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle of Buddhahood. The ten mystic principles of the essential teaching are set forth on the basis of the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, as expounded in the "Life Span" chapter.

24. Added to each of the two sets of ten mystic principles—the ten mystic principles of the theoretical teaching and the ten mystic principles of the essential teaching—are the ten mystic principles grasped from the relative standpoint and the ten mystic principles grasped from the absolute, or all-encompassing, standpoint.

25. Thirty mystic principles related to the life of sentient beings, the Buddhist Law, and the nature of one's mind, or the Law within, plus ten in either the theoretical teaching or the essential teaching.

26. To perceive or awaken to the ultimate reality inherent in one's life. This is particularly stressed in T'ien-t'ai's practice, in which meditation is focused on the true nature of one's mind rather than some exterior object.

27. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

28. This refers to the two of the five groups into which people are by nature divided according to the Dharma Characteristics school. People in these two groups can eventually attain the state of arhat and that of pratyekabuddha, respectively.

29. This refers to non-Buddhists who held fast to the view of void, denying the causal law, and, according to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings of Buddhism, could not attain Buddhahood.

30. Sudaya was a Brahman master who taught Devadatta occult powers, according to the Increasing by One Agama Sutra.

31. Here, austerities established and practiced by Devadatta. According to *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma*, they were: (1) wearing only clothing discarded by others after washing and mending it; (2) obtaining food only by begging; (3) eating only once a day; (4) always seating oneself outside under a tree; and (5) never eating salt or other food possessing the five tastes.

32. A mountain whose summit resembled an elephant's head, located about 1.5 km southwest of Gaya in Magadha. In China it was translated as the Elephant-Headed Mountain.

33. The circle formed first when a world takes shape and living beings appear in it in the kalpa of formation. According to *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*, the power of the karma of living beings first causes a small wind to arise in space. This wind grows and forms the windy circle thought to lie at the base of a world. Upon this circle a watery circle and then a gold circle take shape, and upon them the land itself is formed, with its Mount Sumeru, seas, and mountains.

34. The two divisions of the threefold world, the realm where unenlightened beings transmigrate within the six paths. Beings in the world of form have material form but are free from desires, and those in the world of formlessness are free from both desire and the restrictions of matter.

35. Mo Hsi of the Hsia dynasty, Ta Chi of the Yin dynasty, and Pao Ssu of the Chou dynasty. All were favorites of the

ruler and helped bring about the downfall of the state.

36. This statement is not found in the extant Chinese versions of the Flower Garland Sutra. However, *A Collection of Treasures* written by Taira no Yasuyori during the Jisho era (1177-1181) cites it as a quotation from the Flower Garland Sutra.

37. A legendary river in the continent of Aparagodaniya located to the west of Mount Sumeru.

38. The Daishonin elsewhere teaches that faith in the Lotus Sutra will enable anyone, man or woman, to attain Buddhahood in one's present form as an ordinary mortal. However, because the recipient of this letter was still strongly attached to the views of the Pure Land school, the Daishonin explained his teaching in a way that she could readily understand.

39. A figure described in a Chinese legend. When he saw a yellow crane being sold on the road, he felt pity for it, offered his clothes in exchange for it, and set it free. When he died, the crane flew down to his grave and continued calling his name for three years. As a result, he came back to life.

40. A hawk-like bird with poisonous feathers that appears in Chinese works.

41. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

42. On "Great Concentration and Insight."

43. T'ien-t'ai is said to have been the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King, who was present at the assembly on Eagle Peak, because he attained an awakening through the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

44. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

45. In the early ninth century, Dengyo went to China and learned the T'ien-t'ai teachings. After returning to Japan, he established the Tendai (Chin T'ien-t'ai) school and devoted himself to upholding T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. It is said that Tao-sui, one of Dengyo's masters in China, identified him as the reincarnation of T'ien-t'ai, referring to T'ien-t'ai's prediction.

46. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro



AFTER Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty dreamed at night [of a golden man and dispatched emissaries to the western region],¹ the two sages, Kashyapa Matanga and Chu Falan, came to China and stood for the first time at the gates of Ch'ang-an. From that time until the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty, the Buddhist teachings of India spread throughout China. During the Liang dynasty, Buddhism was first introduced to Japan by King Syöngmyöng of the Korean kingdom of Paekche. This occurred during the reign of Kimmei, the thirtieth emperor of our country. Thereafter, all the sutras and treatises were circulated widely, and various Buddhist schools arose throughout Japan. How fortunate it is, then, that even though we were born in the Latter Day of the Law we are able to hear the teachings preached at Eagle Peak, and even though we live in a remote corner of the world we are able to scoop up with our hands the water of the great river of Buddhism.

A close examination, however, shows that there are distinctions to be made among the Buddha's teachings, such as the Hinayana and the Mahayana or the provisional and true teachings, or those of the sequence of preaching. If you are confused about these distinctions, you will fall into erroneous views, and even

though you may practice Buddhism, your offense will outweigh that of committing the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins. For this reason, if you abhor the secular world and seek the Buddhist way, you should understand this standard of evaluation before anything else. Otherwise, you are destined to follow the path of the monk Shore of Suffering and other slanderers. As the Nirvana Sutra says, "If one clings to distorted views, at the time of death one will surely fall into the Avichi hell."

Question: How can we discern the error of distorted views? Although I am not wise enough, I am nevertheless anxious about my next life and have resolved to seek the Buddhist teachings to the best of my ability. Therefore, I wish to know this standard of evaluation by all means. Should it be that I am adhering to distorted views, I will reflect on them and turn to the correct view.

Answer: It can be neither discerned with our physical eyes nor perceived with our shallow wisdom. We should use the sutras as our eyes and give precedence to the wisdom of the Buddha. Surely, however, if this standard is made clear, people will become enraged and be filled with resentment. Let them do as they will. What matters most is that we honor the Buddha's words. As a rule, people in the world value what is

distant and despise what is near, but this is the conduct of the ignorant. Even the distant should be repudiated if it is wrong, while what is near should not be discarded if it accords with the truth. Even though people may revere [their predecessors' doctrines], if those doctrines are in error, how can we employ them today?

I am told that the scholars of the ten schools—three in southern China and seven in northern China—were so outstanding in authority and virtue that they were revered throughout the land for more than five hundred years. However, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, who lived during the reigns of emperors of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties, examined their doctrines and denounced them as erroneous. Hearing of this, the people hated him intensely; but the Ch'en and Sui emperors,² being worthy rulers, summoned T'ien-t'ai to debate with the priests of the ten schools and settle the matter. Truth and error were thereby made clear, and in consequence, the priests all revised the distorted views that their schools had upheld over a period of five hundred years and became followers of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. And in our own country, the Great Teacher Kompon [Dengyo] of Mount Hiei debated with the learned scholars of Nara and Kyoto and distinguished between right and wrong in the Buddhist teachings. In every case, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo based their arguments on the sutras.

However, the people of our time—whether clerics or lay believers, nobles or commoners—all revere persons and do not value the Law. They make their own mind their teacher and do not rely on the sutras. Consequently, they take up the provisional teachings of the Nembutsu and discard the wonderful scripture of the great vehicle, or employ the erroneous doctrines of the True Word school to slander the correct teaching of the one true vehicle.

Are they not slanderers of the great vehicle? If what is written in the sutras is true, how can they escape the sufferings of hell? And those who follow their distorted teachings will also suffer the same fate.

Question: You claim that the Nembutsu and the True Word schools uphold provisional or erroneous doctrines, and that their practitioners are people of distorted views or slanderers of the Law. This seems very doubtful. The Great Teacher Kobo was a manifestation of Vajrasattva and a bodhisattva of the third stage of development.³ The True Word doctrine is the most profound secret teaching. Moreover, the Reverend Shan-tao was an incarnation of the Thus Come One Amida, the lord of the Western Land, and the Honorable Honen was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Great Power. How can you call such honorable priests men of erroneous views?

Answer: Such criticism must of course not be leveled on the grounds of personal opinion; the matter must be clarified on the basis of the sutras. The statement that the True Word teaching represents the most profound of all secrets derives from the assertion that the Susiddhikara Sutra should be ranked as the king among the three True Word sutras.⁴ Nowhere in the sutras themselves do we read that the True Word teaching is the highest of all the Thus Come Ones' teachings.

In Buddhism, that teaching is judged supreme that enables all people, whether good or evil, to become Buddhas. Surely anyone can grasp so reasonable a standard. By means of this principle, we can compare the various sutras and ascertain which is superior. The Lotus Sutra reveals that even the people of the two vehicles can attain enlightenment, but the True Word sutras do not. Rather, they categorically deny it. The Lotus Sutra teaches that women are capable of attaining Buddhahood, but

the True Word sutras make no mention of this at all. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written that evil people can attain enlightenment, but in the True Word sutras there is nothing about this. How can one say that the True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra?

Moreover, if we consider this in light of the omens occurring at the time of preaching, there were six portents that preceded the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. Among them, flowers rained down from the heavens, the earth trembled, and a ray of light emanated from the tuft of white hair between the Buddha's eyebrows, reaching as high as the Summit of Being heaven and illuminating as deep as the Avichi hell. Moreover, the tower of Many Treasures Buddha rose from the earth, and the Buddhas who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha assembled from the ten directions. In addition, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth led by Superior Practices emerged from beneath the earth, each with a retinue equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers, fifty thousand, forty thousand, thirty thousand, and so forth, down to the sands of one Ganges, one half, and so forth. When such awesome and wondrous events are considered, how can one still maintain that the True Word sutras surpass the Lotus Sutra? I have no time to dwell on these matters. I have brought up only one drop of the ocean.

I have here a copy of the one-volume work called *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*, which is attributed to Bodhisattva Nagarjuna. This work says: "Only in the True Word teachings can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form, because these teachings expound the practice of samadhi meditation. No such exposition is to be found in the other types of teachings." As I thought this statement extremely doubtful, I examined it in light of the sutras. I discovered that,

although the True Word sutras contained the words "attaining Buddhahood in one's present form," they gave no example of anyone who had actually done so. Even if they had, because the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form is also taught in the Lotus Sutra, Nagarjuna should not have proclaimed that "no such exposition is to be found in the other types of teachings." This is a gross error.

In truth, however, this treatise is not the work of Nagarjuna. I will explain this in detail on another occasion. Yet even if it were the work of Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, an error is still an error. In his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, Nagarjuna refers to a vital point in differentiating among the teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha during his lifetime: "The Wisdom sutras are not secret teachings because they contain no mention of the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles. The Lotus Sutra is a secret teaching because it does." He also says, "Those sutras that expound the attainment of Buddhahood by those of the two vehicles are secret teachings, and those that do not are exoteric teachings."

If one goes by the words of *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*, then one must not only specifically contradict Nagarjuna's *Great Perfection of Wisdom*, but more generally deny the one great reason why the Buddhas make their advent in the world. Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and others all appeared in this world in order to propagate the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Nagarjuna was one of the Buddha's twenty-four successors. Could he really have put forth such an erroneous interpretation?

The True Word sutras are inferior even to the Wisdom sutras. How can we compare them with the Lotus Sutra? Nevertheless, in his *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, Kobo claims that all of the Buddha's lifetime teachings

are contained within the True Word teachings. He not only relegates the Lotus Sutra to third place, but even dismisses it as “a doctrine of childish theory.” Yet, when I reverently open the Lotus Sutra, I find that the Buddha declares it to be “foremost among all that is preached by the Thus Come Ones,”⁵ as well as the sutra supreme “among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach.”⁶ In the ten similes of the “Medicine King” chapter, the Lotus Sutra is likened to the ocean, the sun, and Mount Sumeru. This being the case, could anything be deeper than the ocean, brighter than the sun, or higher than Mount Sumeru? You should realize the truth through such similes. On what basis can Kobo claim that the True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra? We find no such passages whatsoever in the Mahavairochana or other sutras. Trusting only to his own view, he has forever violated the Buddha’s intention.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo states, “I call upon those with eyes to examine this thoroughly.”⁷ Is one not without eyes who regards the Lotus Sutra as inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra? The Nirvana Sutra reads, “If there are persons who slander the correct teaching of the Buddha, their tongues should be cut off.” Ah, how pitiful that those slandering tongues will utter no words in world after world, and that the eyes clouded by false views will fall out in lifetime after lifetime, seeing nothing! Moreover, the Lotus Sutra says: “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”⁸ If this statement is valid, Kobo will surely fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering where he will undergo agony for immeasurable millions of kalpas. You should also recognize the fate of Shan-tao and Honen through his example. Who among those endowed with wis-

dom will dip into the stream of such slanderous teachings and be consumed together with these men in the flames of the Avichi hell? Truly, the practitioners of Buddhism should fear this. These are all persons of profoundly distorted views. In this connection, we find, among the true and golden words of the Thus Come One: “[This devil king Papiyas will in time try] to destroy the correct teaching of mine. He will be like a hunter who wraps his body in a priestly robe. He will change his form into that of a stream-winner, a once-returner, a non-returner, an arhat,⁹ a pratyekabuddha, or a Buddha, and will try to destroy the correct teaching of mine.”¹⁰

Shan-tao and Honen, displaying a variety of majestic powers, deceived ignorant priests and lay believers and schemed to destroy the Thus Come One’s correct teaching. The followers of the True Word school in particular make it a point to emphasize worldly benefits exclusively. Using animals as objects of devotion, they conduct prayers not only to satisfy the amorous passions of man and woman, but also to fulfill desires for manors and the like. They claim such trifling results as wondrous benefits. However, if they are going to assert the supremacy of the True Word teachings on these grounds, they are no match for the non-Buddhists of India. The ascetic Agastya kept the waters of the Ganges River in his ear for twelve years. The ascetic Jinu swallowed up the four great oceans in a day, and the non-Buddhist teacher Uluka turned into a stone and remained that way for eight hundred years. How could the results of the True Word school’s prayers surpass these? The ascetic Gautama¹¹ assumed the form of the god Shakra and preached for twelve years, while Kobo transformed himself into Vairochana for an instant. Judge for yourself whose powers are the greater. If you believe

that such transformations are significant, you might just as well believe in the non-Buddhist practitioners.

Yet it should be known that, while the non-Buddhist practitioners possessed such impressive powers, they could not escape the flames of the Avichi hell, not to mention those with only trivial powers of transformation. Even less can slanderers of the great vehicle avoid this fate. The priests of the True Word school are evil friends to all living beings. Avoid them; fear them. The Buddha states: "Have no fear of mad elephants. What you should fear are evil friends! Why? Because a mad elephant can only destroy your body; it cannot destroy your mind. But an evil friend can destroy both body and mind. A mad elephant can destroy only a single body, but an evil friend can destroy countless bodies and countless minds. A mad elephant merely destroys an impure, stinking body, but an evil friend can destroy both pure body and pure mind. A mad elephant can destroy the physical body, but an evil friend destroys the Dharma body. Even if you are killed by a mad

elephant, you will not fall into the three evil paths. But if you are killed by an evil friend, you are certain to fall into them. A mad elephant is merely an enemy of your body, but an evil friend is an enemy of the good Law."¹² Therefore, even more than venomous serpents or malevolent demons, one should fear the evil friends who follow Kobo, Shan-tao, and Honen. This is just a brief clarification of the error of holding distorted views.

The messenger is in such a great hurry that I have written only a small part of what I had to say. When an opportunity arises in the future, I will write to you again, examining sutras and commentaries in detail. Never show this letter to anyone. If I survive until then, I will visit and talk with you in the autumn of next year, as you requested.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifth day of the twelfth month
Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the twelfth month of the fourth year of Bun'ei (1267), when he was forty-six years old, and addressed it to Hoshina Goro Taro who lived in Kazusa Province to the north of Awa. Hoshina is said to have been a retainer of Sakuma Hyogo, the lord of Okitsu, and converted to the Daishonin's teaching along with his lord when the Daishonin returned to his native Awa Province in the autumn of 1264.

From this single extant letter addressed to him, we can surmise that Hoshina may have previously been

a follower of the True Word school but had converted to the Daishonin's teaching and had since maintained pure faith.

In this letter, the Daishonin repudiates the Nembutsu and True Word schools, briefly stating the arguments that underlay his later remonstrations with government officials and priests of major temples. First, he points out that there are distinctions of relative superiority to be made among all the Buddhist scriptures, such as Hinayana and Mahayana or provisional and true teachings. Of all the various sutras, the

Lotus Sutra is supreme, yet the priests of the Nembutsu and True Word schools are confused as to the proper criteria of comparison and therefore slander the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin criticizes their views on the basis of what is written in the sutras themselves, asserting that the scriptural texts,

not personal opinion, form the only valid basis for judgment. In particular, he censures the practices of the priests of the True Word school that aim only at obtaining shallow, worldly benefits. He concludes that one should acknowledge as supreme the sutra that enables all people to attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. This refers to the tradition that Emperor Ming (28–75) dreamed of a golden man levitating above the garden. He awakened and asked his ministers about the dream. One of them said that he had once heard of the birth of a sage in the western region during the reign of King Chao of the Chou dynasty, and that this sage had been called the Buddha. The emperor sent eighteen envoys to the western region in order to obtain the Buddha's teachings. And, at the request of these envoys, two Indian Buddhist monks came to China in C.E. 67 with Buddhist scriptures and images on the backs of white horses.

2. The Ch'en and Sui emperors refer to Ch'en Shu-pao, the fifth and last sovereign of the Ch'en dynasty, and Emperor Yang Ti, the second sovereign of the Sui dynasty, respectively.

3. The third of the ten stages of development, the stage of the emission of light, in which one radiates the light of wisdom. *See also* fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice in Glossary.

4. Though the True Word school ranks the Susiddhikara Sutra below its other two main scriptures, Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown, it is especially revered in the

Tendai esotericism established by Jikaku. The Daishonin refers here to Jikaku's assertion that this sutra is the highest of the esoteric scriptures.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

7. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

9. References are to those who have attained, respectively, the four levels of enlightenment to which voice-hearers in Hinayana Buddhism aspire. In ascending order, they are the stage of the stream-winner (Skt srota-apanna), the stage of the once-returner (sakridagamin), the stage of the non-returner (anagamin), and the stage of arhat. *See also* four stages of Hinayana enlightenment in Glossary.

10. A rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

11. A hermit of ages past mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra, different from Gautama Buddha, or Shakyamuni. The Nirvana Sutra states: "The ascetic Gautama exhibited great supernatural powers and, for twelve years, transformed himself into the god Shakra . . ."

12. Nirvana Sutra.

16

The Rationale for Writing “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”



IN the first year of the Shoka era (1257), with the cyclical sign *hinotomi*, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, at the time when the hour of the dog gives way to the hour of the boar (around 9:00 P.M.), there occurred an earthquake of unprecedented magnitude. In the second year of the same era, cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-uma*, on the first day of the eighth month, there was a great wind. In the third year, cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-hitsuji*, a major famine occurred. In the first year of the Shogen era (1259), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-hitsuji*, epidemics were rampant, and throughout the four seasons of the second year, cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, the epidemics continued to rage without abating. By this time more than half the people of the nation had been laid low by death. The ruler of the country, alarmed at this state of affairs, turned to the scriptures of Buddhism and the non-Buddhist writings for help, ordering that various prayers be offered. These, however, failed to produce the slightest effect. On the contrary, famine and epidemics raged more fiercely than ever.

I, Nichiren, observing this state of affairs, proceeded to consult the great collection of Buddhist scriptures. There I discovered the reason why these prayers are without effect and on the

contrary actually make the situation worse, along with passages of proof to support it. In the end I had no other recourse than to compile a work to present my findings, entitling it *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. In the first year of the Bunno era (1260), cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month, at the hour of the dragon (7:00–9:00 A.M.), I handed it to the lay priest Yadoya¹ for presentation to His Lordship, the lay priest of Saimyo-ji, who is now deceased. This I did solely that I might repay the debt of gratitude that I owe to my native land.

The essence of this memorial is as follows. Buddhism was first introduced from the kingdom of Paekche to Japan during the reign of Emperor Kimmei, the thirtieth of the human sovereigns, in the hundred reigns of sovereigns following the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities. From that time until the reign of Emperor Kammu, the fiftieth human sovereign, a period of some 260 years, the various Buddhist scriptures were brought to Japan, as well as the six schools of Buddhism. At this time, however, the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools had not yet been introduced.

During the reign of Emperor Kammu, there was a young priest named

Saicho, who was a disciple of the Administrator of Priests Gyohyo of Yamashina-dera temple. (He later came to be known as the Great Teacher Dengyo.) He made a thorough study of the six schools that had been introduced to Japan earlier, as well as of the Zen doctrine, but none of these seemed to satisfy him. Earlier, in the reign of Emperor Shomu, the Reverend Chienchen [Ganjin] of T'ang China had come to Japan and brought with him the commentaries of T'ien-t'ai. Forty or more years had passed, and Saicho was the first person to peruse them and understand the profound meaning of Buddhism.

In the fourth year of the Enryaku era (785), Saicho founded a temple on Mount Hiei in order to insure the continuance of peace in heaven and on earth. Emperor Kammu paid honor to the new establishment, designating it as a place of worship where prayers could be offered to the guardian star of the ruler. He ceased to heed the teachings of the six schools and instead gave wholehearted allegiance to the perfect doctrines of the Tendai school.

In the thirteenth year of the Enryaku era, the emperor moved the capital from Nagaoka to the city of Heian.² In the twenty-first year of the same era, on the nineteenth day of the first month, the emperor summoned fourteen great scholars of the six schools from the seven major temples of Nara, including such priests as Gonso and Choyo, to Takao-dera temple, and ordered them to engage Saicho in debate. These masters of the six schools were not able to hold their own against Saicho even for a single exchange of opinions, to the extent that their mouths became as incapable of speech as their noses. The five teachings of the Flower Garland school, the three periods of the Dharma Characteristics school, and the two storehouses and three periods propounded by the Three Treatises school³—all of

these doctrines were demolished by Saicho. Not only were the doctrines of the six schools refuted, but it was demonstrated how they all go against the correct teaching. On the twenty-ninth day of the same month, the emperor handed down an edict severely criticizing the fourteen debaters who had confronted Saicho. These priests in turn drew up a letter apologizing for their conduct and submitted it to the emperor.

Thereafter, one sovereign after another paid allegiance to Mount Hiei, treating it with even greater deference than a filial son shows toward his father and mother, regarding it with greater awe than the common people manifest before the might of the ruler. At times the rulers issued edicts to honor it; at other times they were obliged to give their approval to its unjust demands. We may note in particular that Emperor Seiwa was able to ascend the throne as a consequence of the powerful prayers of the Reverend Eryo of Mount Hiei.⁴ The emperor's maternal grandfather, the Minister of the Right Kujo, for this reason submitted a written pledge of his fidelity to Mount Hiei. The General of the Right Minamoto no Yoritomo [the founder of the Kamakura shogunate], it will be recalled, was a descendant of Emperor Seiwa. And yet the government authorities in Kamakura, though they may or may not be following the right course in their administration, ignore and turn their back on Mount Hiei. Have they no fear of the punishment of heaven?

In the time of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, during the Kennin era (1201–1204), there were two arrogant men, Honen and Dainichi. Their bodies were possessed of demons, and they went about deluding the people of both high and low station throughout the country, until everyone had become a Nembutsu believer or else

joined the Zen school. Those who continued to pay respect to Mount Hiei became surprisingly few and lacking in ardor, and throughout the country the priests who were authorities on the Lotus Sutra or the True Word teachings found themselves ignored and rejected.

As a result, the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the gods of the seven shrines of Sanno,⁵ who guard and protect Mount Hiei, as well as the other great benevolent deities who protect the different parts of the nation, could no longer taste the flavor of the Law. Their power and brilliance waned, and they abandoned the country. Thus the demons gained access to the nation and brought about disasters and calamities. These disasters, as I stated in my memorial, were omens signifying that our country would in the end be destroyed by a foreign nation.

Later, in the first year of the Bun'ei era (1264), cyclical sign *kinoe-ne*, on the fifth day of the seventh month, a comet appeared in the east, and its light shone over the whole country of Japan. This is an evil portent such as has never been seen before since the beginning of history. None of the authorities on the Buddhist scriptures or the non-Buddhist writings could understand what had brought about such an ill omen. I became even more grieved and distressed. Now, nine years after I presented my memorial [to the lay priest of Saimyo-ji], in the intercalary first month of this year, the official letter arrived from the great kingdom of the Mongols. The events that have occurred match the predictions made in my memorial as exactly as do the two halves of a tally.

The Buddha left this prediction, saying, "One hundred or more years after my passing, a ruler named Ashoka the Great will appear in the world and will spread my relics far and wide."⁶ In the reign of King Chao, the fourth ruler of

the Chou dynasty, the Grand Historian Su Yu made this prediction: "[A sage has been born in the western region.] One thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country."⁷ Prince Shotoku predicted, "After my death, when two hundred years or more have passed, the city of Heian will be established in the province of Yamashiro."⁸ And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai predicted, "Two hundred years or more after my death, I will be reborn in an eastern country and will spread my correct teaching."⁹ All of these predictions were fulfilled to the letter.

When I, Nichiren, observed the great earthquake of the Shoka era, and the great wind and famine that occurred in the same era, as well as the major outbreak of epidemics that took place in the first year of the Shogen era, I made a prediction, saying, "These are omens indicating that this country of ours will be destroyed by a foreign nation." I may seem to be praising myself for having made such a prediction, but if our country should be destroyed, it would most certainly mean the destruction of the Buddhist teachings as well.

The eminent Buddhist priests of our time seem to be of one mind with those who slander the Law. In fact, they do not even understand the true meaning of the teachings of their own schools. It is certain that, if they should receive an imperial command or instructions from the government authorities to offer prayers in an effort to avert the evils that beset the nation, they would only make the Buddhas and deities angrier than they are already, and then the nation could not help but face ruin.

I, Nichiren, understand the steps that should be taken to remedy the situation. Other than the sage of Mount Hiei,¹⁰ I am the only person in all of Japan who does. Just as there are not

two suns or two moons, so two sages are not to be found standing side by side. If these words of mine are false, then may I be punished by the ten demon daughters who protect the Lotus Sutra that I embrace. I say all this solely for the sake of the nation, for the sake of the Law, for the sake of others, not for my own sake. I will be calling on you in person, and so I am inform-

ing you of this. If you do not heed my advice, you will surely regret it later.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifth day of the fourth month
in the fifth year of Bun'ei (1268),
cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tatsu*

To the Reverend Hogan



Background

In the first month of 1268, envoys from Khubilai Khan arrived in Kamakura and presented the shogunate with a message demanding, in veiled terms, that Japan acknowledge fealty to the Mongol empire. The envoys were sent back without an answer, and the government began taking steps to defend the country against foreign attack.

At this time, Nichiren Daishonin wrote the short work known as *The Rationale for Writing "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land"* and sent it to a priest named Hogan. Little is known about him; he was a Buddhist priest, but he would appear to have been active in government circles. The Daishonin explains the circumstances that led to his writing of *On Establishing the Correct Teach-*

ing for the Peace of the Land eight years earlier and points out that the arrival of the Mongol emissaries with a demand for allegiance substantiates the prophecy of foreign invasion that he had made in that treatise.

In the tenth month of the same year, Nichiren Daishonin sent letters to eleven high-ranking political and religious leaders, including the regent Hojo Tokimune, the Zen priest Doryu of Kencho-ji, and the True Word Precepts priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji, pointing out that the predictions in his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* were now being fulfilled and demanding the opportunity to demonstrate the validity of his teachings in public religious debate. He received no response to his letters.

Notes

1. Yadoya Mitsunori, a ranking official who was close to Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263), the retired regent. Tokiyori was known as the lay priest of Saimyo-ji.

2. The ancient name of Kyoto. Earlier the capital had been moved from Nara to Nagaoka.

3. These are systems by which these schools sought to classify the body of Buddhist scriptures. The five teachings of the Flower Garland school are Hinayana, elementary Mahayana and final Mahayana

teachings, and the sudden teaching and the perfect teaching. The three periods of the Dharma Characteristics school divides the sutras into: (1) the teaching that the elements of existence are real; (2) the teaching that all is non-substantial; and (3) the teaching of the Middle Way. The two storehouses of the Three Treatises school are teachings for voice-hearers and teachings for bodhisattvas, and the three periods of that school are: (1) the doctrine that both the mind and objective reality are real;

(2) the doctrine that the mind alone is real; and (3) the doctrine that both the mind and objective reality are without substance.

4. Emperor Seiwa (850–880), in youth known as Prince Korehito, was the fourth son of Emperor Montoku. According to tradition, Emperor Montoku was unable to decide whether to name Korehito or another of his sons as successor, and had the two princes engage in a sumo wrestling match to settle the matter. It is said that Prince Korehito won because of the prayers offered on his behalf by the Tendai priest Eryo. "The emperor's maternal grandfather," which appears in the next sentence, refers to Fujiwara Yoshifusa (804–872), who established a basis for the prosperity of his clan.

5. Sanno refers to Sanno Shrine, another name of Hie Shrine located at the foot of Mount Hiei. Sanno, or Mountain King, is also the name of the main god of the shrine who is revered as the guardian deity of Mount Hiei and the Tendai school. The seven major shrines are located in the compound of Hie Shrine.

6. A rephrasing of a passage in *A History of the Buddha's Successors*. "My relics" indicates both the Buddha's physical remains and the teachings he expounded.

7. *The Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs*. This work states that, in

the twenty-fourth year (trad. date 1029 B.C.E.) of the reign of King Chao, on the night of the eighth day of the fourth month, five-colored rays of light spread across the sky, the earth shook in six different ways, and, though no rain fell, the rivers, streams, wells, and ponds overflowed with water. King Chao was alarmed, but the Grand Historian Su Yu performed divinations and announced, "A sage has been born in the western region. One thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country." It is said that, just as he predicted, 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing, during the reign of Emperor Ming in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67), the doctrines of Buddhism were introduced to China.

8. A rephrasing of a passage in *Gleanings from the Records on Prince Jōgu*. In 794, some two hundred years after Prince Shotoku (also known as Prince Jōgu) passed away in 622, the capital was established at Heian, or present-day Kyoto.

9. This passage is found in *The Reverend Tao-sui's Account of the Transmission of the Law*. When Tao-sui met Dengyo upon the latter's coming to China from Japan, he identified Dengyo as the reincarnation of T'ien-t'ai, based on T'ien-t'ai's prediction.

10. The sage of Mount Hiei refers to the Great Teacher Dengyo.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei



THE Lotus Sutra is the heart and core of the sacred teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha during the course of his lifetime, the foundation of all the eighty thousand doctrines of Buddhism. The various exoteric and esoteric sutras such as the Mahavairochana, the Flower Garland, the Wisdom, and the Profound Secrets sutras spread in China, India, the palaces of the dragon kings, and the world of heavenly beings. In addition, there are the teachings expounded by the Buddhas throughout the lands of the ten directions, which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges or as the dust particles of the land. Even if one were to use all the water in the oceans to produce sumi ink and fashion all the trees and bushes of the major world system into writing brushes, one could never finish writing them all. Yet when I examine them and weigh their contents, I see that among all these sutras the Lotus Sutra occupies the highest place.

Nevertheless, among the various schools of India and in Buddhist circles in Japan, there were many scholars and teachers who failed to understand the Buddha's true intention. Some of them declared that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra. Others said that the Lotus Sutra is inferior not only to the Mahavairochana Sutra but

to the Flower Garland Sutra as well, or that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Nirvana, Wisdom, and Profound Secrets sutras. Still others maintained that the sutras each have their distinctive character, and therefore possess various superior or inferior aspects. Some said that the worth of a particular sutra depends upon whether or not it accords with the capacities of the people; sutras that fit the capacities of the people of the time are superior, while those that do not are inferior. Similarly, some persons claimed that, if people had the capacity to gain the way through the teaching that all things have substance, then one should condemn the teaching that all things are without substance, praising only the former teaching. And the same principle, they said, should be applied to all other situations.

Because no one among the people of the time refuted such doctrines, ignorant rulers and officials of states began to put great faith in them, donating cultivated fields to support those who taught them until their followers grew to be numerous. And once such doctrines had become long-standing, people came to be firmly convinced that they were correct and no longer even dreamed of questioning them.

But then, with the arrival of the latter age, there appeared one wiser than the scholars and teachers whom the

people of the time followed.¹ He began to question one by one the doctrines upheld by the early scholars and teachers and to criticize them, pointing out that they differed from the sutras on which they were based. Or he clarified solely in the light of the various sutras that, in formulating their doctrines, the scholars and teachers had failed to distinguish which sutras had been preached early in the Buddha's teaching life and which later, as well as which were shallow and which profound. Thus attacked, the adherents of these doctrines found themselves unable to defend the erroneous teachings of the founders of their various schools, and were at a loss how to answer. Some in their doubt declared that the scholars and teachers must surely have had their passages of proof in the sutras and treatises, but that they themselves, lacking the requisite wisdom, could not defend these doctrines effectively. Others, also doubtful, decided that while their teachers had been worthies and learned persons of antiquity they themselves were ignorant people of the latter age. In this way, they convinced persons of virtue or rank to ally with them and totally opposed the one who challenged their beliefs.

But I have discarded prejudice, whether against the opinions of others or in favor of my own, and set aside the views propounded by scholars and teachers. Instead, relying solely on the passages of the sutras themselves, I have come to understand that the Lotus Sutra deserves to occupy first place. If there are those who assert that some other sutra surpasses the Lotus Sutra, we must suppose it is for one or another of the following reasons: First, they may have been deceived by passages in other scriptures that resemble those of the Lotus Sutra. Or they may have been deceived by "sutras" that have been fabricated by persons of later times and passed off as the words of

the Buddha. Lacking the wisdom to distinguish true from false, they may have consequently accepted such texts as the Buddha's actual words. Beginning with Hui-neng and his *Platform Sutra* or Shan-tao and his *Teaching on Meditation Sutra*,² there have been numerous false teachers in India, China, and Japan who have simply made up their own "sutras" and preached them to the world. In addition, there are many others who have made up what they claim to be scriptural passages, or who have inserted their own words into passages of the scriptures.

Unfortunately, there are ignorant people who accept these spurious texts as genuine. They are like a sightless person who, if told that there are stars in the sky that shine more brightly than the sun or moon, will accept that assertion as fact. When someone says that his or her own teacher was a worthy or wise person of ages past while Nichiren is a mere foolish man of the latter age, the ignorant will tend to agree.

This is by no means the first time that doubts of this kind have been raised. In the time of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties (557-618) in China, there was a lowly priest called Chih-i, who later became teacher to the emperors of two dynasties and was honored with the title Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che. Before he rose to honor, this man not only refuted the doctrines of the various Tripitaka masters and teachers who had lived in China in the preceding five hundred years or more, but he also refuted those of the scholars who had taught in India over the course of a thousand years. As a result, the wise men of northern and southern China rose up like clouds in opposition, while the worthies and learned persons from east and west came forth like ranks of stars. Criticisms fell on him like rain, while his doctrines were attacked as though by strong winds. Yet in the end he succeeded in refuting the one-sided

and erroneous doctrines of the scholars and teachers, and established the correct doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school.

Likewise, in Japan during the reign of Emperor Kammu there was a humble priest named Saicho, who later was honored with the title of the Great Teacher Dengyo. He refuted the doctrines that had been taught by the Buddhist teachers of the various schools in Japan during the two hundred and some years following [the introduction of Buddhism in] the reign of Emperor Kimmei. At first people were infuriated with him, but later they all joined in becoming his disciples.

These people had criticized T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo by saying, "The founders of our schools were scholars of the four ranks of sages, and worthies and learned persons of antiquity, while you are no more than an ordinary, foolish man of the end of the Middle Day of the Law." The question, however, is not whether one lives in the Former, the Middle, or the Latter Day of the Law, but whether one bases oneself upon the text of the true sutra. Again, the point is not who preaches a doctrine, but whether it accords with truth.

The non-Buddhists criticized the Buddha, saying: "You are a foolish man living at the end of the kalpa of formation and the beginning of the kalpa of continuance,³ while the original teachers of our doctrines were wise men of ancient times, the two deities⁴ and the three ascetics." In the end, however, all the ninety-five non-Buddhist schools were discarded.

On considering the eight schools of Buddhism, I, Nichiren, have discovered the following: The Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and Three Treatises schools, which are based upon provisional sutras, declare that the provisional sutras are equal to the true sutra, or even that the true sutra is inferior to the provisional sutras. These are obviously errors originating with the

scholars and teachers who founded these schools. The Dharma Analysis Treasury and Establishment of Truth schools are a special case,⁵ while the Precepts school represents the very lowest level of the Hinayana teachings.

Scholars surpass ordinary teachers, and the true Mahayana sutra surpasses the provisional Mahayana sutras. Thus the Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school cannot equal the Flower Garland Sutra, much less the Nirvana and Lotus sutras. Yet when the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei came to judge the relative merits of the Flower Garland, Lotus, and Mahavairochana sutras, he erred in his interpretation by declaring that, though the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are equal in terms of principle, the latter is superior in terms of practice. Ever since that time, the True Word followers have arrogantly asserted that the Lotus Sutra cannot even compare to the Flower Garland Sutra, much less to the True Word sutras, or that, because it fails to mention mudras and mantras, the Lotus Sutra cannot begin to compete with the Mahavairochana Sutra. Or they point out that many of the teachers and patriarchs of the Tendai school have acknowledged the superiority of the True Word school, and that popular opinion likewise holds the True Word to be superior.

Since so many people hold mistaken opinions on this point, I have examined it in considerable detail. I have outlined my findings in other writings, which I hope you will consult. And I hope that people who seek the way will take advantage of the time while they are alive to learn the truth of the matter and pass it on to others.

One should not be intimidated by the fact that so many hold such beliefs. Nor does the truth of a belief depend on whether it has been held for a long or short time. The point is simply whether or not it conforms with the

text of the scriptures and with reason.

In the case of the Pure Land school, the Chinese priests T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao made numerous errors and led a great many people to embrace false views. In Japan, Honen adopted the teachings of these men, and not only taught everyone to believe in the Nembutsu but also attempted to wipe out all the other schools in the empire. Because the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei, as well as the priests of Kofuku-ji, Todai-ji, and the other temples of Nara—indeed, of all the eight schools—strove to put a stop to this, emperor after emperor issued edicts, and directives went out from the shogunate, all in an attempt to prevent the spread of this teaching, but in vain. On the contrary, it flourished all the more, until the emperor, the retired emperor, and the entire populace came to believe in it.

I, Nichiren, am the son of a humble family, born along the shore in Kata-umi of Tojo in the province of Awa, a person who has neither authority nor virtue. If the censures of the temples of Nara and Mount Hiei and the powerful prohibitions of emperors could not put a stop to the Nembutsu teachings, then I wondered what I could do. But, employing the passages of the sutras as my mirror and the teachings of T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo as my compass, I have attacked these teachings for the past seventeen years, from the fifth year of the Kencho era (1253) to the present, the seventh year of the Bun'e'i era (1270). And, as may be seen by the evidence before one's eyes, the spread of the Nembutsu in Japan has been largely brought to a halt. Even though there are people who do not cease chanting the Nembutsu with their mouths, I believe they have come to realize in their hearts that the Nembutsu is not the path by which to free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death.

The Zen school likewise is guilty

of doctrinal errors. By observing one thing, you can surmise ten thousand. I can bring an end to the errors of the True Word and all the other schools at will. The "wisdom" of the True Word teachers and other eminent priests of the present time cannot compare to that of an ox or a horse, and their "light" is less than that given off by a firefly. To expect anything from them is like placing a bow and arrows in the hands of a dead man, or asking questions of one who is talking in one's sleep. Their hands form the mudra gestures, their mouths repeat the mantras, but their hearts do not understand the principles of Buddhism. In effect, their arrogant minds tower like mountains, and the greed in their hearts is deeper than the seas. And all these mistaken opinions mentioned above have come about because they are confused as to the relative superiority of the various sutras and treatises, and because none of them has corrected the errors originally propounded by the founders of these schools.

Persons of wisdom should of course devote themselves to the study of all the eighty thousand doctrines of Buddhism, and should become familiar with all the twelve divisions of the scriptures. But ignorant persons living in this latter age of ours, a time of evil and confusion, should discard the so-called difficult-to-practice way and easy-to-practice way that the Nembutsu believers talk of, and devote themselves solely to chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

When the sun rises in the eastern sector of the sky, then all the skies over the great continent of Jambudvipa in the south will be illuminated because of the vast light that the sun possesses. But the feeble glow of the firefly can never shed light on a whole nation. One who carries in one's robe a wish-granting jewel can have any desire

fulfilled, but mere shards and stones can confer no treasures. The Nembutsu and other practices, when compared to the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, are like shards and stones compared to a precious jewel, or like the flicker of a firefly compared to the light of the sun.

How can we, whose eyes are dull, ever distinguish the true color of things by the mere glow of a firefly? The fact is that the lesser, provisional sutras of the Nembutsu and True Word schools are not teachings that enable ordinary people to attain Buddhahood.

Our teacher, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, in the course of his lifetime of teaching, expounded eighty thousand sacred doctrines. He was the first Buddha to appear in this saha world of ours, which previously had not known any Buddha, and he opened the eyes of all living beings. All the other Buddhas and bodhisattvas from east and west, from the lands of the ten directions, received instruction from him.

The period prior to his advent was like the time before the appearance of the sovereigns and emperors⁶ of ancient China, when people did not know who their own fathers were and lived like beasts. In the time before Emperor Yao, people knew nothing about the duties to be performed in the four seasons, and were as ignorant as oxen or horses.

In the period before Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the world, there were no orders of monks and nuns; there were only the two categories of men and women. But now we have monks and nuns who are teachers of the True Word school, and who have decided to look upon the Thus Come One Mahavairochana as their object of devotion, demoting the Thus Come One Shakyamuni to an inferior position; or who are believers in the Nembutsu, and who pay honor solely to Amida Buddha, thrusting the Thus

Come One Shakyamuni aside. They are monks and nuns owing to Shakyamuni Buddha, but because of the erroneous teachings handed down from the founders of these various schools, they have been led to behave in this way.

There are three reasons why the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, rather than any of the other Buddhas, has a relationship with all the living beings of this saha world. First of all, he is the World-Honored One, the sovereign of all the living beings of this saha world. Amida Buddha is not the monarch of this world. In this respect, Shakyamuni Buddha is like the ruler of the country in which we live. We pay respect first of all to the ruler of our own country, and only then do we go on to pay respect to the rulers of other countries. The Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman are the original rulers of our country, provisional manifestations of Shakyamuni Buddha who appeared in the form of local deities. One who turns one's back on these deities cannot become the ruler of this country. Thus the Sun Goddess is embodied in the form of the sacred mirror known as Naishidokoro,⁷ and imperial messengers are sent to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman to report to him and receive his oracle. Shakyamuni, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, is our august sovereign. It is he who is to be regarded as the object of devotion.

The second reason is that the Thus Come One Shakyamuni is the father and mother of all living beings in this saha world. It is proper that we should first of all pay filial respect to our own father and mother, and only then extend the same kind of respect to the fathers and mothers of other people. We have the example of King Wu of the ancient land of Chou, who carved a wooden image of his deceased father and placed it in a carriage, designating it as the general who would lead his

troops into battle. Heaven, moved by such conduct, lent him protection, and thus he succeeded in overthrowing his enemy, Chou, the king of Yin.

The ancient ruler Shun, grieved because his father had gone blind, shed tears; but when he wiped his hands, wet with those tears, on his father's eyes, his father's eyesight was restored.⁸ Now Shakyamuni Buddha does the same for all of us living beings, opening our eyes so as to "open the door of Buddha wisdom"⁹ innate within us. No other Buddha has ever yet opened our eyes in such a way.

The third reason is that Shakyamuni is the original teacher of all living beings in this saha world. He was born in central India as the son of King Shuddhodana during the ninth kalpa of decrease in the present Wise Kalpa, when the life span of human beings measured a hundred years. He left family life at the age of nineteen, achieved enlightenment at thirty, and spent the remaining fifty years of his life expounding the sacred teachings. He passed away at the age of eighty, leaving behind his relics¹⁰ to provide the means of salvation for all living beings of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. The Thus Come One Amida, the Buddha Medicine Master, Mahavairochana, and the others, on the other hand, are Buddhas of other lands; they are not World-Honored Ones of this world of ours.

This saha world occupies the lowest position among all the worlds of the ten directions. Among these worlds, it holds a place like that of a prison within a nation. All the persons in the worlds of the ten directions who have committed any of the ten evil acts, the five cardinal sins, the grave offense of slandering the correct teaching, or other terrible crimes and have been driven out by the Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, of those worlds, have been brought together here in this saha land

by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. These people, having fallen into the three evil paths or the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering and there duly suffered for their offense, have been reborn in the realm of human or heavenly beings. But because they still retain certain vestiges of their former evil behavior, they are inclined to easily commit some further offense by slandering the correct teaching or speaking contemptuously of persons of wisdom. Thus, for example, Shariputra, though he had attained the status of an arhat, at times gave way to anger. Pilindavatsa,¹¹ though he had freed himself from the illusions of thought and desire, displayed an arrogant mind, while Nanda, though he had renounced all sexual attachment, continued to dwell on the thought of sleeping with a woman. Even these disciples of the Buddha, though they had done away with delusions, still retained their vestiges. How much more so must this be the case, therefore, with ordinary people? Yet the Thus Come One Shakyamuni entered this saha world with the title "One Who Can Endure." He is so called because he does not berate its people for the slanders they all commit, but shows them forbearance.

These, then, are the special qualities [possessed by Shakyamuni Buddha, qualities] that the other Buddhas lack.

Amida Buddha and the other various Buddhas were determined to make compassionate vows. For this reason, though they felt ashamed to do so,¹² they made their appearance in this saha world, Amida Buddha proclaiming his forty-eight vows, and Medicine Master Buddha, his twelve great vows. Perceiver of the World's Sounds and the other bodhisattvas who live in other lands also did likewise.

When the Buddhas are viewed in terms of the unchanging equality of their enlightenment, there are no distinctions to be made among them. But when they are viewed in terms of the

ever-present differences among their preaching, then one should understand that each of them has his own realm among the worlds of the ten directions, and that they distinguish between those with whom they have already had some connection, and those with whom they have no such connection.

The sixteen royal sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence each took up residence in a different one of the lands of the ten directions and there led their respective disciples to salvation. The Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who had been one of these sons, appeared in this saha world. We ordinary people, too, have been born into the saha world. Therefore, we must not in any way turn away from the teachings of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. But people all fail to realize this. If they would look carefully into the matter, they would understand that [as the Lotus Sutra says] "I [Shakyamuni] am the only person who can rescue and protect others,"¹³ and that they must not cut themselves off from the helping hand of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni.

For this reason, all the living beings in this saha world, if they detest the sufferings of birth and death and wish to have an object of devotion to which they can pay respect, should first of all fashion images of Shakyamuni Buddha in the form of wooden statues and paintings, and make these their object of devotion. Then, if they still have strength left over, they may go on to fashion images of Amida and the other Buddhas.

Yet when the people of this world today, being unpracticed in the sacred way,¹⁴ come to fashion or paint images of a Buddha, they give priority to those of Buddhas other than Shakyamuni. This does not accord either with the intentions of those other Buddhas, or with the intentions of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni himself, and

is moreover at variance with secular propriety.

The great king Udayana, when he carved his image of red sandalwood, made it of no other Buddha, and the painting offered to King One Thousand Stupas¹⁵ was likewise of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. But people nowadays base themselves upon the various Mahayana sutras, and because they believe that the particular sutra they rely on is superior to all others, they accordingly relegate Shakyamuni Buddha to a secondary position.

Thus all the masters of the True Word school, convinced that the Mahavairochana Sutra surpasses all other sutras, regard the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, who is described therein as the supreme Buddha, as the one with whom they have a special connection. The Nembutsu priests, on the other hand, putting all their faith in the Meditation Sutra, look upon Amida Buddha as the one who has some special connection with this saha world of ours.

Because the people of our time in particular have mistaken the erroneous doctrines of Shan-tao and Honen for correct teachings and taken the three Pure Land sutras as their guide, eight or nine out of every ten temples that they build have Amida Buddha enshrined as the principal object of devotion. And in the dwellings of both lay believers and priests, in houses by the tens, the hundreds, or the thousands, the image hall attached to the residence is dedicated to Amida Buddha. Moreover, among the thousand or ten thousand paintings and images of Buddhas to be found in a single household today, the great majority are of Amida Buddha.

Yet people who are supposed to be wise in such matters see these things happening and do not regard them unfortunate. On the contrary, they find such proceedings quite in accord with their own views and consequently greet

them with nothing but praise and admiration. Paradoxical as it may seem, evil people who have not the least understanding of the principle of cause and effect and who are not dedicated to any Buddha whatsoever would appear to be the ones free from error with respect to Buddhism.

Shakyamuni, the World-Honored One, who is our father and mother and is endowed with the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, is the very one who encourages us, the people driven out by all other Buddhas, saying, "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others." The debt of gratitude we owe him is deeper than the ocean, weightier than the earth, vaster than the sky. Though we were to pluck out our two eyes and place them before him as an offering until there were more eyes there than stars in the sky; though we were to strip off our skins and spread them out by the hundreds of thousands of ten thousands until they blanketed the ceiling of heaven; though we were to give him our tears as offerings of water and present him with flowers for the space of thousands, ten thousands, millions of kalpas; though we were to offer him our flesh and blood for innumerable kalpas until our flesh piled up like mountains and our blood overflowed like vast seas, we could never repay a fraction of the debt we owe to this Buddha.

But the scholars of our time cling to distorted views. Even though they may be wise men who have mastered all the eighty thousand doctrines of Buddhism and committed to memory the twelve divisions of the scriptures, and who strictly observe all the Mahayana and Hinayana precepts, if they turn their backs on this principle, then one should know that they cannot avoid falling into the evil paths.

As an example of what I mean, let us look at the Tripitaka Master Shan-

wu-wei, the founder of the True Word school in China. He was a son of King Buddha Seed,¹⁶ the monarch of the kingdom of Udyana in India. Shakyamuni Buddha left his father's palace at the age of nineteen to take up the religious life. But this Tripitaka master abdicated the throne at the age of thirteen, and thereafter traveled through the seventy states of India, journeying ninety thousand *ri* on foot and acquainting himself with all the various sutras, treatises, and schools of Buddhism. In a kingdom in northern India, he stood at the foot of the stupa erected by King Golden Grains,¹⁷ gazed up at the heavens, and uttered prayers, whereupon there appeared in mid-air the Womb Realm mandala, with the Thus Come One Mahavairochana seated in its center.

Shan-wu-wei, out of his compassion, determined to spread the knowledge of this teaching to remote regions, and thereupon traveled to China, where he transmitted his secret doctrines to Emperor Hsüan-tsung. At the time of a great drought, he offered up prayers for rain, and rain fell from the sky within three days. This Tripitaka master was thoroughly familiar with the seed characters¹⁸ representing the twelve hundred and more honored ones, their august forms, and their samayas.¹⁹ Today all the followers of the True Word school belonging to To-ji and the other True Word temples in Japan look upon themselves as disciples of the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei.

But the time came when the Tripitaka master suddenly died. Thereupon a number of wardens of hell appeared, bound him with seven iron cords, and led him off to the palace of Yama, the lord of hell. This was a very strange thing to happen.

For what fault did he deserve to be censured in this way? In the life he had just lived, he might perhaps have committed some of the ten evil acts, but

surely he had not been guilty of any of the five cardinal sins. And as for his past existences, in view of the fact that he had become the ruler of a great kingdom, he must have strictly observed the ten good precepts and dutifully served five hundred Buddhas.²⁰ What fault, then, could he have committed?

Moreover, at the age of thirteen he had voluntarily relinquished his position as king and entered the religious life. His aspiration for enlightenment was unequalled throughout the entire land of Jambudvipa. Surely such virtue should have canceled out any major or minor offenses that he might have committed in his present or previous lives. In addition, he had made a thorough study of all the various sutras, treatises, and schools that were propagated in India at that time, and that fact too should have served to atone for any possible faults.

In addition to all this, the esoteric True Word doctrines are different from the other teachings of Buddhism. They declare that, though one may make no more than a single mudra with the hands or utter no more than a single mantra with the mouth, even the gravest offenses accumulated throughout the three existences of past, present, and future will thereby without fail be eradicated. Moreover, they say that all the offenses and karmic hindrances that one may have created during the space of innumerable kotis of kalpas will all be extinguished the moment one looks upon the esoteric mandalas. How much more should this be true, therefore, in the case of the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei, who had memorized all the mudras and mantras pertaining to the twelve hundred and more honored ones, who had understood as clearly as if it were reflected in a mirror the practice of contemplation for attaining Buddhahood in one's present form, and who, when he underwent the ceremony of anointment before the

Diamond Realm and Womb Realm mandalas, had become in effect Mahavairochana, the King of Enlightenment, himself! Why, then, should such a man be summoned before King Yama and subjected to censure?

I, Nichiren, had resolved to embrace the teaching that is supreme among the two divisions of Buddhism, the exoteric and the esoteric, and that allows us to free ourselves from the sufferings of birth and death with the greatest ease. Therefore, I acquainted myself with the esoteric True Word doctrines in general and made inquiries concerning this matter of Shan-wu-wei. But no one was able to give a satisfactory answer to the question I have posed above. If this man could not escape the evil paths, then how could any of the True Word teachers of our time, let alone the priests and lay believers who had performed no more than a single mudra or uttered no more than a single mantra, hope to avoid them?

Having examined the matter in detail, I concluded that there were two errors for which Shan-wu-wei was summoned before King Yama for censure.

First of all, the Mahavairochana Sutra not only is inferior to the Lotus Sutra, but cannot even compare to the Nirvana, Flower Garland, or Wisdom Sutra. And yet Shan-wu-wei maintained that it was superior to the Lotus Sutra, thus committing the error of slandering the correct teaching.

Second, although the Thus Come One Mahavairochana is an emanation of Shakyamuni Buddha, Shan-wu-wei held to the biased view that Mahavairochana is in fact superior to Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. The offense of such slanders is so grave that no one who commits them could avoid falling into the evil paths, even though he should practice the teachings of the twelve hundred and more

honored ones over a period of innumerable kalpas.

Shan-wu-wei committed these errors, the retribution for which is very difficult to escape, and therefore, although he performed the mudras and mantras of the various honored ones, it was to no avail. But when he merely recited those words from the "Simile and Parable" chapter in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra that read: "Now this threefold world is all my [Shakyamuni's] domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others," he escaped from the iron cords that bound him.

Be that as it may, the True Word teachers who came after Shan-wu-wei have all maintained that the Mahavairochana Sutra not only is superior to the various other sutras, but surpasses even the Lotus Sutra. In addition, there were other persons who have declared that the Lotus Sutra is also inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra. Though these groups differ in what they maintain, they are alike in being guilty of slandering the correct teaching.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei held the prejudiced opinion that both the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra should be regarded with great respect, since they agree in the profound principles that they embody, but that, because the Lotus Sutra mentions nothing about mudras and mantras, it is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. The True Word teachers who came after him, moreover, were of the opinion that, even with respect to the important principles expressed, the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra, to say nothing of the matter of mudras and mantras. Thus they went much farther in their slander of the correct teaching, piling up offense upon offense. It is impossible to believe that they can long avoid

being censured by King Yama and consigned to the sufferings of hell. Indeed, they will immediately call down upon themselves the flames of the Avichi hell.

The Mahavairochana Sutra does not originally contain any mention of the profound principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. This principle is confined to the Lotus Sutra alone. But the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei proceeded to steal and appropriate this profound principle that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had put forth on the basis of his reading of the Lotus Sutra, incorporating it into his own interpretation of the Mahavairochana Sutra. He then asserted that the mudras and mantras of the Mahavairochana Sutra, which were originally expounded merely to lend adornment to the Lotus Sutra, were the very elements that make the Mahavairochana Sutra superior to the Lotus. Shan-wu-wei was putting forth a distorted view when he stated that the Lotus and Mahavairochana sutras were equal in principle, and he was likewise stating an erroneous view when he claimed that the Mahavairochana Sutra was superior by reason of its mantras and mudras.

This is like the case of a foolish and lowly man who looks upon his six sense organs as his personal treasures, though in fact they belong to his lord.²¹ Consequently, he is led into all manner of erroneous conduct. We should keep this example in mind when interpreting the sutras, because the doctrines set forth in inferior sutras serve only to adorn the sutra that is truly superior.

I, Nichiren, was a resident of [Seicho-ji on] Mount Kiyosumi in Tojo Village in the province of Awa. From the time I was a small child, I prayed to Bodhisattva Space Treasury, asking that I might become the wisest person in all Japan. The bodhisattva transformed himself into a venerable priest before

my very eyes and bestowed upon me a jewel of wisdom as bright as the morning star. No doubt as a result, I was able to gain a general mastery of the principal teachings of the eight older schools of Buddhism in Japan, as well as of those of the Zen and Nembutsu schools.

During the sixteen or seventeen years since the fifth year (1253) or so of the Kencho era until the present, the seventh year of the Bun'ei era (1270), I have leveled many criticisms against the Zen and Nembutsu schools. For this reason, the scholars of those schools have risen up like hornets and flocked together like clouds, though as a matter of fact their arguments can be demolished with hardly more than a word or two.

Even the scholars of the Tendai and True Word schools, losing sight of the principles laid down by their own schools concerning which teachings are to be adopted and which discarded, have come to hold opinions identical to those of the Zen or Nembutsu school. Because their lay followers hold to such beliefs, they have thought it best to lend support to these schools and their erroneous views by declaring that the Tendai and True Word teachings are the same as those of the Nembutsu and Zen schools. As a result, they join the others in attempting to refute me. But although they might appear to refute me, in fact they are simply destroying their own Tendai and True Word teachings. It is a shameful, shameful thing they are doing!

The fact that I have in this way been able to discern the errors of the various sutras, treatises, and schools is due to the benefit of Bodhisattva Space Treasury, and is owed to my former teacher Dozen-bo.

Even a turtle, we are told, knows how to repay a debt of gratitude,²² so how much more so should human beings? To repay the debt that I owe to

my former teacher Dozen-bo, I desired to spread the teachings of the Buddha on Mount Kiyosumi and lead my teacher to enlightenment. But he is a rather ignorant man, and in addition he is a believer in the Nembutsu, so I did not see how he could escape the three evil paths. Moreover, he is not the kind of person who would listen to my words of instruction.

Nevertheless, in the first year of the Bun'ei era (1264), on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month, I met with him at the priests' lodgings²³ of Hanabusa in Saijo. At that time, he said to me: "I have neither wisdom nor any hope for advancement to important position. I am an old man with no desire for fame, and I claim no eminent priest of Nembutsu as my teacher. But because this practice has become so widespread in our time, I simply repeat like others the words *Namu Amida Butsu*. In addition, though it was not my idea originally, I have had occasion to fashion five images of Amida Buddha. This perhaps is due to some karmic habit that I formed in a past existence. Do you suppose that as a result of these faults I will fall into hell?"

At that time I certainly had no thought of quarreling with him. But because of the earlier incident with the lay priest Tojo Saemon Renchi,²⁴ I had not seen my teacher for more than ten years, and thus it was in a way as though we had become estranged and were at odds. I thought that the proper and courteous thing would be to reason with him in mild terms and to speak in a gentle manner. On the other hand, when it comes to the realm of birth and death, neither young nor old know what fate awaits them, and it occurred to me that I might never again have another opportunity to meet with him. I had already warned Dozen-bo's elder brother, the priest Dogi-bo Gisho,²⁵ that he was destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering if he did

not change his ways, and they say that his death was far worse than what he had hoped. When I considered that my teacher Dozen-bo might meet a similar fate, I was filled with pity for him and therefore made up my mind to speak to him in very strong terms.

I explained to him that, by making five images of Amida Buddha, he was condemning himself to fall five times into the hell of incessant suffering. The reason for this, I told him, was that the Lotus Sutra—wherein the Buddha says that he is now “honestly discarding expedient means”²⁶—states that the Thus Come One Shakyamuni is our father, while Amida Buddha is our uncle. Anyone who would fashion no less than five images of his uncle and make offerings to them, and yet not fashion a single image of his own father—how could he be regarded as anything but unfilial? Even hunters in the mountains or fishermen, who cannot tell east from west and do not perform a single pious act, are guilty of less offenses than such a person.

Nowadays, those who seek the way no doubt hope for a better existence in their future lives. Yet they cast aside the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha, while never failing even for an instant to revere Amida Buddha and call upon his name. What kind of behavior is this? Though they may appear to the eye to be pious people, I do not see how they can escape the charge of rejecting their own parent and devoting themselves to a stranger. A completely evil person, on the other hand, has never given his allegiance to any Buddhist teaching at all, and so has not committed the fault of rejecting Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, if the proper circumstances should arise, he might very well in time come to take faith in Shakyamuni.

Those who follow the erroneous doctrines of Shan-tao, Honen, and the Buddhist scholars of our time, making

Amida Buddha their object of devotion and dedicating themselves entirely to the practice of calling upon his name—I do not believe that they will ever renounce their erroneous views and give their allegiance to Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, even though lifetime after lifetime throughout countless kalpas should pass. Accordingly, the Nirvana Sutra, which was preached in the grove of sal trees just before Shakyamuni Buddha's passing, states that there will appear frightful persons whose offenses are graver than the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins—icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, and those who slander the correct teaching. We also read there that such persons will be found nowhere else but among the company of wise men who observe the two hundred and fifty precepts, wrap their bodies in the three robes of a Buddhist monk, and carry a begging bowl.

I explained all this in detail to Dozen-bo at the time of our meeting, though it did not appear that he completely understood. Nor did the other persons present on that occasion seem to understand. Later, however, I received word that Dozen-bo had come to take faith in the Lotus Sutra. I concluded that he must have renounced his earlier distorted views and had hence become a person of sound belief, a thought that filled me with joy. When I also heard that he had fashioned an image of Shakyamuni Buddha, I could not find words to express my emotion. It may seem as though I spoke to him very harshly at the time of our meeting. But I simply explained things as they are set forth in the Lotus Sutra, and that is no doubt why he has now taken such action. It is said that good advice grates on the ear, just as good medicine tastes bitter.

Now I, Nichiren, have repaid the debt of gratitude that I owe to my

teacher, and I am quite certain that both the Buddhas and the gods will approve of what I have done. I would like to ask that all I have said here be reported to Dozen-bo.

Even though one may resort to harsh words, if such words help the person to whom they are addressed, then they are worthy to be regarded as truthful words and gentle words. Similarly, though one may use gentle words, if they harm the person to whom they are addressed, they are in fact deceptive words, harsh words.

The Buddhist doctrines preached by scholars these days are regarded by most people as gentle words, truthful words, but in fact they are all harsh words and deceptive words. I say this because they are at variance with the Lotus Sutra, which embodies the Buddha's true intention.

On the other hand, when I proclaim that the practitioners of the Nembutsu will fall into the hell of incessant suffering or declare that the Zen and True Word schools are likewise in error, people may think I am uttering harsh words, but in fact I am speaking truthful and gentle words. As an example, I may point to the fact that Dozen-bo has embraced the Lotus Sutra and fashioned an image of Shakyamuni Buddha, actions that came about because I

spoke harshly to him. And the same thing holds true for all the people of Japan. Ten or more years ago, virtually everyone was reciting the Nembutsu. But now, out of ten persons, you will find that one or two chant only Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, while two or three recite it along with the Nembutsu. And even among those who recite the Nembutsu exclusively, there are those who have begun to have doubts and so in their hearts believe in the Lotus Sutra; some have even begun to paint or carve images of Shakyamuni Buddha. All this, too, has come about because I have spoken harsh words.

This response is like the fragrant sandalwood trees that grow among the groves of foul-smelling eranda trees, or lotus blossoms that rise from the mud. Thus, when I proclaim that the followers of the Nembutsu will fall into the hell of incessant suffering, the "wise men" of our day, who are in fact no wiser than cattle or horses, may venture to attack my doctrines. But in truth they are like scavenger dogs barking at the lion king, or foolish monkeys laughing at the god Shakra.

Nichiren

The seventh year of Bun'ei (1270)

To Gijo-bo and Joken-bo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in 1270 at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura to Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, priests who had been his seniors at Seicho-ji temple in Awa, where he had entered Buddhism. While his reasons for writing it are not certain, quite possibly it was motivated by his joy in learning, as mentioned at the close of this letter, that Dozen-bo had expressed his belief

in the Lotus Sutra and carved a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. From the Daishonin's remarks, it can be surmised that, although Dozen-bo did not entirely recant his belief in the Nembutsu, he came to revere Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra sometime in 1270.

Seicho-ji was originally a temple of the Tendai school, but later had fallen

under True Word and Pure Land influences. Dozen-bo, one of the senior priests of Seicho-ji, had been the Daishonin's teacher, one to whom he felt a sincere obligation. It is possible that, because Dozen-bo had begun to embrace the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin wished to express his gratitude.

Broadly speaking, this letter consists of five sections. In the first section, Nichiren Daishonin proclaims that the Lotus Sutra is supreme among the vast number of Buddhist sutras and is the sutra that perfectly accords with the Buddha's true intention. Nevertheless, most of the Buddhist scholars and teachers of India, China, and Japan have slighted the Lotus Sutra and set forth various erroneous doctrines, turning against the intention of the Buddha. Following the examples of the great teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, the Daishonin has refuted their mistaken doctrines, relying not upon people's opinions but solely upon the sutras themselves.

In the second section, he points out the errors of several major schools of Buddhism in Japan, particularly those of the True Word and Pure Land schools. He may have focused on these two not only because they represented major errors, but because Dozen-bo had professed faith in their doctrines. The Daishonin then defines the daimoku of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the practice

for the universal attainment of Buddhahood in the Latter Day of the Law. In the third section, the Daishonin identifies Shakyamuni as the Buddha karmically connected with all people living in this saha or mundane world, explaining that Shakyamuni possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent with respect to them. Therefore, the Daishonin says, all the people in the saha world should recognize their debt to Shakyamuni.

In the fourth section, from which this letter takes its title, the Daishonin refers to Shan-wu-wei, who first brought the esoteric True Word teachings from India to China. The story of Shan-wu-wei serves to demonstrate that even a person of wisdom who has mastered all the Buddhist teachings will fall into the evil paths as a result of disparaging Shakyamuni and slighting the Lotus Sutra. By citing the example of Shan-wu-wei, the Daishonin also indirectly criticizes Seicho-ji temple, which had fallen under the influence of the True Word school. In the fifth section, he expresses his gratitude to Bodhisattva Space Treasury, the original object of devotion at Seicho-ji, and to his teacher Dozen-bo, and expresses his joy at hearing that the latter has embraced the Lotus Sutra. Finally, he stresses the importance of speaking frankly to those who have been led astray by teachings that distort the Buddha's intention.

Notes

1. Here, the Daishonin refers to himself.
2. *The Teaching on Meditation Sutra* is a work on the practice of meditation on Amida Buddha and the benefits that accrue from it. Though the title contains the word "sutra," it is not.
3. The "end of the kalpa of formation and the beginning of the kalpa of continuance" refers to the time of transition between the first two stages of the four-stage cycle, described as the four kalpas of for-

mation, continuance, decline, and disintegration, which a world is said to undergo repeatedly. During these first two stages, a world takes shape, and living beings appear and continue to exist.

4. Shiva and Vishnu.

5. The Dharma Analysis Treasury and Establishment of Truth schools were studied in conjunction, respectively, with the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools; thus presumably the Daishonin did

not regard them as independent religious schools.

6. The sovereigns and emperors refer to the Three Sovereigns, Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, and Huang Ti, legendary rulers said to have established model governments, and the Five Emperors, Shao Hao, Chuan Hsü, Ti Kao, T'ang Yao, and Yü Shun, said to have reigned after them.

7. Originally the palace that enshrined the mirror, one of the three sacred treasures of the imperial court, and that was guarded by court ladies of honor called *naishi*. Later, *naishidokoro* became another name for the sacred mirror itself.

8. Shun was one of the Five Emperors. Although his father, a commoner, treated him cruelly, being partial to his younger half brother Hsiang, Shun practiced filial piety toward his parent. The story of Shun restoring his father's eyesight is found in *The Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Law*.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

10. Here, the relics of the Dharma body, namely, the teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded.

11. Pilindavatsa was one of Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples. Born to a Brahman family in Shravasti, India, he was arrogant and held others in contempt. He had won renown for the practice of magic, but lost his powers when he met Shakyamuni and instead became the Buddha's disciple. Shakyamuni's prediction of his future enlightenment appears in chapter 8 of the Lotus Sutra.

12. For example, Amida Buddha lives in the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss, located a hundred thousand million worlds away in the west, and Medicine Master Buddha lives in the Pure Emerald World said to lie in the eastern part of the universe. As these names suggest, the living beings in these lands experience only pleasure; consequently, there is no one there to be freed from suffering. For this reason, the Daisshonin says, the Buddhas of those worlds, though embarrassed to appear in another Buddha's realm, came down to this saha world, which is full of suffering, in order to fulfill their vows of compassion.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

14. The sacred way refers to one of the five types of practices for bodhisattvas that are mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra. The sacred way here indicates actions undertaken in order to master the three types of

learning—precepts, meditation, and wisdom.

15. Probably King Rudrayana in ancient India who is mentioned in *The Monastic Rules of the Sarvastivada School*. According to this work, Rudrayana gave five treasures to Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, but King Bimbisara had no gifts to offer him in return and was at a loss. At the suggestion of his chief minister, however, he had an image of Shakyamuni Buddha painted, and presented it to King Rudrayana as the most precious of all treasures in the world. King Rudrayana at first became angry, but on realizing that it was an image of the Buddha, he came to have deep faith and converted to Buddhism.

16. A king of Udyana who lived around the seventh century and was a descendant of King Amritodana, Shakyamuni's uncle.

17. A king who built a great stupa in Gandhara. Little else is known about him. It is said that at the beginning of the eighth century Shan-wu-wei offered prayers at the foot of this stupa and achieved sudden understanding of the Mahavairochana Sutra. Some sources suggest that King Golden Grains in this passage may actually refer to King Kanishka.

18. The seed characters were characters written in Siddham, a style of Sanskrit orthography, which were used as symbols to represent various Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the esoteric teaching.

19. Samayas here refer to the mudras (sacred hand gestures) of and to the objects held by the various figures depicted in the mandalas. The term is also used to signify the vows these beings have taken.

20. According to the Benevolent Kings Sutra, kings are born to their position as the karmic reward of having served five hundred Buddhas in prior lifetimes.

21. In feudal Japan, a vassal was regarded as so heavily indebted to his lord for providing him with his sole means of livelihood that he was expected to dedicate his entire being to loyal service in return. The six sense organs are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that is, the physical and mental components of a human being. This is another way of saying that a retainer's life belongs to his lord, and that all his faculties must be dedicated to the latter's service.

22. This story appears in *A Collection of Stories and Poems* and other sources. When

the young Mao Pao, who later became a general of the Chin dynasty, was walking along the Yangtze River, he saw a fisherman catch a turtle and prepare to kill it. Moved to pity, he gave the fisherman his clothes in exchange for the turtle and thus saved its life. Later, Mao Pao was attacked by enemies. When he fled in retreat to the Yangtze River, the turtle he had saved in his childhood appeared and carried him on its back to the opposite shore.

23. The priests' lodgings are probably part of the compound of Renge-ji temple located in Hanabusa, Saijo, Awa Province.

Renge-ji is said to have been a branch temple of Seicho-ji.

24. Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of Tojo Village in Awa Province. A strong Nembutsu believer, Tojo had attempted to have the Daishonin killed after the latter refuted the Nembutsu and declared the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in 1253.

25. Dogi-bo Gisho was a priest at Seicho-ji temple, thought to have been either Dozen-bo's elder brother or a priest senior to him. He opposed the Daishonin's teaching.

26. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

The Essence of the “Life Span” Chapter



WHEN Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, expounded the “Life Span” chapter, he referred to what all living beings had heard in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. He said: “In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment.”¹ This statement expresses the idea held by all the Buddha’s disciples and the great bodhisattvas from the time they heard Shakyamuni preach his first sermon in the Flower Garland Sutra up through the time he expounded the “Peaceful Practices” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

We find two flaws in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings: First, “Because the Ten Worlds are separate from one another in these teachings, they fail to move beyond the provisional.”² That is, they do not reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, that of discarding the provisional and revealing the true,³ or that of persons of the two vehicles being capable of attaining Buddhahood—the doctrines related to the ten factors of life stated in the “Expedient Means” chapter of the theoretical teaching.

Second, “Because they teach that

Shakyamuni first attained enlightenment in this world, they fail to discard the Buddha’s provisional status.”⁴ Thus they do not reveal the Buddha’s original enlightenment in the remote past expounded in the “Life Span” chapter. These two great doctrines [the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles and the Buddha’s original enlightenment] are the core of the Buddha’s lifetime teachings, the heart and marrow of all the sutras.

The theoretical teaching states that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, thus avoiding one of the shortcomings found in the sutras expounded during the first forty years and more of the Buddha’s preaching. However, since the “Life Span” chapter had not yet been expounded, the true doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life remained obscure, and the enlightenment of persons of the two vehicles was not assured. In these respects the theoretical teaching does not differ from the moon’s reflection on the water, or rootless plants drifting on the waves.

The Buddha also stated, “But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood.”⁵ With this single proclamation, he refuted as great falsehoods his other statements [concerning his own enlighten-

ment]. For instance, the Flower Garland Sutra states that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood for the first time in this world. The Agama sutras speak of his first attainment of the way, and the Vimalakirti Sutra says, "For the first time the Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree." The Great Collection Sutra states, "It is sixteen years [since the Thus Come One first attained the way]." The Mahavairochana Sutra describes the Buddha's enlightenment as having taken place "long ago when I sat in the place of meditation." The Benevolent Kings Sutra refers to the Buddha's enlightenment as an event of "twenty-nine years" ago. The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra states, "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation," and the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "When I first sat in the place of meditation . . ."

When we come to the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching, the belief that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood for the first time [in India] is demolished, and the effects [enlightenment] of the four teachings are likewise demolished. When the effects of the four teachings are demolished, their causes are likewise demolished. "Causes" here refers to Buddhist practice [to attain enlightenment] or to the stage of disciples engaged in practice. Thus the causes and effects expounded in both the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are wiped out, and the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds⁶ in the essential teaching are revealed. This is the doctrine of original cause and original effect. It teaches that the nine worlds are all present in beginningless Buddhahood and that Buddhahood exists in the beginningless nine worlds. This is the true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the true hundred worlds and thousand factors, the true three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

Considered in this light, it is evident that Vairochana Buddha depicted in the Flower Garland Sutra as sitting on a lotus pedestal, the sixteen-foot Shakyamuni described in the Agama sutras, and the provisional Buddhas of the Correct and Equal, Wisdom, Golden Light, Amida, and Mahavairochana sutras are no more than reflections of the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter. They are like fleeting images of the moon in the sky mirrored on the surface of the water held in vessels of varying sizes. The wise men and scholars of the various schools are first of all confused as to [the nature of the Buddhas of] their own school, and more fundamentally, they are ignorant of [the Buddha of] the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. As a result, they mistake the reflection of the moon on the water for the real moon shining in the sky. Some of them enter the water and try to grasp it with their hands, while others try to snare it with a rope. As the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai says, "They know nothing of the moon in the sky, but gaze only at the moon in the pond."⁷ He means that those attached to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings or the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are not aware of the moon shining in the sky, but see only its reflection in the pond.

The Great Canon of Monastic Rules also tells of five hundred monkeys who, emerging from the mountains, saw the moon reflected in the water and tried to seize it. However, as it was only a reflection, they fell into the water and drowned. This writing equates the monkeys with Devadatta and the group of six monks.⁸

Were it not for the presence of the "Life Span" chapter among all the teachings of Shakyamuni, they would be like the heavens without the sun and moon, a kingdom without a king, the mountains and seas without treasures, or a person without a soul. This being so, without the "Life Span"

chapter, all the sutras would be meaningless. Grass without roots will die in no time, and a river without a source will not flow far. A child without parents is looked down upon. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the heart of the “Life Span” chapter, is the mother of

all Buddhas throughout the ten directions and the three existences.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The seventeenth day of the fourth month



Background

Neither the year nor the recipient of this letter is indicated. Its contents are quite similar to what the Daishonin wrote about the importance of the “Life Span” chapter in his treatise *The Opening of the Eyes*. Therefore, although it is generally thought to have been written in the eighth year of Bun’ei (1271), some hold that it might have been completed after the Daishonin wrote that lengthy treatise in 1272. In any event, it clarifies the important differences among the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and the essential teaching revealed by Nichiren Daishonin, that is, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, which is implicit in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter.

First, the sutras that came before the Lotus discriminate among certain types of people in terms of their capacity for attaining Buddhahood. Second, the theoretical teaching reveals that the Buddha nature is equally inherent in all people. But neither sets forth Shakyamuni’s original enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. This led people

to believe that they could attain Buddhahood only after many lifetimes of self-sacrificing practice as they heard Shakyamuni had. For them, attaining Buddhahood was like a remote dream. Shakyamuni declares in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra’s essential teaching, “But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood.” From this it follows that Shakyamuni did not finally become a Buddha in his present life as the result of his many kalpas of ascetic practices, but that he had already been a Buddha.

The question that remained was what teaching or Law did Shakyamuni realize in his heart and put into practice when he first attained enlightenment countless kalpas before? No Buddhist teacher after Shakyamuni had ever answered this question. Nichiren Daishonin was the first to reveal this Law, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, to enable anyone in any time or any place to attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.
2. *The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.”*
3. A principle set forth in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. “The provisional” here refers to all the sutras expounded during the first forty-two years of

Shakyamuni’s teaching, and “the true,” to the Lotus Sutra.

4. On “*The Profound Meaning.*”
5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.
6. Here “cause” or the stage of practice is equated with the nine worlds of delusion in which the Buddha nature still remains

dormant, and "effect," with Buddhahood or enlightenment, the tenth world. By indicating that the Buddha still retains all the nine worlds even after attaining enlightenment, the "Life Span" chapter demonstrates that cause (nine worlds) and effect (Buddhahood) exist simultaneously, thus substantiating the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.

7. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

8. The group of six monks refers to the monks who lived during the Buddha's lifetime, whose misconduct is said to have caused the necessity to formulate the precepts. They are Nanda, Upananda, Kaldayin, Chanda, Ashvaka, and Punarvasu.

Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child



I UNDERSTAND the circumstances of your pregnancy. In response to your request, I have prepared the protective agent,¹ choosing from among the lore that has been transmitted to me. You must be careful to have firm faith. For example, even the most excellent medicine will have little effect if poison is added to it. Even a sword will be of no use to a coward.

Above all, both you and your husband are upholders of the Lotus Sutra. You will surely bear a jewel of a child who is going to inherit the seed for the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. I wholeheartedly congratulate you. The child is the one who will inherit both your physical and spiritual aspects. How could you possibly suffer a prolonged labor? I expect that the child will be born quickly. If you take this medicine, there can be no doubt. Even the darkness becomes bright when a lantern is lit, and even muddy water becomes clear when the moon shines on it.

Can anything exceed the sun and moon in brightness? Can anything surpass the lotus flower in purity? The Lotus Sutra is the sun and moon and the lotus flower. Therefore it is called the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. Nichiren, too, is like the sun and moon and the lotus flower.

If the water of your faith is clear, the

moon of blessings will surely cast its reflection on it and protect you. You are assured of an easy delivery. A passage from the Lotus Sutra says, “A wonderful Law such as this . . .,”² and another says, “She will be delivered safely of a healthy child.”³ I have carefully explained in detail to Ben-ko⁴ about the orally transmitted instructions. Therefore, Ben-ko is “an envoy of the Thus Come One.”⁵ You must be earnest in your faith.

The Sun Goddess bestowed a jewel upon Susano’o no Mikoto,⁶ who then fathered a jewel of a boy child. For that reason, the Sun Goddess designated the child as her own and then named him Masaya Akatsu.⁷ When I have provided the seed for an easy delivery, how could the child be any less than my own? The sutra speaks of “a precious jewel worth as much as the major world system”⁸ and also says, “This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought.”⁹ The Thus Come One Shakyamuni states, “The living beings in it [the threefold world] are all my children.”¹⁰ How could Nichiren possibly differ from the meaning of these passages? How fortunate! How auspicious! I will write again on another occasion.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The seventh day of the fifth month
in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271)

Reply to the wife of Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written in Matsubagayatsu, Kamakura, in the fifth month of 1271 to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo. It is the earliest of the many extant writings that Nichiren Daishonin sent to the Shijo family.

Nichigen-nyo had grown uneasy as the birth of her first child drew near. She asked the Daishonin for a protective agent so that she could be certain of an easy delivery. He sent it to her immediately via Nissho, one of his earliest converts, along with this letter of

encouragement. The Daishonin urges Nichigen-nyo to take the agent he has specially prepared for her with firm faith in the Lotus Sutra.

On the eighth day of the fifth month, the day after receiving the letter, Nichigen-nyo gave birth to a baby girl. Shijo Kingo relayed the news of the safe delivery to the Daishonin, who immediately sent a congratulatory letter (p. 188) in which, in response to Nichigen-nyo's request, he named the baby Tsukimaro, or Full Moon.

Notes

1. The use of a protective agent was common practice among the Buddhist schools of feudal Japan. Generally the agent took the form of the figure or words of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deities written on paper or wood. One then either placed this item somewhere in one's home, attached it to one's person, or, if it was made of paper, ingested it. The protective agent also sometimes took the form of powdered herbs that were to be dissolved in water and drunk. What formula the Daishonin used for his protective agent is unknown.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 19.

4. Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Dai-

shonin's six senior disciples.

5. The Daishonin borrows the wording of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

6. An unruly storm god in Japanese mythology who was the younger brother of the Sun Goddess.

7. "Masaya Akatsu" may be rendered as "Truly I Have Conquered." He was a deity said to have been born from the mist of Susano'o's breath after he chewed up a necklace he had received from the Sun Goddess. This story is found in *The Records of Ancient Matters* and other sources.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

10. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

The Birth of Tsukimaro



I UNDERSTAND that your baby has been born. Congratulations! In particular, today is the eighth day of the month. Not only have you had your baby, but on such an auspicious day! The fulfillment of your wish is now complete, just like the tide at the high watermark or the blossoming of flowers in a spring meadow. Thus, I have wasted no time in giving her a name. Please call her Tsukimaro.

What is more, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the sovereign deity of this country, was born on the eighth day of the fourth month. Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings in this saha world, was also born on the eighth day of the fourth month. Though the month is different, your baby girl was also born on the eighth day. She could well be the reincarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha or Hachiman. Since I am an ordinary man, I have no way of knowing for certain, but I am convinced that the reason for this auspicious birth is that I gave you the protective agent.¹ How happy you, her parents, must be! In celebration, you have kindly sent me rice cakes, sake, and one thousand coins. I have also reported this to the object of devotion and the ten demon daughters.

When the Buddha was born in this world, there were thirty-two auspicious

phenomena,² as is recorded in a work called *The Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou*. Immediately following his birth, Shakyamuni Buddha took seven steps, opened his mouth, and uttered the words, expressed in sixteen characters, "Throughout heaven and earth, I alone am worthy of respect. The three-fold world is a place of suffering from which I will save all living beings." Tsukimaro must have chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with her very first cry at birth. The Lotus Sutra speaks of "the true aspect of all phenomena."³ T'ien-t'ai said, "Voices do the Buddha's work."⁴ This is also what I think. The deaf cannot hear the thunder, and the blind cannot see the light of the sun and moon. But I am quite certain that the ten demon daughters must be together side by side, giving the baby her first bath and watching over her growth.

Let me heartily congratulate you. I can imagine your joy. I have respectfully reported this to the ten demon daughters and to the Sun Goddess. I am too excited to write any more. I will be writing you again.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

Reply to Shijo Kingo

Background

This letter was written at Kamakura on the eighth day of the fifth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271) to Shijo Kingo and his wife, Nichigen-nyo. It is Nichiren Daishonin's reply to the report that Kingo had sent concerning the birth of the couple's first child and their request that the Daishonin name the baby.

On the preceding day Nichigen-nyo had received from the Daishonin a pro-

TECTIVE agent to ensure a safe delivery and a short letter of encouragement. That letter is entitled *Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child* (p. 186). Nichigen-nyo gave birth the next day, the day of the present letter, to a baby girl. The Daishonin named the child Tsukimaro, or Full Moon. The couple's second daughter was born in the autumn of 1272. The Daishonin named her Kyo'o, or Sutra King.

Notes

1. The use of a protective agent was common practice among the Buddhist schools of feudal Japan. Generally the agent took the form of the figure or words of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deities written on paper or wood. One then either placed this item somewhere in one's home, attached it to one's person, or, if it was made of paper, ingested it. The protective agent also sometimes took the form of powdered herbs that were to be dissolved in water and

drunk. What formula the Daishonin used for his protective agent is unknown.

2. Good omens, mentioned in the Sutra of the Buddha's Marvelous Deeds in Previous Lifetimes, that occurred when Shakyamuni Buddha made his appearance in this world.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

4. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

21

The Origin of the Service for Deceased Ancestors



YOU went to the trouble to send me by messenger a donation for the service for your deceased ancestors of one *to* of polished rice as white as snow, a bamboo container of oil like well-aged sake, and one thousand coins. In particular, I was very much moved by the contents of your letter.

The service for deceased ancestors has its origins in the events arising from the Venerable Maudgalyayana's attempts to save his mother, Shodai-nyo, who, because of her karma of greed and stinginess, had fallen into the world of hungry spirits for a period of five hundred lifetimes. He failed, however, to make his mother a Buddha. The reason was that he himself was not yet a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and so he could not lead even his mother to Buddhahood. At the eight-year assembly on Eagle Peak, he embraced the Lotus Sutra and chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and became Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha.¹ At this time, his mother also became a Buddha.²

You also asked about offerings for the hungry spirits. The third volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "Suppose that someone coming from a land of famine should suddenly encounter a great king's feast."³ This passage is explaining that the four great voice-hearers,⁴ who were of intermediate capacity, had not

yet even heard of the delicacy called ghee, but when this sutra was expounded, they savored its taste to their hearts' content for the first time, thus bringing an end at once to the hunger that had long been in their hearts. Therefore, when you make offerings to the hungry spirits, you should recite that passage from the sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for their repose.

Generally speaking, hungry spirits are divided into thirty-six kinds. Among these, caldron-shaped hungry spirits are ones with no eyes or mouth. If you ask what sort of cause from the past exists for this, it is because, while they were in this world, they did such things as attacking people under cover of night or committing robberies. Vomit-eating hungry spirits feed on what people have vomited up. The cause of this is the same as that mentioned above. It is also because they robbed people of their food. Thirst-consumed hungry spirits are ones that drink things like the water that people offer out of filial piety to their deceased parents. Property-possessing hungry spirits⁵ are ones that drink the water from horses' hooves. This is because, while alive, they begrudged their property and concealed their food. Property-less hungry spirits⁶ are ones who have not heard even the name of

food or drink since the time of their birth.

Law-devouring hungry spirits are people who renounce the world and spread Buddhism. They think that if they preach the Law people will respect them, and because of their ambition for fame and profit, they spend their entire present lifetime striving to be thought of as better than others. They neither help other human beings nor have a mind to save their parents. Such people are called Law-devouring hungry spirits, or hungry spirits who use the Buddhist teachings to satisfy their own desires.

When we observe the priests of our time, we find some who secretly accept offerings for themselves alone. In the Nirvana Sutra they are described as dog-like priests. In their next life they will become ox-headed demons.⁷ We also find persons who, though they receive offerings openly, being greedy, never share them with others. In their next existence they will be born as horse-headed demons.

Also, some lay believers fail to pray for the repose of their parents who, having fallen into hell or the realm of hungry spirits or of animals, are undergoing excruciating agonies. These believers are luxuriously clad and fed, have an abundance of cattle, horses, and retainers, and enjoy themselves as they please. How their parents must envy and resent them! Even among priests, those who pray for the repose of their parents and teachers on the anniversaries of their death are rare. Certainly the gods of the sun and moon in the heavens and the deities on earth must be angry and indignant with them, considering them to be unfilial. Though they possess a human form, they are like animals. They should also be called human-headed beasts.

When I think that I will surely eradicate these karmic impediments and in

the future go to the pure land of Eagle Peak, though various grave persecutions fall on me like rain and boil up like clouds, since they are for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, even these sufferings do not seem like sufferings at all. Those who have become the disciples and lay supporters of such a Nichiren—especially your deceased mother, Myoho, the anniversary of whose death falls on the twelfth day of this month—are votaries of the Lotus Sutra and my lay supporters. How could she possibly have fallen into the world of hungry spirits? No doubt she is now in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Perhaps they are saying, “So this is the mother of Shijo Kingo!” and, with one accord, patting her on the head and praising her joyfully. And she is probably saying to Shakyamuni Buddha, “What a splendid son I have.”

The Lotus Sutra says: “If there are good men or good women who, on hearing the ‘Devadatta’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, believe and revere it with pure hearts and harbor no doubts or perplexities, they will never fall into hell or the realm of hungry spirits or of beasts, but will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions, and in the place where they are born they will constantly hear this sutra. If they are born among human or heavenly beings, they will enjoy exceedingly wonderful delights, and if they are born in the presence of a Buddha, they will be born by transformation⁸ from lotus flowers.”⁹ The phrase “good women” is found in this passage of the sutra. If it does not refer to the deceased, Myoho, then to whom does it refer? The sutra also states, “This sutra is hard to uphold; if one can uphold it even for a short while I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas. A person who can do this wins the admiration of the Buddhas.”¹⁰ My

praise of your mother counts for little, but the sutra says that she “wins the admiration of the Buddhas.” Thinking, “How encouraging, how encouraging!” you should apply yourself earnestly to faith. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twelfth day of the seventh
month

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written to Shijo Kingo, a samurai and one of Nichiren Daishonin’s most loyal followers, in the seventh month of the eighth year of Bun’ei (1271). Shijo Kingo had sent various offerings to Nichiren Daishonin as a donation for a memorial service to be held for his mother, who had passed away some years before on the twelfth day of the seventh month. The Daishonin wrote Kingo this letter in reply, explaining that, in the profoundest sense, only the act of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo benefits the deceased.

Traditionally held in Japan on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the service for deceased ancestors is a Buddhist observance honoring the spirits of the ancestors. This tradition originated in China and is based on the story of Maudgalyayana’s saving his deceased mother that is related in the Service for the Deceased Sutra. Records indicate that the service for deceased ancestors was first held in China in 538, and in Japan in 657. Recent scholarship has established that the Service for the

Deceased Sutra has its origins not in India, but in China, where filial piety was highly valued.

According to popular belief in Kamakura-period Japan, those who were greedy or egotistic in life would inevitably suffer from hunger in death. In this letter, the Daishonin discusses the various kinds of hungry spirits mentioned in Buddhist texts and explains the causes, that is, the evil acts they committed in past existences, that led them to acquire these forms.

The Daishonin also exposes the true motives of many of the priests of his day, referring to them as “Law-devouring hungry spirits” who use the Buddhist teachings as a means to gain personal fame and profit. Though they pretend to have a sincere desire to preach the Buddhist teachings, in their hearts they are greedy. They conceal the offerings they receive from others, keeping them to themselves. The Daishonin also censures those Buddhists, whether of the priesthood or of the laity, who neglect to pray for the repose of their deceased parents or teachers.

Notes

1. This name is found in chapter 6 of the Lotus Sutra. The eight-year assembly indicates the assembly at which the Lotus Sutra was expounded.

2. According to the Service for the Deceased Sutra, Maudgalyayana tried unsuccessfully with his supernatural powers to

save his deceased mother, Shodai-nyo, who was suffering in the world of hungry spirits. He sought the advice of Shakyamuni, who urged him to offer one hundred kinds of food to the monks on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (the last day of the monks’ three-month retreat during the

rainy season). Maudgalyayana did as the Buddha instructed, and his mother was relieved of her agony. Here the Daishonin interprets the story in the light of the Lotus Sutra and the daimoku of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, that is, the sutra's essence.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 6.

4. Maudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Katyayana, and Subhuti.

5. Hungry spirits who have property, but begrudge sharing it with others, and who have an insatiable desire for even more.

6. Hungry spirits who have no property.

7. Beings who, together with horse-headed demons, are said to act as jailors in

the hell of crushing, the third of the eight hot hells. These two kinds of demons are depicted as having the bodies of human beings and the heads of oxen or horses.

8. "Born by transformation" refers to one of the four forms of birth. Due to their karma, beings so born are said, upon the end of their previous lifetime, to appear suddenly in this fashion without the help of parents or other intermediary agency. This passage may be interpreted to mean that one attains the state of Buddhahood by manifesting one's inherent Buddha nature.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

10. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

Letter from Echi



THE government's persecution of me has clearly demonstrated my faith in the Lotus Sutra. There is no doubt that the moon wanes and waxes, and that the tide ebbs and flows. In my case, too, since punishment has already occurred, benefit must be forthcoming. What is there to lament?

At the hour of the cock (5:00–7:00 P.M.) on the twelfth day, I incurred the wrath of the government authorities. Placed in the custody of the lord of Musashi,¹ I left Kamakura at the hour of the ox (1:00–3:00 A.M.) on the thirteenth day for exile in the province of Sado. At present, I am in a place called Echi, which is the domain of Homma,² under the supervision of a person called Uma Taro, a deputy of Homma Rokuro Saemon-no-jo of Echi. I will probably be staying here for four or five days.

Your grief is understandable, but because I have been certain from the beginning that this would occur, I myself do not grieve. Rather, I regret that I have yet to be beheaded. Had I been decapitated on account of the Lotus Sutra in a past existence, I would not have been born as such a lowly person in this life. By undergoing repeated persecution, just as is noted in the sutra when it says, “again and again we will be banished,”³ I can erase the grave offenses of my past and for the first time attain Buddhahood. I therefore engage in these difficult practices of my own accord.

Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the ninth month

Reply to Toki



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the fourteenth day of the ninth month of the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271) and addressed it to Toki Jonin, immediately following the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

When this letter was written, the

Daishonin was staying at the residence of Homma Rokuro Saemon-no-jo in Echi, Sagami Province. The Daishonin had been sentenced to exile on Sado Island under the supervision of Hojo Nobutoki, the constable of Sado. Nevertheless, on the twelfth day, an attempt

was made to behead him at Tatsunokuchi in the early hours of the thirteenth day. The attempt failed, however, and the Daishonin was placed under the custody of Homma Rokuro, Hojo Nobutoki's deputy. Although the Daishonin estimates in this letter that he would be kept at Echi for four or five days, he was to remain there until the tenth day of the following month.

For the first time in his writings, the Daishonin cites the passage from the Lotus Sutra that reads, "again and again we will be banished." The implication

here is that, through his previous banishment to Izu (1261–1263) and the upcoming exile to Sado, the Daishonin is reading and experiencing the words "again and again" with his entire being. Although at the end of this letter the Daishonin declares the certainty of his attaining enlightenment in the future, this statement and his conviction in the face of persecution apparent in this letter can be seen as an expression of the Daishonin's state of life as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

Notes

1. The lord of Musashi is Hojo Nobutoki, the governor of Musashi Province, who held this post from 1267 to 1273. He was also the constable of Sado.

2. Homma is Homma Rokuro Saemon-no-jo Shigetsura, a retainer of Hojo Nobutoki and also the deputy constable of Sado.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

The Persecution at Tatsunokuchi



I CANNOT adequately express my gratitude for your frequent letters. At the time of my persecution on the twelfth, not only did you accompany me to Tatsunokuchi,¹ but also you declared that you would die by my side. This can only be called wondrous.

How many are the places where I have thrown away my life in past existences for the sake of my wife and children, lands and followers! I have given up my life on the mountains and the seas, on the rivers, on the seashore, and by the roadside. Never once, however, did I die for the Lotus Sutra or suffer persecution for the daimoku. Hence none of the ends I met enabled me to attain Buddhahood. Because I did not attain Buddhahood, the seas and rivers where I threw away my life are not Buddha lands.

In this life, however, as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, I was exiled and put to death—exiled to Ito and beheaded at Tatsunokuchi. Tatsunokuchi in Sagami Province is the place where Nichiren gave his life. Because he died there for the Lotus Sutra, how could it be anything less than the Buddha land? The sutra reads, “In the Buddha lands of the ten directions there is only the Law of the one vehicle.”² Does this not bear out my assertion? The “Law of the one vehicle” is the Lotus Sutra. No true teaching other than the Lotus Sutra

exists in any of the Buddha lands of the ten directions. The sutra continues, “There are not two, there are not three, except when the Buddha preaches so as an expedient means.”³ This being so, then every place where Nichiren meets persecution is the Buddha land.

Of all the places in the saha world, it is at Tatsunokuchi in Katase of Sagami Province in Japan that Nichiren’s life dwells. Because he gave his life there for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, Tatsunokuchi deserves to be called the Land of Tranquil Light. This is what the “Supernatural Powers” chapter means when it states, “Whether in a garden, a forest . . . or in mountain valleys or the wide wilderness . . . in such places have the Buddhas entered nirvana.”

You accompanied Nichiren, vowing to give your life as a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Your deed is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand times greater than that of Hung Yen,⁴ who cut open his stomach and inserted the liver of his dead lord, Duke Yi [to save him from shame and dishonor]. When I reach Eagle Peak, I will first tell how Shijō Kingo, like myself, resolved to die for the Lotus Sutra.

I have heard unofficially that by the order of the lord of Kamakura⁵ I am to be exiled to Sado Province. Among the three heavenly sons of light, the god of

the moon saved my life at Tatsunokuchi by appearing as a shining object, and the god of the stars descended four or five days ago to greet me.⁶ Now only the god of the sun remains, and he is certain to protect me. How reassuring! How encouraging! The “Teacher of the Law” chapter states, “I will dispatch persons magically conjured who will act to guard and protect them.” This passage leaves no room for doubt. The “Peaceful Practices” chapter reads, “Swords and staves will not touch him.”

The “Universal Gateway” chapter states, “The executioner’s sword will be broken to bits!” There is nothing false in these sutra passages. The strong and steadfast power of faith is precious indeed.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-first day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun’ei (1271)

To Shijo Kingo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to his loyal samurai follower Shijo Kingo in 1271, in the ninth month, on the twenty-first day, only nine days after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. The Daishonin had been sentenced to exile on Sado Island under the supervision of Hojo Nobutoki, the constable of Sado. Originally it was intended that the Daishonin be escorted to Echi, to the residence of Homma Shigetsura, Hojo Nobutoki’s deputy; from here he was to be taken directly to Sado. But Hei no Saemon, a high government official and avowed enemy of the Daishonin, arbitrarily decided to have the Daishonin executed as he was being escorted to Homma’s residence. An attempt was made to behead the Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi, but it was unsuccessful. The Daishonin’s exile was later carried out as it had been originally planned.

The Daishonin here reveals something about his true identity, which he

later describes in greater detail in *The Opening of the Eyes*, also given to Shijo Kingo. Here he states, “Tatsunokuchi in Sagami Province is the place where Nichiren gave his life. Because he died there for the Lotus Sutra, how could it be anything less than the Buddha land?” Why is it that the Daishonin states, “he died,” when in fact he survived the attempted execution? *The Opening of the Eyes* explains this when it says, “On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded. It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado” (p. 269). The Daishonin is implying that, though the ordinary person called Nichiren died at Tatsunokuchi, Nichiren, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, reached Sado Island safely in order to fulfill his mission.

Notes

1. A place near Kamakura used as an execution site.
2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
3. Ibid.

4. Hung Yen (d. 660 B.C.E.) was a loyal retainer in ancient China whose lord, Duke Yi, was slain in battle. Hung Yen sacrificed his own life to prevent the desecration of

his lord's body. The liver was considered the seat of the spirit.

5. The lord of Kamakura is another name for Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

6. The reference to the god of the moon indicates the bright object that appeared in the sky just prior to the Daishonin's scheduled execution, which frightened his executioners to the extent that they aborted their attempt on his life. It is generally thought that this was a meteor.

Regarding the reference to the god of the stars, the Daishonin records in his work *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra* that, while he was confined at Homma's residence in Echi, a luminous object fell from the sky and struck the branches of a plum tree before him. It is not clear what this was, though it may have been a lightning-related electrical discharge—the Daishonin mentions a thunder-like roar and strong winds in his description.

Lessening One's Karmic Retribution



THESE were two brothers named Chudapanthaka.¹ When the name Chudapanthaka was called, either would answer. You three believers are like them. When any one of you comes, I feel as though all three of you were here with me.

The Nirvana Sutra teaches the principle of lessening one's karmic retribution. If one's heavy karma from the past is not expiated within this lifetime, one must undergo the sufferings of hell in the future, but if one experiences extreme hardship in this life [because of the Lotus Sutra], the sufferings of hell will vanish instantly. And when one dies, one will obtain the blessings of the human and heavenly worlds, as well as those of the three vehicles and the one vehicle. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was not abused and vilified, stoned and beaten with staves without reason. He had probably slandered the correct teaching in the past. The phrase "when his offenses had been wiped out"² indicates that, because Bodhisattva Never Disparaging met persecution, he was able to eradicate his offenses from previous lifetimes. (This concludes my first point.)

The twenty-five teachers who transmitted the Buddhist teachings,³ with the exception of Shakyamuni Buddha, were all temporary manifestations of Buddhas or great bodhisattvas whose

advent had been predicted by Shakyamuni. Of these, the fourteenth, Bodhisattva Aryadeva, was killed by a non-Buddhist, and the twenty-fifth, the Venerable Aryasimha, was beheaded by King Dammira. Buddhamitra and Bodhisattva Nagarjuna also suffered many persecutions. Yet others propagated Buddhism under the protection of devout kings, without encountering persecution. This would seem to be because good countries and evil countries exist in the world, and *shoju* and *shakubuku* exist as ways of propagation. It was like this even during the Former and Middle Days of the Law, as it was in India, the center of Buddhism. This country is far away from India, and this is the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. I was certain beforehand that such things would happen; I have simply been waiting for the inevitable. (This concludes my second point.)

I expounded this principle a long time ago, so it should not be new to you. One of the six stages of practice in the perfect teaching is the stage of perception and action. At this stage "one acts as one speaks and speaks as one acts."⁴ Those at the stage of being a Buddha in theory only and at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth believe in the perfect teaching; but even though they praise it,

their actions fail to reflect their words. For example, countless people study the non-Buddhist works known as the *Three Records* and the *Five Canons*, but not even one case in ten million is found where a person governs society and behaves as the texts teach. Thus it is very difficult to establish peace in society. One may be letter-perfect in reciting the Lotus Sutra, but it is far more difficult to act as it teaches. The "Simile and Parable" chapter states, "If this person . . . on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . ." The "Teacher of the Law" chapter reads, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?" The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter reads, "Many ignorant people will attack us with swords and staves . . . again and again we will be banished." The "Peaceful Practices" chapter states, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe." Although these quotations from the sutra are the Buddha's prophecies, there is no reference to when these persecutions will occur. In the past, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and the monk Realization of Virtue

read and lived these passages. But setting aside the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, now, in the Latter Day, in all Japan only Nichiren seems to be doing so. From the present situation, I can well imagine how followers, relatives, disciples, and lay supporters must have grieved in the past when during the reigns of evil kings so many of their sage monks met persecution.

Nichiren has now read [and lived] the entirety of the Lotus Sutra.⁵ Even a single phrase or verse assures one's enlightenment; since I have read the entire sutra, how much more certain is my enlightenment. I am more confident than ever. Though I may sound presumptuous, my most fervent wish is to realize the security and peace of the entire land. In an age when none will heed me, however, it is beyond my power. I will close now to keep this brief.

Nichiren

The fifth day of the tenth month
in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271),
cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*

Reply to Ota Saemon-no-jo
Lay priest Soya
Dharma Bridge Kimbara



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the fifth day of the tenth month, 1271, only three weeks after he was nearly executed at Tatsunokuchi. It was sent to three of his leading disciples: Ota Saemon, a government official, the lay priest Soya Kyoshin, and the Dharma Bridge Kimbara. One of them may have visited the Daishonin while he was being held in detention for exile at

the residence of Homma, deputy constable of Sado Island, in Echi. Records indicate that the three disciples lived in Shimosa Province, to the northeast of Kamakura; this letter may well have been an expression of gratitude for the visit and for their concern for the Daishonin's safety.

Following the failure to behead the Daishonin, the government had diffi-

culty deciding what to do with him, so he was temporarily detained at Homma's residence. Just at that time, a wave of arson and murder swept Kamakura, and the Daishonin's followers were blamed. The government then directed that the exile that had been ordered earlier be carried out.

The community of believers in Kamakura was deeply upset by this series of events, and the Daishonin sent a succession of letters to reassure them. In this letter, the Daishonin says that hardships allow one to purge oneself of accumulated evil karma in order to bring forth the state of Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Sons of a Brahman family in Shakyamuni's time, said to have had the same name Chudapanthaka. Therefore, when one was called, both would answer. The Daishonin compares their closeness to the staunch unity of the three believers from Shimosa.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.

3. The number and ordering of the successors of Shakyamuni who propagated his teachings in the Former Day of the Law dif-

fer slightly according to the source. Here the Daishonin counts Shakyamuni Buddha among the successors; hence the total of twenty-five. Usually Shakyamuni is excluded so that there are only twenty-four.

4. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

5. By saying that he has "read" the entire sutra, the Daishonin here means he has dedicated his life to it and fulfilled the predictions contained therein.

Banishment to Sado



ON the twelfth day of the ninth month, I incurred the wrath of the government authorities, and on the tenth day of the tenth month of this year, I am to leave for the province of Sado.

From the beginning, I pursued my studies because I wanted to master Buddhism and attain Buddhahood, and also to save the people to whom I am indebted. It seems to me that on the path to attain Buddhahood it may invariably be when one has done something like lay down one's life that one becomes a Buddha. I think that perhaps it is encountering such difficulties as have already been explained in the sutra—being cursed, vilified, attacked with swords and staves, shards and rubble, and banished again and again—that is reading the Lotus Sutra with one's life. My faith springs up all the more, and I am confident about my next existence. If I should die, I will definitely also save each of you.

In India a man called the Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded by King Dammira, and Bodhisattva Aryadeva

was murdered by a non-Buddhist. In China, a man named Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in a place called Su-chou, and the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face and exiled to a place south of the Yangtze River. All these were because of the virtue of the Lotus Sutra, and because of the Buddhist teachings.

Nichiren is the son of a chandala family who lived near the sea in Tojo in Awa Province, in the remote countryside of the eastern part of Japan. How could giving up a body that will decay uselessly for the sake of the Lotus Sutra not be exchanging rocks for gold? None of you should lament for me. Please convey what I have said to the Reverend Dozen-bo, too. I have also thought of writing to the wife of the lord of the manor,¹ but because of my present circumstances, she may no longer wish to be reminded of me. Should the opportunity arise, please tell her what I have said.

Nichiren

The tenth month



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the tenth month of the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), just before he left for his exile on Sado Island. At the time, he was being held at the mainland residence of Homma Rokuro Saemon, the deputy constable of Sado. The Daishonin wrote the letter to an acquaintance at Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province, possibly a priest named Enjo-bo.

Exile to Sado Island was a harsh punishment, second only to the death penalty. In this letter the Daishonin

declares that he has met this persecution solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra; he emphasizes that the very fact that it has happened demonstrates that he is "reading" the Lotus Sutra with his life. Since the Daishonin seeks to dispel doubts among his followers and revive their flagging courage by pointing out his mission as the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day, this letter may be said to foreshadow *The Opening of the Eyes*, a major treatise he wrote four months later.

Note

1. Reference here is to the lay nun of Nagoe. The wife of Hojo Tomotoki, a younger brother of the third Kamakura regent and lord of Nagasa District in Awa Province, where the Daishonin was born. After the Daishonin entered the priesthood, the lay nun apparently assisted his parents in some way, and he therefore felt

indebted to her; moreover, she was one of his first converts. Her resolve was not firm, however, and she abandoned her faith around the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. Later, she resumed her practice and requested a Gohonzon from the Daishonin, but he refused.

Letter to Priest Nichiro in Prison



TOMORROW I am to leave for the province of Sado. In the cold tonight, I think of what it must be like for you in prison, and it pains me. Admirable Nichiro, because you have read the entirety of the Lotus Sutra with both the physical and spiritual aspects of your life, you will also be able to save your father and mother, your six kinds of relatives,¹ and all living beings. Others read the Lotus Sutra with their mouths alone, in word alone, but they do not read it with their hearts. And even if they read it with their hearts, they do not read it with their actions. It is reading the sutra with both one's body and mind that is truly praiseworthy! Since the

sutra teaches that "the young sons of heavenly beings will wait on him and serve him. Swords and staves will not touch him and poison will have no power to harm him,"² certainly nothing untoward will befall you. When you are released from prison, please come as quickly as you can. I am eager to see you, and to show you that I too am well.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The ninth day of the tenth month
in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271),
cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*

To Chikugo



Background

On the ninth day of the tenth month, 1271, on the eve of his departure for Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Chikugo-bo Nichiro, who was later to become one of his six senior disciples. Nichiro and his father had converted to the Daishonin's teachings in 1254, and Nichiro had received the tonsure under the supervision of his uncle Nissho, also later to become one of the six senior disciples. At the

time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in the ninth month of 1271, Nichiro and several other priest-disciples were imprisoned in the custody of Yadoya Mitsunori, an official of the Kamakura government, in a dungeon carved into the side of a hill near Mitsunori's residence in Kamakura.

In the interval between the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and his exile to Sado Island, the Daishonin was held at the

mainland residence of Homma Rokuro Saemon, the deputy constable of Sado, in Echi of Sagami Province. It was here that the Daishonin wrote this letter, which demonstrates that, even when

about to embark for a destination sure to be marked by privation and hardship, his chief concern was for his disciples.

Notes

1. One's father, mother, elder brother, younger brother, wife, and son or daughter. According to another classification, the

father, son or daughter, elder brother, younger brother, husband, and wife.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

Letter from Teradomari



I HAVE received the string of coins that you sent. Those resolved to seek the way should gather and listen to the contents of this letter.

This month (the tenth month), on the tenth day, we left the village of Echi in Aiko District of the province of Sagami. Along the way we stopped at Kumegawa in the province of Musashi and, after traveling for twelve days, arrived here at the harbor of Teradomari in the province of Echigo. From here we are going to cross the sea to the island province of Sado, but at the moment the winds are not favorable, so I do not know when we will depart.

The hardships along the way were worse than I could have imagined, and indeed more than I can put down in writing. I will leave you to surmise what I endured. But I have been prepared for such difficulties from the outset, so there is no point in starting to complain about them now. I shall accordingly say no more of the matter.

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹ The fifth volume says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."² And the thirty-eighth volume of the Nirvana

Sutra states: "At that time all the non-Buddhists spoke [to King Ajatashatru], saying: 'O Great King, at present there is a man of incomparable wickedness, a monk called Gautama. . . . All sorts of evil people, hoping to gain profit and alms, have flocked to him and become his followers. These people do not practice goodness, but instead use the power of spells and magic to win over men like Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, and Maudgalyayana.'"

This passage from the Nirvana Sutra recounts the evil words that the various non-Buddhists spoke against Shakyamuni Buddha because he refuted the scriptures preached by their original teachers, the two deities³ and the three ascetics.

In the above passages from the Lotus Sutra, however, it is not the Buddha himself who is being looked upon as an enemy. Rather, as T'ien-t'ai explains, it is [the Lotus Sutra that is being opposed by] "the various voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones and the bodhisattvas who seek only the Buddha of recent enlightenment."⁴ In other words, persons who show no desire to hear or believe in the Lotus Sutra or who say that it does not match their capacity, though they may not actually slander it in so many words, are all to be regarded as persons of hatred and jealousy.

Observing the situation when the Buddha was in the world and comparing it with the situation since his passing, we may say that the scholars of the various schools in the world today are like the non-Buddhists of the Buddha's time. They too speak of "a man of incomparable wickedness," by which they mean me, Nichiren. They speak of "all sorts of evil people who have flocked to him," by which they mean my disciples and followers. The non-Buddhists, having incorrectly received and transmitted the teachings of the earlier Buddhas, displayed hostility toward the later Buddha, Shakyamuni. The scholars of the various schools today are just the same. In effect, they have let their own way of understanding the Buddha's teachings lead them into erroneous views. They are like persons who, dizzy from drink, think that the huge mountain in front of them is spinning round and round. And so we now have these eight schools or ten schools all disputing with one another over their various doctrines.

The eighteenth volume of the Nirvana Sutra sets forth the doctrine of "the precious jewels that redeem life."⁵ The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, after studying and pondering this passage, concluded that "life" refers to the Lotus Sutra, and the "precious jewels," to the first three of the four teachings expounded in the Nirvana Sutra. But what then of the fourth or perfect teaching, which the Nirvana Sutra also expounds? This teaching represents a reiteration of the doctrine already expounded in the Lotus Sutra concerning the eternally inherent Buddha nature, and was preached to lead people to the Lotus Sutra from which it originated. The Nirvana Sutra's perfect teaching of the eternally inherent Buddha nature in fact belongs to the Lotus Sutra. The merits unique to the Nirvana Sutra are consequently limited to the first three of the four teachings.

The third volume of T'ien-t'ai's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* states, "The Nirvana Sutra offers precious jewels to redeem the life [of the Lotus Sutra], and thus the hands are clapped and the bargain concluded."⁶ The third volume of *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra"* explains this by saying, "The T'ien-t'ai school cites this metaphor to indicate that the contents of the Nirvana Sutra are to be regarded as precious jewels."

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, in his work entitled *The Four Meditations*, cites the passage in the Lotus Sutra that reads, "Though they [the Buddhas] point out various different paths . . .,"⁷ and declares that the four flavors of teachings are also to be regarded as precious jewels. If so, then the sutras that were preached before and after the Lotus Sutra are all to be regarded as precious jewels offered for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

But the Buddhist scholars in the world today are of the opinion that this interpretation represents a doctrine put forward by the T'ien-t'ai school alone, and that none of the other schools accepts it. When I consider the matter, however, I have this to say: The eight or ten schools we are speaking of all came into existence after the passing of the Buddha and are the creation of the various scholars and teachers of the time. But we should not evaluate the sutras that the Buddha preached during his lifetime on the basis of the doctrines of schools established after his passing. The judgments put forward by T'ien-t'ai, however, completely accord with the teachings of all the sutras. It is wrong to discard them on the grounds that they represent no more than the opinions of a single school.

The scholars of the various schools continue to cling to the mistaken opinions of their respective teachers. Therefore, they declare that Buddhist practices must be accommodated to the

people's capacities, or they defer to the opinions of their founders or try to persuade the worthy rulers of the time to be their allies. The upshot of all this is that in the end they give themselves up wholly to evil intentions, engage in wrangling and doctrinal disputes, and take delight in inflicting injury upon people who are guilty of no fault.

Among the various schools, the opinions of the True Word school are particularly distorted. Its founders, Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chieh, maintained: "The concept of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is the most important of all T'ien-t'ai's principles and the heart and core of the teachings put forward by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime. But setting aside this doctrine that the three thousand realms are encompassed by the mind, which constitutes the foundation of both the exoteric and the esoteric teachings, the mudras and mantras form the most crucial part of the Buddhist teachings." The teachers of the True Word school in later times have used this pronouncement as a pretext to declare that all sutras that do not mention mudras and mantras are to be regarded as inferior and, in fact, as no different from non-Buddhist teachings.

Some of the esoteric teachers assert that the Mahavairochana Sutra was preached by [the Thus Come One Mahavairochana], a Buddha other than the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, others declare that it is the highest of all the teachings put forth by the lord of teachings, Shakyamuni Buddha, while still others say that the same Buddha manifested himself once in the form of Shakyamuni Buddha to preach the exoteric sutras, and on another occasion, in the form of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana to preach the esoteric sutras. Thus, misunderstanding the underlying principles of Buddhism, they produce an endless

array of erroneous opinions. They are like a group of people who, unaware of the true color of milk, venture various speculations as to what the color might be, though none are able to surmise it correctly.⁸ Or they are like the blind men in the parable who try to guess the true shape of the elephant.⁹ In this connection, the scholars of the various schools should understand that the Mahavairochana Sutra, if preached before the Lotus Sutra, is on a level with the Flower Garland Sutra, and if preached after the Lotus Sutra, is on a level with the Nirvana Sutra.

Is it not possible that the Lotus Sutra in India contained descriptions of mudras and mantras, but that those who translated the text into Chinese omitted those sections—Kumarajiva calling his version the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law? And is it also not possible that Shan-wu-wei added mudras and mantras and called his version the Mahavairochana Sutra? For example, there were other versions of the Lotus Sutra, such as the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law, the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the Lotus Meditation Sutra, and the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra.¹⁰

In India after the Buddha's passing, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna was the one who truly understood the relationship between the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras, while in China the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che was the first to grasp it correctly. Men like Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school, Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, and Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school each publicly upheld the doctrines of the school they had established, but in their hearts they were all won over to the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school. Yet their disciples were ignorant of this fact and hence developed erroneous opinions. How can they avoid being guilty

of slandering the correct teaching?

Some people criticize me, saying, "Nichiren does not understand the capacities of the people of the time, but goes around preaching in a harsh manner—that is why he meets with difficulties." Other people say, "The practices described in the 'Encouraging Devotion' chapter¹¹ are for bodhisattvas who are far advanced in practice; [Nichiren ought to follow the practices of] the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter, yet he fails to do so." Others say, "I, too, know the Lotus Sutra is supreme, but I say nothing about it." Still others complain that I give all my attention to doctrinal teachings.¹²

I am well aware of all these criticisms against me. But I recall the case of Pien Ho,¹³ who had his legs cut off at the knee, and of Kiyomaro¹⁴ (Pure Man), who was dubbed Kegaremaro (Filthy Man) and almost put to death. All the people of the time laughed at them with scorn, but unlike those two men, those who laughed left no good name behind them. And all the people who level unjust criticisms at me will meet with a similar fate.

The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us." I observe my own situation in this passage. Why should it not apply to all of you as well? "They will attack us with swords and staves," the passage continues. I have experienced this passage from the sutra with my own body. Why do you, my disciples, not do likewise? Further on, the passage says, "In the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us," and "they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders, [slandering and speaking evil of us]." And they "will confront us with foul language and angry frowns; again and again we will be banished." "Again and again" means time after time. And I, Nichiren, have been repeatedly driven away,

and have twice been condemned to exile.

The Lotus Sutra accords with the fashion of the preaching employed by all Buddhas of the three existences.¹⁵ The past events described in the "Never Disparaging" chapter¹⁶ I am now experiencing as predicted in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter; thus the present foretold in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter corresponds to the past of the "Never Disparaging" chapter. The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the present will be the "Never Disparaging" chapter of the future, and at that time, I, Nichiren, will be its Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.

The Lotus Sutra consists of a single work in eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters, but I have heard that the sutra as it existed in India was long enough to stretch over a whole yojana. In other words, there must have been many more chapters to it. The twenty-eight-chapter version used today in China and Japan represents the most essential portion of an abbreviated version.

Let us set aside for now the revelation section¹⁷ of the sutra. In the following transmission section, the three pronouncements¹⁸ of the "Treasure Tower" chapter are delivered to the assembly gathered at Eagle Peak and present at the Ceremony in the Air. As to the vow made in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter by the twenty thousand, eighty thousand, and eight hundred thousand million nayutas of great bodhisattvas, a man of shallow wisdom like myself cannot comprehend it. But the phrase "in an age of fear and evil" that appears in this chapter nevertheless indicates the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. The following "Peaceful Practices" chapter refers to this "age of fear and evil" with the words "in the latter age." And looking at other translations of the sutra, we find that in the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law it

appears as “in the latter age hereafter” or “in the latter age to come,” while in the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law it appears as “in an age of fear and evil.”

In this latter age, which corresponds to our own time, the three types of enemies have appeared, but not a single one of the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas is anywhere to be seen. It is like a lake that has dried and is missing its full share of water, or a waning moon that is far from full. If the water is clear, it will reflect the moon’s image, and if trees are planted, then birds can nest in them. Therefore, I, Nichiren, propagate this sutra in place of the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas. I ask that those bodhisattvas grant me their aid and protection.

The lay priest who bears this letter tells me that you instructed him to accompany me to the province of Sado. But in view of the expenses of the trip and other difficulties, I am sending him back to you. I already know the depths of your consideration. Please explain to the others what I have written here. I am very much concerned about the priests who are in prison,¹⁹ and I hope you will inform me of their situation at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The hour of the cock (5:00–7:00 P.M.), the twenty-second day of the tenth month

To Toki



Background

After his unsuccessful attempt to execute Nichiren Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi on the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271, Hei no Saemon, deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs, had no choice other than to follow the government’s original instructions to deliver the Daishonin into the custody of Homma Rokuro Saemon Shigetsura, the deputy constable of Sado. The Daishonin was confined for nearly a month at Homma’s residence in Echi, Sagami Province, awaiting word of his fate from the government.

On the tenth day of the tenth month, Nichiren Daishonin left Echi, escorted by Homma’s warriors. When the group reached the coast of the Sea of Japan on the twenty-first, snow covered the ground and the sea was very rough. They were forced to stop for several days at a harbor called Terado-

mari in Echigo and wait for the winds to abate before crossing to Sado Island. Teradomari is said to have prospered from the early ninth century on as a port for shipping traffic between the island of Sado and the Japanese mainland. The day after arriving at Teradomari, the Daishonin wrote this letter and entrusted it to a lay priest whom Toki Jonin had sent to accompany him.

The community of believers in Kamakura had been badly shaken by the events of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and the Sado Exile, and many among the Daishonin’s disciples and lay supporters succumbed to government pressures and gave up their faith, or began to have doubts when they saw the Daishonin persecuted. In order to help his followers dispel their doubts and persevere in faith, the Daishonin during his exile produced a number of writings. This letter is the first of these

writings, which include *The Opening of the Eyes*, *Letter from Sado*, and *On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings*.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin mentions in passing the hardships and difficulties he experienced during the twelve-day journey to Teradomari. He then quotes scriptural passages to show that, in the Latter Day of the Law, hatred and jealousy of the Lotus Sutra will be worse than during the Buddha's lifetime. He himself is actually confronting such opposition, he says. Next, citing T'ien-t'ai's view of the Nirvana Sutra as precious jewels to redeem the life of the Lotus, the Daishonin declares the superiority of the Lotus over all other sutras and points out the mistaken views of the scholars of the various schools who fail to recognize this. In particular, he mentions the erroneous

opinions of the True Word school deriving from Shan-wu-wei and others. He warns that the followers of the various schools are committing the offense of slandering the Lotus Sutra, unaware that their patriarchs inwardly concurred with the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school, which are based on the Lotus Sutra.

The Daishonin next enumerates four frequent criticisms of his method of propagation, raised not only by his enemies but by some of his own followers as well, and declares that the hardships he has encountered perfectly match the prophecies of the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In light of the sutra, he makes clear that he himself is the votary who propagates the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.
2. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.
3. Shiva and Vishnu.
4. A rephrasing of a passage in *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* The "Buddha of recent enlightenment" refers to Shakyamuni in his provisional capacity as the Buddha who first attained enlightenment in India.
5. This quotation actually appears in *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*. The Nirvana Sutra states that the store of seven gems can redeem one's life when threatened by famine, bandits, or an evil king. On the basis of this passage, *Profound Meaning* uses the expression "precious jewels that redeem life" to indicate that the Nirvana Sutra functions to protect and support the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra, which is reiterated in the Nirvana Sutra.
6. The statement "The hands are clapped and the bargain concluded" indicates that after Shakyamuni expounded the perfect teaching in the Lotus Sutra he reiterated it in the Nirvana Sutra.
7. *The Four Meditations* cites not this passage but another from the same "Expedient Means" chapter that reads, "I used the power of expedient means to preach to

the five ascetics." Because both passages agree in principle, the Daishonin may have cited the one rather than the other.

8. The Nirvana Sutra states that Brahmans, being ignorant of Shakyamuni's teachings of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity, fall into erroneous views, like blind men who do not know the true color of milk.

9. This parable appears in the Nirvana Sutra. A king had his high minister bring an elephant to a group of blind men, let them touch it, and then asked them to describe it to him. One blind man who pressed his hands against the elephant's stomach said that it was like a pot; another who touched the elephant's tail said that it resembled a rope; still another who stroked the elephant's trunk insisted that the animal resembled a pestle; and so on. In this parable, Shakyamuni likened the king who knows the truth to the Buddha's wisdom, the high minister to the Nirvana Sutra, the elephant to the Buddha nature, and the blind men to ordinary mortals who are ignorant of the Buddha nature.

10. The Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law and the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law are two of the three extant

Chinese translations of the Lotus Sutra, done by Dharmaraksha in 286 and by Jnanagupta and Dharmagupta in 601, respectively. The Lotus Meditation Sutra has been lost. The Saddharmapundarika Sutra here does not indicate the Sanskrit text but a Chinese translation. This version has also been lost.

11. The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter describes how the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas vow to teach the sutra far and wide in an age of fear and evil after the Buddha's passing. They express their determination to meet the various persecutions that will result from their propagation. The practice of shakubuku is what calls forth such persecution and is what the Daishonin is referring to here. In contrast, the "Peaceful Practices" chapter details the four peaceful means of practice, by peaceful deeds, words, thoughts, and vows.

12. In contrast to "the observation of the mind," or the perception through meditation of the ultimate reality inherent in one's life. This, along with the doctrinal study of the sutras, is one of the two integral aspects of practice taught in the Tendai school. The Daishonin gives emphasis to the meditational aspect (the invocation of the daimoku), but expresses here that he is criticized for not doing so. This was because he also emphasized scriptural comparison to establish the superiority of the Lotus Sutra.

13. Pien Ho was a native of the state of Ch'u in China during the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.). According to *Han Fei Tzu*, Pien Ho found a precious stone at Mount Ch'u and presented it to King Li. When the king had it appraised, it was identified as a mere stone. So the king had Pien Ho's left leg cut off at the knee. After the king's death, Pien Ho again presented the precious stone, this time to King Wu, only to have his right leg cut off at the knee on a second charge of deception. Later, after King Wen had ascended the throne, Pien Ho wept for three days at the foot of Mount Ch'u, holding the precious stone and shedding tears of blood at the kings' ignorance. Hearing of this, King Wen asked for Pien Ho's stone and had it polished. It was then recognized as being genuine and, in consequence, is said to

have been widely treasured by the populace.

14. Kiyomaro is Wake no Kiyomaro (733-799). A high-ranking court official who thwarted the attempts of the priest Dokyo, Empress Shotoku's favorite, to ascend the throne and was persecuted as a result. After the death of the empress, however, Dokyo was stripped of power, and Kiyomaro was pardoned from his sentence of exile and recalled to service at court.

15. This statement derives from a passage in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which reads: "Following the same fashion that the Buddhas of the three existences employ in preaching the Law, I now will do likewise, preaching a Law that is without distinctions." The five categories of Buddhas—all Buddhas in general, past Buddhas, present Buddhas, future Buddhas, and Shakyamuni Buddha—invariably follow the same method of preaching, first expounding various provisional teachings over a relatively long period to lead people to the one Buddha vehicle, or the Lotus Sutra, which they reveal later.

16. The "Never Disparaging" chapter describes the practices of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who lived in the Middle Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, persevered in the face of persecution for the sake of the correct teaching, and finally attained Buddhahood.

17. The revelation section is one of the three divisions of a sutra—preparation, revelation, and transmission—used in interpreting the Buddhist teachings. Here the Daishonin applies these divisions solely to the theoretical teaching (former half) of the Lotus Sutra. From this viewpoint, preparation consists of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the "Introduction" chapter; revelation, the "Expedient Means" through "Prophecies" chapters; and transmission, the "Teacher of the Law" through "Peaceful Practices" chapters.

18. The three pronouncements are exhortations by Shakyamuni, three times urging the assembly before him to propagate the Lotus Sutra after his passing.

19. After the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, five of the Daishonin's disciples, including Nichiro, were confined in a dungeon.

Aspiration for the Buddha Land



IT is now the latter part of the eleventh month. When I was living in Kamakura in Sagami, I thought that the changing of the seasons must be the same in all the provinces, but in the two months that have passed since I arrived in this northern province of Sado, icy winds have blown without pause, and though there have been times when the frost and snow stopped falling, I have never seen the sunlight. I feel the eight cold hells in my life now. The hearts of the people are like those of birds and beasts; they recognize neither sovereign, teacher, nor parent. Even less do they distinguish between correct and incorrect in Buddhism, or good and evil in their teachers. But I will say no more of these things.

When I sent back from Teradomari the lay priest whom you dispatched on the tenth day of the tenth month to accompany me, I wrote out and entrusted to him certain teachings for you.¹ As you may have guessed from these, [the advent of the great Law] is already before our very eyes. In the twenty-two hundred and more years since the Buddha's passing, and in India, China, Japan, and throughout Jambudvīpa, [the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai said], "Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they employed the provisional

Mahayana teachings, which were suited to the times."² T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo commented generally on it, but left its propagation for the future. The secret Law that is the one great reason the Buddhas make their advent will be spread for the first time in this country. How could Nichiren not be the one who will do this?

The portents of its rise have already appeared. The great earthquake of the Shoka era was a major omen of a kind never before witnessed in previous ages, one totally unprecedented in the twelve reigns of the deities,³ the ninety reigns of human sovereigns,⁴ and the twenty-two hundred and more years since the Buddha's passing. The "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, "Because after the Buddha has passed into extinction there will be those who can uphold this sutra, the Buddhas are all delighted and manifest immeasurable supernatural powers." It also refers to "all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One." Once this great Law has spread, I am sure neither the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings nor the theoretical teaching of the Lotus will provide even the slightest benefit. The Great Teacher Dengyo said that when the sun comes up the stars hide themselves.⁵ And the preface written by Tsun-shih⁶ says that, at the beginning of the Latter Day of

the Law, [Buddhism will rise in the east and] illuminate the west. The Law has already appeared. The signs heralding its advent far surpass those of previous ages. When I gave this some thought, I realized that it is because the time has so decreed it. The sutra states, “[Among these bodhisattvas] were four leaders. The first was called Superior Practices . . .”⁷ It also reads, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra . . .,”⁸ and “If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off . . . [that too would not be difficult].”⁹

I would like you to gather and keep in one place the five folding notebooks I mentioned to you, which contain essential passages from the complete collection of the scriptures and from *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. Please make sure that the essential passages from the treatises and commen-

taries are not scattered and lost. And please tell the young priests that they should not neglect their studies. You absolutely must not lament over my exile. It says in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter and in the “Never Disparaging” chapter [that the votary of the Lotus Sutra will meet with persecution]. Life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land.

Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the eleventh month in the eighth year of Bun’ei (1271)

Reply to the lay priest Toki

I am sending back some of the young priests. You can ask them what this province is like and about the circumstances in which I live. It is impossible to describe these matters in writing.



Background

On the twenty-eighth day of the tenth month, 1271, Nichiren Daishonin arrived at Sado Island. On the first day of the eleventh month, he was taken to Tsukahara, a desolate field used as a graveyard that was to be his dwelling place on Sado. He was given as lodging a small dilapidated shrine called Sammai-do. Wind and snow blew in through gaping holes in its walls and roof. Perhaps because of the severe lack of food and shelter, the Daishonin soon sent back to the mainland some of the priests who had accompanied him. Just before their departure, he wrote this letter and entrusted it to them for his staunch follower Toki Jonin. It is believed to be the first letter he wrote from Sado Island.

While the Daishonin was in exile on Sado, he relied on Toki to convey mes-

sages of encouragement to believers in the Shimoso area. This particular letter indicates that he had also asked Toki to look after his books and papers during his absence.

In the letter, he voices his readiness to meet death if necessary for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, and his joy at knowing himself to be the sutra’s votary. He also declares that the supreme Law never before revealed by any of the great Buddhist teachers of the past has now made its advent. He interprets the great Shoka earthquake of 1257 as an omen of its rise, and cites various passages from the Lotus Sutra and other sources to substantiate his assertion that now, the beginning of the Latter Day, is the time for this great Law to spread.

In the last few lines of the letter, the

Daishonin explains that, since life in this world is transient, one should dedicate oneself to the Law. Rather than fleeting satisfactions, one's ultimate goal should

be to attain "the Buddha land," or enlightenment—that state of boundless joy in which one realizes the eternal truth within one's life.

Notes

1. This refers to *Letter from Teradomari*, which the Daishonin wrote to Toki Jonin on the twenty-second day of the tenth month, 1271.

2. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

3. The twelve reigns of the deities refer to the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities said to have ruled Japan before Emperor Jimmu, the legendary first human sovereign.

4. The ninety reigns of human sovereigns refer to the successive emperors from the legendary first sovereign, Emperor Jimmu (r. 660–585 B.C.E., according to *The Chronicles of Japan*), to the ninetieth emperor, Kameyama (r. 1259–1274).

5. In *The Verse-form Record of the Lineage of the Tendai Lotus School*, the Great Teacher Dengyo uses the sun to represent the Lotus Sutra, and the stars to represent the provisional teachings. Here the Daishonin uses the sun to represent the Law of Nam-

myoho-rence-kyo, and the stars to represent both the provisional teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

6. Tsun-shih was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in Sung-dynasty China. Tsun-shih's "preface" is his introduction to *The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight* by T'ien-t'ai's teacher, Nan-yüeh. Nan-yüeh's work had been lost for centuries in China, but a copy was brought from Japan by Jakusho, a priest of the Japanese Tendai school, when he traveled to China at the beginning of the eleventh century. Therefore Tsun-shih said that Buddhism "rises in the east."

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 17.

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 11. This passage teaches how difficult it will be to embrace and propagate the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law.

The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life

Written by Nichiren



I HAVE just carefully read your letter. To reply, the ultimate Law of life and death as transmitted from the Buddha to all living beings is Myoho-enge-kyo. The five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo were transferred from Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, the two Buddhas inside the treasure tower, to Bodhisattva Superior Practices, carrying on a heritage unbroken since the infinite past. *Myo* represents death, and *ho*, life. Living beings that pass through the two phases of life and death are the entities of the Ten Worlds, or the entities of Myoho-enge-kyo.

T'ien-t'ai says that one should understand that living beings and their environments, and the causes and effects at work within them, are all the Law of *rengé* (the lotus).¹ Here "living beings and their environments" means the phenomena of life and death. Thus, it is clear that, where life and death exist, cause and effect, or the Law of the lotus, is at work.

The Great Teacher Dengyo states, "The two phases of life and death are the wonderful workings of one mind. The two ways of existence and non-existence are the true functions of an inherently enlightened mind."² No phenomena—either heaven or earth, yin or yang,³ the sun or the moon, the five planets,⁴ or any of the worlds from

hell to Buddhahood—are free from the two phases of life and death. Life and death are simply the two functions of Myoho-enge-kyo. In his *Great Concentration and Insight*, T'ien-t'ai says, "Arising is the arising of the essential nature of the Law, and extinction is the extinction of that nature." Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, the two Buddhas, are also the two phases of life and death.

Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, the Lotus Sutra that leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from one another. To chant Myoho-enge-kyo with this realization is to inherit the ultimate Law of life and death. This is a matter of the utmost importance for Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters, and this is what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra.

For one who summons up one's faith and chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the profound insight that now is the last moment of one's life, the sutra proclaims: "When the lives of these persons come to an end, they will be received into the hands of a thousand Buddhas, who will free them from all fear and keep them from falling into the evil paths of existence."⁵ How can we possibly hold back our tears at the inexpressible joy of know-

ing that not just one or two, not just one hundred or two hundred, but as many as a thousand Buddhas will come to greet us with open arms!

Concerning one who disbelieves the Lotus Sutra, because the sutra states, "When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell,"⁶ the wardens of hell will surely come for one and take one away by the hands. How pitiful! The ten kings⁷ of the world of the dead will then pass judgment, and the heavenly messengers⁸ who have been with one since birth will berate one for one's evil deeds.

Think of those thousand Buddhas extending their hands to all of Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters who chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as melons or moonflowers extending their slender vines. My followers are now able to accept and uphold the Lotus Sutra because of the strong ties they formed with it in their past existences. They are certain to obtain the fruit of Buddhahood in the future. The heritage of the Lotus Sutra flows within the lives of those who never forsake it in any lifetime whatsoever—whether in the past, the present, or the future. But those who disbelieve and slander the Lotus Sutra will immediately "destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world."⁹ Because they cut themselves off from the potential to attain enlightenment, they do not share the heritage of the ultimate Law of life and death.

All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves¹⁰ to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren's propagation. When you are so united, even the great desire for

widespread propagation can be fulfilled. But if any of Nichiren's disciples disrupt the unity of many in body but one in mind, they would be like warriors who destroy their own castle from within.

Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood. But instead they have persecuted me in various ways and finally had me banished to this island. You have followed Nichiren, however, and met with suffering as a result. It pains me deeply to think of your anguish. Gold can be neither burned by fire nor corroded or swept away by water, but iron is vulnerable to both. A worthy person is like gold, a fool like iron. You are like pure gold because you embrace the "gold" of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra states, "Just as among all the mountains, Mount Sumeru is foremost, so this Lotus Sutra is likewise."¹¹ It also states, "The good fortune you gain thereby . . . cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water."¹²

It must be ties of karma from the distant past that have destined you to become my disciple at a time like this. Shakyamuni and Many Treasures certainly realized this truth. The sutra's statement, "Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly re-born in company with their teachers,"¹³ cannot be false in any way.

How admirable that you have asked about the transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death! I have never heard of anyone who has asked such a question. I have answered in complete detail in this letter, so please take it deeply to heart. The important point is to carry out your practice confident that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo alone is the heritage that was transferred from Shakyamuni and Many Treasures to Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

The function of fire is to burn and give light. The function of water is to wash away filth. The winds blow away dust and breathe life into plants, animals, and human beings. The earth produces the grasses and trees, and heaven provides nourishing moisture. The five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo are also like that. They are the cluster of blessings brought by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, disciples of the Buddha in his true identity. The Lotus Sutra says that Bodhisattva Superior Practices will appear now, in the Latter Day of the Law, to propagate this teaching, but has this happened? Whether or not Bodhisattva Superior Practices has appeared in this world, Nichiren has already made a start in propagating this teaching.

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of faith, and chant Nam-

myoho-enge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate Law of life and death, and manifest it in your life. Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana. Even embracing the Lotus Sutra would be useless without the heritage of faith.

I will go into particulars again on another occasion.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren,
the shramana of Japan

The eleventh day of the second month in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*

Reply to the Honorable Sairen-bo



Background

This letter, dated the eleventh day of the second month in 1272, was sent by Nichiren Daishonin to Sairen-bo Nichijo, a former Tendai priest who, for reasons that are unclear, was also living in exile on Sado Island. Details about Sairen-bo are scarce, but it is known that he was originally from Kyoto, and that he had studied at Mount Hiei, the seat of the Tendai school, before his exile. He was also present at the Tsukahara Debate, held in front of Sammai-do, the Daishonin's dwelling at Tsukahara, on the sixteenth and seventeenth days of the first month in 1272. In this debate the Daishonin was the clear victor over Pure Land, True Word, and other priests from Sado and from various provinces of northern Japan. A number of people converted to his teachings at this time, among them Sairen-bo.

Sairen-bo was a highly educated priest to whom the Daishonin sent several important essays, including *The True Aspect of All Phenomena* and *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life*. He had a number of unresolved questions about Buddhist theory, and he addressed them one by one to the Daishonin, who in turn answered these questions in written form. The Daishonin praised him, saying, "How admirable that you have asked about the transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death!" In his reply the Daishonin offers a look into the wonder of the Buddha's own enlightenment, as well as the practical means whereby ordinary people may attain the same end.

In the first paragraph, the Daishonin states that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the heritage of the ultimate Law of life,

and that the transmission of this Law is made from the Buddha to all living beings. Then he refers to the question of how we can inherit the ultimate Law of life and manifest it within ourselves.

This Law flows in the depths of the lives of those who believe in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, practice in exact accord with them, and chant the daimoku. The Daishonin declares that there is no distinction whatsoever between Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, and us, ordinary people.

Viewed from the standpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism, this can be taken as a declaration that there is absolutely no difference or separation between Nichiren Daishonin as the Buddha of the Latter Day, the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo—or the Go-honzon which embodies that Law—and ourselves, who chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

In terms of time, the heritage—the mystic relationship between the Law and the lives of the people—courses eternally through past, present, and

future, unbroken in any lifetime. In terms of space, the Daishonin proclaims that the heritage of the ultimate Law flows within the lives of his disciples and lay supporters who work in perfect unity for the realization of a peaceful world and happiness for all humanity.

Having stated that the ultimate Law is within the lives of human beings, Nichiren Daishonin further explains how to inherit the Law. He emphasizes the importance of the attitude, “now is the last moment . . .,” in order to manifest innate Buddhahood, a state that transcends both life and death.

In discussing the thousand Buddhas and the ten kings of hell, he reveals the continuity of cause and effect spanning past, present, and future. Whatever state of life predominates while one is alive will continue in the next life. Whether one can succeed to the heritage of the Law depends entirely on one's faith. This is why he strictly warns in his conclusion, “Even embracing the Lotus Sutra would be useless without the heritage of faith.”

Notes

1. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

2. *The Essential Doctrines Transmitted within the Tendai Lotus School*.

3. Yin and yang are two universal principles of ancient Chinese philosophy. Yin is the negative, dark, and feminine principle; yang is the positive, bright, and masculine principle. Their interaction was thought to determine the destiny of all things.

4. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. In the thirteenth century the more distant planets were as yet unknown, and Earth was not known to be among the planets.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

7. Symbolic figures from popular religious tradition. One Chinese concept

viewed hell as a demonic court of law where the dead were tried for their evil deeds.

8. Gods said to dwell on one's shoulders from the time of birth and to record one's every act. They represent the law of cause and effect at work in one's life.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

10. The phrase “transcending all differences among themselves” could be rendered literally as “without any thought of self or other, this or that.” This is not a denial of individuality, but rather urges the bridging of the gaps between people that arise from self-centeredness.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, chap. 7.

The Opening of the Eyes



PART ONE

THESE are three categories of people that all human beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher, and the parent. There are three types of doctrines that are to be studied. They are Confucianism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism.

Confucianism describes the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and the Three Kings, whom it calls the Honorable Ones of Heaven. These men are depicted as the heads of the government officials and the bridges for the populace. In the age before the Three Sovereigns, people were no better than birds and beasts in that they did not even know who their own fathers were. But from the time of the Five Emperors on, they came to know who their fathers and mothers were, treating them according to the dictates of filial piety. Thus Ch'ung-hua¹ served his father with reverence, though the latter was stubborn and hardheaded. Also, the governor of P'ei,² after he became the emperor, continued to pay great respect to his father, the Venerable Sire. King Wu of the Chou dynasty made a wooden image of his father, the Earl of the West,³ and Ting Lan fashioned a statue of his mother.⁴ All of these men are models of filial piety.

The high minister Pi Kan, seeing that the Yin dynasty was on the path to

ruin, strongly admonished the ruler, though it cost him his head. Hung Yen, finding that his lord, Duke Yi, had been killed, cut open his own stomach and inserted the duke's liver in it before he died. These men may serve as models of loyalty.

Yin Shou was the teacher of Emperor Yao, Wu Ch'eng was the teacher of Emperor Shun, T'ai-kung Wang was the teacher of King Wen,⁵ and Lao Tzu was the teacher of Confucius.⁶ These teachers are known as the four sages. Even the Honorable Ones of Heaven bow their heads to them in respect, and all people press their palms together in reverence. Sages such as these have left behind writings that run to over three thousand volumes in such works as the *Three Records*, the *Five Canons*, and the *Three Histories*. But all these writings in the end do not advance beyond the three mysteries. The first of the three mysteries is Being. This is the principle taught by the Duke of Chou and others. The second mystery is Non-Being, which was expounded by Lao Tzu. The third is Both Being and Non-Being, which is the mystery set forth by Chuang Tzu. Mystery denotes darkness. Some say that, if we ask what existed before our ancestors were born, we will find that life was born out of the primal

force, while others declare that eminence and ignobility, joy and sorrow, right and wrong, gain and loss occur simply as part of the natural order.

These are theories that are cleverly argued, but that fail to take cognizance of either the past or the future. Mystery, as we have seen, means darkness or obscurity, and it is for this reason that it is called mystery. It is a theory that deals with matters only in terms of the present. Speaking in terms of the present, the Confucians declare that one should abide by the principles of benevolence and righteousness,⁷ and thereby insure safety to oneself and peace and order to the state. If one departs from these principles, they say, then one's family will be doomed and one's house overthrown. But although the wise and worthies who preach this doctrine are acclaimed as sages, in their lack of knowledge about the past they are like ordinary people unable to see their own backs, and in their understanding about the future they are like a blind man unable to see what lies before him.

If, in terms of the present, one brings order to one's family, carries out the demands of filial piety, and faithfully practices the five constant virtues, then one's associates will respect one, and one's name will become known throughout the country. If there is a worthy ruler on the throne, he will invite such a person to become his minister or his teacher, or may even cede his position to him. Heaven too will come to protect and watch over such a person. Such were the so-called Five Elders⁸ who gathered about and assisted King Wu of the Chou dynasty, or the twenty-eight generals of Emperor Kuang-wu of the Later Han, who were likened to the twenty-eight constellations of the sky. But since such persons know nothing about the past or the future, they cannot assist their parents, their sovereign, or their teacher

in making provisions for their future lives, and are therefore unable to repay the debt they owe them. Such persons are not true worthies or sages.

Confucius declared that there were no worthies or sages in his country, but that in the land to the west there was one named Buddha who was a sage.⁹ This indicates that non-Buddhist texts should be regarded as a first step toward Buddhist doctrine. Confucius first taught propriety and music¹⁰ so that, when the Buddhist scriptures were brought to China, the concepts of the precepts, meditation, and wisdom¹¹ could be more readily grasped. He taught the ideals of ruler and minister so that the distinction between superior and subordinate could be made clear, he taught the ideal of parenthood so that the importance of filial piety could be appreciated, and he explained the ideal of the teacher so that people might learn to follow.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "The propagation of Buddhism truly depends on this. First the teachings on propriety and music were set forth, and later the true way was introduced."¹² T'ien-t'ai states, "In the Golden Light Sutra it is recorded that 'all the good teachings that exist in the world derive from this sutra. To have a profound knowledge of this world is itself Buddhism.'¹³ In *Great Concentration and Insight* we read, "I [the Buddha] have dispatched the Three Sages¹⁴ to educate the land of China." In *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* we read: "The Practice of the Pure Law Sutra states that Bodhisattva Moonlight appeared in that land under the name Yen Hui, Bodhisattva Bright Pure appeared there as Confucius, and Bodhisattva Kashyapa appeared as Lao Tzu. Since the sutra is speaking from the point of view of India, it refers to China as 'that land.'"

Secondly, we come to the non-Buddhist teachings of India. In Brahmanism

we find the two deities: Shiva, who has three eyes and eight arms, and Vishnu. They are hailed as the loving father and compassionate mother of all living beings and are also called the Honorable Ones of Heaven and sovereigns. In addition, there are three men, Kapila, Uluka, and Rishabha,¹⁵ who are known as the three ascetics. These ascetics lived somewhere around eight hundred years before the time of the Buddha. The teachings expounded by the three ascetics are known as the four Vedas and number sixty thousand.

Later, in the time of the Buddha, there were the six non-Buddhist teachers who studied and transmitted these non-Buddhist scriptures and acted as tutors to the kings of the five regions of India. Their teachings split into ninety-five or ninety-six different lines, forming school after school. The banners of their pride were raised higher than the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought,¹⁶ and their dogmatic rigidity was harder than metal or stone. But in their skill and depth of understanding, they surpassed anything known in Confucianism. They were able to perceive two, three, or even seven existences, a period of eighty thousand kalpas, into the past, and they likewise knew what would happen eighty thousand kalpas in the future. As the fundamental principle of their doctrine, some of these schools taught that causes produce effects, others taught that causes do not produce effects, while still others taught that causes both do and do not produce effects. Such were the fundamental principles of these non-Buddhist schools.

The devout followers of the non-Buddhist teachings observe the five precepts and the ten good precepts, practice the kind of meditation that is still accompanied by outflows, and, ascending to the worlds of form and formlessness,¹⁷ believe they have attained nirvana when they reach the highest of the heavens.

But although they make their way upward bit by bit like an inchworm, they fall back from the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought, and descend instead into the three evil paths. Not a single one succeeds in remaining on the level of the heavens, though they believe that once having attained that level they will never descend from it. Each approves and practices the doctrines taught by his teacher and firmly abides by them. Thus some of them bathe three times a day in the Ganges even on cold winter days, while others pull out the hairs on their head, fling themselves against rocks, expose themselves to fire, burn their bodies, or go about stark naked. Again there are those who believe they can gain good fortune by sacrificing many horses, or who burn grasses and trees, or make obeisance to every tree they encounter.

Erroneous teachings such as these are too numerous to be counted. Their adherents pay as much respect and honor to the teachers who propound them as the heavenly deities pay to the lord Shakra, or the court ministers pay to the ruler of the empire. But not a single person who adheres to these ninety-five types of higher or lower non-Buddhist teachings ever escapes from the cycle of birth and death. Those who follow teachers of the better sort will, after two or three rebirths, fall into the evil paths, while those who follow evil teachers will fall into the evil paths in their very next rebirth.

And yet the main point of these non-Buddhist teachings constitutes an important means of entry into Buddhism. Some of them state, "A thousand years from now, the Buddha will appear in the world,"¹⁸ while others state, "A hundred years from now, the Buddha will appear in the world."¹⁹ The Nirvana Sutra remarks, "All of the non-Buddhist scriptures and writings in society are themselves Buddhist teach-

ings, not non-Buddhist teachings.” And in the Lotus Sutra it is written, “Before the multitude they seem possessed of the three poisons or manifest the signs of distorted views. My disciples in this manner use expedient means to save living beings.”²⁰

Thirdly, we come to Buddhism. One should know that the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment is a great leader for all living beings, a great eye for them, a great bridge, a great helmsman, a great field of good fortune. The four sages and three ascetics of the Confucian and Brahmanical scriptures and teachings are referred to as sages, but in fact they are no more than ordinary people who have not yet been able to eradicate the three categories of illusion. They are referred to as wise men, but in fact they are no more than infants who cannot understand the principles of cause and effect. With their teachings for a ship, could one ever cross over the sea of the sufferings of birth and death? With their teachings for a bridge, could one ever escape from the maze of the six paths? But the Buddha, our great teacher, has advanced beyond even transmigration with change and advance, let alone transmigration with differences and limitations.²¹ He has wiped out even the very root of fundamental darkness, let alone the illusions of thought and desire that are as minor as branches and leaves.

This Buddha, from the time of his enlightenment at the age of thirty until his passing at the age of eighty, expounded his sacred teachings for a period of fifty years. Each word, each phrase he spoke is true; not a sentence, not a verse is false. The words of the sages and worthies preserved in the scriptures and teachings of Confucianism and Brahmanism, as we have noted, are free of error, and the words match the spirit in which they were spoken. But how much more true is

this in the case of the Buddha, who had spoken not a false word for countless kalpas! In comparison to the non-Buddhist scriptures and teachings, the doctrines that he expounded in a period of fifty or so years represent the great vehicle, the true words of the great man.²² Everything that he preached, from the dawn of his enlightenment until the evening that he entered into nirvana, is none other than the truth.

However, when we examine the eighty thousand teachings of Buddhism expounded during a period of fifty or so years and recorded in scriptures, we find that they fall into various categories such as Hinayana and Mahayana, provisional and true sutras, exoteric and esoteric teachings, detailed and rough discourses, true words and false words, correct and incorrect views. But among these, the Lotus Sutra alone represents the correct teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, the truthful words of the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions. The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment designated a specific period of the preceding forty years and more, and defined the various sutras preached during that period, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as the sutras in which he had “not yet revealed the truth.”²³ He designated the Lotus Sutra preached during the eight years as the sutra in which he “now must reveal the truth.”²⁴ Thus Many Treasures Buddha came forth from beneath the earth to testify that “all that you have expounded [in the Lotus Sutra] is the truth,”²⁵ and the Buddhas who are emanations of Shakyamuni gathered together and extended their long tongues up to the Brahma heaven in testimony.²⁶ These words are perfectly clear, perfectly understandable, brighter than the sun on a clear day, or like the full moon at midnight. Look up to them and believe them, and

when you turn away, cherish them in your heart!

The Lotus Sutra contains two important teachings.²⁷ The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, and Three Treatises schools have never heard even so much as the name of these teachings. The Flower Garland and True Word schools, on the other hand, have surreptitiously stolen these doctrines and made them the heart of their own teachings. The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu were aware of it but did not bring it forth into the light. T'ien-t'ai Chih-che alone embraced it and kept it ever in mind.

The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life begins with the concept of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. But the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools speak only of eight worlds and know nothing of the entirety of the Ten Worlds, much less of the concept of their mutual possession. The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools derive their teachings from the Agama sutras. They are aware only of the six worlds and know nothing of the other four worlds. They declare that in all the ten directions there is only one Buddha, and do not even preach that there is any other Buddha in any of the ten directions. Of the principle that "all sentient beings alike possess the Buddha nature,"²⁸ they of course say nothing at all. They refuse to acknowledge that even a single person possesses the Buddha nature. In spite of this, one will sometimes hear members of the Precepts and Establishment of Truth schools declaring that there are Buddhas in the ten directions, or that all liv-

ing beings possess the Buddha nature. This is because the teachers of these schools who appeared after the passing away of the Buddha had stolen these Mahayana doctrines and incorporated them into the teachings of their own schools.

To illustrate, in the period before the appearance of Buddhism, the proponents of the non-Buddhist teachings in India were not so bound up in their own views. But after the appearance of the Buddha, when they had listened to and observed the Buddhist teachings, they became aware of the shortcomings of their own doctrines. They then conceived the clever idea of appropriating Buddhist teachings and incorporating them into their own doctrines, and as a result they fell into even deeper error than before. These are examples of the errors known as "appropriating Buddhism" or "plagiarizing Buddhism."²⁹

The same thing occurred in the case of non-Buddhist scriptures in China. Before Buddhism was brought to China, Confucianism and Taoism were rather naive and childish affairs. But in the Later Han, Buddhism was introduced to China and challenged the native doctrines. In time, as Buddhism became more popular, there were certain Buddhist priests who, because they had broken the precepts, were forced to return to secular life, or who elected to join forces with the native creeds. Through such men, Buddhist doctrines were stolen and incorporated into the Confucian and Taoist teachings.

In volume five of *Great Concentration and Insight* we read: "These days there are many devilish monks who break the precepts and return to lay life. Fearing that they will be punished for their action, they then go over to the side of the Taoists. Hoping to gain fame and profit, they speak extravagantly of the merits of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, usurping Buddhist concepts and reading them into their erro-

neous scriptures. They twist what is lofty and force it into a mean context; they destroy what is exalted and drag it down among the base, striving to put the two on an equal level."

On "*Great Concentration and Insight*" comments on this passage as follows: "Though they are monks, they destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Some break the precepts and return to lay life, as Wei Yüan-sung did. Then, as laymen, they work to destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Men of this kind steal and usurp the correct teachings of Buddhism and use them to supplement and bolster the erroneous writings. The passage on 'twisting what is lofty . . .' means that, adopting the outlook of the Taoists, they try to place Buddhism and Taoism on the same level, to make equals of the correct and the erroneous, though reason tells us that this could never be. Having once been followers of Buddhist teachings, they steal what is correct and use it to bolster what is incorrect. They twist the lofty eighty thousand teachings of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist canon and force them into the mean context of Lao Tzu's two chapters and five thousand words, using them to interpret the base and mistaken teachings of that text. This is what is meant by 'destroying what is exalted and dragging it down among the base.'" These comments should be carefully noted, for they explain the meaning of the foregoing description of events.

The same sort of thing happened within Buddhism itself. Buddhism was introduced to China during the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 58-75) of the Later Han dynasty, and in time established its supremacy over Confucian and Taoist teachings. But differences of opinion developed within Buddhism, resulting in the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north, which sprang up here and there like so many orchids or chrysanthemums. In the

time of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties, however, the Great Teacher Chih-che defeated these various schools and returned Buddhism once more to its primary objective of saving all living beings.

Later, the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics and True Word schools were introduced from India, and the Flower Garland school also made its appearance. Among these schools, the Dharma Characteristics school set itself up as an arch opponent of the T'ien-t'ai school, because their teachings are as contradictory to each other as fire is to water. However, when the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz'u-en closely examined the works of T'ien-t'ai, they came to realize that the views of their own school were in error. Although they did not openly repudiate their own school, it appears that in their hearts they switched their allegiance to the T'ien-t'ai teachings.

From the beginning the Flower Garland and True Word schools were both provisional schools based upon provisional sutras. But the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih [who introduced the esoteric True Word teachings to China] usurped the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and made it the core of the teachings of their school, adding the practice of mudras and mantras and convincing themselves that their teachings surpassed T'ien-t'ai's. As a result, students of Buddhism, unaware of the real facts, came to believe that the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life was to be found in the Mahavairochana Sutra that had been brought from India. Similarly, in the time of the Flower Garland patriarch Ch'eng-kuan, the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life was surreptitiously incorporated and used to interpret the

passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, "The mind is like a skilled painter." People were unaware that this was what had happened.

In the case of our own country of Japan, the Flower Garland and the other schools that comprised the six schools of Nara were introduced to Japan before the T'ien-t'ai (or Tendai) and True Word schools. The Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics schools argued and contended, as inimical to one another as water and fire. When the Great Teacher Dengyo appeared in Japan, he not only exposed the errors of the six schools, but also made it clear that the True Word school had stolen the principles of the Lotus Sutra as expounded by T'ien-t'ai and made them the heart of the teachings of its own school. The Great Teacher Dengyo set aside the various tenets propounded by the leaders of the other schools and, solely in the light of the sutras, attacked their views. As a result, he was able to defeat eight eminent priests of the six schools, then twelve priests, then fourteen, then over three hundred, as well as the Great Teacher Kobo. Soon there was not a single person in all Japan who did not acknowledge allegiance to the Tendai school, and the great temples of Nara, To-ji, and other temples throughout all the provinces became subordinate to the head temple of the Tendai school at Mount Hiei. The Great Teacher Dengyo also made it clear that the founders of the various other schools in China, by acknowledging allegiance to the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai, had escaped committing the error of slandering the correct teachings of Buddhism.

Later, however, conditions in the world declined, and people became increasingly shallow in wisdom. They no longer studied or understood the profound doctrines of the Tendai school, and the other schools became

more and more firmly attached to their own prejudiced views. Eventually, the six schools and the True Word school turned upon and attacked the Tendai school. The latter, growing ever weaker, in the end found that it was no match for the other schools. To aggravate the situation, absurd new schools such as Zen and Pure Land appeared and began attacking the Tendai school as well, and more and more of its lay supporters transferred their allegiance to these erroneous schools. In the end, even those priests of the Tendai school who were looked up to as men of eminent virtue all admitted defeat and lent their support to these schools. Not only Tendai but True Word and the six schools as well were forced to yield their lands and estates to these new misguided schools, and the correct teachings [of the Lotus Sutra] fell into oblivion. As a result, the Sun Goddess, the god Hachiman, the Mountain King of Mount Hiei, and the other great benevolent deities who guard the nation, no longer able to taste the flavor of the correct teaching, departed from the land. Demons came forward to take their place, and it became apparent that the nation was doomed.

Here, with my humble outlook, I have considered the differences between the teachings expounded by the Buddha Shakyamuni during the first forty and more years and those expounded in the Lotus Sutra during the last eight years of his life. Although both differ in many ways, contemporary scholars have already expressed the opinion, and it is my conviction as well, that the chief difference lies in the fact that the Lotus Sutra teaches that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, and that the Buddha Shakyamuni in reality attained enlightenment at an inconceivably distant time in the past.

When we examine the text of the Lotus Sutra, we see that it predicts that

Shariputra will become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright, Subhuti will become the Thus Come One Rare Form, Katyayana will become the Thus Come One Jambunada Gold Light, Maudgalyayana will become Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha, Purna will become the Thus Come One Law Bright, Ananda will become Mountain Sea Wisdom Unrestricted Power King Buddha, Rahula will become the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers, the five hundred and seven hundred voice-hearers will become Thus Come Ones Universal Brightness, the two thousand who have more to learn or do not have more to learn will become Thus Come Ones Jewel Sign, the nuns Mahaprajapati and Yashodhara will become Thus Come Ones Gladly Seen by All Living Beings and Endowed with a Thousand Ten Thousand Glowing Marks, respectively.

Thus, if we examine the Lotus Sutra, we will realize that these persons are worthy of great honor. But when we search through the scriptures expounded in the period previous to the Lotus Sutra, we find to our regret that the situation is far different.

The Buddha, the World-Honored One, is a man of truthful words. Therefore, he is designated the sage and the great man. In the non-Buddhist scriptures of India and China, there are also persons called worthies, sages, or heavenly ascetics because they speak words of truth. But because the Buddha surpasses all these, he is known as the great man.

[When he expounded the Lotus Sutra,] this great man said, "The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone."³⁰ He also said, "I have not yet revealed the truth,"³¹ "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth,"³² and "Hon-

estly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]."³³ Many Treasures Buddha added his testimony to the words of the Buddha, and the emanations of the Buddha put forth their tongues as a token of assent. Who, then, could possibly doubt that Shariputra will in the future become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright, or that the other predictions made by the Buddha will come true?

Nevertheless, all the sutras preceding the Lotus Sutra also represent the true words of the Buddha. The Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra states: "There are only two places where the Great Medicine King Tree, which is the wisdom of the Thus Come One, will not grow and bring benefit to the world. It will not grow in the vast void that is the deep pit into which persons of the two vehicles fall, or in the profoundly distorted and craving-filled waters wherein drowned beings unfit for Buddhahood who destroy their own roots of goodness."

This passage may be explained as follows. In the Snow Mountains, there is a huge tree that has numberless roots. It is called the Great Medicine King Tree and is the monarch of all the trees that grow in the land of Jambudvīpa. It measures 168,000 yojanas in height. All the other trees and plants of Jambudvīpa depend upon the roots, branches, flowers, and fruit of this tree to attain their own flowering and fruition. Therefore, this tree is employed as a metaphor for the Buddha nature, and the various other trees and plants stand for all living beings. But this great tree will not grow in a fiery pit or in the watery circle.³⁴ The fiery pit is used as a metaphor for the mind of persons of the two vehicles, and the watery circle is used as a metaphor for the mind of icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. The scripture is saying

that these two categories of beings will never attain Buddhahood.

The Great Collection Sutra states: "There are two types of persons who are destined to die and not to be reborn, and who in the end will never be able to understand or repay their obligations. One is the voice-hearer, and the other is the cause-awakened one. Suppose that a person falls into a deep pit. That person will be unable to benefit himself or to benefit others. The voice-hearer and the cause-awakened one are like this. They fall into the pit of emancipation and can benefit neither themselves nor others."

The more than three thousand volumes of Confucian and Taoist literature of China on the whole stress two principles, namely, filial piety and loyalty to the sovereign. But loyalty is nothing more than an extension of filial piety. Filial piety may be described as lofty. Though heaven is lofty, it is no loftier than the ideal of filial piety. Filial piety may be called deep. Though earth is deep, it is no deeper than filial piety. Sages and worthies are the product of filial piety. It goes without saying, therefore, that persons who study the teachings of Buddhism must also [observe the ideal of filial piety and] understand and repay their obligations. The disciples of the Buddha must without fail understand the four debts of gratitude³⁵ and know how to repay them.

In addition, Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, and the other disciples who were persons of the two vehicles carefully observed the two hundred and fifty precepts and the three thousand rules of conduct, mastered the three types of meditation—known as flavor meditation, pure meditation, and free-of-outflows meditation—and the Agama sutras, and freed themselves from the illusions of thought and desire in the threefold world. They must therefore have been models in the under-

standing and repaying of obligations.

And yet the World-Honored One declared that they were men who did not understand obligation. He said this because, when a man leaves his parents and home and becomes a monk, he should always have as his goal the salvation of his father and mother. But these men of the two vehicles, although they thought they had attained emancipation, did nothing to benefit others. And even if they had done a certain amount to benefit others, they had led their parents to a path whereby they could never attain Buddhahood. Thus, contrary to what one might expect, they became known as men who did not understand their obligations.

In the Vimalakirti Sutra we read: "Vimalakirti once more questioned Manjushri, saying, 'What are the seeds of Buddhahood?' Manjushri replied, 'All the delusions and defilements are the seeds of Buddhahood. Even though a person commits the five cardinal sins and is condemned to the hell of incessant suffering, he is still capable of conceiving the great desire for the way.'"

The same sutra also says: "Good man, let me give you a metaphor. The plains and highlands will never bring forth the stems and blossoms of the blue lotus or the water lily. But the muddy fields that are low-lying and damp—that is where you will find these flowers growing."

It also says: "One who has already become an arhat and achieved the level of truth that goes with arhatship can never conceive the desire for the way and gain Buddhahood. He is like a man who has destroyed the five sense organs and therefore can never again enjoy the five delights that go with them."

The point of this sutra is that the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness can become the seeds of Buddhahood, and the five cardinal sins such as the killing of one's father can like-

wise become the seeds of Buddhahood. Even if the high plains should bring forth blue lotus flowers, the persons of the two vehicles would never attain Buddhahood. The text is saying that, when the goodness of the persons of the two vehicles is compared with the evils of ordinary people, it will be found that, though the evils of ordinary people can lead to Buddhahood, the goodness of the persons of the two vehicles never can. The various Hinayana sutras censure evil and praise good. But this sutra, the Vimalakirti, condemns the goodness of persons of the two vehicles and praises the evils of ordinary people. It would almost appear that it is not a Buddhist scripture at all, but rather the teachings of some non-Buddhist school. But the point is that it wants to make absolutely clear that the persons of the two vehicles can never become Buddhas.

The Correct and Equal Dharani Sutra states: "Manjushri said to Shariputra, 'Can a withered tree put forth new blossoms? Can a mountain stream turn and flow back to its source? Can a shattered rock join itself together again? Can a scorched seed send out sprouts?' Shariputra replied, 'No.' Manjushri said, 'If these things are impossible, then why do you come with joy in your heart and ask me if Buddhahood has been predicted for you in the future?'"

The passage means that, just as a withered tree puts forth no blossoms, a mountain stream never flows backward, a shattered rock cannot be joined, and a scorched seed cannot sprout, so the persons of the two vehicles can never attain Buddhahood. In their case the seeds of Buddhahood have been scorched.

The Larger Wisdom Sutra reads: "All you sons of gods, if you have not yet conceived a desire for perfect enlightenment, now is the time to do so. If you should once enter the realm of the enlightenment of voice-hearers,

you would no longer be capable of conceiving such a desire for perfect enlightenment. Why is this? Because you would be outside the world of birth and death, which itself would constitute an obstacle." This passage indicates that the Buddha³⁶ is not pleased with the persons of the two vehicles because they do not conceive the desire for perfect enlightenment, but that he is pleased with the heavenly beings because they do conceive such a desire.

The Shurangama Sutra states: "If a person who has committed the five cardinal sins should hear of this shurangama meditation and should conceive the desire for supreme enlightenment, then he would still be capable of attaining Buddhahood. But, World-Honored One, an arhat who has put an end to outflows is like a broken vessel, and will never be capable of receiving and upholding this meditation."³⁷

The Vimalakirti Sutra says, "Those who give alms to you are cultivating for themselves no field of good fortune. Those who give alms to you will fall into the three evil paths." This passage means that the human and heavenly beings who give alms to the sage monks such as Mahakashyapa and Shariputra will invariably fall into the three evil paths. Sage monks such as these, one would suppose, must be the eyes of the human and heavenly beings and the leaders of all living beings, second only to the Buddha himself. It must have been very much against common expectation that the Buddha spoke out time and again against such men before the great assemblies of human and heavenly beings, as we have seen him do. Was he really trying to reprimand his own disciples to death? In addition, he employed countless different metaphors in expressing his condemnation of the persons of the two vehicles, calling them donkey's milk as compared to cow's milk, clay vessels as compared to vessels of gold, or the

glimmer of a firefly as compared to the light of the sun.

He did not speak of this in one word or two, in one day or two, in one month or two, in one year or two, or in one sutra or two, but over a period of more than forty years, in countless sutras, addressing himself to great assemblies of countless persons, condemning the persons of the two vehicles without a single extenuating word. Thus everyone learned that his condemnation was true. Heaven learned it and earth learned it. Not only one or two, but hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of people; the heavenly beings, dragon gods, and the asuras of the threefold world; all the human and heavenly beings, persons of the two vehicles, and great bodhisattvas gathered in assembly from the five regions of India, the four continents, the six heavens of the world of desire, the worlds of form and formlessness, and the worlds of the ten directions, and learned and heard of it. Then all these beings returned to their own lands, explaining the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha of the saha world one by one to the inhabitants of their respective lands, so that there was not a single being in the countless worlds of the ten directions who did not understand that Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, and those like them would never attain Buddhahood, and that it was wrong to give them alms and support.

In the Lotus Sutra preached during the last eight years of his life, however, the Buddha suddenly regretted and retracted his earlier position and instead taught that persons of the two vehicles can in fact attain Buddhahood. Could the human and heavenly beings gathered in the great assembly to listen to him be expected to believe this? Would they not rather reject it and in addition begin to entertain doubts about all the sutras preached in this and earlier periods? They would wonder if all the

teachings put forward in the entire fifty years of the Buddha's preaching were not, in fact, false and erroneous doctrines.

To be sure, there is a sutra passage that says, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."³⁸ Nevertheless, one might wonder if the heavenly devil had not taken on the Buddha's form and preached this sutra of the last eight years, the Lotus. In the sutra, however, the Buddha describes quite specifically how his disciples of the two vehicles will attain Buddhahood and reveals the kalpas and the lands in which they will appear, the names they will bear, and the disciples they will teach. Thus it becomes apparent that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, is saying two different things. This clearly means that he is contradicting his own words. This is why the Brahmanists laugh at the Buddha and call him the great prevaricator.

But just as the human and heavenly beings in the great assembly were feeling downcast in the face of this contradiction, the Thus Come One Many Treasures, who dwells in the World of Treasure Purity in the east, appeared in a huge tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures and measuring five hundred yojanas high and two hundred and fifty yojanas wide. The human and heavenly beings in the great assembly accused Shakyamuni Buddha of contradicting his own words, and although the Buddha answered in one way or another, he was in considerable embarrassment, being unable to dispel their doubts, when the treasure tower emerged out of the ground before him and ascended into the sky. It came forth like the full moon rising from behind the eastern mountain in the dark of night. The tower of seven kinds of treasures ascended into the sky, clinging neither to the earth nor to the roof of the heavens, but hanging in midair, and from within the tower a

pure and far-reaching voice issued, speaking words of testimony. [As the Lotus Sutra describes it:] “At that time a loud voice issued from the treasure tower, speaking words of praise: ‘Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth!’”³⁹

[Elsewhere the Lotus Sutra says:] “At that time the World-Honored One, in the presence of Manjushri and the other immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who from of old had dwelled in the saha world, as well as . . . human and nonhuman beings—before all these he displayed his great supernatural powers. He extended his long broad tongue upward till it reached the Brahma heaven, and from all his pores [he emitted immeasurable, countless beams of light that illuminated] all the worlds in the ten directions.

“The other Buddhas, seated on lion seats underneath the numerous jeweled trees, did likewise, extending their long broad tongues and emitting immeasurable beams of light.”⁴⁰

And it also says: “Shakyamuni Buddha caused the Buddhas who were emanations of his body and had come from the ten directions to return each one to his original land, saying, [Each of these Buddhas may proceed at his own pleasure.] The tower of Many Treasures Buddha may also return to its former position.”⁴¹

In the past, when the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment first attained the way,⁴² Buddhas appeared in the ten directions to counsel and encourage him, and various great bodhisattvas were dispatched to him. When

he preached the Wisdom Sutra, he covered the major world system with his long tongue, and a thousand Buddhas appeared in the ten directions. When he preached the Golden Light Sutra, the four Buddhas⁴³ appeared in the four directions, and when he preached the Amida Sutra, the Buddhas of the six directions⁴⁴ covered the major world system with their tongues. And when he preached the Great Collection Sutra, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions gathered in the Great Treasure Chamber.

But when we compare the auspicious signs that accompanied these sutras with those accompanying the Lotus Sutra, we find that they are like a yellow stone compared to gold, a white cloud to a white mountain, ice to a silver mirror, or the color black to the color blue—the bleary-eyed, the squint-eyed, the one-eyed, and the wrong-viewed will be likely to confuse them.

Since the Flower Garland Sutra was the first sutra to be preached, there were no previous words of the Buddha for it to contradict, and so it naturally raised no doubts. In the case of the Great Collection Sutra, the Larger Wisdom Sutra, the Golden Light Sutra, and the Amida Sutra, the Buddha, in order to censure the ideal of the two vehicles demonstrated in the various Hinayana sutras, described the pure lands of the ten directions, and thereby inspired ordinary people and bodhisattvas to aspire to attain them. Thus he caused the persons of the two vehicles to feel confounded and vexed.

Again, because there are certain differences between the Hinayana sutras and the Mahayana sutras mentioned above, we find that in some cases Buddhas appeared in the ten directions, in others great bodhisattvas were dispatched from the ten directions, or it was made clear that the particular sutra was expounded in the worlds of the ten directions, or that various Buddhas

came from the ten directions to meet in assembly. In some cases, it was said that Shakyamuni Buddha covered the major world system with his tongue, while in others it was the various Buddhas who put forth their tongues. All of these statements are intended to combat the view expounded in the Hinayana sutras that in the worlds of the ten directions there is only one Buddha.

But in the case of the Lotus Sutra, it differs so greatly from the previous Mahayana sutras that Shariputra and the other voice-hearers, the great bodhisattvas, and the various human and heavenly beings, when they heard the Buddha preach it, were led to think, "Is this not a devil pretending to be the Buddha?"⁴⁵ And yet those bleary-eyed men of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, True Word, and Nembutsu schools all seem to think that their own particular sutras are exactly the same as the Lotus Sutra. That is what I call wretched perception indeed!

While the Buddha was still in this world, there were undoubtedly those who set aside the sutras he had taught during the first forty and more years of his teaching life and embraced the Lotus Sutra. But after he passed away, it must have been difficult to find persons who would open and read this sutra and accept its teachings. To begin with, the sutras preached earlier run to countless words, while the Lotus Sutra is limited in length. The earlier sutras are numerous, but the Lotus Sutra is no more than a single work. The earlier sutras were preached over a period of many years, but the Lotus Sutra was preached in a mere eight years.

Moreover, the Buddha, as we have seen, has been called the great liar, and therefore one can hardly be expected to believe his words. If one makes a great effort to believe the unbelievable, one can perhaps bring oneself to be-

lieve in the earlier sutras but not in the Lotus Sutra. The people today appear to believe in the Lotus Sutra, but in fact they do not really believe in it. The reason is this: When someone assures them that the Lotus Sutra is the same as the Mahavairochana Sutra, or that it is the same as the Flower Garland Sutra or the Amida Sutra, they are pleased and place their faith in this person. If someone tells them that the Lotus Sutra is completely different from all the other sutras, they will not listen to him, or even if they should listen, they would not think that the person was really speaking the truth.

Nichiren has this to say. It is now over seven hundred years since Buddhism was introduced to Japan. During that time, only the Great Teacher Dengyo truly understood the Lotus Sutra, but no one is willing to heed this fact that Nichiren has been teaching. It is just as the Lotus Sutra says: "If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed!"⁴⁶

The powerful assertions I am putting forward are in complete accord with the sutra itself. But as the Nirvana Sutra, which is intended to propagate the Lotus Sutra, states: in the defiled times of the latter age, those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions, while those who uphold the correct teaching will be as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. What do you think of that? Would you say that the people of Japan can be squeezed into the space of a fingernail? Would you say that I, Nichiren, occupy the ten directions? Consider the matter carefully.

In the reign of a worthy ruler, what

is reasonable will prevail, but when a foolish ruler reigns, then what is unreasonable will have supremacy. One should understand that, in similar fashion, when a sage is in the world, then the true significance of the Lotus Sutra will become apparent.

In my remarks here, I have been contrasting the early sutras with the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and it would appear as though the early sutras are in a position to prevail. But if they really win out over the theoretical teaching, then it means that Shariputra and the other persons of the two vehicles will never be able to attain Buddhahood. That would surely be lamentable!

I turn now to the second important teaching of the Lotus Sutra.⁴⁷ Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was born in the kalpa of continuance, in the ninth period of decrease, when the span of human life measured a hundred years. He was the grandson of King Simhahanu and the son and heir of King Shuddhodana. As a boy he was known as Crown Prince Siddhartha, or the Bodhisattva All Goals Achieved. At the age of nineteen he left his family, and at thirty he attained enlightenment. At his place of enlightenment, the World-Honored One first revealed the ceremony of Vairochana Buddha of the Lotus Treasury World, a Land of Actual Reward, and expounded the ten mysteries, the six forms, the perfect interfusion of all things, and the subtle and wonderful great teaching for immediate attainment of the ultimate fruit. At that time the Buddhas of the ten directions appeared on the scene, and all the bodhisattvas gathered about like clouds. In view of the place where Shakyamuni preached, the capacity of the listeners, the presence of the Buddhas, and the fact that it was the first sermon, is there any reason the Buddha could have concealed or held back the great doctrine? Therefore, the Flower

Garland Sutra says, "He displayed his power freely and expounded a sutra of perfection and fullness."

The work, which consists of sixty volumes, is indeed a sutra of perfection and fullness in its every character and stroke. It may be compared to the wish-granting jewel that, though it is a single jewel, is the equal of countless such jewels. For the single jewel can rain down ten thousand treasures, which are equal to the treasures brought forth by ten thousand jewels. In the same way, one character of the Flower Garland Sutra is equal to ten thousand characters. The passage that expounds the identity of "the mind, the Buddha, and all living beings" represents the core not only of Flower Garland teachings, but of the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, True Word, and Tendai schools as well.

In such a superb sutra, how could there be any truths that are hidden from the hearer? And yet we find the sutra declaring that persons of the two vehicles and icchantikas can never attain Buddhahood. Here is the flaw in the jewel. Moreover, in three places the sutra speaks of Shakyamuni Buddha as attaining enlightenment for the first time in this world. It thus hides the fact that Shakyamuni Buddha actually attained enlightenment in the remote past, as revealed in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, the Flower Garland Sutra is in fact a chipped jewel, a moon veiled in clouds, a sun in eclipse. A strange thing indeed!

The sutras of the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, such as the Mahavairochana Sutra, since they were expounded by the Buddha, are splendid works, and yet they cannot begin to compare with the Flower Garland Sutra. Therefore, one could hardly expect that doctrines concealed even in the Flower Garland Sutra

would be revealed in these sutras. Thus we find that the Miscellaneous Agama Sutra speaks of Shakyamuni Buddha as having attained the way for the first time in his present existence; the Great Collection Sutra says, "It is sixteen years since the Thus Come One first attained the way"; and the Vimalakirti Sutra states, "For the first time the Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree and through his might conquered the devil." Likewise, the Mahavairochana Sutra describes the Buddha's enlightenment as having taken place "long ago when I sat in the place of meditation," and the Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra refers to it as an event of "twenty-nine years" in the past.

It is hardly surprising that these sutras should speak in this fashion. But there is something that is an astonishment to both the ear and the eye. This is the fact that the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra also speaks in the same way. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha denies the great doctrines, such as the Flower Garland Sutra concept of the phenomenal world as created by the mind alone, the concept of the ocean-imprint meditation set forth in the sutras of the Correct and Equal period, and the Wisdom Sutra concept of mutual identification and nonduality, when he declares, "I have not yet revealed the truth." The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra regards the practices taught in the previous sutras as practices that require many kalpas to complete. However, the same sutra says, "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation for six years under the bodhi tree and was able to gain supreme perfect enlightenment," using the same type of language as the Flower Garland Sutra, the first sutra Shakyamuni preached after his enlightenment, when it talks of the Buddha having attained enlightenment for the first time in this world.

Strange as this may seem, we may

suppose that, since the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra is intended to serve as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, it deliberately refrains from speaking about doctrines to be revealed in the Lotus Sutra itself. But when we turn to the Lotus Sutra, we find that, in the sections where the Buddha discusses in both concise and expanded form the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, he says, "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas,"⁴⁸ "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines [and now must reveal the truth]," and "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]." Moreover, Many Treasures Buddha testifies to the verity of the eight chapters⁴⁹ of the theoretical teaching, declaring that these are all true. We would suppose, therefore, that in them there would be nothing held back or concealed. Nevertheless, the Buddha hides the fact that he attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, for he says, "I first sat in the place of meditation and gazed at the tree and walked around it."⁵⁰ This is surely the most astounding fact of all.

In the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, a multitude of bodhisattvas who had not been seen previously in the more than forty years of the Buddha's preaching life suddenly appear, and the Buddha says, "I taught and converted them, and caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way." Bodhisattva Maitreya, puzzled by this announcement, says: "[World-Honored One], when the Thus Come One was crown prince, you left the palace of the Shakyas and sat in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya, and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. Barely forty years or more have passed since then. World-Honored One, how in that short time could you have accom-

plished so much work as a Buddha?"

In order to dispel this doubt and puzzlement, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, then preaches the "Life Span" chapter. Referring first to the version of the events presented in the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, he says: "In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment." But then, in order to dispel their doubts, he says, "But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood."

All the other sutras such as the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana not only conceal the fact that people of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, but they also fail to make clear that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. These sutras have two flaws. First, because they teach that the Ten Worlds are separate from one another, they fail to move beyond the provisional doctrines and to reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life as it is expounded in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Second, because they teach that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in this world, referring only to his provisional aspect, they fail to reveal the fact stressed in the essential teaching that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago. These two great doctrines are the core of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, and the very heart and marrow of all the sutras.

The "Expedient Means" chapter, which belongs to the theoretical teaching, expounds the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of

life, making clear that persons of the two vehicles can achieve Buddhahood. It thus eliminates one of the two errors found in the earlier sutras. But it nevertheless retains the provisional aspect, and fails to reveal the eternal aspect, of the Buddha's enlightenment. Thus the true doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life remains unclear, and the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles is not properly affirmed. Such teachings are like the moon seen in the water, or rootless plants that drift on the waves.

When we come to the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, then the belief that Shakyamuni first obtained Buddhahood during his present lifetime is demolished, and the effects of the four teachings are likewise demolished. When the effects of the four teachings are demolished, the causes⁵¹ of the four teachings are likewise demolished. Thus the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds as expounded in the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are wiped out, and the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds⁵² in the essential teaching are revealed. This is the doctrine of original cause and original effect. It reveals that the nine worlds are all present in beginningless Buddhahood and that Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds. This is the true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the true hundred worlds and thousand factors, the true three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

When we consider the matter in this light, we can see that Vairochana Buddha seated on the lotus pedestal of the ten directions as described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the little Shakyamuni described in the Agama sutras,⁵³ and the provisional Buddhas described in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods such as the Golden Light, Amida, and Mahavairochana sutras are no more than reflections of

the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter. They are like fleeting reflections of the moon that float on the surfaces of various large and small bodies of water. The scholars of the various schools of Buddhism, confused as to [the nature of the Buddhas of] their own school and, more fundamentally, ignorant of [the Buddha of] the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, mistake the reflection in the water for the actual moon, some of them entering the water and trying to grasp it in their hands, others attempting to snare it with a rope. As T'ien-t'ai says, "They know nothing of the moon in the sky, but gaze only at the moon in the pond."⁵⁴

Having pondered this, I am of the opinion that, though the Lotus Sutra teaches that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, this view tends to be overshadowed by the opposite view propounded in the sutras that precede the Lotus. How much more so is this the case with the doctrine that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past! For in this case, it is not the Lotus Sutra as a whole that stands in contradiction to the earlier sutras, but the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra that stands in contradiction both to the earlier sutras and to the first fourteen chapters of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus. Moreover, of the latter fourteen chapters of the essential teaching, all of them with the exception of the "Emerging from the Earth" and "Life Span" chapters retain the view that the Buddha first attained enlightenment in his present lifetime.

The forty volumes of the Mahāparinirvāna Sutra, preached by the Buddha in the grove of sal trees just before his passing, as well as the other Mahāyāna sutras except the Lotus Sutra, have not one single word [to say about the fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past]. They speak of the Dharma body of the Buddha as being without beginning

and without end, but they do not reveal the true nature of the other two bodies, the reward body and the manifested body.⁵⁵ How, then, can we expect people to cast aside the vast body of writings represented by the earlier Mahāyāna sutras, the Nirvāna Sutra, and the major portion of the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and put all their faith simply in the two chapters "Emerging from the Earth" and "Life Span"?

If we examine the origins of the school called Dharma Characteristics, we find that, nine hundred years after the Buddha passed away in India, there was a great scholar called Bodhisattva Asanga. At night, he ascended to the inner court of the Tushita heaven, where he came before Bodhisattva Maitreya and resolved his doubts concerning the sacred teachings propounded by the Buddha during his lifetime. In the daytime, he worked to propagate the Dharma Characteristics doctrines in the state of Ayodhya.⁵⁶ Among his disciples were various great scholars such as Vasubandhu, Dharmapala, Nanda, and Shīlabhadra.⁵⁷ The great ruler, King Śīladitya, bowed his head in reverence, and the people of all the five regions of India abandoned their arrogance and declared themselves followers of his teaching.

The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang of China journeyed to India, spending seventeen years visiting 130 or more Indian states. He rejected all the other teachings of Buddhism, but brought back the doctrines of the Dharma Characteristics school to China and presented them to the worthy sovereign, Emperor T'ai-tsung. Hsüan-tsang numbered among his disciples such men as Shen-fang, Chia-shang, P'u-kuang, and K'uei-chi. He preached his teachings in Ta-tz'u-en-ssu temple and spread them through more than 360 districts of China.

In the reign of Emperor Kotoku, the thirty-seventh sovereign of Japan, Doji,

Dosho, and other priests went to China and studied these doctrines, and on their return preached them at Yamashina-dera temple.⁵⁸ In this way, the Dharma Characteristics school was regarded as the leading school of Buddhism throughout all three lands of India, China, and Japan.

According to this school, in all the teachings of the Buddha, from the Flower Garland Sutra, the earliest of the sutras, to the Lotus and Nirvana sutras, which were preached last, it is laid down that those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment and those predestined for the two vehicles can never become Buddhas. The Buddha, they say, never contradicts himself. Therefore, if he has once declared that these people will never be able to attain Buddhahood, then, even should the sun and moon fall to the earth or the great earth itself turn upside down, that declaration can never be altered. In the earlier sutras, those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment and those predestined for the two vehicles were said to be incapable of attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, they conclude, even in the Lotus or Nirvana Sutra it is never said that they can in fact do so.

“Close your eyes and consider the matter,” the members of the Dharma Characteristics school would say. “If it had in fact been plainly stated in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras that those who possess no innate nature of enlightenment or those predestined for the two vehicles can actually attain Buddhahood, then why would the great scholars such as Asanga and Vasubandhu or the Tripitaka masters and teachers such as Hsüan-tsang and Tz’u-en not have taken notice of this fact? Why did they not mention it in their own writings? Why did they not accept the belief and transmit it to later ages? Why did Asanga not question Bodhisattva Maitreya about it? People like you,

Nichiren, claim that you are basing your assertions on the text of the Lotus Sutra, but in fact you are simply accepting the biased views of men like T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo and interpreting the text of the sutra in the light of their teachings. Therefore, you claim that the Lotus Sutra is as different from the earlier sutras as fire from water.”

Again, there are the Flower Garland and True Word schools, which are of an incomparably higher level than the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools. They claim that the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles may attain Buddhahood and that the Buddha achieved enlightenment in the remote past are to be found not only in the Lotus Sutra, but in the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras as well.

According to these schools, the Flower Garland patriarchs Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch’eng-kuan, and the True Word masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung were far more eminent than T’ien-t’ai or Dengyo. Moreover, they claim that Shan-wu-wei’s teachings descend in an unbroken line from the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. How could men like this, who are manifestations of the Buddha, possibly be mistaken? they ask. They point to the passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, “Some people perceive that immeasurable numbers of kalpas have passed since Shakyamuni attained the Buddha way,” or the passage in the Mahavairochana Sutra that says, “I [Mahavairochana Buddha] am the source and beginning of all things.” Why, they ask, would anyone claim that it is the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra alone that expounds the doctrine that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment long ago? Persons who do so are like frogs at the bottom of a well who have never seen the great sea, or like mountain dwellers who know nothing of the capital. “You

people look only at the 'Life Span' chapter and know nothing of the Flower Garland, the Mahavairochana, and the other sutras! Do you suppose that, in India and China, and in Silla and Paekche [in Korea], people believe that these two doctrines are limited to the Lotus Sutra alone?"

As we have seen, the Lotus Sutra, which was preached over a period of eight years, is quite different from the earlier sutras preached over a period of some forty years. If one had to choose between the two, one ought by rights to choose the Lotus Sutra that was preached later, and yet the earlier sutras in many ways appear to carry greater weight.

While the Buddha was still alive, there would have been good reasons for choosing the Lotus Sutra. But in the ages since his passing, the teachers and scholars have in most cases shown a preference for the earlier sutras. Not only is the Lotus Sutra itself difficult to believe, but in addition, with the coming of the latter age, sages and worthies gradually disappear from the scene, and deluded people increase in number. People are prone to make mistakes even in shallow, worldly affairs, so how much more likely are they to be mistaken about the profound Buddhist teachings that lead to enlightenment?

Vatsa and Vaipulya⁵⁹ were keen and perceptive, but still they confused the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras. Vimālamitra and Madhava were very clever by nature, but they could not distinguish properly between the provisional teachings and the true teaching. These men lived during the thousand-year period known as the Former Day of the Law, not far removed in time from the Buddha himself, and in the same country of India, and yet they fell into error, as we have seen. How much more likely, therefore, that the people of China and Japan should do so, since these countries are far removed from India and

speak different languages from it?

Now human beings have grown increasingly dull by nature, their life span diminishes steadily,⁶⁰ and the poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness continue to multiply. Many ages have passed since the Buddha's demise, and the Buddhist scriptures are all misunderstood. Who these days has the wisdom to interpret them correctly?

Therefore, the Buddha predicted in the Nirvana Sutra that in the Latter Day of the Law those who abide by the correct teaching will be as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail, while those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions.

In the Decline of the Law Sutra we find a passage stating that those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, but those who abide by the correct teaching will be no more than one or two pebbles. Though five hundred or a thousand years go by, it will be difficult to find even a single person who believes in the correct teaching. Those who fall into the evil paths because of secular crimes will be as insignificant in number as the specks of dirt placed on a fingernail, but those who do so because of violations of the Buddhist teachings will be equal in number to the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions. More monks than laymen, and more nuns than laywomen, will fall into the evil paths.

Here Nichiren considers as follows: Already over two hundred years have passed since the world entered the Latter Day of the Law. I was born in a remote land, and moreover, I am a person of low station and a priest of humble learning. While being born again and again amid the six paths, I have perhaps at times been born as a great ruler in the human or heavenly world, and have bent the multitudes

to my will as a great wind bends the branches of small trees. And yet at such times I was not able to become a Buddha.

I studied the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras, beginning as an ordinary practitioner with no understanding at all and gradually moving upward to the position of a great bodhisattva. For one kalpa, two kalpas, countless kalpas I devoted myself to the practices of the bodhisattva, until I almost reached the stage of non-regression. And yet I was dragged down by the powerful and overwhelming influences of evil, and I never attained Buddhahood. I do not know whether I was among the third group⁶¹ who failed to take faith when the sons of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra and again failed to attain Buddhahood during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha, or whether I faltered and fell away from the teachings that I heard numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago and thus have been reborn in this age.

While one is practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, one may surmount all kinds of difficulties occasioned by the evil forces of worldly life, or by the persecutions of rulers, non-Buddhists, or the followers of the Hinayana sutras. And yet one may encounter someone like Tao-ch'ò, Shan-tao, or Honen, priests who seemed thoroughly conversant with the teachings of the provisional and the true Mahayana sutras but who were in fact possessed by devils. Such men seem to praise the Lotus Sutra most forcefully, but in fact they belittle the people's capacity to understand it, claiming that its principles are very profound but human understanding is slight.⁶² They mislead others by saying that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood" through that sutra, or that "not even one person in a thousand"⁶³ can be saved by it. Thus, over a period of countless life-

times, people are deceived as often as there are sands in the Ganges, until they [abandon their faith in the Lotus Sutra and] descend to the teachings of the provisional Mahayana sutras, abandon these and descend to the teachings of the Hinayana sutras, and eventually abandon even these and descend to the teachings and scriptures of the non-Buddhist doctrines. I understand all too well how, in the end, people have come in this way to fall into the evil paths.

I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this. But if I utter so much as a word concerning it, then parents, brothers, and teachers will surely censure me, and the ruler of the nation will take steps against me.⁶⁴ On the other hand, I am fully aware that if I do not speak out I will be lacking in compassion. I have considered which course to take in the light of the teachings of the Lotus and Nirvana sutras. If I remain silent, I may escape persecutions in this lifetime, but in my next life I will most certainly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose.

If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out. While thinking this over, I recalled the teachings of the "Treasure Tower" chapter on the six difficult and nine easy acts. Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline;⁶⁵ and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. But such acts are not diffi-

cult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts.

It is already over twenty years since I began proclaiming my doctrines. Day after day, month after month, year after year I have been subjected to repeated persecutions. Minor persecutions and annoyances are too numerous even to be counted, but the major persecutions number four. Among the four, twice I have been subjected to persecutions by the rulers of the country.⁶⁶ The most recent one has come near to costing me my life. In addition, my disciples, my lay supporters, and even those who have merely listened to my teachings have been subjected to severe punishment and treated as though they were guilty of treason.

In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra we read, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁶⁷ The second volume states, "If this person [should slander a sutra such as this], or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . ."⁶⁸ And the fifth volume says, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."⁶⁹ It also states, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us,"⁷⁰ and "They will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders, [as well as the other monks], slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, 'These are men of perverted views [who preach non-Buddhist doctrines]!'" It is also stated in the same volume, "Again and again we will be banished,"⁷¹ and [in the seventh vol-

ume] "Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him."⁷²

The Nirvana Sutra records: "At that time there were innumerable non-Buddhists who plotted together and went as a group to Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha, and said: 'At present there is a man of incomparable wickedness, a monk called Gautama. . . . All sorts of evil people, hoping to gain profit and alms, have flocked to him and become his followers. These people do not practice goodness, but instead use the power of spells and magic to win over men like Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, and Maudgalyayana.'"

T'ien-t'ai says, "It will be much worse in the future because the principles [of the Lotus Sutra] are so hard to teach."⁷³ Miao-lo says, "'Hatred' refers to those who have not yet freed themselves from impediments, and 'jealousy,' to those who take no delight in listening to the doctrine."⁷⁴ The teachers of the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north in China, as well as the countless other scholars of China, all regarded T'ien-t'ai with resentment and animosity. Thus Tokuitsu said, "See here, Chih-i, whose disciple are you? With a tongue less than three inches long you slander the teachings that come from the Buddha's long broad tongue that can cover even his face!"⁷⁵

In *Tung-ch'un* we read: "Question: While the Buddha was in the world, there were many who were resentful and jealous. But in the age after his passing, when someone preaches this [Lotus] sutra, why do so many oppose that person? Answer: It is said that good medicine tastes bitter. This sutra, which is like good medicine, dispels attachments to the five vehicles and establishes the one ultimate principle. It reproaches those in the ranks of ordinary beings and censures those in the ranks of sagehood, denies [provisional]

Mahayana and refutes Hinayana. It speaks of the heavenly devils as poisonous insects and calls non-Buddhists⁷⁶ demons. It censures those who cling to Hinayana teachings, calling them mean and impoverished, and it dismisses bodhisattvas as beginners in learning. For this reason, heavenly devils hate to listen to it, non-Buddhists find their ears offended, persons of the two vehicles are dumbfounded, and bodhisattvas flee in terror. That is why all these types of people try to make hindrances [for a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra]. The Buddha was not speaking nonsense when he declared that hatred and jealousy would abound.”

A Clarification of the Precepts states: “The superintendents of priests [in the capital of Nara] say in their memorial to the throne: ‘Just as in a land west of China there was a Brahman named Demon Eloquence, so now in this eastern realm of Japan there is a shaved monk who spits out crafty words. Evil spirits invisibly invite such people to deceive and mislead the world.’ I [Dengyo] reply to these charges by saying: ‘Just as in the Ch’i dynasty of China we heard of the arrogant superintendent of priests, Hui-kuang, so now in our own country we see these six superintendents of priests.’⁷⁷ How true was [the Buddha’s prediction in] the Lotus Sutra that the situation would be much worse after his passing.’ ”

The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra states: “Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T’ang and to the west of Katsu. As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, ‘Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more

will this be so after his passing?’ There is good reason for this statement.”

When a little boy is given moxibustion treatment, he will invariably resent his mother; when a seriously ill person is given good medicine, he will complain without fail about its bitterness. And we meet with similar complaints about the Lotus Sutra, even in the lifetime of the Buddha. How much more severe is the opposition after his passing, especially in the Middle and Latter Days of the Law and in a far-off country like Japan? As mountains pile upon mountains and waves follow waves, so do persecutions add to persecutions and criticisms augment criticisms.

During the Middle Day of the Law, one man alone, T’ien-t’ai, understood and expounded the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras. The other Buddhist leaders of both northern and southern China hated him for it, but the two sage rulers of the Ch’en and Sui dynasties gave him an audience so he could establish the correctness of his views in debate with his opponents. Thus in time he ceased to have any more opponents. At the end of the Middle Day of the Law, one man alone, Dengyo, grasped the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras just as the Buddha had expounded them. The seven major temples of Nara rose up like hornets against him, but the two worthy sovereigns, Emperor Kammu and Emperor Saga, themselves investigating the views of both sides, made clear which was correct, and thereafter there was no further trouble.

It is now over two hundred years since the Latter Day of the Law began. The Buddha predicted that conditions would be much worse after his passing, and we see the portents of this in the quarrels and wranglings that go on today because unreasonable doctrines are prevalent. And as proof of the fact that we are living in a muddied age, I was not summoned for a doctrinal

debate with my opponents, but instead I was sent into exile and my very life imperiled.

When it comes to understanding the Lotus Sutra, I have only a minute fraction of the vast ability that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo possessed. But as regards my ability to endure persecution and the wealth of my compassion for others, I believe they would hold me in awe. [As a votary of the Lotus Sutra] I firmly believe that I should come under the protection of the gods, and yet I do not see the slightest sign of this. On the contrary, I am subjected to increasingly severe punishments. In view of this, am I perhaps then not a votary of the Lotus Sutra after all? Or have the heavenly gods and benevolent deities perhaps taken leave and departed from this land of Japan? I find myself in much perplexity.

But then I recall the twenty lines of verse in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra.⁷⁸ If I, Nichiren, had not been born in this land of Japan, then the words of the World-Honored One predicting such persecutions would have been a great prevarication, and those eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas would have been guilty of the same offense as that of Devadatta, of lying and misleading others.

The sutra says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, with rocks and tiles."⁷⁹ Look around you in the world today—are there any priests other than Nichiren who are cursed and vilified because of the Lotus Sutra or who are attacked with swords and staves? If it were not for Nichiren, the prophecy made in this verse of the sutra would have been sheer falsehood.

The same passage says, "In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked,"⁸⁰ and "They will preach

the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers."⁸¹ If it were not for the priests of the Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts schools of our present age, then the World-Honored One would have been a teller of great untruths.

The passage likewise says, "Because in the midst of the great assembly . . . they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders . . . [slandering and speaking evil of us]." If the priests of today did not slander me to the authorities and have them condemn me to banishment, then this passage in the sutra would have remained unfulfilled.

"Again and again we will be banished," says the sutra. But if Nichiren had not been banished time and again for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, what would these words "again and again" have meant? Even T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo were not able to fulfill this prediction represented by the words "again and again," much less was anyone else. But because I have been born at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, the "age of fear and evil" described in the sutra, I alone have been able to live these words.

As other examples of prophecies that were fulfilled, in the Buddha's Successors Sutra it is recorded that the World-Honored One said that one hundred years after his passing a ruler named Ashoka the Great would appear. In the Maya Sutra he said that six hundred years after his passing a man named Bodhisattva Nagarjuna would appear in southern India. And in the Great Compassion Sutra he said that sixty years after his passing a man named Madhyantika would establish his base in the dragon palace. All of these prophecies came true. Indeed, if they had not, who would believe in the Buddha's teachings?

Thus the Buddha decided the time [when the votary of the Lotus Sutra should appear], describing it as “an age of fear and evil,” “the latter age hereafter,” “the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish,” and “the last five-hundred-year period,” as attested by the two Chinese versions of the Lotus Sutra, the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law and the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.⁸² At such a time, if the three powerful enemies predicted in the Lotus Sutra did not appear, then who would believe in the words of the Buddha? If it were not for Nichiren, who could fulfill the Buddha’s prophecies concerning the votary of the Lotus Sutra? The three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China, along with the seven major temples of Nara, were numbered among the enemies of the Lotus Sutra in the time of the Middle Day of the Law. How much less can the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu priests of the present time hope to escape a similar label?

With this body of mine, I have fulfilled the prophecies of the sutra. The more the government authorities rage against me, the greater is my joy. For instance, there are certain Hinayana bodhisattvas, not yet freed from delusion, who draw evil karma to themselves by their own compassionate vow. If they see that their father and mother have fallen into hell and are suffering greatly, they will deliberately create the appropriate karma in hopes that they too may fall into hell and share in and take their suffering upon themselves. Thus suffering is a joy to them. It is the same with me [in fulfilling the prophecies]. Though at present I must face trials that I can scarcely endure, I rejoice when I think that in the future I will escape being born into the evil paths.

And yet the people doubt me, and I too have doubts about myself. Why do the gods not assist me? Heavenly gods

and other guardian deities made their vow before the Buddha. Even if the votary of the Lotus Sutra were an ape rather than a man, they should address him as the votary of the Lotus Sutra and rush forward to fulfill the vow they made before the Buddha. Does their failure to do so mean that I am in fact not a votary of the Lotus Sutra? This doubt lies at the heart of this piece I am writing. And because it is the most important concern of my entire life, I will raise it again and again here, and emphasize it more than ever, before I attempt to answer it.

Prince Chi-cha in his heart had promised to give the lord of Hsü the precious royal sword that he wore. Therefore [when he later found that the lord of Hsü had died], he placed the sword on his grave.⁸³ Wang Shou, having drunk water from a river, carefully tossed a gold coin into the water as payment.⁸⁴ Hung Yen, finding that his lord had been killed, cut open his stomach and inserted his lord’s liver in it before he died. These were worthy men, and they knew how to repay a debt of gratitude. How much more so, then, should this be the case with great sages like Shariputra and Mahakashyapa, who observed every one of the two hundred and fifty precepts and the three thousand rules of conduct, and had cut themselves off from the illusions of thought and desire and separated themselves from the threefold world? They are worthy to be the leaders of Brahma, Shakra, and the other heavenly gods, and the eyes of all living beings. During the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching, these men were disliked and pushed aside with admonitions that they could never attain Buddhahood. But when they had tasted the medicine of immortality in the Lotus Sutra, they were like scorched seeds that sprout, a shattered rock joined together again, or withered trees that put forth blossoms and fruit.

Through the Lotus Sutra, it was revealed that they would attain Buddhahood after all, though they had yet to enter the eight phases of a Buddha's existence. How, then, can they not do something to repay the profound debt of gratitude that they owe to the sutra? If they do not do so, they will show themselves to be inferior to the worthy men I mentioned earlier and, in fact, be no more than animals who have no understanding of a debt of gratitude.

The turtle that Mao Pao saved did not forget to repay the kindness of the past.⁸⁵ The great fish of K'un-ming Pond, in order to repay the man who had saved his life, presented a bright jewel in the middle of the night.⁸⁶ Even these creatures understood how to repay a debt of gratitude, so why shouldn't men who are great sages?

The Venerable Ananda was the second son of King Dronodana, and the Venerable Rahula was the grandson of King Shuddhodana. Both men were born into very distinguished families and even attained arhatship. However, they were declared to be unable to attain Buddhahood. And yet, during the eight-year assembly at Eagle Peak [when the Lotus Sutra was preached], it was revealed that they would become Buddhas with names such as the Thus Come One Mountain Sea Wisdom [Unrestricted Power King] and the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers. No matter how distinguished their families or what great sages they were, if it had not been for the revelation in the Lotus Sutra, who would have paid them respect?

King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and King Chou of the Yin dynasty were lords of an army of ten thousand chariots and commanded the allegiance of the entire populace of their kingdoms. But because they governed despotically and brought about the downfall of their dynasties, people speak of Chieh

and Chou as the epitome of evil men.⁸⁷ Even a person of low station or a leper, if he is likened to Chieh and Chou, will be enraged at the insult.

If it had not been for the Lotus Sutra, then who would ever have heard of the twelve hundred voice-hearers⁸⁸ and the countless other voice-hearers [who would attain Buddhahood through the sutra, and] who would have listened to their voices? No one would have read the Buddhist sutras compiled by the thousand voice-hearers,⁸⁹ nor would there be any paintings or wooden statues of them set up and worshiped. It is entirely due to the power of the Lotus Sutra that these arhats are revered and followed. If these voice-hearers were to separate themselves from the Lotus Sutra, they would be like a fish without water, a monkey without a tree, a baby without the breast, or a people without a sovereign. How then can they abandon the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

Through the sutras that precede the Lotus Sutra, the voice-hearers have acquired the heavenly eye and the wisdom eye in addition to their physical eyes. Through the Lotus Sutra, they have been provided with the Dharma eye and the Buddha eye.⁹⁰ Their eyesight can penetrate any of the worlds in the ten directions. How then could they fail to see me, the votary of the Lotus Sutra, right here in the saha world? Even if I were an evil man who had said a word or two against them, or even if I cursed and reviled the voice-hearers for a year or two, a kalpa or two, or a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million kalpas, and went so far as to threaten to take up swords and staves against them, so long as I maintain my faith in the Lotus Sutra and act as its votary, then they should never abandon me.

A child may curse his parents, but would the parents for that reason cast him aside? The young owls eat their

mother, but the mother nevertheless does not abandon them. The hakei beast kills its father, but the father does nothing to prevent this. If even animals behave like this, then why should great sages abandon the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

The four great voice-hearers, in the passage that expresses their understanding, proclaimed: "Now we have become voice-hearers in truth, for we will take the voice of the Buddha way and cause it to be heard by all. Now we have become true arhats, for everywhere among the heavenly and human beings, devils, and Brahmas of the various worlds we deserve to receive offerings. The World-Honored One in his great mercy makes use of a rare thing, in pity and compassion teaching and converting, bringing benefit to us. In numberless millions of kalpas who could ever repay him? Though we offer him our hands and feet, bow our heads in respectful obeisance, and present all manner of offerings, none of us could repay him. Though we lift him on the crown of our heads, bear him on our two shoulders, for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands reverence him with all our hearts; though we come with delicate foods, with countless jeweled robes, with articles of bedding, various kinds of potions and medicines; with ox-head sandalwood and all kinds of rare gems, construct memorial towers and spread the ground with jeweled robes; though we were to do all this by way of offering for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands, still we could not repay him."⁹¹

In the various sutras preached during the earlier period of the Buddha's teaching life, which have been compared to the first four flavors, the voice-hearers were depicted on countless occasions as being subjected to all kinds of abuse and shamed before the great assembly of human and heavenly beings. Thus we are told that the sound

of the Venerable Mahakashyapa's weeping and wailing echoed throughout the major world system,⁹² that the Venerable Subhuti was so dumbfounded that he almost went off and left the alms bowl⁹³ he had been carrying, that Shariputra spat out the food he was eating,⁹⁴ and that Purna was berated for being the kind who would put filth in a precious jar.⁹⁵

When the World-Honored One was at Deer Park, he extolled the Agama sutras and enjoined his disciples to rely on the two hundred and fifty precepts as their teacher, warmly praising those who did so, and yet before long, as we have seen, he turned about and began condemning such men. He is guilty, we would have to say, of making two different and completely contradictory pronouncements.

Thus, for example, the World-Honored One cursed Devadatta, saying, "You are a fool who licks the spit of others!" Devadatta felt as though a poison arrow had been shot into his breast, and he cried out in anger, declaring: "Gautama is no Buddha! I am the eldest son of King Dronodana, the elder brother of the Venerable Ananda, and kin to Gautama. No matter what kind of evil conduct I might be guilty of, he ought to admonish me in private for it. But to publicly and outrageously accuse me of faults in front of this great assembly of human and heavenly beings—is this the behavior appropriate to a great man or a Buddha? He showed himself to be my enemy in the past when he stole the woman I intended to marry,⁹⁶ and he has shown himself my enemy at this gathering today. From this day forward, I will look upon him as my archenemy for lifetime after lifetime and age after age to come!"⁹⁷

When we stop to consider, we note that, of the great voice-hearers, some were originally from non-Buddhist Brahman families, or were leaders of

various non-Buddhist orders who had converted kings to their teachings and were looked up to by their followers. Others were men of noble families or the possessors of great wealth. But they abandoned their exalted positions in life, lowered the banners of their pride, cast off everyday clothing, and wrapped their bodies in the humble, dingy-hued robes of a Buddhist monk. They threw away their white fly whisks, their bows and arrows, and took up a solitary alms bowl, becoming like paupers and beggars and following the World-Honored One. They had no dwellings to protect them from the wind and rain, and very little in the way of food or clothing by which to sustain life. Moreover, all the people of the five regions and the four seas of India were disciples or lay supporters of the non-Buddhist teachings, so that even the Buddha himself was on nine occasions forced to suffer major hardships.

Thus, for example, Devadatta hurled a great stone at him, and King Ajatashatru loosed a drunken elephant on him. Failing to receive alms from King Agnidatta, the Buddha was forced to eat horse fodder, and at a Brahman city, he was offered stinking rice gruel. Again, Chinchā, the daughter of a Brahman, tying a bowl to her belly, claimed to be pregnant with his child.⁹⁸

Needless to say, the Buddha's disciples were likewise forced to suffer frequent hardships. Thus, countless numbers of the Shakya clan were killed by King Virudhaka, and ten million of the Buddha's followers were trampled to death by drunken elephants that were set upon them. The nun Utpalavarna was killed by Devadatta, the Venerable Kalodayin was buried in horse dung, and the Venerable Maudgalyayana was beaten to death by members of a Brahman group named Bamboo Staff.⁹⁹ In addition, followers of the six non-Buddhist teachers banded together and slandered the Buddha before King

Ajatashatru and King Prasenajit, saying: "Gautama is the most evil man in the whole land of Jambudvīpa. Wherever he may be, the three calamities and seven disasters rampage without fail. As the numerous rivers gather together in the great sea and the groves of trees cluster on the great mountains, so crowds of evil men gather about Gautama. The men called Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and Subhuti are examples. All those who are born in human form should place loyalty to the sovereign and filial piety above all else. But these men have been so misled by Gautama that they disregard the lessons of their parents, abandon their families, and, defying the commandments of the king, go to live in the mountain forests. They should be expelled from this country. It is because they are allowed to remain that the sun, moon, and stars manifest sinister phenomena, and many strange happenings occur in the land."¹⁰⁰

The voice-hearers did not know how they could possibly bear such persecutions. Then, as if to add to their hardship, [the Buddha himself began to denounce them]. They found it difficult to follow him. Now and then, hearing him condemn them repeatedly in great assemblies of human and heavenly beings, and not knowing how to behave, they only became more confused.

On top of all this, they had to face the greatest hardship of all, as revealed in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, [when the Buddha addressed the voice-hearers], saying, "Those who give alms to you are cultivating for themselves no field of good fortune. Those who give alms to you will fall into the three evil paths." These words were spoken when the Buddha was staying at Ambapali Garden.¹⁰¹ There Brahma, Shakra, the deities of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the heavenly gods of the threefold world, along with

earthly gods, dragon gods, and other beings as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, had gathered in this great assembly, when the Buddha said, "The heavenly and human beings who give alms to Subhuti and the other monks will fall into the three evil paths." After the heavenly and human beings had heard this, would they be likely to go on giving alms to the voice-hearers? It would almost appear as though the Buddha were deliberately attempting through his words to inflict death upon those who upheld the two vehicles. The more sensible persons in the assembly were no doubt repelled by the Buddha's action. Nevertheless, the voice-hearers were able to obtain enough of the alms given to the Buddha to keep themselves alive, meager though the amount was.

When I consider the situation, it occurs to me that, if the Buddha had passed away after preaching the various sutras delivered in the first forty and more years of his teaching life and had not lived to preach the Lotus Sutra in the following eight years, then who would ever have offered alms to these venerable ones? They would have been living in the realm of hungry spirits.

But after more than forty years of preaching various sutras, it was as though the bright spring sun emerged to melt the frigid ice, or a great wind arose to dispel the dew from countless grasses. With one remark, in one moment, the Buddha wiped away his earlier pronouncements, saying, "I have not yet revealed the truth." Like a great wind scattering the dark clouds or the full moon in the vast heavens, or like the sun shining in the blue sky, he proclaimed, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth." With the brilliance of the sun or the brightness of the moon, it was revealed in the Lotus Sutra that Shariputra would become the Thus Come One Flower Glow and

Mahakashyapa would become the Thus Come One Light Bright. Because of the Lotus Sutra, the phoenix among scriptures and the mirror that reflects the teachings, after the Buddha's passing, the voice-hearers were looked up to by the human and heavenly supporters of Buddhism just as the Buddha would be.

If the water is clear, then the moon will not fail to be reflected there. If the wind blows, then the grass and trees will not fail to bow before it. And if there is a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the sages, the voice-hearers, should not fail to go to his side, though they might have to pass through a great fire or make their way through a great rock to do so. Though Mahakashyapa may be deep in meditation, he should not ignore the circumstances.¹⁰² Why does he do nothing about the situation? I am completely perplexed. Is this not the last five-hundred-year period? Is the prediction that the Lotus Sutra will spread abroad widely mere nonsense?¹⁰³ Is Nichiren not the votary of the Lotus Sutra? Are the voice-hearers protecting those who disparage the Lotus Sutra as a mere written teaching and who put forth their great lies about what they call a special transmission?¹⁰⁴ Are they guarding those who write "Discard, close, ignore, abandon!"¹⁰⁵ urging people to close the gate to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and to throw away its scrolls, and who cause the ruin of the temples dedicated to the practice of the Lotus Sutra? The various heavenly deities swore before the Buddha to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra, but now that they see how fierce are the great persecutions of this muddied age, do they fail to come down? The sun and the moon are still up in the sky. Mount Sumeru has not collapsed. The ocean tides ebb and flow, and the four seasons proceed in their normal order. Why then is there no sign of aid for the votary of the

Lotus Sutra? My doubts grow deeper than ever.

In the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha is shown predicting that various great bodhisattvas and heavenly and human beings will attain Buddhahood in the future. But trying to realize such predictions is like trying to grasp the moon in the water, like mistaking the reflection for the actual object—it has the color and shape of the object but not the reality. Likewise, the Buddha would seem to be displaying profound kindness in making such predictions, but in fact it is little kindness at all.

When the World-Honored One had first attained enlightenment and had not yet begun to preach, more than sixty great bodhisattvas, including Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse, appeared from the various Buddha lands of the ten directions and came before Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. There, at the request of the bodhisattvas Chief Wise, Moon of Deliverance, and others, they preached the doctrines of the ten stages of security, the ten stages of practice, the ten stages of devotion, the ten stages of development,¹⁰⁶ and so forth. The doctrines that these great bodhisattvas preached were not learned from Shakyamuni Buddha. At that time, Brahma and other deities of the worlds of the ten directions came together and preached the various teachings, but again those were not what they had learned from Shakyamuni.

These great bodhisattvas, deities, dragons, and others who appeared at the assembly described in the Flower Garland Sutra were beings who had dwelt in “inconceivable emancipation”¹⁰⁷ since before Shakyamuni Buddha began preaching. Perhaps they were disciples of Shakyamuni when he was carrying out bodhisattva practices in previous existences, or perhaps they were disciples of previous Buddhas of

the worlds of the ten directions. In any event, they were not disciples of the Shakyamuni who first attained enlightenment in this world and expounded his lifetime teachings.

It was only when the Buddha set forth the four teachings in the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods that he finally acquired disciples. And although they were doctrines preached by the Buddha himself, they were not doctrines that revealed his true intention. Why do I say this? Because the specific and perfect teachings, as set forth in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods, do not differ in meaning from the specific and perfect teachings as set forth in the Flower Garland Sutra. The specific and perfect teachings given in the Flower Garland Sutra are not the specific and perfect teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. They are the specific and perfect teachings of Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas mentioned earlier. These great bodhisattvas may appear to most people to have been disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, but in fact it would be better to call them his teachers. The World-Honored One listened to these bodhisattvas’ preaching and, after gaining wisdom and understanding, proceeded to set forth the specific and perfect teachings of the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods. But these differ in no way from the specific and perfect teachings of the Flower Garland Sutra.

Therefore, we know that these great bodhisattvas were the teachers of Shakyamuni. These bodhisattvas are mentioned in the Flower Garland Sutra, where they are called “good friends.” To call a person a good friend means that that person is neither one’s teacher nor one’s disciple. The two types of teachings called Tripitaka and connecting teachings are offshoots of the specific and perfect teachings. Anyone who understands the specific and per-

fect teachings will invariably understand the Tripitaka and connecting teachings as well.

A teacher is someone who teaches his disciples things that they did not previously know. For example, in the ages before the Buddha, the heavenly and human beings and followers of Brahmanism were all disciples of the two deities¹⁰⁸ and the three ascetics. Though their doctrines branched off to form ninety-five different schools, these did not go beyond the views of the three ascetics. Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, also studied these doctrines and for a time became a disciple of the Brahmanic teachers. But after spending twelve years in various painful and comfortable practices,¹⁰⁹ he came to understand the principles of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. Therefore, he ceased to call himself a disciple of the Brahmanic teachings and instead proclaimed himself the possessor of a wisdom acquired from no teacher at all. Thus in time the human and heavenly beings came to look up to him as a great teacher.

It is clear, therefore, that during the teaching period of the first four flavors Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, was a disciple of Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas. Similarly, he was the ninth disciple of Bodhisattva Manjushri.¹¹⁰ This is also the reason why the Buddha repeatedly declares in the earlier sutras, "I never preached a single word."

When Shakyamuni Buddha was seventy-two, he preached the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra on Eagle Peak in the kingdom of Magadha. At that time he denied all the sutras he had preached during the previous more than forty years, and all the fragmentary teachings derived from those sutras, saying, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth." At that time, the great bodhisattvas and the various heavenly and human beings

hastened to implore the Buddha to reveal the true doctrine. In fact, in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra he made a single pronouncement that appeared to suggest the true doctrine,¹¹¹ but he did not elaborate on it. It was like the moment when the moon is about to rise. The moon is still hidden behind the eastern hills, and though its glow begins to light the western hills, people cannot yet see the body of the moon itself.

In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in the section that concisely reveals the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, the Buddha briefly explained the concept of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the doctrine that he had kept in mind for his final revelation. But because this was the first time he had touched on the subject, it was only dimly apprehended, like the first note of the cuckoo heard by someone drowsy with sleep, or like the moon appearing over the rim of the hill but veiled in thin clouds. Shariputra and the others, startled, called the heavenly beings, dragon deities, and great bodhisattvas together and, begging for instruction, said: "The heavenly beings, dragons, spirits, and the others, their numbers like Ganges sands, the bodhisattvas seeking to be Buddhas in a great force of eighty thousand, as well as the wheel-turning kings [who] come from ten thousands of millions of lands, all press their palms and with reverent minds wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment."¹¹²

The passage indicates that they requested to hear a doctrine such as they had not heard in the previous more than forty years, one that differed from the four flavors and the three teachings. With regard to the part "[they] wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment," it may be noted that the Nirvana Sutra states, "*Sad*¹¹³ indicates perfect endowment." *The Profound Meaning of*

the *Four Mahayana Treatises* states, “*Sad* connotes six. In India the number six implies perfect endowment.” In his commentary Chi-tsang writes, “*Sad* is translated as perfect endowment.”¹¹⁴ In the eighth volume of his *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* T’ien-t’ai remarks, “*Sad* is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as *myo*, or wonderful.” Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, in the heart of his thousand-volume *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, comments, “*Sad* signifies six.” Nagarjuna was thirteenth in the lineage of the Buddha’s successors, the founder of the True Word, Flower Garland, and the other schools, a great sage of the first stage of development, and the person whose true identity was the Thus Come One Dharma Clouds Freedom King.

The characters *Myoho-enge-kyo* are Chinese. In India, the Lotus Sutra is called *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*. The following is the mantra concerning the heart of the Lotus Sutra composed by the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei:

*namah samanta-buddhanam
om a a am ah
sarva-buddha-jna-sakshebhyah
gagana-sambhavalakshani
saddharma-pundarika-sutra
jah hum bam hoh vajrarakshaman
hum svaha*

Hail to all the Buddhas! Three-bodied Thus Come Ones! Open the door to, show me, cause me to awaken to, and to enter into the wisdom and insight of all the Buddhas. You who are like space and who have freed yourself from form! Oh, Sutra of the White Lotus of the Correct Law! Cause me to enter into, to be everywhere within, to dwell in, and to rejoice in you. Oh, Adamantine Protector! Oh, empty, aspect-free, and desire-free sutra!¹¹⁵

This mantra, which expresses the heart of the Lotus Sutra, was found in

the iron tower in southern India.¹¹⁶ In this mantra, *saddharma* means “correct Law.” *Sad* means correct. Correct is the same as *myo* [wonderful]; *myo* is the same as correct. Hence the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law and the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. And when the two characters for *namu* are prefixed to Myoho-enge-kyo, or the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, we have the formula Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.¹¹⁷

Myo means perfect endowment. Six refers to the six paramitas representing all the ten thousand practices. When people ask to hear the teaching of perfect endowment, they are asking how they may gain the perfect endowment of the six paramitas and ten thousand practices of the bodhisattvas. In the phrase “perfect endowment,” endowment refers to the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, while perfect means that, since there is mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, then any one world contains all the other worlds, indicating that this is “perfect.” The Lotus Sutra is a single work consisting of eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters. Each and every character is endowed with the character *myo*, each being a Buddha who has the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics. Each of the Ten Worlds manifests its own Buddhahood. As Miao-lo writes, “Since even Buddhahood is present in all living beings, then all the other worlds are of course present, too.”¹¹⁸

The Buddha replied to the request of his listeners by saying that “the Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings.”¹¹⁹ The term “all living beings” here refers to Shariputra, and it also refers to icchantikas, persons of incorrigible disbelief. It also refers to the nine worlds. Thus the Buddha fulfilled his words, “Living beings are numberless. I vow to save them all,”¹²⁰ when he declares, “At the start I took a vow, hoping to make all

persons equal to me, without any distinction between us, and what I long ago hoped for has now been fulfilled."

All the great bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, and others, when they had heard the doctrine of the Buddha and comprehended it, said, "Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One's preaching, but we have never heard this kind of profound, wonderful, and superior Law."¹²¹

The Great Teacher Dengyo comments: "Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One's preaching' refers to the fact that they had heard him preach the great doctrines of the Flower Garland Sutra and other sutras in the time previous to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. 'We have never heard this kind of profound,

wonderful, and superior Law' means that they had never heard the teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood propounded in the Lotus Sutra."¹²²

They understood, that is, that none of the previous Mahayana sutras—which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and include those of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, such as the Profound Secrets and Mahavairochana sutras—had ever made clear the great principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the core of the Buddha's lifetime teachings. Nor had they clarified the bone and marrow of those teachings, the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood and that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past.

PART TWO

FROM this time forward, the great bodhisattvas, as well as Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, became the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Thus, in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha treats these great bodhisattvas as his disciples, admonishing and instructing them in these words: "So I say to the great assembly: After I have passed into extinction, who can guard and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!" This was the solemn way he addressed them. Then, among the great bodhisattvas, it was "as though a great wind were tossing the branches of small trees."¹²³ Like the kusha grass¹²⁴ bending before a great wind or like rivers and streams drawn to the great ocean, so were they drawn to the Buddha.

But it was still a relatively short time since the Buddha had begun to preach the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak, and what he said seemed to his listeners dreamlike and unreal. The treasure tower had first appeared to confirm the correctness of the theoretical teaching in the first half of the Lotus Sutra, and after that the treasure tower prepared the way for the expounding of the essential teaching in the latter half. The Buddhas of the ten directions gathered in assembly, Shakyamuni Buddha announcing that all of these were emanations of himself. The treasure tower hung in the air, with Shakyamuni and Many Treasures seated in it side by side, as though both the sun and moon had appeared side by side in the blue sky. The great assembly of human and heavenly beings were clustered in the sky like stars, and the Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha were on the ground, seated on

their lion seats under jeweled trees.

In the Lotus Treasury World described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the Buddhas in their reward bodies all dwell in their separate lands. Buddhas of other worlds do not come to this world and call themselves emanations [as happened in the case of the Lotus Sutra], nor do Buddhas of this world go to other worlds. Only Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas come and go.

As for the nine honored ones on the eight-petaled lotus and the thirty-seven honored ones¹²⁵ described respectively in the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras, although they appear to be transformation bodies of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, they are not Buddhas enlightened since the remote past or endowed with the three bodies.

The thousand Buddhas described in the Larger Wisdom Sutra and the Buddhas of the six directions represented in the Amida Sutra never assembled in this world [as did the Buddha's emanations in the Lotus Sutra]. The Buddhas who assembled when the Great Collection Sutra was preached were not emanations of Shakyamuni. The four Buddhas of the four directions depicted in the Golden Light Sutra are transformation bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Thus, in the various sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni does not assemble Buddhas who carry out different austerities and practices and who possess the three bodies, nor does he identify them as emanations of himself. [Only in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra does he do so.] This chapter, then, is intended as an introduction to the "Life Span" chapter that follows later. Shakyamuni Buddha, who was believed to have attained enlightenment for the first time only some forty years previously, calls together Buddhas who had become enlightened as long as one or even ten

kalpas ago, and declares that they are emanations of himself. This is a far cry indeed from the Buddha's usual preaching on the equality of all Buddhas [in their Dharma bodies], and in fact a cause of great astonishment. If Shakyamuni had attained enlightenment for the first time only some forty years earlier, there could hardly have been so many beings in the ten directions who had received his instruction. And even if he was privileged to possess emanations, there would have been no benefit in his showing them to his listeners. T'ien-t'ai, describing what went on in the astonished minds of the assembly, says, "It was evident to them that Shakyamuni Buddha possessed numerous emanations. Therefore, they understood that he must have attained enlightenment in the far distant past."¹²⁶

In addition, the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds appeared, rising up out of the ground. Even Universal Worthy and Manjushri, who had been regarded as the leading disciples of Shakyamuni, could not compare to them. The great bodhisattvas present in the assemblies described in the sutras of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods and in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, or Vajrasattva and the rest of the sixteen great bodhisattvas of the Mahavairochana [and Diamond Crown] sutras, when compared with these newly arrived bodhisattvas, seemed like a pack of apes or monkeys, with the new bodhisattvas appearing among them like so many Shakras. It was as though great ministers of court had mingled with humble mountain folk. Even Maitreya, who was to be the next Buddha after Shakyamuni, was perplexed by them, to say nothing of the lesser personages in the assembly.

Among these great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a

thousand worlds there were four great sages called Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices. In the presence of these four, the other bodhisattvas suspended in the air or seated on Eagle Peak could not bear to gaze on them face to face or begin to fathom their dignity. Even the four bodhisattvas of the Flower Garland Sutra,¹²⁷ the four bodhisattvas of the Mahavairocana Sutra,¹²⁸ or the sixteen great bodhisattvas of the Diamond Crown Sutra,¹²⁹ when in the presence of these four, were like bleary-eyed men trying to peer at the sun, or like humble fishermen appearing in audience before the emperor. These four were like T'ai-kung Wang and the others of the four sages of ancient China,¹³⁰ who towered above the multitude. They were like the Four White-Haired Elders¹³¹ of Mount Shang who assisted Emperor Hui. Solemn, dignified, they were beings of great and lofty stature. Aside from Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanations of Shakyamuni from the ten directions, they were worthy of being good friends upon whom all beings could rely.

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya began to consider the matter in his mind. He said to himself: "Since the time Shakyamuni Buddha was a crown prince, and during the forty-two years since he gained enlightenment at the age of thirty up until this gathering on Eagle Peak, I have known all the bodhisattvas of this world, and all the great bodhisattvas who have come from the worlds of the ten directions to attend the assemblies. Moreover, I have visited the pure and impure lands of the ten directions, sometimes as the Buddha's emissary, at other times on my own initiative, and I have become acquainted with all the great bodhisattvas of those various lands. As for these great bodhisattvas who have appeared from the earth, what kind of Buddha is their teacher? Surely he must

be a Buddha who is incomparably superior to Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanation Buddhas from the ten directions! From the fury of the rain, we can judge the greatness of the dragon that caused it to fall; from the size of the lotus flower, we can tell the depth of the pond that produced it. Now from what land did these great bodhisattvas come, what Buddha did they follow, and what great teaching have they practiced?"

Thus did Bodhisattva Maitreya wonder to himself, becoming so puzzled that he was unable to utter a sound. But, perhaps through the Buddha's power, he was at last able to put his doubts into words, saying: "Immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions, a great host of bodhisattvas such as was never seen in the past . . . This host of bodhisattvas with their great dignity, virtue, and diligence—who preached the Law for them? Who taught and converted them and brought them to this? Under whom did they first set their minds on enlightenment, what Buddha's Law do they praise and proclaim? . . . World-Honored One, from times past I have seen nothing like this! I beg you to tell me where they come from, the name of the land. I have constantly journeyed from land to land but never have I seen such a thing! In this whole multitude there is not one person that I know. Suddenly they have come up from the earth—I beg you to explain the cause."¹³²

[Paraphrasing Maitreya's statement,] T'ien-t'ai comments: "Since the time of the Buddha's enlightenment at the place of meditation, up until the present gathering, great bodhisattvas unceasingly came from the worlds in the ten directions to attend the various assemblies. Their numbers are unlimited, but I, with the wisdom and power appropriate to the next Buddha, have been able to see and know every single one of them. And yet, among the newly

arrived multitude, I do not know a single person—this in spite of the fact that I have traveled in the ten directions, have served the various Buddhas, and am well known among their audiences.”¹³³

Miao-lo comments, “Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes.”¹³⁴

The meaning of these passages of scripture and commentary is perfectly clear. In effect, from the time of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment up until the present assembly [on Eagle Peak], in this land and in all the lands of the ten directions, Bodhisattva Maitreya had never seen or heard of these bodhisattvas who came forth from the earth.

The Buddha, replying to Maitreya’s doubts, said: “Ajita,¹³⁵ these bodhisattvas . . . whom you have never seen before in the past—when I had attained supreme perfect enlightenment in this saha world, I converted and guided these bodhisattvas, trained their minds, and caused them to develop a longing for the way.”¹³⁶

He also said: “When I was in the vicinity of the city of Gaya, seated beneath the bodhi tree, I attained the highest, the correct enlightenment and turned the wheel of the unsurpassed Law. Thereafter I taught and converted them, and caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way. Now all of them dwell in the stage of non-regression . . . Ever since the long distant past I have been teaching and converting this multitude.”

But Maitreya and the other great bodhisattvas were further perplexed by these words of the Buddha. When the Buddha preached the Flower Garland Sutra, Dharma Wisdom and countless other great bodhisattvas appeared in the assembly. Maitreya and the others wondered who they could be, but the Buddha said, “They are my good friends,” and they thought this must be true. Later, when the Buddha preached

[the Great Collection Sutra] at the Great Treasure Chamber and [the Larger Wisdom Sutra] at White Heron Lake,¹³⁷ great bodhisattvas appeared in the assembly, and Maitreya and the others supposed that they too were good friends of the Buddha.

But these great bodhisattvas who had newly appeared out of the earth looked incomparably more venerable than those earlier bodhisattvas. One might conclude that they were the teachers of Shakyamuni Buddha, and yet the Buddha had “caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way,” and, when they were still immature, had converted them and made them his disciples. It was this that Maitreya and the others found so profoundly perplexing.

Prince Shotoku of Japan was the son of Emperor Yomei, the thirty-second sovereign. When he was six years old, elderly men came to Japan from the states of Paekche and Koguryō in Korea and from the land of China. The six-year-old prince thereupon exclaimed, “These are my disciples!” and the old men in turn pressed their palms together in reverence and said, “You are our teacher!” This was a strange happening indeed.

There is a similar story found in a secular work. According to this work, a man was walking along a road when he saw by the roadside a young man of about thirty who was beating an old man of about eighty. When he asked the reason, the young man replied, “This old man is my son.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya, continuing to doubt, said: “World-Honored One, when the Thus Come One was crown prince, you left the palace of the Shakyas and sat in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya, and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. Barely forty years or more have passed since then. World-Honored One, how in that short time

could you have accomplished so much work as a Buddha?"¹³⁸

The various bodhisattvas who had attended the numerous assemblies held in the forty-some years since the Buddha preached the Flower Garland Sutra had raised doubts at each assembly, asking the Buddha to dispel these doubts for the benefit of the multitude. But this present doubt was the greatest doubt of all. It surpassed even the doubt entertained by Great Adornment and the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas described in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra when the Buddha, after declaring in the previous forty-some years of his teaching that enlightenment was something that required countless kalpas to attain, now announced that it could be attained quickly.

According to the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, King Ajatahatru, led astray by Devadatta, imprisoned his father and was on the point of killing his mother, Lady Vaidehi. Reprimanded by the court ministers Jivaka and Chandraprabha, however, he spared his mother's life. At that time she begged that the Buddha appear to her,¹³⁹ and then she began by posing this question: "What offense have I committed in the past that I should have given birth to this evil son? And, World-Honored One, through what cause have you come to be related to a person as evil as your cousin Devadatta?"

Of the doubts raised here, the second is the more perplexing, the question of why the Buddha should be related to an evil person like Devadatta. A wheel-turning king, we are told, is never born into the world along with his enemies, nor is the god Shakra to be found in the company of demons. The Buddha had been a merciful personage for countless kalpas. Yet the fact that Shakyamuni was born together with his archenemy might make one doubt whether he was indeed a Bud-

dha at all. The Buddha, however, did not answer the question of Lady Vaidehi. Therefore, if one reads and recites only the Meditation Sutra and does not examine the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, one will never know the truth of the matter.¹⁴⁰

In the Nirvana Sutra, Bodhisattva Kashyapa posed thirty-six questions to the Buddha, but even these cannot compare to this question posed by Maitreya. If the Buddha had failed to dispel Maitreya's doubts, the sacred teachings of his entire lifetime would have amounted to no more than froth on the water, and all living beings would have remained tangled in the snare of doubt. That was why it was so important for him to preach the "Life Span" chapter.

Later, when the Buddha preached the "Life Span" chapter, he said: "In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment." This passage expresses the view held by all the great bodhisattvas and the rest of the multitude from the time of the Buddha's first preaching at the place of enlightenment until his preaching of the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. "But, good men," the Buddha continued, "it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood."¹⁴¹

In three places the Flower Garland Sutra says that the Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence. In the Agama sutras he speaks of having attained the way for the first time in his present existence; the Vimalakirti Sutra states, "For the first time the Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree"; in the Great Collec-

tion Sutra, "It is sixteen years [since the Thus Come One first attained the way]"; in the Mahavairochana Sutra, "long ago when I sat in the place of meditation"; in the Benevolent Kings Sutra, "twenty-nine years [since his enlightenment]"; in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation"; and in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "I first sat in the place of meditation." But now all these passages have been exposed as gross falsehoods by this single pronouncement in the "Life Span" chapter.

When Shakyamuni Buddha revealed that he had gained enlightenment in the far distant past, it became apparent that all the other Buddhas were emanations of Shakyamuni. When the Buddha preached the earlier sutras and the first half, or theoretical teaching, of the Lotus Sutra, the other Buddhas were pictured as standing on an equal footing with Shakyamuni, after completing their respective practices and disciplines. Therefore, the people who take one or another of these Buddhas as their object of devotion customarily look down on Shakyamuni Buddha. But now it becomes apparent that Vairochana Buddha, who is described in the Flower Garland Sutra as being seated on a lotus pedestal, and the various Buddhas who appear in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods, such as the Mahavairochana Sutra, are all in fact followers of Shakyamuni Buddha.

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained the way at the age of thirty, he seized the saha world away from the great heavenly king Brahma and the devil king of the sixth heaven, who had both ruled it previously, and made it his own. In the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, he called the regions of the ten directions pure lands and spoke of the present world as an impure land. But now, in

the "Life Span" chapter, he has reversed this, revealing that this world is the true land and that the so-called pure lands of the ten directions are impure lands, mere provisional lands.

Since the Buddha [of the "Life Span" chapter] is revealed as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past [and all the other Buddhas as his emanations], it follows that not only the great bodhisattvas whom Shakyamuni himself taught in his transient status, but the great bodhisattvas from other realms [who were taught by the Buddhas of their own realms] are also in fact disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. If, among all the numerous sutras, this "Life Span" chapter should be lacking, it would be as though there were no sun or moon in the sky, no supreme ruler in the nation, no gems in the mountains and rivers, and no spirit in human beings.

Nevertheless, Ch'eng-kuan, Chia-hsiang, Tz'u-en, Kobo, and others, seemingly learned men of provisional schools such as the Flower Garland and the True Word, in order to praise the various sutras upon which their provisional doctrines are based, go so far as to say, "The Buddha of the Flower Garland Sutra is the Buddha of the reward body, while the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra is merely the Buddha of the manifested body."¹⁴² Or they say, "The Buddha of the 'Life Span' chapter of the Lotus Sutra is in the region of darkness, while the Buddha of the Mahavairochana Sutra occupies the position of enlightenment."¹⁴³

As clouds obscure the moon, so calumnious ministers can obscure a person of true worth. A yellow stone, if people praise it, may be mistaken for a jewel, and ministers who are skilled in flattery may be mistaken for worthies. In this impure age, scholars and students are confused by the slanderous assertions of the kind of men I have

mentioned above, and they do not appreciate the true worth of the jewel of the "Life Span" chapter. Even among the men of the Tendai school there are those who have become so deluded that they cannot distinguish gold from mere stones.

One should consider the fact that, if the Buddha had not attained enlightenment in the distant past, there could not have been so many disciples who were converted and instructed by him. The moon is not selfish with its reflection, but if there is no water, then its reflection will not be seen. The Buddha may be very anxious to convert all people, but if the connection he shares with them is not strong enough, then he cannot exhibit the eight phases of a Buddha's existence. For example, the voice-hearers attained the first stage of security or the first stage of development, but so long as they followed the teachings that preceded the Lotus Sutra and sought only to regulate and save themselves, they had to postpone the attainment of the eight phases of a Buddha's existence to some future lifetime.

If Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, had attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence, then when he preached the Lotus Sutra, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, though they had ruled over this world since the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, would have been disciples of the Buddha for no longer than forty-some years. These beings would then have established their connection with the Lotus Sutra for the first time during the eight years of preaching at Eagle Peak. They would thus have been like newcomers unable to unreservedly approach their lord, kept at a distance by those who had been present longer.

But now that it has become apparent that Shakyamuni Buddha attained en-

lightenment countless kalpas ago, then the bodhisattvas Sunlight and Moonlight, who attend the Thus Come One Medicine Master of the eastern region, and the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Great Power, who attend the Thus Come One Amida of the western region, along with the disciples of all the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions, and the great bodhisattvas who are disciples of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana as they are shown in the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras—all of these beings are disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Since the various Buddhas themselves are emanations of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, it goes without saying that their disciples must be disciples of Shakyamuni. And of course the various deities of the sun, moon, and stars, who have dwelt in this world since the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, must likewise be disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Nevertheless, the schools of Buddhism other than Tendai have gone astray concerning the true object of devotion. The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools take as their object of devotion the Shakyamuni Buddha who eliminated illusions and attained the way by practicing thirty-four kinds of spiritual purification.¹⁴⁴ This is comparable to a situation in which the heir apparent of the supreme ruler of a state mistakenly believes himself to be the son of a commoner. The four schools of Flower Garland, True Word, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics are all Mahayana schools of Buddhism. Among them the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools honor a Buddha who is comparable to the Buddha of the superior manifested body.¹⁴⁵ This is like the heir of the supreme ruler supposing that his father was a member of the warrior class. The

Flower Garland and True Word schools look down upon Shakyamuni Buddha and declare the Buddha Vairocana and the Buddha Mahavairocana to be their respective objects of devotion. This is like the heir looking down upon his own father, the supreme ruler, and paying honor to one who is of obscure origin simply because that person pretends to be the sovereign who abides by the principles of righteousness. The Pure Land school considers itself to be most closely related to the Buddha Amida, who is an emanation of Shakyamuni, and abandons Shakyamuni himself who is the lord of teachings. The Zen school behaves like a person of low birth who makes much of his small achievements and despises his father and mother. Thus the Zen school looks down upon both the Buddha and the sutras. All of these schools are misled concerning the true object of devotion. They are like the people who lived in the age before the Three Sovereigns of ancient China and did not know who their own fathers were. In that respect, the people of that time were no different from birds and beasts.

The people of these schools who are ignorant of the teachings of the "Life Span" chapter are similarly like beasts. They do not understand to whom they are obligated. Therefore, Miao-lo states: "Among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, there is no place [other than the 'Life Span' chapter] where the true longevity of the Buddha is revealed. A person ought to know how old his father and mother are. If a son does not even know how old his father is, he will also be in doubt as to what lands his father presides over. Though he may be idly praised for his talent and ability, he cannot be counted as a son at all!"¹⁴⁶

The Great Teacher Miao-lo lived in the T'ien-pao era (742-756) in the latter part of the T'ang dynasty.¹⁴⁷ He

made a deep and thorough examination of the Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, True Word, and other schools, and the sutras upon which they are based. Then, he concluded that, if one fails to become acquainted with the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter, one is no more than a talented animal who does not even know what lands one's father presides over. "Though he may be idly praised for his talent and ability" refers to men like Fa-tsang and Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school or the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school. These teachers had talent and ability, yet they were like sons who do not even know their own father.

The Great Teacher Dengyo was the patriarch of both esoteric and exoteric Buddhism in Japan.¹⁴⁸ In his *Outstanding Principles* he writes: "The sutras that the other schools are based upon give expression in a certain measure to the mother-like nature of the Buddha. But they convey only a sense of love and are lacking in a sense of fatherly sternness. It is only the Tendai Lotus school that combines a sense of both love and sternness. The Lotus Sutra is 'father of all sages, worthies, those still learning, those who have completed their learning, and those who set their minds on becoming bodhisattvas.'"¹⁴⁹

The sutras that form the basis of the True Word and Flower Garland schools do not even contain the terms "sowing," "maturing," and "harvesting," much less the doctrine to which these terms refer. When the sutras of the Flower Garland and True Word schools assert that their followers will enter the first stage of development in this lifetime and achieve Buddhahood in their present form, they are putting forth the teachings of the provisional sutras alone, teachings that conceal [the seeds sowed in] the past.¹⁵⁰ To expect to harvest [the fruit of Buddhahood] without

knowing the seed first sowed is like the minister Chao Kao attempting to seize the throne or the priest Dokyo trying to become emperor of Japan.

The various schools argue with one another, each claiming that its sutra contains the true seeds of enlightenment. I do not intend to enter the argument. I will let the sutras speak for themselves. Thus Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, speaking of the seeds of enlightenment implanted by the Lotus Sutra, designates them "the seeds without peer."¹⁵¹ And these seeds of enlightenment are the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life as expounded by T'ien-t'ai.

The seed of enlightenment for the various Buddhas described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the other various Mahayana sutras is the one doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che was the only person who was capable of perceiving the truth of this doctrine. Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school usurped the doctrine and made it the soul of the passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, "The mind is like a skilled painter."

The Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school contains no mention of the fact that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, that the Buddha Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment in the distant past, or of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. But after the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei came to China, he had occasion to read *Great Concentration and Insight* by T'ien-t'ai and came to gain wisdom and understanding. He then stole the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, using it to interpret the passages in the Mahavairochana Sutra on "the reality of the mind" or the one that reads, "I am the source and

beginning of all things," making it the core of the True Word teachings but adding to it the practice of mudras and mantras. And in comparing the relative merits of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, he declared that, while the two agree in principle, the latter is superior in practice. The mandalas of the two realms,¹⁵² the True Word teachers claim, symbolize the attaining of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, but are these doctrines to be found anywhere in the Mahavairochana Sutra? Those who claim so are guilty of the grossest deception.

Therefore, the Great Teacher Denryo states: "The True Word school of Buddhism that has recently been brought to Japan deliberately obscures how its transmission was falsified in the recording [by I-hsing, who was deceived by Shan-wu-wei], while the Flower Garland school that was introduced earlier attempts to disguise the fact that it was influenced by the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai."¹⁵³

Suppose someone were to go to some wild region like the island of Ezo and recite the famous poem:¹⁵⁴

How I think of it—
dim, dim in the morning mist
of Akashi Bay,
that boat moving out of sight
beyond the islands.

If the person told the ignorant natives of Ezo that he himself had composed the poem, they would probably believe him. The Buddhist scholars of China and Japan are equally gullible.

The Reverend Liang-hsü states that the doctrines of the True Word, Zen, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and other schools, when compared with the Lotus Sutra, serve as none other than an introduction to the true teachings [of the Lotus Sutra]. We are told that the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei

was subjected to torments by Yama because of his mistaken view [that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra]. Later, he had a change of heart and became a supporter of the Lotus Sutra, which is why he was spared further torments. As evidence, when he, Pu-k'ung, and the others devised the Womb Realm mandala and the Diamond Realm mandala of the True Word school, they placed the Lotus Sutra in the center of the two mandalas as the supreme ruler, with the Mahavairochana Sutra depicting the Womb Realm and the Diamond Crown Sutra depicting the Diamond Realm to the left and right as ministers to the ruler.

When Kobo of Japan drew up a theoretical statement of the True Word teachings, he was attracted by the Flower Garland school and assigned [the Flower Garland Sutra to the ninth stage of advancement and] the Lotus Sutra to the eighth stage.¹⁵⁵ But when he taught the practices and ceremonies to his disciples Jitsue, Shinga, Encho, Kojo, and the others, he placed the Lotus Sutra in a central position, between the two realms of the Womb and the Diamond, as Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung had done.

In a similar case, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, in his ten-volume *Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, assigned the Lotus Sutra to the fourth of the five periods of teachings,¹⁵⁶ claiming that it repudiated the two vehicles to reveal the one vehicle of the bodhisattva and then incorporated the former as the means to attain the latter. Later, however, he became converted to the teachings of T'ien-t'ai. He ceased giving lectures, dismissed his disciples, and instead served T'ien-t'ai for a period of seven years, personally carrying T'ien-t'ai on his back [when T'ien-t'ai mounted an elevated seat for preaching].

Again, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Char-

acteristics school, in his seven-volume and twelve-volume *Forest of Meanings in the Garden of the Law*, states that the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the Lotus Sutra is an expedient means, and that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth. He also makes many similarly absurd pronouncements. But in the fourth volume of *The Essential Meaning of "Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra,"* he is represented as saying that "both doctrines are to be accepted," thus bringing flexible interpretation to the tenets of his own school. Although he said that both doctrines were acceptable, in his heart he supported the T'ien-t'ai teachings on the Lotus Sutra.

Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school wrote a commentary on the Flower Garland Sutra in which he compared the Flower Garland and Lotus sutras and seems to have declared that the Lotus Sutra is an expedient means. But later he wrote: "The T'ien-t'ai school defines this teaching [of three thousand realms in a single moment of life] as the truth. The doctrines of my own school, on matters of principle, do not disagree in any way with those of the T'ien-t'ai school." From this it would appear, would it not, that he regretted and reversed his earlier pronouncement.

Kobo is a similar example. If one has no mirror, one cannot see one's own face, and if one has no opponents, one cannot learn of one's own errors. The scholars of the True Word and the other various schools were unaware of their errors. But after they were fortunate enough to encounter the Great Teacher Dengyo, they became conscious of the mistakes of their own particular schools.

The various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly and human beings described in the sutras that preceded the Lotus may seem to have gained enlightenment through the particular

sutras in which they appear. But in fact they attained enlightenment only through the Lotus Sutra. The general vow taken by Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas to save countless living beings finds fulfillment through the Lotus Sutra. That is the meaning of the passage of the sutra that states that the vow “has now been fulfilled.”¹⁵⁷

In view of these facts, I believe that the devotees and followers of the Flower Garland, Meditation, Mahavairochana, and other sutras will undoubtedly be protected by the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly beings of the respective sutras that they uphold. But if the votaries of the Mahavairochana, Meditation, and other sutras should set themselves up as the enemies of the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly beings will abandon them and will protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the case of a filial son whose father opposes the ruler of the kingdom. The son will abandon his father and support the ruler, for to do so is the height of filial piety.

The same thing applies to Buddhism. The Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the ten demon daughters described in the Lotus Sutra will not fail to lend their protection to Nichiren. And in addition, the Buddhas of the six directions and the twenty-five bodhisattvas of the Pure Land school, the twelve hundred honored ones¹⁵⁸ of the True Word school, and the various honored ones and benevolent guardian deities of the seven schools¹⁵⁹ are also certain to protect Nichiren. It is like the case of the Great Teacher Dengyo, who was protected by the guardian deities of the seven schools.

I, Nichiren, think as follows. The gods of the sun and moon and the other deities were present in the two places and three assemblies when the Lotus Sutra was preached. If a votary of the Lotus Sutra should appear, then,

like iron drawn to a magnet or the reflection of the moon appearing in the water, they will instantly come forth to take on his sufferings for him and thereby fulfill the vow that they made in the presence of the Buddha. But they have yet to come and inquire of my well-being. Does this mean that I am not a votary of the Lotus Sutra? If that is so, then I must examine the text of the sutra once more in the light of my conduct and see where I am at fault.

Question: What eye of wisdom allows you to perceive that the Nembutsu, Zen, and other schools of our time are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and evil companions who are ready to mislead all people?

Answer: I do not state personal opinions, but merely hold up the mirror of the sutras and commentaries so that the slanderers of the Law may see their ugly faces reflected there and perceive their errors. But if they are incurably “blind,” it is beyond my power.

In the “Treasure Tower” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra we read: “At that time Many Treasures Buddha offered half of his seat in the treasure tower to Shakyamuni Buddha . . . At that time the members of the great assembly [saw] the two Thus Come Ones seated cross-legged on the lion seat in the tower of seven treasures . . . And in a loud voice he [Shakyamuni Buddha] addressed all the four kinds of believers, saying: ‘Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this saha world? Now is the time to do so, for before long the Thus Come One will enter nirvana. The Buddha wishes to entrust this Lotus Sutra to someone so that it may be preserved.’”

This is the first pronouncement of the Buddha.

Again the chapter reads: “At that time the World-Honored One, wish-

ing to state his meaning once more, spoke in verse form, saying: "This holy lord, this World-Honored One, though he passed into extinction long ago, still seats himself in the treasure tower, coming here for the sake of the Law. You people, why then do you not also strive for the sake of the Law? . . . In addition, these emanations of my body, Buddhas in immeasurable numbers like Ganges sands, have come, desiring to hear the Law . . . Each has abandoned his wonderful land, as well as his host of disciples, the heavenly and human beings, dragons, and spirits, and all the offerings they give him, and has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure. . . . as though a great wind were tossing the branches of small trees. Through this expedient means they make certain that the Law will long endure. So I say to the great assembly: After I have passed into extinction, who can guard and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!" "

This is the second proclamation of the Buddha. The passage continues: "The Thus Come One Many Treasures, I myself, and these emanation Buddhas who have gathered here, surely know this is our aim. . . . All you good men, each of you must consider carefully! This is a difficult matter—it is proper you should make a great vow. The other sutras number as many as Ganges sands, but though you expound those sutras, that is not worth regarding as difficult. If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed! . . . If, when the fires come at the end of the kalpa, one can load dry grass on his back and enter the fire without being

burned, that would not be difficult. But after I have passed into extinction if one can embrace this sutra and expound it to even one person, that will be difficult indeed! . . . All you good men, after I have entered extinction, who can accept and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!"

This is the third admonition from the Buddha. The fourth and fifth admonitions are found in the "Devadatta" chapter, and I will deal with them later.

The meaning of these passages from the sutra is right before our eyes, obvious as the sun suspended in the blue sky or a mole on a white face. And yet the blind ones, those with perverse eyes, the one-eyed, those who believe no one but their own teachers, and those who cling to biased views cannot see it.

For those who earnestly seek the way, in spite of all difficulties, I will try to demonstrate what these passages mean. But they must understand that the truth is more rarely met with than the peaches of immortality that grow in the garden of the Queen Mother of the West, or the udumbara flower that blooms only when a wheel-turning king appears.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the conflict [between Nichiren and the various schools] surpasses the eight years of warfare when the governor of P'ei and Hsiang Yü¹⁶¹ battled for the empire of China, the seven years when Yoritomo and Munemori¹⁶² fought for the islands of Japan, the struggles between Shakra and the asuras, or between the dragon king and the garuda birds at Anavatapta Lake.¹⁶³

The truth of the Lotus Sutra has made its appearance twice in the country of Japan. You should understand that it appeared once with the Great Teacher Dengyo and again with Nichiren. But the sightless ones doubt this; it

is beyond my power to convince them. Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions gathered together and judged the relative merits of all the sutras of Japan, China, India, the palace of the dragon king, the heavens, and all the other worlds of the ten directions, and this is the sutra they chose.

Question: Do sutras such as the Flower Garland, the sutras of the Correct and Equal period, Wisdom, Profound Secrets, Lankavatara, Mahavairochana, and Nirvana belong to the "nine easy acts" group or the "six difficult acts" group?¹⁶⁴

Answer: Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, who were all masters of the three divisions of the canon, state that both the Flower Garland Sutra and the Lotus Sutra belong to the "six difficult acts" category. Though in name they are two different sutras, they are identical in their teachings and principles. It is similar to the statement, "Though the four perceptions of reality are separate, the truth they point to is identical."¹⁶⁵

The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school state that the Profound Secrets Sutra and the Lotus Sutra both expound the Consciousness-Only doctrine. They date from the third period of the Buddha's teaching¹⁶⁶ and belong to the "six difficult acts" category.

Chi-tsang of the Three Treatises school asserts that the Wisdom Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are different names for a single entity, two sutras that preach one teaching.

The Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung [of the True Word school] say that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are identical in principle and that both belong to the "six difficult" category. But the Japanese [True Word leader]

Kobo says that the Mahavairochana Sutra belongs neither to the "six difficult" nor to the "nine easy" category. The Mahavairochana Sutra, according to him, stands apart from all the sutras preached by Shakyamuni Buddha, since it was preached by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body. Likewise, some persons assert that, since the Flower Garland Sutra was preached by the Thus Come One of the reward body, it stands outside the categories of "six difficult" and "nine easy."

Such, then, are the views put forth by the founders of these four schools. The thousands of students of these schools likewise subscribe to the same views.

I must observe sadly that, although it would be simple enough to point out the error of the views propounded by these men, if I did so, the people of today would not even look in my direction. They would go on in their erroneous ways and, in the end, would slander me to the ruler of the country and put my life in jeopardy. Nevertheless, our merciful father Shakyamuni Buddha, when he faced his end in the grove of sal trees, stated as his dying instructions that we are to "rely on the Law and not upon persons."¹⁶⁷ "Not relying upon persons" means that when persons of the first, second, third, and fourth ranks¹⁶⁸ preach, even though they are bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy and Manjushri who have attained the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, if they do not preach with the sutra in hand, then they are not to be accepted.

It is also laid down that one should "rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final."¹⁶⁹ We must therefore look carefully among the sutras to determine which are complete and final and which are not, and put our faith in the former. Bodhisattva Nagarjuna in his *Commentary on the Ten Stages*

Sutra states, "Do not rely on treatises that distort the sutras; rely on those that are faithful to the sutras." The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai says, "That which accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so."¹⁷⁰ The Great Teacher Dengyo says, "Depend upon the preachings of the Buddha, and do not put faith in traditions handed down orally."¹⁷¹ Enchin, also known as the Great Teacher Chisho, says, "In transmitting the teachings, rely on the written words [of scriptures]."¹⁷²

To be sure, the leaders of the various schools whose opinions I have quoted above all appear to base themselves on some groups of sutras and treatises in attempting to establish which teachings are the most superior. But these men all cling firmly to the doctrines of their own school and perpetuate the erroneous views handed down from their predecessors, so that their judgments are characterized by twisted interpretations and personal feelings. Their doctrines are no more than private opinions that have been dressed up and glorified.

The non-Buddhist schools of such men as Vatsa and Vaipulya, which appeared in India after the Buddha's passing, are even more wrong in their views and more cunning in their doctrines than their counterparts before the Buddha [because they borrowed ideas from Buddhism]. Similarly, since the introduction of Buddhism to China in the Later Han dynasty, non-Buddhist views and writings have become even more wrong and cunning than the pre-Buddhist writings of Confucianism that deal with the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of antiquity. Also the teachers of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, True Word, and other schools, jealous of the correct doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school, brazenly interpret the words of the true sutra in such

a way that they will accord with the provisional teachings.

Those who seek the way, however, should reject such one-sided views, transcending disputes between one's own school and others, and should not treat others with contempt.

In the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says, "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, [this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand]."¹⁷³

Miao-lo remarks: "Though other sutras may call themselves the king among sutras, there is none that announces itself as foremost among all the sutras preached in the past, now being preached, or to be preached in the future."¹⁷⁴ He also says: "Concerning [the Buddha's statement] that this wonderful sutra surpasses all those of past, present, and future, there are those who persist in going astray. Thus they commit the grave fault of slandering the sutra and for many long kalpas are subjected to sufferings."¹⁷⁵

Startled by these passages in the sutra and its commentaries, I examined the entire body of sutras and the expositions and commentaries of the various teachers, and found that my doubts and suspicions melted away. But now those foolish True Word priests rely upon their mudras and mantras and believe that the True Word school is superior to the Lotus Sutra, simply because the Great Teacher Jikaku and their other teachers have assured them that the True Word is superior. Their views are not worthy of discussion.

The Secret Solemnity Sutra says: "The Ten Stages,¹⁷⁶ Flower Garland, Kimnara King Great Tree, Supernatural Powers, Shrimala, and the other sutras all derive from this sutra. Thus the Secret Solemnity Sutra is the greatest of all sutras."

The Great Cloud Sutra states: "This sutra is the wheel-turning king among

all sutras. Why is this? Because in this sutra is set forth the doctrine of the constancy of the Buddha nature as the true nature of all beings."

The Six Paramitas Sutra says: "All the correct teachings expounded by the countless Buddhas of the past and the eighty-four thousand wonderful teachings that I have now expounded may as a whole be divided into five categories: first, sutras (the Buddha's teachings); second, vinaya (monastic rules); third, abhidharma (treatises); fourth, prajna-paramita (the teachings of the perfection of wisdom); and fifth, dharani (mystic formulas). The works in these five collections will instruct sentient beings. Among sentient beings there may be those who cannot accept and abide by the sutras, vinaya, abhidharma, and prajna-paramita, or there may be sentient beings who commit various evil acts such as the four major offenses, the eight major offenses, or the five cardinal sins that lead to the hell of incessant suffering, or slander the correct and equal sutras, or are icchantikas who disbelieve Buddhism itself. In order to wipe out such crimes, give quick release to the offenders, and allow them to enter into nirvana at once, I preached for their sake this collection of dharanis.

"These five divisions of the Dharma are compared to the flavors of milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee, respectively, with ghee as the finest. The division containing the dharanis compares to ghee. Ghee has the finest and most subtle flavor among the five substances enumerated above and is capable of curing various sicknesses and easing the minds and bodies of sentient beings. Similarly, the dharani division stands foremost among the five divisions of the teachings because it can do away with grave offenses."

The Profound Secrets Sutra states: "At that time Bodhisattva Superlative Truth Appearing addressed the Bud-

dha, saying: 'World-Honored One, in the first period of your teaching when you were in the forest Sage Ascetics-Gathering, or Deer Park, in Varanasi, for the sake of those who wished merely to seek the vehicle of the voice-hearers, you expounded the doctrine of the four noble truths, in this way turning the wheel of the correct Law. This was a very wonderful thing, a very rare thing. No heavenly or human being in any of the countless worlds had ever been able to expound such a doctrine as this before. And yet the wheel of the Law that you turned at that time left room for improvement, left room for doubt. It was not yet final in meaning and offered ample opportunity for dispute.

"Then, World-Honored One, in the second period of your teaching, for the sake of those who wished merely to seek the great vehicle,¹⁷⁷ you taught that all phenomena are without distinctive natures of their own, that there is no birth or death, that all things are basically in a state of quietude, and that the nature of beings as they exist constitutes nirvana. You turned the wheel of the correct Law, although you did not reveal the whole truth. This was even more wonderful, an even rarer thing. But the wheel of the Law that you turned at that time left room for improvement, left room for doubt. It was not yet final in meaning and offered ample opportunity for dispute.

"Now, World-Honored One, in the third period of your teaching, for the sake of those who wish to practice the vehicle that saves all beings, you taught that all phenomena are without distinctive natures, that there is no birth or death, that all things are basically in a state of quietude, and that the nature of beings as they exist constitutes nirvana—and then you have taught that the "nature" you spoke of itself lacks anything that can be called a nature. You have turned the wheel of

the correct Law and expounded these doctrines in their perfect form. This is most wonderful, the rarest thing of all. This wheel of the Law that you have turned leaves no room for improvement, no room for doubt. It is truly complete and final in meaning and offers no opportunity for dispute.”

The Great Wisdom Sutra says: “When one regards whatever teachings one hears, either secular or Buddhist, as an expedient means, one is brought to understand that these can be incorporated into the profound principles that prajna, or Buddha wisdom, alone can grasp. When, with the same wisdom, one understands that all secular matters and actions represent the essential nature of things, one will see not a thing that is outside that essential nature.”

The first volume of the Mahavairochana Sutra states: “Master of Secrets [Vajrasattva], there is a great vehicle practice that arouses the mind that is without attachment to things and leads one to understand that all phenomena are without individual natures. Why is this? Because in past times those who practiced this way were able to observe the alaya-consciousness within the five components, and to realize that individual natures are illusory.”

The same sutra also says: “Master of Secrets, these men in this way cast aside the concept of non-self and came to realize that the mind exists in a realm of complete freedom, and that the individual mind has from the beginning never known birth [or death].”

It also says: “Emptiness is by nature removed from the sense organs and their objects. It has no form or boundaries; beyond any futile theory, it is equal to space. It represents the ultimate in the absence of individual nature.”

It also says: “The Buddha Mahavairochana addressed the Master of Secrets, saying, ‘Master of Secrets, what is the

meaning of enlightenment? It means to understand one’s own mind as it truly is.’”

The Flower Garland Sutra states: “Among the various beings of all the different worlds, there are few who seek to practice the vehicle of the voice-hearers. There are still fewer who seek that of the cause-awakened ones, and those who seek the great vehicle are extremely rare. To seek the great vehicle is relatively easy to do, but to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. And how much more difficult it is to uphold this sutra, keep its teachings correctly in mind, practice them as directed, and understand their true meaning.

“To take the major world system and hold it on the top of your head without moving for the space of a kalpa is not such a difficult thing to do. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. To offer musical instruments for the space of a kalpa to all the living beings who are as countless as the dust particles of the major world system will not gain one much merit. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra will gain one merit in great quantity. To hold ten Buddha lands in the palm of one’s hand and remain stationary in the midst of the air for the space of a kalpa is not so difficult to do. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. To offer musical instruments for the space of a kalpa to all the living beings who are as countless as the dust particles of those ten Buddha lands will not gain one much merit. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra will gain one merit in great quantity. For the space of a kalpa one may honor and give alms to the various Thus Come Ones who are as countless as the dust particles of those ten Buddha lands. But if one can accept and abide by the doctrines of this chapter,¹⁷⁸ one will gain vastly greater merit.”

The Nirvana Sutra says: "Although the various correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle will bring inestimable merit, there is no way to describe how much greater is the merit gained through this sutra. It is a hundred times, a thousand times, a billion times greater, greater in a way that is beyond calculation or simile. Good man, milk comes from the cow, cream is made from milk, curdled milk is made from cream, butter is made from curdled milk, and ghee is made from butter. Ghee is the finest of all. One who eats it will be cured of all illnesses, just as if all kinds of medicinal properties were contained in it. Good man, the Buddha is like this. The Buddha brought forth the twelve divisions of discourse. From among these twelve divisions he brought forth the sutras, from among the sutras he brought forth the correct and equal sutras, from the correct and equal sutras he brought forth the doctrine of prajna-paramita (the perfection of wisdom), and from the prajna-paramita he brought forth the Nirvana Sutra. The Nirvana Sutra is comparable to ghee. Ghee here is a metaphor for the Buddha nature."

When we compare these sutra passages that I have just quoted with those of the Lotus Sutra that describe it as the greatest among the sutras the Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach," and deal with the six difficult and nine easy acts, the latter stand out like the bright moon beside the stars, or Mount Sumeru beside the other eight mountain ranges that surround it. And yet Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, and Kobo of the True Word school, all men who were believed to possess the Buddha eye, did not understand the above passages of the Lotus Sutra. How then could the ordinary scholars of the time, who appear to be quite blind, be ex-

pected to judge the difference between the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras! This difference is as plain as black and white, or Mount Sumeru side by side with a mustard seed, yet these men go astray. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they are also confused by principles that are as elusive as air. Unless one can perceive the relative profundity of the various writings, one cannot judge the worth of the principles they reveal.

The passages [from the eight sutras] quoted above appear in separate volumes and are out of sequence [in terms of their relative depth]. Since this makes it difficult to discern the worth of the various teachings, I will explain these passages to help the ignorant understand.

When it comes to kings, there are great kings and petty kings, and in any matter whatsoever, there are parts and there is the whole. We have talked about the simile of the five flavors of milk, but we must understand when this simile is being applied to Buddhist teachings as a whole and when it is being applied to one part of those teachings.

The Six Paramitas Sutra teaches that sentient beings can attain enlightenment, but it refuses to apply this to those without the nature of enlightenment. And of course it mentions nothing about the doctrine that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment countless ages in the past.

The Six Paramitas Sutra cannot in fact even compare with the Nirvana Sutra, which compares itself with ghee among the five flavors, much less with the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. And yet the Great Teacher Kobo of Japan, misled by the above-quoted passage of the Six Paramitas Sutra, assigned the Lotus Sutra to the fourth flavor, or that of butter. If the so-called ghee of the dharanis (mystic formulas) cannot even match

the so-called ghee of the Nirvana Sutra, then how could he possibly make such an obvious mistake? And yet he writes that "the Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee,"¹⁷⁹ calling T'ien-t'ai and others thieves. And in a boastful vein, he declares, "What a pity it is that the worthies of ancient times were not able to taste this ghee."

Putting all this aside, I will point out the truth for the sake of my followers. Because others do not choose to believe it now, they are persons who thereby form a reverse relation. By tasting a single drop, one can tell the flavor of the great ocean, and by observing a single flower in bloom, one can predict the advent of spring. One does not have to cross the water to far-off Sung China, spend three years traveling to Eagle Peak in India,¹⁸⁰ enter the palace of the dragon king the way Nagarjuna did, visit Bodhisattva Maitreya [in the Tushita heaven] the way Bodhisattva Asanga did,¹⁸¹ or be present at the two places and three assemblies when Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra, in order to judge the relative merits of the Buddha's lifetime teachings. It is said that snakes can tell seven days in advance when a flood is going to occur. This is because they are akin to dragons [who make the rain fall]. Crows can tell what lucky or unlucky events are going to take place throughout the course of a year. This is because in a past existence they were diviners. Birds are better at flying than human beings. And I, Nichiren, am better at judging the relative merits of sutras than Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, and Kobo of the True Word school. That is because I follow in the footsteps of the teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo. If Ch'eng-kuan and the others had not accepted the teachings of T'ien-t'ai and

Dengyo, how could they have expected to escape the sin of slandering the Law?¹⁸²

I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day Japan. I have dedicated my life to the Lotus Sutra, and my name will be handed down in ages to come. If one is lord of the great ocean, then all the gods of the various rivers will obey one. If one is king of Mount Sumeru, then the gods of the various other mountains cannot help but serve one. If a person fulfills the teaching of "the six difficult and nine easy acts" of the Lotus Sutra, then, even though he may not have read the entire body of sutras, all should follow him.

In addition to the three pronouncements of the Buddha in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the "Devadatta" chapter contains two enlightening admonitions. [The first reveals that Devadatta will attain Buddhahood.] Devadatta was a man of incorrigible disbelief, of the type called icchantika, and yet it is predicted that he will in the future become a Buddha called the Thus Come One Heavenly King. The forty volumes of the Nirvana Sutra state that [all beings, including the icchantikas, possess the Buddha nature, but] the actual proof of that is found in this chapter of the Lotus Sutra. There are countless other persons such as the monk Sunakshatra or King Ajatashatru who have committed the five cardinal sins and slandered the Law, but Devadatta is cited as one example to represent all the countless others; he is the chief offender, and it is assumed that all lesser offenders will fare as he does. Thus it is revealed that all those who commit the five or the seven cardinal sins¹⁸³ or who slander the Law or who are icchantikas inherently opposed to taking faith will become Buddhas like the Thus Come One Heavenly King. Poison turns into sweet dew, the finest of all flavors.

[The second admonition concerns

the fact that the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood.] When she attained Buddhahood, this does not mean simply that one person did so. It reveals the fact that all women will attain Buddhahood. In the various Hinayana sutras that were preached before the Lotus Sutra, it is denied that women can ever attain Buddhahood. In the Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, it would appear that women can attain Buddhahood or be reborn in the pure land. But they may do so only after they have changed into some other form. It is not the kind of immediate attainment of Buddhahood that is based on the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Thus it is an attainment of Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land in name only and not in reality. The dragon king's daughter represents "one example that stands for all the rest."¹⁸⁴ When the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood, it opened up the way to attaining Buddhahood for all women of later ages.

Confucianism preaches filial piety and care for one's parents, but it is limited to this present life. It provides no way for one to assist one's parents in their future lives, and the Confucian sages and worthies are therefore sages and worthies in name only and not in reality. Brahmanism, though it recognizes the existence of past and future lives, similarly offers no means to assist one's parents to a better life in the future. Buddhism alone can do so, and thus it is the true way of sages and worthies. But in the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, and in the schools based on these sutras, to gain the way even for oneself is impossible. One can hardly hope to do anything for one's parents either. Though the texts of these sutras may say [that they can bring about enlightenment], in reality that is not the case. Only with the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, in which the dragon

king's daughter attained Buddhahood, did it become evident that the attainment of Buddhahood was a possibility for all mothers. And when it was revealed that even an evil man such as Devadatta could attain Buddhahood, it became evident that Buddhahood was a possibility for all fathers. The Lotus Sutra is *The Classic of Filial Piety of Buddhism*. This ends my discussion of the two admonitions contained in the "Devadatta" chapter.

Awed by the five proclamations of the Buddha [made in the "Treasure Tower" and "Devadatta" chapters], the countless bodhisattvas promised the Buddha that they would propagate the Lotus Sutra, as described in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter. I will hold up this passage of the sutra like a bright mirror so that all may see how the present-day priests of the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools and their lay supporters are guilty of slandering the Law.

On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded.¹⁸⁵ It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado and, in the second month of the following year, snowbound, is writing this to send to his close disciples. [The description of the evil age in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter seems] terrible, but [one who cares nothing about oneself for the sake of the Law has] nothing to be frightened about. Others reading it will be terrified. This scriptural passage is the bright mirror that Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions left for the future of Japan, and in which the present state of the country is reflected. It may also be regarded as a keepsake from me.

The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter states: "We beg you not to worry. After the Buddha has passed into extinction, in an age of fear and evil we will preach far and wide. There will be

many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, but we will endure all these things. In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked who will suppose they have attained what they have not attained, being proud and boastful in heart. Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement, who will claim they are practicing the true way, despising and looking down on all humankind. Greedy for profit and support, they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. These men with evil in their hearts, constantly thinking of worldly affairs, will borrow the name of forest-dwelling monks and take delight in proclaiming our faults . . . Because in the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us, they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, 'These are men of perverted views who preach non-Buddhist doctrines!' . . . In a muddied kalpa, in an evil age there will be many things to fear. Evil demons will take possession of others and through them curse, revile, and heap shame on us . . . The evil monks of that muddied age, failing to understand the Buddha's expedient means, how he preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, will confront us with foul language and angry frowns; again and again we will be banished."

The eighth volume of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* comments as follows: "In this passage, three types of arrogance are cited. First, there is a section that exposes people of mistaken views. This

represents [the arrogance and presumption of] lay people. Next, there is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of members of the Buddhist clergy. Third is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of those who pretend to be sages. Of these three, the first can be endured. The second exceeds the first, and the third is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are."

The Dharma Teacher Chih-tu writes in *Tung-ch'un*: "First, regarding the verse section that begins with 'There will be many ignorant people': The first part tells how the votaries of the Lotus Sutra must endure evils inflicted by the body, mouth, and mind of their opponents. This refers to non-Buddhists and evil lay Buddhists. The next part that begins with 'In that evil age' deals with arrogant members of the Buddhist clergy. The third part that begins, 'Or there will be forest-dwelling monks,' deals with members of the clergy who [pretend to be sages and use their positions so that they can] act as leaders of all the other evil people." And the same text goes on to say: "The section that begins, 'Because in the midst of the great assembly,' describes how these men will appeal to the government authorities, slandering the Law and its practitioners."

In the ninth volume of the Nirvana Sutra we read: "Good man, there are icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. They pretend to be arhats, living in deserted places and speaking slanderously of the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle. When ordinary people see them, they all suppose that they are true arhats and speak of them as great bodhisattvas." It also says: "At that time, this sutra will be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa. In that age there will be evil monks who will steal this sutra and divide it into

many parts, losing the color, scent, and flavor of the correct teaching that it contains. These evil men will read and recite this sutra, but they will ignore and put aside the profound and vital principles that the Thus Come One has expounded in it and replace them with ornate rhetoric and meaningless talk. They will tear off the first part of the sutra and stick it on at the end, tear off the end and put it at the beginning, put the end and the beginning in the middle and the middle at the beginning or the end. You must understand that these evil monks are the companions of the devil.”

The six-volume Parinirvana Sutra¹⁸⁶ states: “There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds. There are also arhats who resemble icchantikas but display merciful hearts. The icchantikas who look like arhats spend their time slandering the correct and equal sutras to the populace. The arhats who look like icchantikas, on the other hand, are critical of the voice-hearers and go about preaching the correct and equal sutras. They address the populace, saying, ‘You and I are all bodhisattvas. Why? Because each living being possesses the Buddha nature.’ But the populace will probably call such men icchantikas.”

In the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha speaks as follows: “After I have passed away . . . After the Former Day of the Law has ended and the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice. And they will constantly reiterate these words, ‘I have

attained arhatship!’ Outwardly they will seem to be wise and good, but within they will harbor greed and jealousy. [And when they are asked to preach the teachings, they will say nothing,] like Brahmans who have taken a vow of silence. They are not true monks—they merely have the appearance of monks. Consumed by their erroneous views, they slander the correct teaching.”

In the light of the sun and moon that are [the Lotus Sutra preached on] Eagle Peak and [the Nirvana Sutra preached at] the sal grove, or in the bright mirrors that are the commentaries by Miao-lo of P’i-ling and Chih-tu of Tung-ch’un, we can discern without a trace of obscurity the ugly faces of the priests of the various schools of present-day Japan, especially the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools. The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law says [in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter], “After the Buddha has passed into extinction, in an age of fear and evil,” and the “Peaceful Practices” chapter says, “In the evil age hereafter,” “in the latter age,” and “in the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish.” The “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter says, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law”; the “Medicine King” chapter says, “In the last five-hundred-year period.” The “Exhortation to Preach” chapter of the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law says, “In the latter age hereafter” and “in the latter age to come.” The same type of language is found in the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. T’ien-t’ai states, “In the Middle Day of the Law, the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra.”¹⁸⁷ And Dengyo states, “At the end of the Middle Day of the Law, the scholars of the six Nara schools are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra.”¹⁸⁸

In the time of T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo, [the three types of enemies men-

tioned above] had not yet appeared. But we must recall that, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and Many Treasures Buddha sat side by side in the treasure tower like the sun and moon, and the Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni had come from the ten directions and were ranged beneath the trees like so many stars, then it was said that after the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law and the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, there would be three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra. How could this pronouncement made by the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas have been an empty or a false prediction?

It is now some twenty-two hundred years since the Thus Come One passed away. Even if it were possible to point straight at the earth and miss it, if the flowers were to cease blooming in spring, still I am certain that these three powerful enemies exist in the land of Japan. If so, then who is to be numbered among the three enemies? And who is to be accounted a votary of the Lotus Sutra? It is a troubling question. Are we—I and my disciples—to be numbered among the three enemies? Or are we to be numbered among the votaries of the Lotus Sutra? A troubling question.

In the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Chao, the fourth ruler of the Chou dynasty, with the cyclical sign *kinoe-tora*, on the night of the eighth day of the fourth month, a five-colored light spread across the sky from north to south until all was as bright as noon. The earth shook in six different ways, and though no rain fell, the rivers and streams, wells and ponds brimmed with water. All the trees and plants bloomed and bore fruit. It was a wondrous happening indeed. King Chao was greatly surprised. The Grand

Historian Su Yu performed divinations and announced, "A sage has been born in the western region." "What about our country?" asked King Chao, to which Su Yu replied, "Nothing particular will happen for now. But one thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country and will bring benefit to all living beings." Su Yu was a scholar of non-Buddhist texts who had not in the slightest degree freed himself from illusions of thought and desire, and yet he was able to know what would happen a thousand years in the future. And just as he predicted, 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing, in the reign of Emperor Ming, the second ruler of the Later Han dynasty, in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67), with the cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, the doctrines of Buddhism were introduced to China.¹⁸⁹

On quite a different level is the prediction I have described above that was made by the various bodhisattvas in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas from the ten directions that were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha. In view of this prediction, how could the three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra help but be present in Japan today?

In the Buddha's Successors Sutra, the Buddha is recorded as saying: "After my passing, during the one thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, there will be twenty-four persons in succession¹⁹⁰ who will spread abroad the correct teachings as I have taught them." Mahakashyapa and Ananda [were contemporaries of the Buddha and so] we will pass them over. But a hundred years later there was the monk Parshva, six hundred years later Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, and seven hundred years later Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, along with others, all appearing just as the prophecy had said they would.

If so, how could the prophecy [in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the Lotus Sutra] be in vain? If this prophecy were at variance with the truth, then the whole Lotus Sutra would be at variance with the truth. Then the predictions that Shariputra will in the future become the Thus Come One Flower Glow and that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright would all be mere lies. In that case, the teachings put forward in the sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra would be absolutely correct, and the voice-hearers would be destined never to achieve Buddhahood. If it were true that one should give alms to a dog or a fox before giving them to a voice-hearer such as Ananda, then where would we stand?

[The passage from the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter mentions three groups of people,] saying first that "there will be many ignorant people," second that "in that evil age there will be monks," and referring third to "monks wearing clothing of patched rags." The first category of ignorant people are the important lay believers who support monks in the second and third categories. Accordingly, the Great Teacher Miao-lo, commenting on the people in the first group, says they represent the arrogance and presumption of lay people. And *T'ing-ch'un* says that they will "appeal to the government authorities,¹⁹¹ slandering the Law and its practitioners."

Concerning the second group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra, the sutra says: "In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked who will suppose they have attained what they have not attained, being proud and boastful in heart."

Similarly, the Nirvana Sutra says: "In that age there will be evil monks . . . These evil men will read and recite this sutra, but they will ignore and put

aside the profound and vital principles that the Thus Come One has expounded in it."

Great Concentration and Insight says: "If one lacks faith [in the Lotus Sutra], one will object that it pertains to the lofty realm of the sages, something far beyond the capacity of one's own wisdom to comprehend. If one lacks wisdom, one will become puffed up with arrogance and will claim to be the equal of the Buddha."

We see an example of this in the statement by the Meditation Master Tao-ch'o: "The second reason [for the difficulty in understanding the Lotus Sutra] is that its principles are very profound but human understanding is slight."¹⁹² Honen says, "Religious practices other than the Nembutsu do not accord with the people's capacities. They are not appropriate for the times."¹⁹³

[To combat such views] the tenth volume of *On "The Words and Phrases"* reads: "Probably those who are mistaken in their understanding fail to realize how great is the benefit gained even by a beginner [in the practice of the Lotus Sutra]. They assume that benefit is reserved for those who are far advanced in practice and disparage beginners. Therefore, the sutra here demonstrates its power by revealing that practice is shallow but the benefit that results is profound indeed."

The Great Teacher Dengyo declares: "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people. How do we know this is true? Because the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, 'In the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, [accept and embrace the Lotus Sutra].'"¹⁹⁴ And Eshin says, "Throughout Japan, all people share the same capacity to

attain Buddhahood through the perfect teaching.”¹⁹⁵

Now which opinion should we believe, that of Tao-ch’o and Honen or that of Dengyo and Eshin? The former has not a scrap of evidence in the sutras to support it. The latter is based firmly upon the Lotus Sutra.

Moreover, the Great Teacher Dengyo of Mount Hiei is, for all priests throughout Japan, the master of ordination into the priesthood. How could any priests turn their hearts toward a person like Honen, who is possessed by the heavenly devil, and reject the Great Teacher Dengyo, the master of ordination? If Honen was a truly wise man, why did he not, in his *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, mention the passages of explanation by Dengyo and Eshin such as I have quoted above, and resolve the contradiction? He did not do so because he is the kind of person who hides the teachings of others. When the Lotus Sutra speaks of the second type of enemy, saying, “in that evil age there will be monks,” it is referring to men like Honen who disregard the precepts and hold perverse views.

The Nirvana Sutra says: “[World-Honored One, today I have learned the correct view for the first time. World-Honored One, up till today] we all have been people of mistaken views.” Miao-lo explains this by saying, “They themselves referred to the three teachings [they had practiced until that time] as mistaken views.”¹⁹⁶ And *Great Concentration and Insight* says, “The Nirvana Sutra says, ‘Up till today we all have been people of mistaken views.’ ‘Mistaken’ is bad, is it not?” *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* says: “‘Mistaken’ is bad. Therefore, let it be known that only the perfect teaching is good. There are two meanings involved here. First, what accords with the truth is to be accounted good, and what goes against the truth is to be accounted bad. This is the meaning

from the relative viewpoint. [Second,] attachment [to this viewpoint] is bad, and transcending it is good. [This is the meaning from the absolute viewpoint.] From both the relative and absolute viewpoints, we should abandon all that is bad. To be attached to the perfect teaching is bad, and to be attached to the other [three] teachings is of course even worse.”

The goods and evils of non-Buddhist creeds, when compared with the Hinayana sutras, all represent a bad way. Similarly, the good ways of Hinayana teachings, and the four flavors and three teachings as well, when compared with the Lotus Sutra, are all mistaken and bad. The Lotus Sutra alone is correct and good. The perfect teaching of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra is so called from the relative viewpoint; from the absolute viewpoint, it must still be counted as bad. Fundamentally it falls into the category of the three teachings, and therefore it is bad in that sense as well. To practice the highest principles of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings according to the sutras is still bad. How much more so, then, is someone who would take a work of insignificant doctrines like the Meditation Sutra, which cannot compare even with the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras, as the fundamental teaching? Such a person incorporates [the ideas of] the Lotus Sutra into the Meditation Sutra and urges people to “ignore, abandon, close, and discard” the Lotus and believe only in the Nembutsu. That is what Honen, his disciples and lay supporters do, and they deserve to be called slanderers of the correct teaching.

Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions came to this world to “make certain the Law will long endure.”¹⁹⁷ Honen and the other Nembutsu priests throughout Japan declare that in the Latter Day of the Law the

Lotus Sutra will disappear before the Nembutsu. Are such persons not the enemy of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas?

Concerning the third group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra, the sutra says: "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement . . . they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers." And the six-volume Parinirvana Sutra states: "There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds. There are also arhats who resemble icchantikas but display merciful hearts. The icchantikas who look like arhats spend their time slandering the correct and equal sutras to the populace. The arhats who look like icchantikas, on the other hand, are critical of the voice-hearers and go about preaching the correct and equal sutras. They address the populace, saying, 'You and I are all bodhisattvas. Why? Because each living being possesses the Buddha nature.' But the populace will probably call such men icchantikas."

The Nirvana Sutra says: "After I have passed away . . . [After the Former Day of the Law has ended and] the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice. And they will constantly reiterate these words, 'I have attained arhatship!' Outwardly they will seem to be wise and good, but within they will harbor

greed and jealousy. [And when they are asked to preach the teachings, they will say nothing,] like Brahmans who have taken a vow of silence. They are not true monks—they merely have the appearance of monks. Consumed by their erroneous views, they slander the correct teaching."

Miao-lo writes, concerning people of this type: "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are." And *Tung-ch'un* states: "The third part that begins, 'Or there will be forest-dwelling monks,' deals with members of the clergy who [pretend to be sages and use their positions so that they can] act as leaders of all the other evil people."

As for these "members of the clergy who act as leaders of all the other evil people"—where in Japan at the present time should we look for them? On Mount Hiei? In Onjo-ji [in Otsu]? In To-ji [in Kyoto]? In the temples of Nara? In Kennin-ji [in Kyoto] or Jufuku-ji and Kencho-ji [in Kamakura]? We must examine this carefully. Do the words refer to the monks of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei who wear helmets on their heads and are dressed in armor? Do they refer to the monks of Onjo-ji who wear suits of mail on their fivefold bodies of the Law¹⁹⁸ and carry weapons? But these men do not resemble the monks "wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement" that are described in the sutra, nor do they seem to be the type who are "respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers." They are not like the men of the third group who [Miao-lo said] are "increasingly harder to recognize." It would appear, therefore, that the words refer to men such as Shoichi of Kyoto and Ryokan of Kamakura. [Even if they are identified as such,] they should not hate

others. If they have eyes, they should examine the sutra texts and compare their own behavior with them.

The first volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "There has never been anything to compare to the brightness and serenity of concentration and insight." The first volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* states, "From the time when Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty dreamed at night of the Buddha down to the Ch'en dynasty [when the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai lived], there were many who participated in the Zen school and received the robe and bowl that were handed down." *The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works* explains this by saying, "The handing down of the robe and bowl refers to the succession of Zen patriarchs from Bodhidharma on down."

The fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "There is a type called Zen men, but their masters and disciples are blind [to the truth] and lame [in practice], and both masters and disciples will fall into hell." In the seventh volume we read: "[There are ten ways necessary for understanding and practicing Buddhism correctly. Of these, except one], the nine ways have nothing in common with the ordinary priests of the world who concentrate on the written word, nor do they have anything in common with the Zen masters who concentrate on practice. Some Zen masters give all their attention to meditation alone. But their meditation is shallow and false, totally lacking in the nine ways. This is no empty assertion. Worthy persons of later ages who have eyes to see will understand the truth of what I say."

The seventh volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* states: "'Priests who concentrate on the written word' refers to men who gain no inner insight or understanding through meditation, but concern themselves

only with characteristics of the doctrine. 'Zen masters who concentrate on practice' refers to men who do not learn how to attain the truth and the corresponding wisdom, but fix their minds on the mere techniques of breath control. Theirs is the kind of [non-Buddhist] meditation that fundamentally still retains outflows. 'Some Zen masters give all their attention to meditation alone' means that, for the sake of discussion, T'ien-t'ai gives them a certain degree of recognition, but from a stricter viewpoint they lack both insight and understanding. The Zen men in the world today value only meditation [as the way to realize the truth] and have no familiarity with doctrinal teachings. In relying upon meditation alone, they interpret the sutras in their own way. They put together the eight errors and the eight winds, and talk about the Buddha as being sixteen feet in height.¹⁹⁹ They lump together the five components and the three poisons, and call them the eight errors. They equate the six sense organs with the six transcendental powers, and the four elements with the four noble truths. To interpret the sutras in such an arbitrary manner is to be guilty of the greatest falsehood. Such nonsense is not even worth discussing."

The seventh volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states: "In the past, the Zen master of Yeh and Lo²⁰⁰ became renowned throughout the length and breadth of China. When he arrived, people gathered around him from all directions like clouds, and when he left for another place, they formed a great crowd along the roads. But what profit did they derive from all this bustle and excitement? All of them regretted what they had done when they were on their deathbed."

In the seventh volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* we read: "The text speaks of the 'Zen master of

Yeh and Lo.' Yeh is in Hsiang-chou and was the capital of the Ch'i and Wei dynasties. The founder of Zen caused Buddhism to flourish there and converted the people of the region. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, out of deference to the people of his time, refrains from naming anyone specifically. Lo refers to the city of Lo-yang."

The six-volume Parinirvana Sutra says, "The extreme is impossible to see. That is, the extremely evil deeds done by the icchantika are all but impossible to perceive." Or, as Miao-lo has said, "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because [the second and third ones are] increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are."

Those without eyes, those with only one eye, and those with distorted vision cannot see these three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra who have appeared at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. But those who have attained a portion of the Buddha eye can see who they are. "They will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders." And *Tung-ch'un* states, "These men will appeal to the government authorities, slandering the Law and its practitioners."

In the past, when the Middle Day of the Law was coming to an end, Gomyo, Shuen, and other priests presented petitions to the throne in which they slandered the Great Teacher Den-kyo. Now, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, Ryokan, Nen'a, and others drew up false documents and presented them to the shogunate. Are they not to be counted among the third group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra?

Nowadays the teachers of the Nembutsu address the "rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders" who support the Tendai Lotus school, saying, "The principles of the Lotus Sutra are very profound, but our understanding is slight. The doctrine it teaches is

extremely deep; our capabilities are extremely shallow." [Just as *Great Concentration and Insight* says,] they "object that it pertains to the lofty realm of the sages, something far beyond the capacity of one's own wisdom to comprehend."

Again, the men of the Zen school say: "The Lotus Sutra is a finger pointing at the moon, but the Zen school is the moon itself. Once one has the moon, of what use is the finger? Zen is the mind of the Buddha. The Lotus Sutra is the word of the Buddha. After the Buddha had finished preaching the Lotus Sutra and all the other sutras, he held up a single flower and through this gesture conveyed his enlightenment to Mahakashyapa alone.²⁰¹ As a token of this tacit communication, the Buddha presented Mahakashyapa with his own robe, which together with the enlightenment has been handed down through the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and so on through the six patriarchs of China." For many years now, the whole country has been intoxicated and deceived by this kind of falsehood.

Again, the eminent priests of the Tendai and True Word schools, though nominally representatives of their respective schools, are in fact quite ignorant of their teachings. In the depths of their greed and out of fear of the courtiers and warriors, they compromise with the assertions of the Nembutsu and Zen followers and sing their praises. Long ago, Many Treasures Buddha and the various Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha acknowledged their allegiance to the Lotus Sutra, saying that they would "make certain that the Law will long endure." But now the eminent leaders of the Tendai school acknowledge the assertion that the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra are very profound but that human understanding is slight. As a result, the Lotus Sutra exists in Japan today in name

only—there is not a single person who actually practices it and attains enlightenment. Who can be called a votary of the Lotus Sutra? We see priests who burn down temples and pagodas and are exiled in numbers too great to count. And we see numerous eminent priests who fawn on the courtiers and warriors and are hated for it by the people. Can men such as these be called the votaries of the Lotus Sutra?

Because the predictions of the Buddha are not false, the three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra already fill the country. And yet, as though to belie the golden words of the Buddha, there seems to be no votary of the Lotus Sutra. How can this be? How can this be?

But let us consider. Who is it who is cursed and spoken ill of by the populace? Who is the priest who is attacked with swords and staves? Who is the priest who, because of the Lotus Sutra, is accused in petitions submitted to the courtiers and warriors? Who is the priest who is “again and again banished,” as the Lotus Sutra predicted? Who else in Japan besides Nichiren has fulfilled these predictions?

But I, Nichiren, am not a votary of the Lotus Sutra, because, contrary to the prediction, the gods have cast me aside. Who, then, in this present age will be the votary of the Lotus Sutra and fulfill the prophecy of the Buddha?

The Buddha and Devadatta are like a form and its shadow—in lifetime after lifetime, they are never separated. Prince Shotoku and his archenemy Moriya²⁰² appeared at the same time, like the blossom and the calyx of the lotus. If there exists a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the three types of enemies are bound to exist as well. The three types of enemies have already appeared. Who, then, is the votary of the Lotus Sutra? Let us seek him out and make him our teacher. [As the Lotus Sutra says, to find such a person is as

rare as for] a one-eyed turtle to chance upon a piece of driftwood [with a hole just the right size to hold him].²⁰³

Someone may raise this question: It would surely appear that the three types of enemies are present today, but there is no votary of the Lotus Sutra. If one were to say that you [Nichiren] are the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the following serious discrepancies would become apparent. The Lotus Sutra states, “The young sons of heavenly beings will wait on him and serve him. Swords and staves will not touch him and poison will have no power to harm him.”²⁰⁴ It also reads, “If people speak ill of and revile him, their mouths will be closed and stopped up.”²⁰⁵ And it states, “They [who have heard the Law] will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.”²⁰⁶ It also states, “[If there are those who . . . trouble and disrupt the preachers of the Law], their heads will split into seven pieces like the branches of the arjaka tree.”²⁰⁷ Furthermore, it reads, “In this present existence they [the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra] will gain the reward of good fortune.”²⁰⁸ And it adds: “If anyone sees a person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person, whether what he speaks is true or not, he will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy.”²⁰⁹ [How do you explain these discrepancies?]

Answer: These doubts of yours are most opportune. I will take the occasion to clear up the points that puzzle you. The “Never Disparaging” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “They spoke ill of him [Bodhisattva Never Disparaging] and cursed him.” And again, “Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him.” The Nirvana Sutra states, “[They will] even kill him or do him injury.” The Lotus Sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this

sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, [how much more will this be so after his passing?]"

The Buddha encountered acts of hostility, known as the nine great ordeals, such as being wounded on the toe by Devadatta, and yet he was a votary of the Lotus Sutra, was he not? And Bodhisattva Never Disparaging [who, as we have seen above, was cursed and beaten]—was he not a votary of the one vehicle teaching? Maudgalyayana was beaten to death by a Brahman group called Bamboo Staff sometime after the Lotus Sutra predicted that he would attain Buddhahood in a future life. Among the [twenty-five] leaders in the lineage of Buddhism, the fourteenth, Bodhisattva Aryadeva, and the twenty-fifth, the Venerable Aryasimha,²¹⁰ were murdered. Were these men not votaries of the Lotus Sutra? Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, and Fa-tao was branded on the face and exiled south of the Yangtze River. Were these men not upholders of the one vehicle teaching? Among scholars of secular learning, both Po Chü-i and Sugawara no Michizane, who was posthumously revered as the god of Kitano Shrine, were exiled to distant places, and yet were they not worthy men?

If we consider the second part of your question, we must note the following points. Those who did not commit the error of slandering the Lotus Sutra in their previous existences will become votaries of the Lotus Sutra in their present lives. If such persons should be subjected to persecution under a false charge of having committed worldly offenses, then those who persecute them ought to suffer some kind of immediate retribution. It should be like the case of the asuras who shoot arrows at Shakra or the garuda birds that try to eat the dragon of Anavatapta Lake, but who both invariably suffer injury themselves in-

stead. And yet T'ien-t'ai says, "The ills and pains I suffer at present are all due to causes in the past, and the meritorious deeds that I do in my present life will be rewarded in the future."²¹¹ Likewise, the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra states: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present." The "Never Disparaging" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "when his offenses had been wiped out."²¹² This indicates that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was attacked with tiles and stones because he had in the past committed the offense of slandering the Lotus Sutra.

Next, we should note that persons who are inevitably destined to fall into hell in their next existence, even though they commit grave offenses in this life, will suffer no immediate punishment. The icchantikas are examples of this.

The Nirvana Sutra states, "Bodhisattva Kashyapa said to the Buddha, 'World-Honored One, as you have described, the rays of the Buddha's great nirvana enter the pores of all living beings.'" It also states, "Bodhisattva Kashyapa said to the Buddha, 'World-Honored One, how can those who have not yet conceived a desire for enlightenment create the causes that will lead to enlightenment?'" In reply, "the Buddha said to Kashyapa: 'There may be persons who listen to the Nirvana Sutra and yet claim that they have no need to conceive a desire for enlightenment, and instead slander the correct teaching. Such persons will immediately dream at night of demons, and their hearts will be filled with terror. The demons will say to them, 'How foolish you are, my friend! If you do not set your mind on enlightenment now, your life span will be cut

short!" These persons quake with fear, and as soon as they wake from the dream, they set their minds on enlightenment. And you should know that such persons will become great bodhisattvas.' In other words, although one might slander the correct teaching, if one is not an unspeakably evil person, one will be warned at once in a dream and will have a change of heart.

[According to the Nirvana Sutra, the icchantikas, on the other hand, are likened to] "dead trees or stony mountains" that can never bring forth growth. They are "scorched seeds that, although they encounter the sweet rain," will not grow. "Bright pearls have the power, when put into turbid water, to change it into clear water . . . But when thrown into the mud of icchantika, they cannot purify it." They are [like persons without a wound on their hands when the sutra says], "If a person with a wound on his hand handles poison,²¹³ it will enter his body, but it will not enter the body of a person without a wound." "Just as torrents of rain cannot remain suspended in the sky, [so the rain of the Law cannot remain in the sky of icchantika]."²¹⁴ Through these various similes we can know that icchantikas of the most evil type will invariably fall into the hell of incessant suffering in their next life. Therefore, they do not suffer any immediate punishment in this life. They are like the evil rulers of ancient China, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and King Chou of the Yin dynasty. During their reigns, heaven did not display any unusual manifestations as a warning. That was because their offenses were so grave that their dynasties were already destined to perish.

Third, it would appear that the guardian deities have deserted this country, and this is probably one reason why offenders do not suffer any immediate punishment. In an age that slanders the Law, guardian deities will take

their leave, and the various heavenly gods will cease to lend their protection. That is why the votaries of the correct teaching do not receive any sign of divine favor but, on the contrary, encounter severe difficulties. The Golden Light Sutra says, "Those who perform good deeds day by day languish and dwindle in number." We are living in an evil country and an evil age. I have discussed all this in detail in my work entitled *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.

This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law. Shariputra practiced the way of the bodhisattva for sixty kalpas, but he abandoned the way because he could not endure the ordeal of the Brahman who begged for his eye.²¹⁵ Of those who received the seeds of Buddhahood in the remote past and those who did so from the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, many abandoned the seeds and suffered in hell for the long periods of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas and major world system dust particle kalpas, respectively, because they followed evil companions.

Whether tempted by good or threatened by evil, if one casts aside the Lotus Sutra, one destines oneself for hell. Here I will make a great vow. Though I might be offered the rulership of Japan if I would only abandon the Lotus Sutra, accept the teachings of the Meditation Sutra, and look forward to rebirth in the Pure Land, though I might be told that my father and mother will have their heads cut off if I do not recite the Nembutsu—whatever obstacles I might encounter, so long as persons of wisdom do not prove my teachings to be false, I will never yield! All other troubles are no more to me than dust before the wind.

I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great

ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it!

Question: How can you be certain that the exiles and sentences of death imposed on you are the result of karma created in the past?

Answer: A bronze mirror will reflect color and form. The First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty had a lie-detecting mirror that would reveal offenses committed in this present life. The mirror of the Buddha's Law makes clear the causal actions committed in the past. The Parinirvana Sutra states: "Good man, because people committed countless offenses and accumulated much evil karma in the past, they must expect to suffer retribution for everything they have done. They may be despised, cursed with an ugly appearance, be poorly clad and poorly fed, seek wealth in vain, be born to an impoverished and lowly family or one with erroneous views, or be persecuted by their sovereign. They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions. It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution."

This sutra passage and my own experience tally exactly. By now all the doubts that I have raised earlier should be dispelled, and thousands of difficulties are nothing to me. Let me show you phrase by phrase how the text applies to me. "They may be despised," or, as the Lotus Sutra says, people will "despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them"—and in exactly that manner I have been treated with contempt and arrogance for over twenty years. "They may be cursed with an ugly appearance," "They may be poorly clad"—these too apply to me. "They may be poorly fed"—that applies to me. "They may seek wealth in vain"—that applies to me. "They may be born to an impoverished and lowly family"—that applies to me. "They may be per-

secuted by their sovereign"—can there be any doubt that the passage applies to me? The Lotus Sutra says, "Again and again we will be banished," and the passage from the Parinirvana Sutra says, "They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions." [These passages also apply to me.]

The passage also says, "It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution." The fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* has this to say on the subject: "The feeble merits produced by a mind only half intent on the practice cannot alter [the realm of karma]. But if one carries out the practice of concentration and insight so as to observe 'health' and 'illness,'²¹⁶ then one can alter the cycle of birth and death [in the realm of karma]." It also says, "[As practice progresses and understanding grows], the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere."

From the beginningless past I have been born countless times as an evil ruler who deprived the votaries of the Lotus Sutra of their robes and rations, their fields and crops, much as the people of Japan in the present day go about destroying the temples dedicated to the Lotus Sutra. In addition, countless times I cut off the heads of the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. Some of these grave offenses I have already paid for, but there must be some that are not paid for yet. Even if I seem to have paid for them all, there are still ill effects that remain. When the time comes for me to transcend the sufferings of birth and death, it will be only after I have completely freed myself from these grave offenses. My merits are insignificant, but these offenses are grave.

If I practiced the teachings of the provisional sutras, then these retributions for my past grave offenses would not appear. When iron is heated, if it is

not strenuously forged, the impurities in it will not become apparent. Only when it is subjected to the tempering process again and again will the flaws appear. When pressing hemp seeds, if one does not press very hard, one will not get much oil from them. Likewise, when I vigorously berate those throughout the country who slander the Law, I meet with great difficulties. It must be that my actions in defending the Law in this present life are calling forth retributions for the grave offenses of my past. If iron does not come into contact with fire, it remains black, but if it contacts fire, it turns red. If you place a log across a swift stream, waves will pile up like hills. If you disturb a sleeping lion, it will roar loudly.

The Nirvana Sutra says: "It is like the case of a poor woman. She has no house to live in and no one to aid or protect her, and in addition she is beset by illness, hunger, and thirst; she wanders through various places, begging for a living. While staying at an inn, she gives birth to a baby, but the master of the inn drives her away. Though the baby has just been born, she takes it up in her arms and sets out, hoping to journey to another land. But along the way, she encounters fierce wind and rain, and she is troubled by cold and bitten by mosquitoes, gadflies, hornets, and poisonous insects. Coming at length to the Ganges River, she clasps her child in her arms and begins to cross it. Although the current is very swift, she will not let go of her child, and in the end both mother and child are drowned. But through the merit that the woman gained by her loving tenderness, she is reborn after her death in the Brahma heaven.

"Manjushri, if there are good men who wish to defend the correct teaching, they should emulate this poor woman crossing the Ganges who sacrificed her life because of her love for her child. Good man, the bodhisattvas

who guard the Law should behave in this way. They should not hesitate to give up their lives. Then, although they do not seek emancipation, emancipation will come of itself, just as the poor woman, though she did not seek to be reborn in the Brahma heaven, was nevertheless reborn there."

The Great Teacher Chang-an interprets this story from the Nirvana Sutra in terms of the three obstacles.²¹⁷ Observe how he does this. The fact that the woman is called "poor" indicates that the person does not have the treasure of the Law. The fact that she is identified as a woman indicates that the person has a measure of tenderness. The "inn" signifies an impure land. The child she bears is the heart that has faith in the Lotus Sutra, or the wisdom that perceives one's inherent Buddha nature. Being driven out of the inn by its master signifies that the person is exiled. The fact that the baby has just been born means that very little time has passed since the person began to have faith in the Lotus Sutra. The fierce wind the woman encounters is the imperial decree sentencing the person to exile. The mosquitoes, gadflies, and other insects are the "many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of" the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The fact that both mother and child are drowned indicates that, though in the end the person had his head cut off, he never renounced his faith in the Lotus Sutra. Being reborn in the Brahma heaven means being reborn in the realm of Buddhahood.

The power of karmic rewards extends to all of the Ten Worlds, even to the realm of Buddhahood. Even though one might go around killing people throughout the provinces of Japan and China, if one does not commit any of the five cardinal sins or does not slander the Law, one will not fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Yet one must go through other evil paths for a period of

numerous years. Even if one observes ten thousand precepts and performs ten thousand good deeds, if one does so with a mind only half intent, one cannot be reborn in any heaven of the world of form. To be born a king in the Brahma heaven of that world, one must add the spirit of compassion to one's karma that is laden with outflows and draws one to the world of humanity. The poor woman in the sutra passage was reborn in the Brahma heaven because of her concern for her child. Her case is different from the nature of causality that is commonly known. Chang-an offers two interpretations of it, but in the end it is nothing other than the loving kindness with which the woman cares for her child that makes the difference. Her concern concentrates on one thing just like the Buddhist practice of concentration. She thinks of nothing but her child, which is similar to Buddhist compassion. That must be why, although she created no other causes to bring it about, she was reborn in the Brahma heaven.

The path to Buddhahood is not to be found in the Flower Garland doctrine of the phenomenal world as created by the mind alone, in the eight negations of the Three Treatises school, in the Consciousness-Only doctrine of the Dharma Characteristics school, or in the True Word type of meditation on the five elements of the universe. Only the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is the path to Buddhahood. Even in the case of this doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, we do not possess the kind of wisdom and understanding to comprehend it fully. Nevertheless, among all the sutras preached by the Buddha during his lifetime, the Lotus Sutra alone contains this jewel that is the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. The doctrines of the other sutras are merely yellow stones that appear to

be jewels. They are like sand, from which you can extract no oil no matter how hard you squeeze it, or a barren woman who can never bear a child. Even a wise person cannot become a Buddha through the other sutras, but with the Lotus Sutra, even fools can plant the seeds that lead to Buddhahood. As the sutra passage I have quoted earlier puts it, "Although they do not seek emancipation, emancipation will come of itself."

Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not have doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith.

Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes. Some of them feel pity for their wives and children and grieve at the thought of parting from them in this life. In countless births throughout many long kalpas they have had wives and children but parted from them in every existence. They have done so unwillingly and not because of their desire to pursue the way of the Buddha. Since they must part with them in any case, they should remain faithful to their belief in the Lotus Sutra and make their way to Eagle Peak, so that they may lead their wives and children there as well.

Question: You insist that the followers of the Nembutsu and Zen schools will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. This shows that you have a contentious heart. You yourself are in danger of falling into the realm of the asuras. Moreover, it is said in the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "He should not delight in

speaking of the faults of other people or scriptures. He should not display contempt for other teachers of the Law." It is because you are going against this passage in the sutra that you have been abandoned by heaven, is it not?

Answer: *Great Concentration and Insight* says: "There are two ways to spread the Buddha's teachings. The first is called shoju and the second is called shakubuku. When the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter says that one should not speak of the shortcomings of others, it is referring to the shoju method. But when the Nirvana Sutra says that one should carry swords and staves or that one should cut off their heads, it is referring to the shakubuku method. They differ in approach in that one is lenient and the other severe, but they both bring benefit."

On "*Great Concentration and Insight*" states: "With regard to the two ways of spreading the Buddha's teachings, the passage from the Nirvana Sutra, 'carry swords and staves,' is found in the third volume where it says, 'Defenders of the correct teaching need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. [Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows, halberds and lances.]' . . . And later on, the sutra tells of King Sen'yo [who put to death those who slandered the correct teaching]. It also mentions how the new physician, [explaining that the medicine from milk prescribed by the old physician was dangerous], forbade its usage, saying, 'If anyone takes any more of this medicine, he shall have his head cut off.'²¹⁸ These passages also demonstrate how the method of shakubuku should be applied to persons who go against the Law. All the sutras and treatises deal with one or the other of these two methods."

The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra reads: "Question: The Nirvana Sutra clearly states that one should associate closely with the ruler, bearing bows and

arrows and helping overthrow evil persons.²¹⁹ And yet [the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter of] the Lotus Sutra says that one should stay away from persons in power and should behave with humility and loving kindness. There seems to be a major contradiction between the sternness of one approach and the gentleness of the other. Why should they differ so?

"Answer: The Nirvana Sutra speaks mostly about the shakubuku approach. But it also mentions dwelling in the state where one looks on all living beings as one's own children. Could it say so if it did not have the shoju approach? The Lotus Sutra is mainly concerned with the shoju approach [as in the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter]. But [in the 'Dharani' chapter] there is also the curse [on those who trouble the preachers of the Law] that says they will have their heads split into seven pieces. Could it say so if it did not have the shakubuku approach? Both sutras employ one or the other of the two methods depending on the context. The method chosen should be that which accords with the time."

The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra states: "When monks or laymen are defending the Law, the most important thing is for them to adopt the proper basic mental attitude. They should disregard external details, stick to the principles, and in this way spread the teachings of the Nirvana Sutra. Therefore, it says that defenders of the correct teaching need not abide by petty regulations. And that is why it says they need not practice the rules of proper behavior. In past times the age was peaceful, and the Law spread throughout the country. At that time it was proper to observe the precepts and not to carry staves. But now the age is perilous, and the Law is overshadowed. Therefore, it is proper to carry staves and to disregard the precepts. If both past and present were perilous times,

then it would be proper to carry staves in both periods. And if both past and present were peaceful times, then it would be proper to observe the precepts in both of them. You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other.”

I suppose the learned priests of the time think it is only natural that one should have doubts about this. Therefore, no matter how I explain and try to persuade my own disciples, they still cannot seem to overcome their doubts, but behave like icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. Therefore, I have quoted these passages of explanation from T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and others in order to silence their ungrounded criticisms.

These two methods of shoju and shakubuku are like water and fire. Fire hates water, water detests fire. The practitioner of shoju laughs with scorn at shakubuku. The practitioner of shakubuku laments at the thought of shoju. When the country is full of evil people without wisdom, then shoju is the primary method to be applied, as described in the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. But at a time when there are many people of perverse views who slander the Law, then shakubuku should come first, as described in the “Never Disparaging” chapter. It is like using cold water to cool yourself in the hot weather, or longing for a fire when the weather turns cold. Grass and trees are kindred to the sun—they suffer in the cold moonlight. Bodies of water are followers of the moon—they lose their true nature when the hot weather comes.

In the Latter Day of the Law, however, both shoju and shakubuku are to be used. This is because there are two kinds of countries, the country that is passively evil,²²⁰ and the kind that actively seeks to destroy the Law. We must consider carefully to which category Japan at the present time belongs.

Question: If one applies the shakubuku method at a time when the shoju method would be appropriate, or shoju at a time when shakubuku would be appropriate, is there any merit to be gained?

Answer: The Nirvana Sutra says: “Bodhisattva Kashyapa addressed the Buddha, saying, ‘The Dharma body of the Thus Come One is as indestructible as a diamond. But I do not yet understand the means by which you acquired it. Would you tell me?’

“The Buddha replied: ‘Kashyapa, it is because I was a defender of the correct teaching that I have been able to attain this diamond-like body. Kashyapa, because [in the past] I devoted myself to the correct teaching, I have been able to achieve this diamond-like body that abides forever and is never destroyed. Good man, defenders of the correct teaching need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows . . .

“‘The monks [whom you are speaking of] preach various teachings, but still they are not able to utter “the lion’s roar.” . . . Nor are they able to refute and convert evil persons who go against the correct teaching. Monks of this kind can bring no benefit either to themselves or to the populace. You should realize that they are in fact shirkers and idlers. Though they are careful in observing the precepts and maintain spotless conduct, you should realize that they cannot achieve anything. [Then a monk raises “the lion’s roar.” . . .] Those who break the precepts, upon listening to his preaching, are all enraged to the point where they attack him. This preacher of the Law, though he may in the end lose his life, is still worthy of being called a person who observes the precepts and brings benefits to both himself and others.’”

In the passage from *On the Nirvana*

Sutra quoted earlier, Chang-an says, "You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other." And T'ien-t'ai, as we have seen, declared that "the method chosen should be that which accords with the time." If it is not, you will be like someone who plants seeds at the end of autumn. Though you may carefully tend the field, you are not likely to harvest any rice or grain.

During the Kennin era (1201-1204), two men came to prominence, Honen and Dainichi, who spread the teachings of the Nembutsu and Zen schools, respectively. Honen denied the worth of the Lotus Sutra now that the world has entered the Latter Day of the Law, saying that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood" through that sutra, and that "not even one person in a thousand" can be saved by its teachings. Dainichi for his part claimed that the true teachings of Buddhism had been transmitted apart from the sutras. These two doctrines have now spread throughout the entire country. The learned priests of the Tendai and True Word schools fawn on the lay supporters of the Nembutsu and Zen schools the way a dog wags its tail before its master or fear them the way a mouse fears a cat. These men enter the service of the ruler and the military leader, where they preach in such a way as to bring about the destruction of the Buddhist Law and the ruin of the country. These Tendai and True Word leaders in their present existence will fall into the realm of hungry spirits and, after death, will find themselves in the Avichi hell. Even if they retire to the mountain forests and engage intensely in the meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, or retire to a quiet spot and concentrate on the three mysteries [of body, mouth, and mind], if they do not understand the time or the people's capacity and perceive which of the two meth-

ods, shoju or shakubuku, is appropriate, then they can never free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death.

Question: When you berate the followers of the Nembutsu and Zen schools and arouse their enmity, what merit does that bring?

Answer: The Nirvana Sutra says: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer."

Chang-an comments on this as follows: "One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender is a voice-hearer who defends the Buddha's teachings, a true disciple of the Buddha. One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent. Those who reproach offenders are disciples of the Buddha. But those who do not oust offenders are betraying the Buddha's teachings."²²¹

If we examine the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha gathering together. And why? As the sutra itself says, "Each . . . has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure." Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas intend to insure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra so that it can be made available to all the children of the Buddha in times to come. We may surmise from this that their concern and compassion are even greater than those of

a father and mother who see their only child inflicted with great suffering. Honen, however, shows not the least concern about their compassion, but would tightly shut the gates to the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law so that no one would have access to it. Like a person who tricks a demented child into throwing away a treasure, he tries to induce people to discard the Lotus Sutra, a shameless thing to do indeed!

If someone is about to kill your father and mother, shouldn't you try to warn them? If a bad son who is insane with drink is threatening to kill his father and mother, shouldn't you try to stop him? If some evil person is about to set fire to the temples and pagodas, shouldn't you try to stop him? If your only child is gravely ill, shouldn't you try to cure him or her with moxibustion treatment? To fail to do so is to act like those people who see but do not try to put a stop to the Zen and Nembutsu followers in Japan. [As Chang-an says,] "If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy."

I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan. But the men of the Tendai school [who do not refute misleading teachings] are all great enemies of the people. [As Chang-an has noted,] "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."

One who has not conceived a desire for the way can never free oneself from the sufferings of birth and death. Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was cursed by all the followers of non-Buddhist teachings and labeled as a man of great evil. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was regarded with intense enmity by the three schools of the

south and seven schools of the north, and Tokuitsu of Japan criticized him for using his three-inch tongue to try to destroy the five-foot body of the Buddha²²². The Great Teacher Dengyo was disparaged by the priests of Nara, who said, "Saicho has never been to the capital of T'ang China!"²²³ But all of these abuses were incurred because of the Lotus Sutra, and they are therefore no shame to the men who suffered them. To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame. Now that I, Nichiren, have incurred the wrath of the authorities, the priests of the Tendai and True Word schools are no doubt delighted. They are strange and shameless men.

Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the saha world, Kumarajiva journeyed to the Ch'in dynasty in China,²²⁴ and Dengyo likewise went to China [all for the sake of the Lotus Sutra]. Aryadeva and Aryasimha sacrificed their bodies. Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his arms as an offering, and Prince Jogu stripped off the skin on his hand [and copied the sutra on it].²²⁵ Shakyamuni, when he was a bodhisattva, sold his flesh to make offerings,²²⁶ and another time, when he was a bodhisattva named the ascetic Aspiration for the Law, he used one of his bones as a pen [to write down the Buddha's teaching].

T'ien-t'ai has said that "the method chosen should be that which accords with the time." The propagation of the Buddhist teachings should follow the time. For what I have done, I have been condemned to exile, but it is a small suffering to undergo in this present life and not one worth lamenting. In future lives I will enjoy immense happiness, a thought that gives me great joy.



Background

This treatise is one of Nichiren Daishonin's five most important writings, in which he reveals his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent. In the second month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), still in exile under harsh conditions on Sado Island, the Daishonin completed this work in two volumes and addressed it to Shijo Kingo, one of his leading disciples in Kamakura and a samurai who was in the employ of the ruling Hojo clan, on behalf of all his followers. When the Daishonin was taken to Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura in 1271, Shijo Kingo accompanied him, having resolved to die by his side, and personally witnessed his triumph over execution. Also, he had journeyed to Sado to visit the Daishonin in exile and sent his messengers to him with writing materials and other necessities.

The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind, written in 1273, clarifies, from the viewpoint of the Law, the object of devotion that enables all people to attain Buddhahood. *The Opening of the Eyes* treats the same subject in terms of the Person; that is, it shows Nichiren Daishonin to be the Buddha who would establish the object of devotion for all humankind to achieve Buddhahood. The object of devotion is the embodiment of the Daishonin's enlightenment to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Law implied in the depths of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin's life on the forbidding island of Sado was full of hardship; his hut was open to wind and snow, and he lacked food, clothing, and writing materials. In addition to his physical suffering, he was greatly troubled by the news that many of his followers in Kamakura had abandoned their faith. Feeling himself constantly facing the shadow of death, the Dai-

shonin wrote this treatise to encourage his disciples as though it were his last will and testament.

Nichiren Daishonin later described his motives behind the work in his *Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra*: "After everyone had gone, I began to put into shape a work in two volumes called *The Opening of the Eyes*, which I had been working on since the eleventh month of the previous year. I wanted to record the wonder of Nichiren, in case I should be beheaded. The essential message in this work is that the destiny of Japan depends solely upon Nichiren. A house without pillars collapses, and a person without a soul is dead. Nichiren is the soul of the people of this country" (p. 772).

The title *The Opening of the Eyes* means to enable people to see the truth, in other words, to free people from illusions and distorted views and awaken them to an understanding of the correct teaching and its correct teacher. The work describes the role the Daishonin played in championing the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra and in spreading its teachings, as he himself viewed and experienced it. A passage from this treatise reads: "On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded. It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado" (p. 269). It was through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution that Nichiren Daishonin revealed his true identity as the eternal Buddha. This passage refers to the death of a common person named Nichiren and indicates that from then on the Daishonin was to reveal in full his enlightenment as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

Nichiren Daishonin begins this treatise with the words, "There are three categories of people that all human

beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher, and the parent” (p. 220). The three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent are equated with the qualifications of a Buddha. The virtue of sovereign is the power to protect all living beings; the virtue of teacher is the wisdom to lead all to enlightenment, and the virtue of parent means compassion to nurture and support them. These three virtues constitute a theme that runs throughout this treatise, and at the conclusion of this work the Daishonin declares, “I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan” (p. 287).

At the outset Nichiren Daishonin discusses Confucianism, Taoism, Brahmanism, Hinayana, and provisional Mahayana Buddhism, and then moves on to the Lotus Sutra. He attributes the disasters ravaging Japan to the confusion in Buddhism and the failure by both rulers and subjects to recognize the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. Here he cites two reasons why the sutra is supreme. One is that the theoretical teaching (the first half of the sutra) reveals that people of the two vehicles can attain enlightenment, a possibility utterly denied in the previous forty-two years of the Buddha’s preaching. This substantiates the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and the statement that Buddhahood is open to all. The other reason is that, in the essential teaching (the latter half of the sutra), Shakyamuni Buddha proclaims that he first attained enlightenment in an unfathomably remote past.

The Daishonin states that Shakyamuni Buddha himself declared that the Lotus Sutra is “the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” In this sutra the Buddha implied the supreme teaching, as stated: “The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the ‘Life Span’ chapter of the

essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra” (p. 224). The Daishonin takes the position that only the revelation of the truth of Buddhism can save the nation and the people. This conviction, he says, has moved him to propagate the essence of the Lotus Sutra in spite of the persecution that he knew he would incur. He realized that his followers might doubt him because of the apparent failure of the gods to protect a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he stated: “This doubt lies at the heart of this piece I am writing. And because it is the most important concern of my entire life, I will raise it again and again here, and emphasize it more than ever, before I attempt to answer it” (p. 243).

The second part of this treatise discusses the “Emerging from the Earth” and the “Life Span” chapters of the Lotus Sutra, where Shakyamuni Buddha summons forth countless bodhisattvas from beneath the earth and reveals that he actually attained enlightenment in the remote past, and that all the Buddhas of the other sutras are his emanations and all the bodhisattvas, his disciples. Nichiren Daishonin clarifies that the Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter is the teacher of all Buddhas.

At this point, an implicit analogy begins to emerge. The doubt held by Shakyamuni’s disciples about how he could possibly have taught the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth in this life leads to the revelation of his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago. Similarly, the doubt held by the Daishonin’s followers about why he has been exiled and suffered so many persecutions leads to an understanding of his true identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day.

Then the Daishonin mentions the principle of sowing, maturing, and harvesting. He points to the unsurpassed Law whereby all Buddhas attain en-

lightenment—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. This Law is what lies in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter. Nichiren Daishonin directly teaches this Law, the true cause for attaining Buddhahood, and his Buddhism is called the Buddhism of sowing because it implants this “seed of enlightenment” in the lives of those who practice it. In this light, he possesses the virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for humanity as a whole.

Nichiren Daishonin explains that each sutra has its own claim to excellence; he also gives examples of statements in which various sutras assert their own superiority to other teachings. But the Lotus Sutra alone declares that it is supreme among all sutras, and the Daishonin reconfirms its supremacy. The Lotus Sutra speaks of the three powerful enemies of the sutra and prophesies opposition and hostility toward the sutra and its votary. All this the Daishonin had himself encountered; all this is predicted in the sutra. As the votary of the Lotus Sutra, he vows to stake his life on the cause of saving all people, saying: “Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law. . . . I will be the pillar of

Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it” (pp. 280–81). Then he assures his disciples that they will definitely attain Buddhahood as long as they do not permit themselves to be overcome by doubts, even when difficulties befall them.

In the final section of this treatise, Nichiren Daishonin explains that there are two ways to propagate the Lotus Sutra: *shoju*, or gentle persuasion, and *shakubuku*, or strict refutation. Here, the Daishonin argues that both methods should be used, because there are two kinds of countries, those whose people are ignorant of the correct teaching of Buddhism and those whose people deliberately oppose it. But Japan, as a nation that slanders the correct teaching, requires the *shakubuku* method. Then he concludes that to remove suffering and give joy to the people is the Buddha’s teaching. The Daishonin has devoted himself to refuting and rooting out the causes of human misery. For him, the exile to Sado was only a “small suffering” in this life. Indeed, he feels “great joy” because of the results he is confident will come in the future.

Notes

1. Also known as Yü Shun. He is the last of the Five Emperors, legendary rulers of ancient China.

2. The governor of P’ei refers to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.E.), the founder of the Former Han dynasty.

3. When King Wu decided to overthrow the tyrant Chou of the Yin dynasty, before setting out on his campaign, he carved a wooden figure of his father, who had cherished the same desire to save the people. The Earl of the West refers to King Wen of the Chou dynasty, the third of the Three Kings who reigned after the Five Emperors.

4. During the Later Han dynasty, Ting Lan, who had lost his mother at the age of

fifteen, made a statue of her and served it as if she had been still alive.

5. Yin Shou and Wu Ch’eng are legendary figures. T’ai-kung Wang was a general who served King Wen and, after the king’s death, served King Wu, Wen’s son. He fought valorously with King Chou of the Yin dynasty and contributed to the prosperity of the Chou dynasty.

6. This assertion is found in *Chuang Tzu* and *Records of the Historian*.

7. The principles refer to the first two of the five constant virtues taught by Confucius.

8. Their names are unknown.

9. This is found in *Lieh Tzu*, an early Taoist text.

10. Propriety and music were regarded as instrumental in enhancing people's sense of morality, and in maintaining social order.

11. The three types of learning or disciplines essential for the Buddhist practitioner.

12. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* "The true way" here refers to Buddhism.

13. *Great Concentration and Insight.*

14. Confucius, his disciple Yen Hui, and Lao Tzu.

15. Kapila and Uluka were the respective founders of the Samkhya and Vaishe-shika schools, two of the six major schools of Brahmanism in ancient India. Rishabha's teachings are said to have prepared the way for Jainism. They were called the three ascetics.

16. The world of formlessness being divided into four realms, this refers to the uppermost.

17. "Outflows" here means illusions or defilements. The worlds of form and formlessness are the two highest worlds of the threefold world.

18. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

19. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

20. Lotus Sutra, chap. 8.

21. "Transmigration with differences and limitations" refers to the transmigration of unenlightened beings through the six paths. In this repeating cycle of rebirth through the six lower deluded worlds, living beings are born with limited spans of life and in different forms in accordance with their karma. "Transmigration with change and advance" refers to the transmigration of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas. In this transmigration, they change, or emancipate, from the body subject to transmigration of delusion with differences and limitations, while gradually removing illusions leading to sufferings.

22. The great man refers here to the Buddha.

23. A passage from the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra that reads, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."

24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. It reads, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."

25. *Ibid.*, chap. II.

26. This is described in chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra.

27. This refers to the theory of three thousand realms in a single moment of life based on the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra, and the actuality of three thousand realms in a single moment of life based on the essential teaching (latter half) of the sutra.

28. Nirvana Sutra.

29. "Appropriating Buddhism" refers to the incorporating of the Hinayana teachings by non-Buddhists into their own doctrine, claiming it as their own teaching. "Plagiarizing Buddhism" refers to the plagiarizing of Buddhist teachings by non-Buddhists who set forth Mahayana teachings as the doctrine of their own school. They are described in *Great Concentration and Insight.*

30. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

31. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. *See* n. 23.

32. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

33. *Ibid.*

34. According to ancient Indian cosmology, the watery circle is one of three circles, made respectively of gold, water, and wind, that supported Mount Sumeru and the surrounding continents.

35. The debts owed to one's parents, teacher, sovereign, and the three treasures of Buddhism.

36. In the Larger Wisdom Sutra, these words are spoken by Subhuti, a disciple of the Buddha, but the Daishonin is treating them here as the words of Shakyamuni Buddha himself, who expounded the sutra.

37. This is the statement that the heavenly beings made with tears of joy, when they heard the Buddha preaching. The shurangama meditation is supposed to prevent one from being troubled by earthly desires and illusions.

38. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, regarded as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra.

39. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.

40. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

41. *Ibid.*, chap. 22.

42. This indicates the preaching of the Flower Garland Sutra.

43. The four Buddhas are Akshobhya (east), Jewel Sign (south), Infinite Life (west), and Subtle and Wonderful Voice (north).

44. The six directions refer to east, west, north, south, up, and down.

45. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

46. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

47. The revelation that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. This appears in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The first important teaching is that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood. This is explained in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

48. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. In this chapter Shakyamuni expounded the ten factors to indicate that all people are endowed with the Buddha nature; this provided a theoretical basis for the assertion that all people can become Buddhas. Later in the same chapter Shakyamuni declares that all the teachings he expounded serve to reveal the one vehicle leading all to Buddhahood.

49. The eight chapters from the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter to the “Prophecies” (9th) chapter.

50. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

51. The “causes” refers to the practice of the four teachings—the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings—leading to the attainment of enlightenment. See also eight teachings in Glossary.

52. By revealing that the Buddha still retains all the nine worlds even after achieving enlightenment, the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching demonstrates that cause (nine worlds) and effect (Buddhahood) exist simultaneously.

53. In the Agama sutras Shakyamuni preaches Hinayana or lesser teachings. Hence the “little Shakyamuni.”

54. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

55. The “Emerging from the Earth” and “Life Span” chapters reveal that Shakyamuni’s enlightenment actually occurred in the far distant past, and that the three bodies—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body—are eternally inherent in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha.

56. A state in northeast India. Asanga was a native of Gandhara but lived most of his life in Ayodhya.

57. Dharmapala, Nanda, and Shilabhadra were scholars of the Yogachara, or Consciousness-Only school, associated with Nalanda Monastery in India.

58. An old name of Kofuku-ji, the head temple of the Dharma Characteristics

school, one of the seven major temples of Nara.

59. Vatsa was the founder of the Hinayana Vatsiputriya school, and Vaipulya incorporated Mahayana into non-Buddhist teachings. Vimalamitra, who appears in the next sentence, is said to have opposed Vasubandhu, and Madhava was a scholar of the Samkhya school.

60. This age is a period of decrease, in which the human life span was diminishing. According to *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*, during the kalpa of continuance, the human life span is said to undergo a repeated cycle of increase and decrease.

61. The third group refers to the story of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha and his sixteen sons, which appears in the “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Major world system dust particle kalpas ago, Great Universal Wisdom Excellence preached the Lotus Sutra to his sixteen sons. These sons then preached the sutra to the people. Among the people, the third group comprises those who heard the Lotus Sutra at that time but did not take faith in it and could not attain enlightenment even when the sixteenth son appeared in India as Shakyamuni Buddha and preached it to them again.

62. *The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight*, by Tao-ch’o, the second patriarch of the Pure Land school in China.

63. The first quotation is from *On the World of Peace and Delight*, and the second quotation, from *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land* by Shan-tao, the third patriarch of the Pure Land school in China.

64. The Japanese text may also read, “Then the ruler of the nation will surely take steps against my parents, brothers, and teachers.”

65. A world was said to go through a continuous cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration, each of these four phases lasting one medium kalpa. The end of the kalpa of decline is marked by a great fire that consumes the world.

66. These persecutions refer to the exiles to the Izu Peninsula and Sado Island.

67. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

68. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

69. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

70. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. The quotation that follows is from the same chapter.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, chap. 20.

73. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

74. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

75. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation.* Tokuitsu (n.d.), a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school, carried on a long-standing controversy with Dengyo. Chih-i is another name for T'ien-t'ai.

76. Non-Buddhists: This term generally refers to Brahmanists in the text of the sutras and, furthermore, to Confucians and Taoists in the context of *Tung-ch'un*.

77. The six superintendents of priests were the priests of the temples in the city of Nara, who opposed Dengyo in 819. They were Jo'e of Kofuku-ji, Buan of Toshodai-ji, Shuen of Kofuku-ji, Taien of Saidai-ji, Sebyo of Gango-ji, and the Chief Superintendent Gomyo of Gango-ji.

78. In the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas describe the persecutions they will endure after the Buddha's passing for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

79. In the twenty-line verse of the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, the countless assembled bodhisattvas vow to brave various hardships in propagating the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. These hardships were later categorized by Miao-lo as the work of the three powerful enemies. This passage refers to the first of the three powerful enemies. The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter itself refers only to "swords and staves." "Rocks and tiles" is an interpolation from the "Never Disparaging" chapter.

80. This passage refers to the second of the three powerful enemies.

81. This passage refers to the third of the three powerful enemies: monks who enjoy the respect of the general public but, in fear of losing fame and profit, induce the authorities to persecute the votaries.

82. Two of the three extant Chinese versions of the Lotus Sutra are mentioned here. The three are the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law translated by Dharmaraksha, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law by Kumarajiva, and the Supplemental Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law by Jnanagupta and Dharmagupta. Among these versions, Kumarajiva's is by far the most widely used.

83. In 544 B.C.E. Chi-cha, the son of Shou-meng, king of Wu, was ordered to

visit other countries as an envoy. At that time he was given a valuable sword. When he happened to be passing through the country of Hsü, the lord of the state saw Chi-cha's sword and wanted it, though he did not dare to say so. Chi-cha, however, understood the lord's desire and in his heart promised to give him the sword after he had fulfilled his mission and returned to Hsü. But when he returned, he found that the lord had already died. True to his promise, he offered the sword at the lord's grave.

84. The details of the story are unknown; it symbolizes Wang Shou's deep gratitude for the natural environment and sense of integrity.

85. When Mao Pao was walking along the Yangtze River, he saw a fisherman catch a turtle and prepare to kill it. He bought the turtle and put it back in the water. Later, Mao Pao was defeated by a powerful general named Shih Hu. When he fled in retreat to the Yangtze River, the turtle that he had saved appeared and carried him on its back to the opposite shore.

86. A pond constructed by Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty. One day he saw a fish in the pond suffering because of a hook caught in its throat. The emperor felt pity for the fish and removed the hook, putting the fish back into the water. Later, to repay its obligation, the fish offered a bright jewel to the emperor.

87. Because King Chieh, the seventeenth ruler of the Hsia dynasty, tyrannically perpetrated various atrocities, he was overthrown by his enemies, and the Hsia dynasty perished. King Chou, the last ruler of the Yin dynasty, enslaved by his love for his consort Ta Chi, totally misgoverned the country. He was destroyed by King Wu of the Chou dynasty.

88. The twelve hundred voice-hearers refer to the arhats who received a prophecy of attaining Buddhahood in the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Each of them was given the same designation: the Thus Come One Universal Brightness.

89. The thousand voice-hearers refer to the disciples who gathered at the First Buddhist Council convened shortly after Shakyamuni's death in Magadha to compile his teachings.

90. The five types of vision are given

here. "Eye" here means perceptive faculty. See five types of vision in Glossary.

91. Lotus Sutra, chap. 4. "A rare thing" in the quotation refers to the Lotus Sutra, and "offer him our hands and feet" means to serve the Buddha and practice his teachings.

92. This story appears in the Vimalakirti Sutra. When Mahakashyapa heard Vimalakirti speak about enlightenment, he could not understand it at all and wept over the fact that he did not inherently possess the seed of Buddhahood. The sutra relates that the sound of his weeping echoed throughout the major world system.

93. This story is also found in the Vimalakirti Sutra. One day Subhuti came to Vimalakirti asking for alms. Vimalakirti filled Subhuti's bowl but told him that he did not deserve to receive alms and that those who offered alms to him would invariably fall into the three evil paths. At that time Subhuti was so shocked that he almost went off without his alms bowl.

94. This story is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. When Shakyamuni Buddha reproached Shariputra for eating impure food, Shariputra was so surprised that he spat it out. Impure food indicates what is not an offering made from the heart.

95. This story appears in the Vimalakirti Sutra. When Shakyamuni Buddha saw Purna preaching the Hinayana teachings to the people, he told Purna that he should not put impure things into a precious vessel.

96. In the period before Shakyamuni renounced the secular life, he married Yashodhara, a beautiful woman whom Devadatta had wished to marry. As a result, Devadatta nurtured a grudge against Shakyamuni.

97. Based on a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

98. The above stories are included among the nine great ordeals or persecutions suffered by Shakyamuni Buddha. They are described in *Great Perfection of Wisdom* and other texts.

99. The story of King Virudhaka appears in *The Monastic Rules on Various Matters* and elsewhere; it is also included in the nine great ordeals mentioned above. The story of the nun Utpalavarna is found in *Great Perfection of Wisdom*; because she reproved Devadatta for being a great enemy

of Buddhism, he was so enraged that he beat her to death. Kalodayin's disaster is described in *The Ten Divisions of Monastic Rules*: one day when he was going about begging, a woman offered him alms, but her jealous and enraged husband killed him. The fate of Maudgalyayana is found in *Monastic Rules on Various Matters*. All of these stories appear also in the various Agama sutras.

100. Adapted from a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

101. The garden of mango trees in the city of Vaishali in India.

102. *A History of the Buddha's Successors* states that, when Mahakashyapa felt that death was approaching, he transferred the teachings to Ananda and went to Mount Kukkutapada in Magadha, where he entered into meditation and died. It is said that not until Bodhisattva Maitreya appears in the world 5,670 million years after the Buddha's death will Mahakashyapa reappear.

103. Reference is to a passage in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."

104. Reference is to a special transmission outside the scriptures, not dependent on words and phrases, an expression commonly used in Zen.

105. Honen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* and put them together as a set.

106. These four types of ten stages are divisions of the fifty-two stages through which a bodhisattva advances from his first resolve to his attainment of perfect enlightenment.

107. "Inconceivable emancipation" is defined as awakening to the profound and subtle principle of Mahayana. Described in the Vimalakirti Sutra.

108. The two deities are Shiva and Vishnu.

109. After he renounced secular life, Shakyamuni engaged in various practices for twelve years until he attained enlightenment. It is said that for the first six years he carried out ascetic practices (painful), and for the second six years he persevered in the practice of meditation (comfortable).

110. This story appears in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In the distant past, Manjushri appeared as Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright, a disciple of Sun Moon Bright Buddha. After the Buddha's demise, Wonderfully Bright continued to embrace the Lotus Sutra, which his teacher had expounded. The Buddha had fathered eight sons before renouncing the world. Wonderfully Bright led the princes to enlightenment. The last of them to attain Buddhahood was Burning Torch Buddha, under whom Shakyamuni practiced the sutra for enlightenment in a previous existence. This is why Shakyamuni is called "the ninth disciple of Bodhisattva Manjushri."

111. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha says, "These immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law," although he does not clarify what this Law is.

112. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

113. *Sad* corresponds to *sad* of *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, the Sanskrit name of the Lotus Sutra.

114. The quotation has not been identified. Chi-tsang (549–623) was a priest of the Three Treatises school in China.

115. The English translation is based on this reconstruction made from versions of the mantra found in *The Writings of Kakuzen* and other sources.

*namaḥ samanta-buddhānām
oṃ a ā aṃ ḥ
sarva-buddha-jña-sākṣebhyaḥ
gaḡana-sambhavālakṣaṇi
saddharma-puṇḍarika-sūtra
jaḥ hūṃ baṃ hoḥ vajrarakṣaman
hūṃ svāhā*

116. The True Word tradition holds that Nagarjuna received the Mahavairochana Sutra from Bodhisattva Vajrasattva along with other esoteric teachings preserved in an iron tower in southern India.

117. "Nam" is a phonetic contraction of "Namu."

118. On "Great Concentration and Insight."

119. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

120. One of the four universal vows of a bodhisattva. The others are to eradicate countless earthly desires, to master immeasurable Buddhist teachings, and to attain supreme enlightenment. The following quotation is from chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra.

121. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

122. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

123. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

124. A kind of lily used in religious ceremonies.

125. Symbolism found in the True Word sutras. On four of the eight petals four Buddhas are seated with four bodhisattvas on the other four petals. Mahavairochana Buddha is seated in the center of the lotus; this scene is described in the Mahavairochana Sutra. The Diamond Crown Sutra depicts thirty-seven Buddhas and bodhisattvas including Mahavairochana Buddha.

126. *Profound Meaning.*

127. Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse.

128. Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Maitreya, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

129. The sixteen bodhisattvas who attend on the Buddhas of the four quarters of the universe.

130. T'ai-kung Wang is the title of a general who served the kings Wen and Wu of the Chou dynasty. The other three sages are Yin Shou, Wu Ch'eng, and Lao Tzu.

131. Emperor Kao-tsu (247–195 B.C.E.), founder of the Former Han dynasty, tried to disown his son, the future Emperor Hui. Hui's mother, Empress Lü, persuaded four eminent elders who lived on Mount Shang to become his advisers. They were known as Master Tung-yüan, Scholar Lu-li, Ch'i Li-chi, and Master Hsia-hüang. On seeing these four elders, the emperor was impressed by their dignity and accepted Hui as his successor.

132. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

133. *Words and Phrases.*

134. On "The Words and Phrases."

135. An epithet of Maitreya, meaning "invincible."

136. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15. The following quotation is a continuation of this passage.

137. A lake on the grounds of Bamboo Grove Monastery in Rajagriha, Magadha.

138. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

139. According to the Meditation Sutra, when Ajatashatru killed his father and confined Vaidehi to the interior of the palace, she faced Eagle Peak where Shakyamuni was preaching and prayed to him. Out of compassion, he appeared in her chamber and taught her how to reach the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

140. The “Devadatta” chapter describes the teacher-disciple relationship between Devadatta and Shakyamuni in their previous existence. The chapter refers to a king, who, in order to seek the great Law, served a seer named Asita for one thousand years. After relating this story, Shakyamuni identifies the king as himself in a previous existence and Asita as Devadatta. He is now the teacher of the man who once taught him. The “Devadatta” chapter thus provides an answer to the question posed in the Meditation Sutra.

141. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16. In the “Peaceful Practices” chapter, or the last chapter of the theoretical teaching, the Buddha had yet to teach of his enlightenment in the remote past.

142. Source unknown.

143. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, written by Kobo.

144. These are practices designed to eradicate the illusions of thought and desire.

145. *The Annotations on the Flower Garland Sutra* divides the manifested body into superior and inferior.

146. *The Treatise of Five Hundred Questions*.

147. In the time of T'ien-t'ai, the esoteric teachings of the True Word school had not yet reached China. Shan-wu-wei brought them from India in 716, shortly after the birth of Miao-lo.

148. When Dengyo went to China, he studied chiefly T'ien-t'ai's teachings based on the Lotus Sutra. When he returned to Japan, however, he also brought some esoteric teachings with him. For this reason he is referred to as the patriarch of esoteric and exoteric Buddhism, since his introduction of esoteric texts preceded that of Kobo.

149. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

150. That is, they do not reveal the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment in the distant past as explained in the Lotus Sutra.

151. In his *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, Vasubandhu asserted the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras from ten viewpoints. “The seeds without peer” is the first of them.

152. The Womb Realm mandala, described in the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the Diamond Realm mandala, described in the Diamond Crown Sutra.

153. From the preface to *A Clarification*

of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine. I-hsing (683–727) assisted his master Shan-wu-wei in translating the Sanskrit version of the Mahavairochana Sutra into Chinese and compiled his oral teachings as *The Annotations on the Mahavairochana Sutra*.

154. The island of Ezo here refers to Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands. This poem is by an anonymous poet from the ninth volume of *A Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry*. In the Japanese text, only the first words of the poem are quoted.

155. In his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, Kobo classified the various Buddhist teachings as corresponding to ten stages of the mind's development and ranked the Lotus Sutra eighth, the Flower Garland Sutra ninth, and the esoteric teachings tenth or the highest.

156. The translation has been expanded in explanation of technical terms used. In his *Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, Chia-hsiang, more commonly known as Chi-tsang (549–623), asserted that the Lotus Sutra was inferior to the Wisdom Sutra.

157. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

158. The twenty-five bodhisattvas of the Pure Land school protect all who worship Amida Buddha. The twelve hundred honored ones refer to Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other beings represented on the two True Word mandalas.

159. The seven schools refer to the six schools (see Glossary) and the True Word school.

160. The Queen Mother of the West is a legendary goddess in China. It is said that the peaches in her garden bear fruit every three thousand years. The udumbara flower is said to bloom once every three thousand years to herald the appearance of a gold-wheel-turning king in the world.

161. The governor of P'ei, or Liu Pang, and Hsiang Yü took advantage of the confusion following the death of the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty to raise troops and overthrow the dynasty. Thereafter, the two engaged in a protracted struggle for power. This ended in the victory of Liu Pang, who founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C.E.

162. The Minamoto clan, led by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), waged a long campaign to wrest political power from the Taira clan. The Taira were finally

defeated at Dannoura, and Taira no Mune-mori (1147-1185), the last head of his clan, died in the battle. Minamoto no Yoritomo subsequently established the Kamakura shogunate.

163. The garudas are gigantic birds in Indian mythology that are said to feed on dragons. Anavatapta, or Heat-Free Lake, located north of the Snow Mountains, contains cool, clear water that removes all sufferings. The lake is said to be inhabited by the dragon king.

164. See six difficult and nine easy acts in Glossary.

165. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

166. The Dharma Characteristics school divides all of Shakyamuni's teachings into three periods. The teachings in the third period reveal the Consciousness-Only doctrine and refute extreme attachment to the doctrine of emptiness. Included in the third period are the Profound Secrets, Lotus, Flower Garland, and Nirvana sutras.

167. Nirvana Sutra.

168. Reference is to Buddhist teachers on whom one can rely, as explained in the Nirvana Sutra and elsewhere. They are the four ranks of voice-hearers, the last of which is the most advanced stage of arhat. T'ien-t'ai, in his *Profound Meaning*, related the four ranks to the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

169. Nirvana Sutra.

170. *Profound Meaning*.

171. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

172. *A Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings*.

173. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

174. On "The Words and Phrases."

175. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

176. The Ten Stages Sutra is a separate translation of the "Ten Stages" chapter of the Flower Garland Sutra.

177. The great vehicle refers to the bodhisattva way.

178. "This chapter" refers to the "Chief Wise" chapter of the Flower Garland Sutra.

179. *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*. The following quotation is from the same passage.

180. In the time of the Daishonin, China was ruled by the Sung dynasty. "Spend three years traveling . . ." refers to the Chinese priest Fa-hsien's journey to India. Deploping the lack of Buddhist scriptures

in China, he traveled overland in the late fourth century to India, where he studied Sanskrit and the Buddhist canon.

181. Asanga is said to have ascended to the Tushita heaven and there inherited the teachings from Bodhisattva Maitreya.

182. See p. 226.

183. To the five cardinal sins (see Glossary) are added killing a monk of high virtue and killing a teacher.

184. On "The Words and Phrases."

185. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, which occurred in 1271.

186. One of the Chinese versions of the Nirvana Sutra, translated by Fa-hsien.

187. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in *Profound Meaning*.

188. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in *Outstanding Principles or A Clarification of the Precepts*.

189. The story of King Chao and Su Yu appears in *The Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs*. The traditional date for the introduction of Buddhism to China is C.E. 67.

190. Twenty-four persons in succession: See Glossary under twenty-four successors.

191. The government authorities themselves belong to the first group of lay people who persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

192. *On the World of Peace and Delight*.

193. *Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

194. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

195. *The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching*. Here Eshin, a Tendai priest, uses the "perfect teaching" to refer to the Lotus Sutra.

196. A rephrasing of a passage in *On "The Profound Meaning"*. The three teachings are the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, and the specific teaching, which indicate the provisional teachings.

197. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

198. The fivefold bodies of the Law refer to the fivefold merit that represents the true and pure nature of a Buddha: precept body, meditation body, wisdom body, emancipation body, and knowledge-of-emancipation body.

199. The Buddha in his manifested body is said to be sixteen feet high. For eight errors and eight winds, see Glossary.

200. Later commentators identify the "Zen master of Yeh and Lo" with Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen in China. T'ien-t'ai, however, does not mention him

or any other contemporary figure by name.

201. Standard Zen histories hold that, when Shakyamuni held up a flower before the assembly at Eagle Peak, no one could fathom his meaning. Mahakashyapa alone understood, and the Buddha wordlessly transferred his teaching to him. Mahakashyapa in turn handed the teaching to Ananda, from whom it was transferred eventually to Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch who had come to China from India. Bodhidharma is considered to be the founder of Zen in China. Hui-neng (638–713) was the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen.

202. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan, Mononobe no Moriya, a powerful minister, opposed it. Prince Shotoku and another minister Soga no Umako supported the new religion. They fought and the Soga faction won; Moriya was killed in 587.

203. This simile appears in chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra. See one-eyed turtle in Glossary.

204. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

205. Ibid.

206. Ibid., chap. 5.

207. Ibid., chap. 26.

208. Ibid., chap. 28.

209. Ibid.

210. Aryadeva and Aryasimha are usually listed as the fifteenth and the twenty-fourth, respectively, of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors. When Shakyamuni is counted, there are twenty-five leaders of the lineage in all.

211. *Profound Meaning*.

212. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20. This passage means that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging expiated his past offense of slandering the Law by being subjected to persecutions on account of the Law, and that he thereby attained Buddhahood.

213. "Poison" here is likened to the cause of enlightenment.

214. The wording of the original has been expanded for clarity in this paragraph.

215. This story appears in *Great Perfection of Wisdom* and elsewhere. In his past existence, Shariputra was practicing the bodhisattva way, when a Brahman begged for his eye. Shariputra gave it to him, but the

Brahman was so revolted by its smell that he dropped and crushed it. Seeing this, Shariputra withdrew in despair from his practice.

216. The first two of the ten objects of meditation formulated by T'ien-t'ai in *Great Concentration and Insight*. Through meditations on these ten objects, one aims to realize the limitations of the nine worlds.

217. This passage is discussed in *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*. The three obstacles are earthly desires, karma, and retribution.

218. According to the Nirvana Sutra, the medicine that the old physician prescribed did harm to the people. To save their lives, the new physician persuaded the king to use stringent measures to prohibit the use of the medicine.

219. The original Japanese sentence could also be construed to mean, "The Nirvana Sutra clearly states that the Buddha personally entrusts his teaching to the ruler [for its protection], saying that evil persons should be subdued with bows and arrows."

220. This indicates the country that is filled with people who conceive no desire to seek the Buddha way.

221. *On the Nirvana Sutra*.

222. His statement appears in *The Mirror on the Meaning of the Middle and the Extreme*. Portions of this lost work of the Dharma Characteristics priest Tokuitsu are cited in Dengyo's *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

223. The source of this quotation has not been identified. Saicho is another name for Dengyo.

224. Kumarajiva accepted an invitation from Yao Hsing, king of the Later Ch'in dynasty, and came to the capital, Ch'angan, in 401. There he engaged in the translation of numerous Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese.

225. A similar statement is found in *A Personal Commentary on Matters concerning Prince Shotoku*, a work by Kenshin, a thirteenth-century priest of Horyu-ji temple. Jogo is another name for Prince Shotoku.

226. This refers to the story of Bodhisattva Ever Wailing. See Ever Wailing in Glossary.

31

On the Treasure Tower



I HAVE read your letter with great care. I have also received your offering to the treasure tower of one thousand coins, polished rice, and other articles. This I have respectfully reported to the Gohonzon and to the Lotus Sutra. Please rest assured.

In your letter you ask, “What is signified by the Thus Come One Many Treasures and his treasure tower, which appeared from beneath the earth?” The teaching on the treasure tower is of great importance. In the eighth volume of his *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai explains the appearance of the treasure tower. He states that it has two distinct functions: to lend credence to the preceding chapters and to pave the way for the revelation to come. Thus the treasure tower appeared in order to verify the theoretical teaching and to introduce the essential teaching. To put it another way, the closed tower symbolizes the theoretical teaching, and the open tower, the essential teaching. The open tower reveals the two elements of reality and wisdom.¹ This is extremely complex, however, so I will not go into further detail now.

In essence, the appearance of the treasure tower indicates that on hearing the Lotus Sutra the three groups of voice-hearers perceived for the first time the treasure tower within their

own lives. Now Nichiren’s disciples and lay supporters are also doing this. In the Latter Day of the Law, no treasure tower exists other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows, therefore, that whether eminent or humble, high or low, those who chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo are themselves the treasure tower, and, likewise, are themselves the Thus Come One Many Treasures. No treasure tower exists other than Myohorenge-kyo. The daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the treasure tower, and the treasure tower is Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

At present the entire body of the Honorable Abutsu is composed of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. These five elements are also the five characters of the daimoku. Abutsu-bo is therefore the treasure tower itself, and the treasure tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful. It is the treasure tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures—hearing the correct teaching, believing it, keeping the precepts, engaging in meditation, practicing assiduously, renouncing one’s attachments, and reflecting on oneself. You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of the Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself. You, yourself,

are a Thus Come One who is originally enlightened and endowed with the three bodies. You should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with this conviction. Then the place where you chant daimoku will become the dwelling place of the treasure tower. The sutra reads, "If there is any place where the Lotus Sutra is preached, then my treasure tower will come forth and appear in that spot."² Faith like yours is so extremely rare that I will inscribe the treasure tower especially for you. You must never transfer it to anyone but your son. You must never show it to others unless they have steadfast faith. This is the reason for my advent in this world.

Abutsu-bo, you deserve to be called a leader of this northern province. Could it be that Bodhisattva Pure

Practices has been reborn into this world as Abutsu-bo and visited me? How wonderful! How marvelous! I do not understand how it is that you have such faith. I will leave it to Bodhisattva Superior Practices when he appears, as he has the power to know these things. I am not saying all this without good reason. You and your wife should worship this treasure tower privately. I will explain more later.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the third month in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*

To the Honorable Abutsu-bo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter in the third month of 1272 to his disciple Abutsu-bo Nittoku. One story has it that Abutsu-bo was a samurai who had accompanied the Retired Emperor Juntoku to Sado when he was exiled there as a result of the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221. It is more likely, however, that he was a native of Sado Island. In either case, he was a longtime resident of the island. He went to Tsukahara to debate with the Daishonin and was converted to the Daishonin's teaching. He and his wife became loyal supporters of the Daishonin and brought him food and other necessities for much of the time he was on the island. After the Daishonin took up

residence at Mount Minobu, Abutsu-bo made at least three visits there, despite his advanced age. He died in 1279 at the age of ninety-one.

The treasure tower described in the Lotus Sutra is of awesome proportions, and its meaning puzzled Abutsu-bo. In this letter the Daishonin gives his aged disciple a striking glimpse into the reality of life. The ceremony depicted in the Lotus Sutra is not a historical event during which a colossal jewel-encrusted stupa actually emerged from the ground. Rather, the appearance of the treasure tower symbolizes a ceremony of life; it is a metaphor for the emergence from deep within the human being of the highest state of life.

Notes

1. Reference is to the ultimate reality of Buddhahood innate in life and the wisdom to perceive that reality. These are represented, respectively, by the Buddhas Many

Treasures and Shakyamuni seated together within the open treasure tower.

2. A rephrasing of a passage in chapter II of the Lotus Sutra.

Letter from Sado



THIS letter is addressed to Toki. It should also be shown to Saburo Saemon, the lay priest Okuratonotsuji Juro, the lay nun of Sajiki, and my other followers. Send me the names of those killed in the battles at Kyoto and Kamakura. Also, please have those who are coming here bring me the anthology of non-Buddhist texts, volume two of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, volume four of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* and the commentary on this volume, and the collected official opinion papers and collected imperial edicts.

The most dreadful things in the world are the pain of fire, the flashing of swords, and the shadow of death. Even horses and cattle fear being killed; no wonder human beings are afraid of death. Even a leper clings to life; how much more so a healthy person. The Buddha teaches that even filling the entire major world system with the seven kinds of treasures does not match offering one's little finger to the Buddha and the [Lotus] sutra.¹ The boy Snow Mountains gave his own body, and the ascetic Aspiration for the Law peeled off his own skin [in order to record the Buddha's teachings]. Since nothing is more precious than life itself, one who dedicates one's life to Buddhist practice is certain to attain Buddhahood. If one is prepared to of-

fer one's life, why should one begrudge any other treasure for the sake of Buddhism? On the other hand, if one is loath to part with one's wealth, how can one possibly offer one's life, which is far more valuable?

The way of the world dictates that one should repay a great obligation to another, even at the cost of one's life. Many warriors die for their lords, perhaps many more than one would imagine. A man will die to defend his honor; a woman will die for a man. Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond's shallowness and dig holes in the bottom to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares. Human beings are equally vulnerable. They give their lives for shallow, worldly matters but rarely for the Buddha's precious teachings. Small wonder they do not attain Buddhahood.

Buddhism should be spread by the method of either shojū or shakubuku, depending on the age. These are analogous to the two worldly ways of the literary and the military. The great sages of old practiced the Buddhist teachings as befitted the times. The boy Snow Mountains and Prince Sattva offered their bodies when urged that by doing so they would hear the teach-

ing in return, and that giving one's life constitutes bodhisattva practice. But should one sacrifice one's life at a time when it is not required? In an age when there is no paper, one should use one's own skin. In an age when there are no writing brushes, one should use one's own bones. In an age when people honor the observers of the precepts and the practitioners of the correct teaching while they denounce those who break or ignore the precepts, one should strictly follow the precepts. In an age when Confucianism or Taoism is used to suppress Shakyamuni's teachings, one should risk one's life to remonstrate with the emperor, as did the Dharma teachers Tao-an and Hui-yüan and the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao. In an age when people confuse Hinayana and Mahayana teachings, provisional and true teachings, or exoteric and esoteric doctrines, as though unable to distinguish gems from tiles and stones or cow's milk from donkey's milk,² one should strictly differentiate between them, following the example of the great teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo.

It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong. Our contemporary scholars of the various schools are just like them. They despise a wise man without power, but fear evil rulers. They are no more than fawning retainers. Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one's real strength. When an evil ruler in consort with priests of erroneous teachings tries to destroy the correct teaching and do away with a man of wisdom, those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood. Like Nichiren, for example. I say this not out of arrogance, but because I am deeply committed to the correct teaching. An arrogant person will always be overcome with fear when meeting a strong enemy, as was the haughty asura who shrank in size and hid himself in a lotus blossom in Heat-Free Lake when re-

proached by Shakra. Even a word or a phrase of the correct teaching will enable one to gain the way, if it suits the time and the capacity of the people. But though one studies a thousand sutras and ten thousand treatises, one will not attain Buddhahood if these teachings are unsuitable for the time and the people's capacity.

Twenty-six years have passed since the battle of Hoji,³ and fighting⁴ has already broken out twice, on the eleventh and the seventeenth days of the second month of this year. Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the correct teaching of the Thus Come One, but the Buddha's disciples definitely can. As a sutra says, only worms born of the lion's body feed on the lion.⁵ A person of great fortune will never be ruined by enemies, but may be ruined by those who are close. The current battle is what the Medicine Master Sutra means by "the calamity of revolt within one's own domain." The Benevolent Kings Sutra states, "Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise." The Golden Light Sutra states, "The thirty-three heavenly gods become furious because the king permits evil to run rampant and fails to subdue it." Although I, Nichiren, am not a sage, I am equal to one, for I uphold the Lotus Sutra exactly as it teaches. Furthermore, since I have long understood the ways of the world, the prophecies I have made in this life have all come true. Therefore, you must never doubt what I have told you concerning future existences.

On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, when I was arrested, I called out in a loud voice, "I, Nichiren, am the pillar, sun, moon, mirror, and eyes of the ruling clan of Kanto.⁶ If the country abandons me, the seven disasters will occur without fail." Did not this prophecy come true just 60 days and then 150 days later? And those battles were only the first

signs. What lamenting there will be when the full effect appears!

Ignorant people wonder why Nichiren is persecuted by the rulers if he is truly a wise man. Yet it is all just as I expected. King Ajatashatru tormented his father and mother, for which he was hailed by the six royal ministers. When Devadatta killed an arhat and caused the Buddha to bleed, Kokalika and others were delighted. Nichiren is father and mother to the ruling house and is like a Buddha or an arhat to this age. The sovereign and his subjects who rejoice at my exile are truly the most shameless and pitiable of all. Those slanderous priests who have been bewailing the exposure of their errors may be overjoyed for the moment, but eventually they will suffer no less than myself and my followers. Their joy is like Yasuhira's when he killed his younger brother and Kuro Hogan.⁷ The demon who will destroy the ruling clan has already entered the country. This is the meaning of the passage from the Lotus Sutra that reads, "Evil demons will take possession of others."⁸

The persecutions Nichiren has faced are the result of karma formed in previous lifetimes. The "Never Disparaging" chapter reads, "when his offenses had been wiped out," indicating that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was vilified and beaten by countless slanderers of the correct teaching because of his past karma. How much more true this is of Nichiren, who in this life was born poor and lowly to a chandala family. In my heart I cherish some faith in the Lotus Sutra, but my body, while outwardly human, is fundamentally that of an animal. It was conceived of the two fluids, one white and one red, of a father and mother who subsisted on fish and fowl. My spirit dwells in this body as the moon is reflected in muddy water, or as gold is wrapped in a filthy bag. Since my heart believes in the Lotus Sutra, I do not fear even

Brahma or Shakra, but my body is still that of an animal. With such disparity between my body and my mind, no wonder the foolish despise me. Without doubt, when compared to my body, my mind shines like the moon or like gold. Who knows what slander I may have committed in the past? I may possess the soul of the monk Superior Intent or the spirit of Mahadeva. Perhaps I am descended from those who contemptuously persecuted Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, or am among those who forgot the seeds of enlightenment sown in their lives.⁹ I may even be related to the five thousand arrogant people,¹⁰ or belong to the third group [who failed to take faith in the Lotus Sutra] in the days of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence.¹¹ It is impossible to fathom one's karma.

Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse. My present exile is not because of any secular crime. It is solely so that I may expiate in this lifetime my past grave offenses and be freed in the next from the three evil paths.

The Parinirvana Sutra states: "Those who enter the monastic order, don clerical garments, and make a show of studying my teachings will exist in ages to come. Being lazy and remiss, they will slander the correct and equal sutras. You should be aware that all these people are followers of the non-Buddhist doctrines of today." Those who read this passage should reflect deeply on their own practice. The Buddha is saying that those of our contemporary priests who wear clerical garments, but are idle and negligent, were disciples of the six non-Buddhist teachers in his day.

The followers of Honen, who call themselves the Nembutsu school, not only turn people away from the Lotus Sutra, telling them to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon"¹² it, but also ad-

vocate chanting only the name of the Buddha Amida, a Buddha described in the provisional teachings. The followers of Dainichi, known as the Zen school, claim that the Buddha's true teachings have been transmitted apart from the sutras. They ridicule the Lotus Sutra as nothing more than a finger pointing at the moon or a meaningless string of words. Those priests must both have been followers of the six non-Buddhist teachers, who only now have entered the stream of Buddhism.

According to the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha emitted a radiant light that illuminated the 136 hells underground and revealed that not a single offender remained there. This was because they had all achieved Buddhahood through the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. What a pity, however, that the icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, who had slandered the correct teaching, were found to have been detained there by the wardens of hell. They proliferated until they became the people of Japan today.

Since Nichiren himself committed slander in the past, he became a Nembutsu priest in this lifetime, and for several years he also laughed at those who practiced the Lotus Sutra, saying that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood"¹³ through that sutra, or that "not even one person in a thousand"¹⁴ can be saved by it. Awakening from my intoxicated state of slander, I felt like a drunken son who, on becoming sober, laments at having delighted in striking his parents. He regrets it bitterly, but to no avail. His offense is extremely difficult to erase. Even more so are the past slanders of the correct teaching that stain the depths of one's heart. A sutra states that both the crow's blackness and the heron's whiteness are actually the deep stains of their past karma.¹⁵ The non-Buddhists failed to recognize this and claimed it was the work of nature.

Today, when I expose people's slanders in an effort to save them, they deny it with every excuse possible and argue back with Honen's words about barring the gates to the Lotus Sutra. From Nembutsu believers this is hardly surprising, but even priests of the Tendai and True Word schools actively support them.

On the sixteenth and seventeenth days of the first month of this year, hundreds of priests and lay believers from the Nembutsu and other schools here in the province of Sado came to debate with me. A leader of the Nembutsu school, Insho-bo, said: "The Honorable Honen did not instruct us to abandon the Lotus Sutra. He simply wrote that all people should chant the Nembutsu, and that its great blessings assure their rebirth in the Pure Land. Even the priests of Mount Hiei and Onjo-ji temple who have been exiled to this island praise him, saying how excellent his teaching is. How dare you try to refute it?" The local priests are even more ignorant than the Nembutsu priests in Kamakura. They are absolutely pitiful.

How terrible are the slanders Nichiren has committed in his past and present existences! Since you have been born into this evil country and become the disciples of such a man, there is no telling what will happen to you. The Parinirvana Sutra states: "Good man, because people committed countless offenses and accumulated much evil karma in the past, they must expect to suffer retribution for everything they have done. They may be despised, cursed with an ugly appearance, be poorly clad and poorly fed, seek wealth in vain, be born to an impoverished and lowly family or one with erroneous views, or be persecuted by their sovereign." It continues: "They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions. It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law

that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution.” Were it not for Nichiren, these passages from the sutra would virtually make the Buddha a liar. The sutra says, first, “They may be despised”; second, “They may be cursed with an ugly appearance”; third, “They may be poorly clad”; fourth, “They may be poorly fed”; fifth, “They may seek wealth in vain”; sixth, “They may be born to an impoverished and lowly family”; seventh, “They may be born to a family with erroneous views”; and eighth, “They may be persecuted by their sovereign.” These eight phrases apply only to me, Nichiren.

One who climbs a high mountain must eventually descend. One who slights another will in turn be despised. One who deprecates those of handsome appearance will be born ugly. One who robs another of food and clothing is sure to fall into the world of hungry spirits. One who mocks a person who observes the precepts and is worthy of respect will be born to an impoverished and lowly family. One who slanders a family that embraces the correct teaching will be born to a family that holds erroneous views. One who laughs at those who cherish the precepts faithfully will be born a commoner and meet with persecution from one’s sovereign. This is the general law of cause and effect.

My sufferings, however, are not ascribable to this causal law. In the past I despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. I also ridiculed the sutra itself, sometimes with exaggerated praise and other times with contempt—that sutra as magnificent as two moons shining side by side, two stars conjoined, one Mount Hua¹⁶ placed atop another, or two jewels combined. This is why I have experienced the aforementioned eight kinds of sufferings. Usually these sufferings appear one at a time, on into the boundless future, but Nichiren has

denounced the enemies of the Lotus Sutra so severely that all eight have descended at once. This is like the case of a peasant heavily in debt to the steward of his village and to other authorities. As long as he remains in his village or district, rather than mercilessly hounding him, they are likely to defer his debts from one year to the next. But when he tries to leave, they rush over and demand that he repay everything at once. This is what the sutra means when it states, “It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law.”

The Lotus Sutra says: “There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, with rocks and tiles . . . they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders, [as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us] . . . again and again we will be banished.”¹⁷ If the offenders are not tormented by the wardens of hell, they will never be able to [pay for their offenses and] escape from hell. Were it not for the rulers and ministers who now persecute me, I would be unable to expiate my past sins of slandering the correct teaching.

Nichiren is like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old, and the people of this day are like the four categories of Buddhists who disparaged and cursed him. Though the people are different, the cause is the same. Though different people kill their parents, they all fall into the same hell of incessant suffering. Since Nichiren is making the same cause as Never Disparaging, how could it be that he would not become a Buddha equal to Shakyamuni? Moreover, those who now slander him are like Bhadrपाला¹⁸ and the others [who cursed Never Disparaging]. They will be tortured in the Avichi hell for a thousand kalpas. I therefore pity them deeply and wonder what can be done

for them. Those who belittled and cursed Never Disparaging acted that way at first, but later they took faith in his teachings and willingly became his followers. The greater part of the fault of their slander was thus expiated, but even the small part that remained caused them to suffer as terribly as one who had killed one's parents a thousand times. The people of this age refuse to repent at all; therefore, as the "Simile and Parable" chapter states, they must suffer in hell for a countless number of kalpas; they may even suffer there for a duration of major world system dust particle kalpas or of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas.

Aside from these people, there are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers.

An asura contended that the Buddha taught only eighteen elements,¹⁹ but that he himself expounded nineteen. The non-Buddhist teachers claimed that the Buddha offered only one way to enlightenment, but that they had ninety-five.²⁰ In the same way, the renegade disciples say, "Though the priest Nichiren is our teacher, he is too forceful. We will spread the Lotus Sutra in a more peaceful way." In so asserting, they

are being as ridiculous as fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, an anthill belittling Mount Hua, wells and brooks despising the river and the ocean, or a magpie mocking a phoenix. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

The twentieth day of the third month in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*

To Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters

There is very little writing paper here in the province of Sado, and to write to you individually would take too long. Nevertheless, if even one person fails to hear from me, it will cause resentment. Therefore, I want people with seeking minds to meet and read this letter together for encouragement. When great trouble occurs in the world, minor troubles become insignificant. I do not know how accurate the reports reaching me are, but there must surely be intense grieving over those killed in the recent battles. What has become of the lay priests Izawa and Sakabe? Send me news of Kawanobe, Yamashiro, Tokugyo-ji,²¹ and the others. Also, please be kind enough to send me *The Essentials of Government in the Chen-kuan Era*,²² the collection of tales from the non-Buddhist classics, and the record of the teachings transmitted within the eight schools. Without these, I cannot even write letters.



Background

This letter was written on the twentieth day of the third month, 1272, some five months after Nichiren Daishonin had arrived on the island of Sado to begin his exile there. He addressed it to

Toki Jonin, a samurai serving as a leading retainer to Lord Chiba, the constable of Shimoso Province, to Saburo Saemon (Shijo Kingo) in Kamakura, and to other staunch followers.

Nichiren Daishonin had been banished on the tenth day of the tenth month, 1271. Charges of treason had been brought against him by Ryokan, the chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple in Kamakura, and by Hei no Saemon, deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs. Hei no Saemon was resolved to execute the Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi before he was to be delivered to the custody of Homma Shigetsura, the deputy constable of Sado. The attempt at execution was unsuccessful, however, and after a delay of almost a month Homma's warriors escorted the Daishonin to the coast of the Sea of Japan. After a delay there caused by bad weather, the Daishonin finally arrived on Sado on the twenty-eighth day of the tenth month.

Nichiren Daishonin was housed at first in a dilapidated structure known as Sammai-do, where he lived exposed to the wind and snow that blew in through gaps in the roof and walls. After five months he was able to move to more comfortable quarters at Ichinosawa. The Daishonin engaged in debates with Pure Land and other priests and actively propagated his own teachings. While on Sado he wrote two major treatises, *The Opening of the Eyes* and *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*. In the second month, 1274, the Daishonin was pardoned and returned to Kamakura on the twenty-sixth day of the third month.

In this writing the Daishonin first states that the only way to attain Bud-

dhahood is to be willing to offer one's life, one's most precious possession, to Buddhism. Next, he says that the method of propagation known as shakubuku is appropriate to this age, and that one can attain Buddhahood only by dedicating oneself to it. He then declares that he is the "pillar, sun, moon, mirror, and eyes" of and "father and mother" to the country; these are symbolic references to the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, who is perfectly endowed with the three virtues of parent, teacher, and sovereign. He also mentions his earlier prophecies in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* concerning political upheaval and violent feuds within the country.

Lastly, he gives an elaborate explanation of karma or destiny, stating that his present difficulties arise from the fact that he slandered the Lotus Sutra in a past existence. Using himself as an example, he elucidates to his disciples the kind of spirit and practice by which they can alter their karma. He adds that persons who try to propagate the correct teaching of Buddhism vigorously will invariably face opposition, and that such opposition in reality presents an opportunity for them to change their karma. Those who have given up their faith and instead criticize are admonished that their actions bear the heaviest consequences. He compares their lack of vision to fireflies who laugh at the sun.

Notes

1. Based on a passage in chapter 23 of the Lotus Sutra.

2. Cow's milk indicates the Lotus Sutra, while donkey's milk, thought to be poisonous, represents all the other sutras.

3. The battle waged in 1247 between the Hojo clan and its kin Miura family for control of the regency. The Hojo clan was victorious. In 1272, some twenty-six years

later, the Kamakura government was again plagued by internal strife.

4. Fighting here refers to the rebellions hatched by Hojo Tokisuke, an influential commissioner in Kyoto, to overthrow the regent Hojo Tokimune, his half brother. Tokisuke's coconspirators in Kamakura were killed by government forces on the eleventh day of the second month, while

Tokisuke himself was attacked and killed in Kyoto on the fifteenth. The “seventeenth” either was based on inaccurate information or else was a mistake that entered when the original document was copied.

5. Lotus-like Face Sutra.

6. Kanto refers to the Kamakura government.

7. Yasuhira refers to Fujiwara Yasuhira (1155–1189), the son of Fujiwara Hidehira, lord of the province of Mutsu in northeastern Japan. Yasuhira killed his brother and seized power for himself. Minamoto no Yoritomo, the Kamakura shogun, ordered him to kill Kuro Hogan Yoshitsune, Yoritomo’s brother, which he did to prove his loyalty. Later, however, Yoritomo had him executed to consolidate his own power in the northern part of Japan.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

9. “Those who forgot the seeds of enlightenment” are individuals who, because of the slanders they have committed, do not remember that they received the seeds of Buddhahood from Shakyamuni Buddha numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago.

10. According to the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, five thousand people—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—left the assembly as Shakyamuni began to preach about “the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle,” because they supposed they had attained what they had not attained.

11. This is described in the “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Major world system dust particle kalpas ago, the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence preached the Lotus Sutra to his sixteen sons. These sons then preached the sutra to the people, some of whom took faith in it and attained enlightenment. The third group comprises those who heard the Lotus Sutra at that time, but did not take faith in it. And even though

they were reborn in Shakyamuni’s lifetime, they still were unable to believe in the Lotus Sutra.

12. Honen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* and put them together as a set.

13. Tao-ch’o’s *Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight*.

14. Shan-tao’s *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*.

15. Presumably a rephrasing of a passage in the Shurangama Sutra (Sutra of the Resolute Meditation).

16. One of the five sacred mountains in China.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13. This chapter actually refers only to “swords and staves.” “Rocks and tiles” is an interpolation from the “Never Disparaging” chapter.

18. Bhadrपालa was the leader of the five hundred bodhisattvas involved in the persecution of Never Disparaging.

19. Eighteen elements: The comprehensive concept of the three interrelated categories: the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind), the six objects they perceive, and the six consciousnesses or the sense organs’ functions of perceiving the objects.

20. Based on a passage in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. The “ninety-five” ways may be ascribable to the fact that there were ninety-five non-Buddhist schools during Shakyamuni’s day.

21. Kawanobe, Yamashiro, and Tokugyo-ji were followers of the Daishonin, said to have been imprisoned in a dungeon following the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

22. A work written by Wu Ching during the T’ang dynasty. The work discusses the state of political affairs between the emperor and his subjects during the Chen-kuan era (627–649).

Reply to Sairen-bo



TAKE great care when you come to see me after dark. I will explain to you in detail the teachings regarding the benefits to be gained by one ordained to the highest stage of Buddhist practice.¹

I have carefully noted the contents of your letter. I have also received safely the various articles that came from the capital [Kyoto]. When I was living in Kamakura, such articles were a daily sight, but since having been exiled to this island, I have yet to encounter them. To come upon articles such as these on this tiny faraway island is truly most welcome.

In your letter you mention that you became a disciple of mine and pledged to follow me at the beginning of the second month, and that from now on, though you may not measure up to others, you would be most pleased and honored if I would continue to count you among my disciples.

The sutra says, "Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers."² It also says, "If one stays close to the teachers of the Law, one will speedily gain the bodhisattva way. By following and learning from these teachers one will see Buddhas as numerous as Ganges sands."³

A commentary states, "Originally

one followed this Buddha and for the first time conceived the desire to seek the way. And by following this Buddha again, one will reach the stage where there is no retrogression."⁴ Another commentary states, "In the beginning one followed this Buddha or bodhisattva and formed a bond with him, and so it will be through this Buddha or bodhisattva that one will attain one's goal."⁵

When I consider these passages of the sutra and the commentaries, I wonder if you and I have not been pledged to each other as teacher and disciple from countless kalpas in the past. You and I have been born together in this defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law, in the country of Japan in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, and with the utmost reverence we chant with our mouths *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*, the ultimate reason for which the Buddhas appear in the world; we believe in it in our hearts, embrace it with our bodies, and delight in it with our hands. Has all of this not come about solely because of some bond of karma we share from the past?

When I look at the situation in Japan, I find that the devil king of the sixth heaven has entered into the bodies of wise persons, transforming correct teachers into erroneous teachers, and good teachers into bad teachers.

This is what the sutra means when it says, "Evil demons will take possession of others."⁶

Although I, Nichiren, am not a man of wisdom, the devil king of the sixth heaven has attempted to take possession of my body. But I have for some time been taking such great care that he now no longer comes near me. Therefore, because the power of the heavenly devil is ineffectual against me, he instead possesses the ruler and his high officials, or foolish priests such as Ryokan, and causes them to hate me.

Be that as it may, one should understand that, at present, when it comes to teachers, there is a difference between correct teachers and erroneous teachers, between good teachers and bad teachers. One should shun those who are erroneous or evil, and associate with those who are correct and good. Even if their virtue is known throughout the country and their wisdom is as bright as the sun and moon, one should recognize that teachers who slander the Lotus Sutra are evil teachers and erroneous teachers, and refrain from approaching them. A sutra warns us on this point, "If there are slanderers of the Law, one should not dwell with them. If one draws near them and dwells with them, one will be bound for the Avichi hell."⁷

No matter how honest and upright you may be, or how you may strive to be known as a worthy person in the secular or the religious world, if you associate with evil persons, then as a natural result you will find that in two or three instances out of ten you are following their teachings, and in the end you, too, will become an evil person. Thus the commentary says, "Though one may not be evil to begin with, if one associates with and is friendly with evil persons, one is bound in time to become an evil person oneself, and one's evil reputation will spread throughout the world."⁸

In the end, what we mean by erroneous and evil teachers are those priests in the world today who slander the Lotus Sutra. The Nirvana Sutra says: "Bodhisattvas, have no fear of mad elephants. What you should fear are evil friends! . . . Even if you are killed by a mad elephant, you will not fall into the three evil paths. But if you are killed by an evil friend, you are certain to fall into them." The Lotus Sutra says, "In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked."⁹

As I have pointed out so many times in the past, when teachers such as Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Bodhidharma, Hui-k'o, Shan-tao, Honen, Kobo of To-ji, Chisho of Onjo-ji, Jikaku of Mount Hiei, or Ryokan of Kanto read the golden words, "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way],"¹⁰ they take them to mean, "Honestly discarding the true teachings, I will preach only the expedient teachings." When they read the passage that says, "Among the sutras, it [the Lotus Sutra] holds the highest place,"¹¹ they take it to mean, "Among the sutras, it holds the lowest place." And when they read, "[Among those sutras] the Lotus is the foremost,"¹² they take it to mean, "The Lotus holds second place," or "holds third place." That is why I describe these various priests as misleading and evil teachers.

Those that I call correct and good teachers are persons who take Shakyamuni Buddha's golden words to mean just what they say, namely, that the other sutras represent expedient means and the Lotus Sutra represents the truth.

In this connection, you should consult the "Entering the Dharma Realm" chapter, the seventy-seventh volume of the Flower Garland Sutra.¹³ The Lotus Sutra states, "A good friend is the great cause and condition by which one is guided and led, and which enables one

to see the Buddha and to conceive the desire for supreme perfect enlightenment.”¹⁴

As the Buddha tells us, we should regard as correct teachers and good teachers those who honestly discard the doctrines of the four flavors and three teachings, the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana sutras that were expounded as expedient means, as well as the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools and the sutras upon which they rely, and expound Myohorenge-kyo, “the one great reason for which the Buddhas appear in the world.”¹⁵

As for myself, I, Nichiren, having been born in Japan in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law, have encountered the three powerful enemies and met with various types of calamity and trouble, just as the Thus Come One predicted would happen. But, without any thought for my person or my life, I chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. I ask you to consider with the utmost care whether I deserve to be called a correct teacher or an erroneous teacher.

Each of the proponents of the various schools I have mentioned above declares that he beyond all others has grasped the meaning of and is practicing the Lotus Sutra. But none of them have been exiled to the province of Izu as I was in the Kocho era, or exiled to the island of Sado as I was in the Bun’ei era, or been led to the place of decapitation at Tatsunokuchi or faced the countless other difficulties that I have. If the sutra passages [that predict such difficulties] are true, then you should realize that I am the correct teacher, the good teacher, and that the scholars of the other schools are all erroneous teachers and evil teachers.

In addition to these, there are a great many other passages in the sutras and treatises that make clear the distinction between these two types of teachers,

the good and the bad. But I am sure you are already familiar with them, so I will not go into them here.

How wondrous that in your letter you say that from now on you will reject the erroneous teachers of our time and will rely entirely upon me as the correct teacher! When the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, our original teacher, appeared in the world in order to expound the Lotus Sutra, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the other worlds, like shadows and echoes, came forth and assisted him in his efforts to spread the teachings. Now it seems that they have appeared here in Japan as envoys of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions to help me in my efforts to spread the teachings!

The sutra says: “I will send persons conjured up by magic to other lands to gather together assemblies to listen to the Law. And I will also send [monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen] conjured up by magic [to listen to the preaching of the Law. These persons conjured up by magic will listen to the Law, believe and accept it], and abide by it without violation.”¹⁶ The “monks” who are spoken of in this passage refer to you. Therefore, when the sutra speaks of persons who “listen to the Law, believe and accept it, and abide by it without violation,” you need look no further than yourself. How can there be any doubt about it?

Although the sutra speaks of those who, having heard the Law, “dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers,” there are persons like the three groups of voice-hearers who, after receiving the seeds of Buddhahood, reject the Mahayana, select the Hinayana, and sink into the five paths or the six paths for a succession of rebirths, but when the time to achieve Buddhahood arrives, they are able to obtain emancipation, one after

another. How gratifying to think that you have now cast aside the erroneous doctrines and erroneous teachers of the Nembutsu, True Word, and other schools, and become a disciple of Nichiren!

In any case, like me, you should condemn the slander of the Law committed by the followers of the other schools and cause them to reject the erroneous and embrace the correct. Then, when you arrive in the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light where the three kinds of Buddhas¹⁷ are seated, and appear before the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, you will ask, "Were Nichiren and I bound by a promise to be teacher and disciple from the beginningless past, or were we not? Was I sent as an envoy of Shakyamuni Buddha to assist him in his efforts to spread the teachings?" And when the Buddhas reply, "Just so!" then you, too, will understand in your own mind why these things happened. Therefore, you must by all means be diligent! You must be diligent!

As a matter of course, I began giving you instruction in the important doctrines around the second month. And as a result, on the eighth day of the fourth month, after midnight in the hour of the tiger (3:00–5:00 A.M.), I performed for you the ceremony for ordination in the precept¹⁸ of the perfect teaching of the Mystic Law.

How could a person who has undergone this ordination fail to become a Buddha of perfect enlightenment in his present existence? And if in this life you have attained the level of perfect enlightenment, then in your next life, how could you have any reason to regress to the stage of near-perfect enlightenment and other lower stages of practice? In view of our promise from the beginningless past and the principle that one will be constantly reborn with one's teacher, if I, Nichiren, attain Buddhahood in my present lifetime, then

how could it be possible for you to become separated from me and fall into the evil paths?

The prophecies of the Thus Come One recorded in the scripture, when viewed in the light of the Buddha's true intentions, never contain the slightest falsehood with regard to either secular or religious matters. Now, in the Lotus Sutra it is stated, "After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way."¹⁹ It also says, "This way one will quickly attain the unsurpassed Buddha way."²⁰ If these passages of prophecy should be meaningless, and if the prediction that we will attain Buddhahood should be a lie, then the tongues of all the Buddhas will break apart, the tower of Many Treasures Buddha will crumble and fall, the place upon which the two Buddhas [Shakyamuni and Many Treasures] are seated side by side will be changed into a bed of burning iron in the hell of incessant suffering, and the three lands of Transition, Actual Reward, and Eternally Tranquil Light will be transformed into the three evil paths of hell, hungry spirits, and animals. But how could such a thing ever be possible?

Ah, how assuring! How assuring! If we continue to think in this way, then, though we may be exiles, we have cause to be joyful in both body and mind!

So day and night I ponder the important doctrines, and hour by hour, moment by moment, I savor the principle that allows us to attain Buddhahood. And because I pass the time in this fashion, though months and years go by, it does not seem long at all, and the hours that have elapsed do not seem like many. It is similar to the case described in the sutra when the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, seated side by side in the treasure tower, nodded in approval over the wonderful principles of the Lotus Su-

tra, and although fifty small kalpas had elapsed, because of the supernatural powers of the Buddha, it seemed to the great crowd assembled there like no more than half a day.²¹

Among all the persons since the beginning of our present kalpa who have incurred the wrath of their parents or their rulers and have been exiled to distant islands, there can be none who overflow with joy as we do. Therefore, wherever we dwell and practice the single vehicle, that place will be the Capital of Eternally Tranquil Light. And, without having to take a step, those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. What a truly inexpressible joy it is!

So delightful is the thought that I will now make a promise to you. If you should be released quickly from exile and return to the capital, although the lord of Kamakura²² may continue to refuse pardon to Nichiren, I will call upon the heavenly deities, and when I have returned to Kamakura, I will write to you in Kyoto. If I should be pardoned first and return to Kamakura, I will call upon the heavenly gods to make certain that you are able to return home to the capital.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the fourth
month

Reply to Sairen-bo



Background

This letter was written to Sairen-bo Nichijō in the fourth month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272) at Ichinosawa on Sado Island. Sairen-bo, a former Tendai priest, was also living in exile on Sado. From the letters sent to him by Nichiren Daishonin, it appears that Sairen-bo was well versed in Buddhist teachings. The Daishonin, on receiving the government's pardon, left Sado and moved to Minobu. Somewhat later Sairen-bo was also pardoned, whereupon he returned to his native Kyoto. He received a number of important writings from the Daishonin, including *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life* and *The True Aspect of All Phenomena*.

In this letter, the Daishonin expresses his heartfelt gratitude for the various articles from Kyoto that Sairen-bo had sent to him as offerings. For an exile such as Sairen-bo, these articles must

have been exceedingly precious.

The Daishonin also refers to a letter that Sairen-bo had sent him. In his letter Sairen-bo explained that he had pledged near the beginning of the second month to follow the Daishonin, and he expressed his desire to be considered one of the Daishonin's disciples.

With regard to Sairen-bo's recent pledge to become his disciple, the Daishonin quotes from the Lotus Sutra and its commentaries to illustrate the profound relationship between teacher and disciple. He then states that one should discard evil teachers and follow good ones. He reveals that he himself is the true and correct teacher for the Latter Day of the Law and declares that Sairen-bo was born in order to aid him in his efforts, thereby encouraging his disciple to exert himself in Buddhist practice.

The Daishonin reveals the great benefits to be gained by observing the precept of the perfect teaching—in other words, faith in the Mystic Law. And he tells Sairen-bo that, although they may both be exiles, in the future

they are sure to attain Buddhahood and that, therefore, he feels great satisfaction and joy. In conclusion, the Daishonin encourages Sairen-bo by suggesting that they are both likely to be pardoned soon.

Notes

1. The highest stage of Buddhist practice refers to the stage of perfect enlightenment, the highest of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 7.

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

4. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

5. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

7. Ten Kinds of Wheels Sutra.

8. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

10. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

11. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

12. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

13. The "Entering the Dharma Realm" chapter consists of the sixtieth volume through the eightieth, and last, volume of the eighty-volume Flower Garland Sutra. This chapter relates the story of the boy Good Treasures, who visits a total of fifty-three teachers in search of the Law. In the seventy-seventh volume, when he meets

the boy Life of Virtue and the girl Possessor of Virtue, he learns about the importance of correct and good teachers and about the benefits to be gained by following them.

14. Lotus Sutra, chap. 27.

15. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

16. *Ibid.*, chap. 10. The entire passage is quoted in translation here for clarity, although only a portion appears in the Japanese original.

17. The three kinds of Buddhas refer to Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

18. The precept refers here to the rule of conduct that one should observe to attain Buddhahood instantly. It means, simply, to embrace the Mystic Law.

19. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

20. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

21. This scene is described in chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra.

22. The lord of Kamakura is another name for Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

The Gods Same Birth and Same Name



I HOPE you will read this letter over and over again together with Toshiro's wife. The sun breaks through the pitch-black dark. A woman's heart is compared to the pitch-black dark, and the Lotus Sutra is compared to the sun. The baby does not recognize its mother, but the mother never forgets her baby. Shakyamuni Buddha is compared to the mother, and women are compared to the baby. If two people long for each other, as a rule they will never be parted. If one person yearns for the other, but the other yearns not, sometimes they will meet, and sometimes they will not. The Buddha is like the one who yearns, and women are like the one who does not. If we yearn for the Buddha, how could Shakyamuni Buddha possibly fail to appear?

You may call a stone a jewel, but that does not make it one. You may call a jewel a stone, but it remains a jewel. In our age, the doctrines of the Nembutsu and the other schools that are based on the Buddha's provisional teachings are all like stones. People may say that the Nembutsu is equal to the Lotus Sutra, but that does not in fact make it so. And people may slander the Lotus Sutra, but that does not affect it any more than calling a jewel a stone affects the jewel.

In the past there was an evil ruler in China named Emperor Hui-tsung.

Having been led astray by Taoist priests, he destroyed Buddhist statues and sutras and forced all the priests and nuns to return to secular life, and there was not one who refused to abandon their religious calling. Among them, however, a man called the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao refused to be cowed by the imperial command. As a result, he was branded on the face and exiled to a region south of the Yangtze River. I was born in an age when the rulers put their faith in the Zen school, which is as erroneous as the doctrine of the Taoists, and I, too, like Fa-tao, have met with great difficulties.

Both of you were born as commoners and live in Kamakura, yet you believe in the Lotus Sutra without concern for the prying eyes of others or the danger it may pose to your lives. This is nothing short of extraordinary. Though I am only guessing, it is as if a jewel had been placed in muddy water, and the water had become clear. It is as if one who was taught something new by a wise person had believed his every word and thus grasped the truth. Could Shakyamuni Buddha and the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Medicine King, and Constellation King Flower be dwelling in your hearts? Surely this is what is meant in the passage of the Lotus Sutra that says that those in the land of Jambudvipa who believe in this sutra do

so because of the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy.¹

Women, for example, are like the wisteria, and men are like the pine. If the wisteria happens to be parted from the pine for even an instant, it never rises again. And yet, in such a turbulent world, and when you do not even have servants you can rely on, you have sent your husband here. This shows that your sincerity is deeper even than the earth, and the earthly gods must certainly realize it. It is loftier even than the sky, and the heavenly gods Brahma and Shakra must also be aware of it. The Buddha taught that one, from the very moment of one's birth, is accom-

panied by two messengers, Same Birth and Same Name, who are sent by heaven and who follow one as closely as one's own shadow, never parting from one even for an instant. These two take turns ascending to heaven to report one's offenses and good deeds, both great and small, without overlooking the slightest detail. Therefore, heaven too must know about this matter. How reassuring! How reassuring!

Nichiren

The fourth month

Reply to the wife of Shijo Kingo



Background

Shijo Kingo visited Nichiren Daishonin on Sado Island in the fourth month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), and the Daishonin entrusted him with this letter for his wife, Nichigen-nyo, who was a devoted follower of the Daishonin's teachings. Nichigen-nyo was the name given to her by the Daishonin. He also named her two daughters, Tsukimaro and Kyō'o.

First, the Daishonin urges Nichigen-nyo to read the letter with Toshiro's wife. While little is known of Toshiro

and his wife, it is believed that he was one of Kingo's colleagues in the Kamakura government.

In the feudalistic society of the time, life was difficult for women since their social status was invariably inferior to that of men. Nevertheless, though she had no one else to rely on, Nichigen-nyo sent her husband all the way from Kamakura to Sado on a journey that was both difficult and dangerous. For this the Daishonin highly praises her faith.

Note

1. As described in the "Universal Worthy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment



I DEEPLY appreciate your visit here and your constant concern over the numerous persecutions that have befallen me. I do not regret meeting with such great persecutions as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. However many times I were to repeat the cycle of birth and death, no life could be as fortunate as this. [If not for these troubles,] I might have remained in the three or four evil paths. But now, to my great joy, I am sure to sever the cycle of the sufferings of birth and death, and attain the fruit of Buddhahood.

Even for spreading the teaching of the theoretical “three thousand realms in a single moment of life” from the first half of the Lotus Sutra, T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo met with hatred and jealousy. In Japan it was transmitted from Dengyo to Gishin, Encho, Jikaku, and others, and spread. The eighteenth chief priest of the Tendai school was the Great Teacher Jie, and he had many disciples. Among them there were four named Danna, Eshin, Soga, and Zen’yu. The teaching also was divided into two: the Administrator of Priests Danna transmitted the doctrinal studies, while the Supervisor of Priests Eshin studied the meditative practices. Thus the doctrinal studies and meditative practices are like the sun and moon; doctrinal studies are shallow, while meditative practices are deep. Thus the teaching ex-

pounded by Danna is broad but shallow, while the teaching of Eshin is limited but deep.

Though the teaching I am now propagating seems limited, it is extremely profound. That is because it goes deeper than the teaching expounded by T’ien-t’ai, Dengyo, and others. It is the three important matters¹ in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching. Practicing only the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo seems limited, but since they are the master of all the Buddhas of the three existences, the teacher of all the bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and the guide that enables all living beings to attain the Buddha way, it is profound.

The sutra states, “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable.”² It refers to “the Buddhas” here in the sense of all Buddhas throughout the ten directions in the three existences, from the Thus Come One Mahavairochana of the True Word school and Amida of the Pure Land school to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of all schools and all sutras, all Buddhas of the past, future, and present, and the present Thus Come One Shakyamuni. And the sutra speaks of the wisdom of all those Buddhas.

What is meant by this “wisdom”? It is the entity of the true aspect of

all phenomena, and of the ten factors of life that lead all beings to Buddhahood. What then is that entity? It is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. A commentary states that the profound principle of the true aspect is the originally inherent Myoho-enge-kyo.³ We learn that that true aspect of all phenomena is also the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures [seated together in the treasure tower]. “All phenomena” corresponds to Many Treasures, and “the true aspect” corresponds to Shakyamuni. These are also the two elements of reality and wisdom. Many Treasures is reality; Shakyamuni is wisdom. It is the enlightenment that reality and wisdom are two, and yet they are not two.

These are teachings of prime importance. These are also what is called “earthly desires are enlightenment,” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo during the physical union of man and woman is indeed what is called “earthly desires are enlightenment,” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” “The sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” exists only in realizing that the entity of life throughout its cycle of birth and death is neither born nor destroyed. The Universal Worthy Sutra states, “Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses.” *Great Concentration and Insight* says, “The ignorance and dust of desires are enlightenment, and the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “At all times I think to myself: How can I cause living beings to gain entry into the unsurpassed way and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?” The “Expedient Means” chapter says, “The characteristics of the world are constantly abiding.” Surely such statements refer to these principles. Thus what is called the

entity is none other than Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

It was such an august and precious Lotus Sutra that in past existences I put under my knees, despised, scowled upon in disgust, and failed to believe in. In one way or another, I maliciously ridiculed those who, studying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, taught them to even one person, and carried on the life of the Law. In addition, I did everything I could to hinder people from embracing the sutra by asserting that they should set it aside for a while because, though it might be suitable for practice in their next lifetime, it would be too difficult to practice in this one. Slandorous acts such as these have brought on the many severe persecutions I have suffered in my lifetime. Because I once disparaged the Lotus Sutra, the highest of all sutras, I am now looked down on, and my words go unheeded. The “Simile and Parable” chapter states that other people will neither concern themselves with one nor have sympathy for one, even though one sincerely tries to be friendly with them.

Nevertheless, you became a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and as a result, you suffered severe persecutions, and you came to my assistance. In the “Teacher of the Law” chapter, the Buddha states that he will magically conjure and send the four kinds of believers—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen [—for the sake of the teachers of the Law]. If the “laymen” mentioned here does not mean you, who does it refer to? You have not only heard the Law, but have taken faith in it and since then have followed it without turning aside. How wondrous! How extraordinary! If that is the case, then can there be any doubt that I am the teacher of the Law of the Lotus Sutra? Perhaps I also resemble “the envoy of the Thus Come One,” for I am carrying out “the Thus Come One’s work.”⁴ I have nearly spread the

five characters of the daimoku that were entrusted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices when the two Buddhas were seated together within the treasure tower. Does this not mean that I am an envoy of Bodhisattva Superior Practices? Moreover, following me, you, as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, have told others of this Law. What else could this be but the transmission of the Law?

Carry through with your faith in the Lotus Sutra. You cannot strike fire from flint if you stop halfway. Bring forth the great power of faith, and be spoken of by all the people of Kamakura, both high and low, or by all the people of Japan, as “Shijo Kingo, Shijo Kingo of the Lotus school!”⁵ Even a bad reputation will spread far and wide. A good reputation will spread even far-

ther, particularly if it is a reputation for devotion to the Lotus Sutra.

Explain all this to your wife too, and work together like the sun and moon, a pair of eyes, or the two wings of a bird. With the sun and moon, could there be a path of darkness? With a pair of eyes, no doubt you will see the faces of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. With a pair of wings, you will surely fly in an instant to the treasure land of Tranquil Light. I will write in more detail on another occasion.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The second day of the fifth month

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

In the fourth month of the ninth year of Bun’ei (1272), Shijo Kingo traveled from Kamakura to Sado Island to visit Nichiren Daishonin. Kingo was a samurai who served the Ema family, a branch of the ruling Hojo clan. The journey to Sado was a long, arduous one, involving a boat trip across the Sea of Japan, and required that he absent himself from his duties in Kamakura for more than a month.

In the fifth month of the same year, soon after Shijo Kingo returned to Kamakura, Nichiren Daishonin sent him this letter. It was written in gratitude for the samurai’s visit.

In the letter, the Daishonin explains the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in terms of such profound Buddhist principles as the fusion of reality and wisdom, and earthly desires are enlightenment. Although Hinayana Buddhism teaches that earthly desires must be eliminated to attain enlightenment,

Mahayana, and particularly the Lotus Sutra, teaches that earthly desires are one with and inseparable from enlightenment. The reason is that both are the workings, or expression, of life itself, and thus are the same in their source.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches that, when one bases one’s life on Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, earthly desires work naturally for one’s own and others’ happiness. The great power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is inherently positive and creative, directs the great energy of one’s earthly desires toward happiness and value for all. Thus, when one chants the daimoku, “earthly desires are enlightenment.”

Until his near-execution at Tatsunokuchi in the ninth month of 1271, the Daishonin had assumed the role of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the votary whose appearance is predicted in the Lotus Sutra. He had spent all his time teaching the essence of the sutra and

propagating the faith. After Tatsunokuchi, he revealed his true identity as the Buddha who is one with the supreme Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In this letter, the Daishonin teaches the significance of the daimoku from the standpoint of the Buddha who opens the way to Buddhahood for all humankind.

He first states that it is his great joy to meet persecutions as the votary of

the Lotus Sutra, because it is the sure way to attain Buddhahood. "Though the teaching I am now propagating seems limited, it is extremely profound. That is because it goes deeper than the teaching expounded by T'ien-t'ai, Dengyo, and others." He reveals that the ultimate Law of all Buddhas is none other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Notes

1. The "three important matters" refers to the Three Great Secret Laws: the object of devotion, the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the daimoku, and the sanctuary, or the place where one chants daimoku before the object of devotion.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

3. This statement has been attributed to T'ien-t'ai, but there is no documentary proof to support this.

4. Based on the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This particular section reads: "If one of these good men or

good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One's work."

5. The Lotus school was originally another name for the Tendai school, which based itself on the Lotus Sutra. Later the term came to mean the Buddhism established by Nichiren Daishonin.

Letter to the Sage Nichimyo



ONCE there was an ascetic named Aspiration for the Law. For twelve years, he traveled from country to country in search of the teachings of a Thus Come One. During that time, none of the three treasures—the Buddha, the Law, and the Order—were to be found. Nevertheless, the ascetic continued his quest for Buddhism as desperately as one who is thirsty seeks water, or as a starving person looks for food. One day a Brahman came to him and said, “I possess a verse of the sacred teaching. If you are a true seeker of Buddhism, I will impart it to you.” The ascetic beseeched him to do so. The Brahman then said: “To prove your sincerity, first peel off your skin for parchment, break off one of your bones for a writing brush, grind up its marrow for pigment, and draw your blood to mix the ink. If you are willing to do all these things and thus write down this teaching, I will teach you the Buddha’s verse.”

The ascetic was overjoyed. He peeled off his skin, dried it, and made parchment of it. He then did all the other things demanded of him, just as he had been told. When he had finished, the Brahman suddenly vanished. The ascetic bewailed his fate, now gazing up to the heavens, now flinging himself to the ground. The Buddha, sensing his sincerity, emerged from

beneath the earth and taught him as follows: “Practice what accords with the Law; do not practice what contradicts it. One who practices the Law will dwell in peace and security both in this life and in the next.”¹ The moment the ascetic heard this, he became a Buddha. This teaching consists of twenty Chinese characters.

Once [in a previous existence] when Shakyamuni was a wheel-turning king engaged in bodhisattva practice, he revered an eight-character phrase that stated: “One who is born is destined to die. To extinguish this cycle is to enter the joy of nirvana.”² As an offering to these eight characters, he gave his own body to fuel a thousand lanterns. Moreover, he urged others to inscribe those characters on stone walls and main roads so that people who read them would arouse the aspiration for enlightenment. The light of those lanterns reached as high as the heaven of the thirty-three gods, where it served as illumination for Shakra and the other heavenly deities.

In another past existence Shakyamuni was carrying out bodhisattva austerities in search of Buddhism. One day a leper said to him, “I possess the correct teaching, which consists of twenty characters. If you will massage my leprosy body, embrace, and lick it, feeding me two or three pounds of your own flesh every day, I will impart the teaching

to you.” Shakyamuni did exactly as the leper said. As a result, he obtained the twenty-character teaching and attained Buddhahood. The teaching went, “The Thus Come One is enlightened to the truth of nirvana, and has forever freed himself from the sufferings of birth and death. Anyone who wholeheartedly listens to him will surely obtain immeasurable joy.”³

There was once a boy called Snow Mountains who lived in the Snow Mountains. Although he had mastered all non-Buddhist teachings, he had not yet encountered Buddhism. Then, one day, he happened to hear a terrifying demon recite a verse that began: “All is changeable, nothing is constant. This is the law of birth and death.” The demon, however, spoke only the first eight characters of the verse, leaving the rest unsaid. Although the boy was exceedingly glad to have heard the first eight characters, he felt as though he had been given only half a wish-granting jewel. It was like a plant that flowers but bears no fruit. When the boy asked for the remaining eight characters, the demon replied, “I have had nothing to eat for several days. I am too dazed with hunger to preach the remaining eight characters. First give me some food!” The boy asked, “What do you eat?” The demon answered, “I feed on the warm flesh and blood of human beings. Though I can fly anywhere throughout the four continents in the space of a moment, I can obtain no warm flesh and blood. Human beings are protected by the heavenly gods, so I cannot kill them unless they commit evil.”

The boy Snow Mountains said, “I will make you an offering of my own body, so teach me the remaining eight characters so that I can leave the whole teaching behind.” The demon said, “You are a cunning fellow, aren’t you? Surely you are trying to deceive me.” The boy replied, “If one is offered gold

and silver in exchange for shards and rubble, should one not accept it? If I die to no purpose on this mountain, then my body will be devoured by kites, owls, wolves, and tigers, and will bring me no benefit whatsoever. On the other hand, if I give my life for the remaining eight characters, it will be like exchanging dung for food.”

The demon was still suspicious. The boy assured him, “There are those who will vouch for my honesty. Like the Buddhas of ages past, I call upon the great heavenly king Brahma, the heavenly lord Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings to be my witnesses.” Finally the demon consented to impart the second half of the verse. The boy removed his deer-skin garment and spread it out for the demon to sit upon. Then he knelt down and joined his palms together in supplication, begging the demon to be seated. The fierce demon complied and began to recite, “Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana.” When the boy had learned the entire verse, he inscribed it on trees and stones. This completed, he cast himself into the demon’s mouth. The boy Snow Mountains was actually Shakyamuni in one of his past existences, while the demon was Shakra in disguise.⁴

Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his arms for seventy-two thousand years as an offering to the Lotus Sutra.⁵ Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was for many years cursed and humiliated, beaten with sticks and staves, and pelted with tiles and stones by countless monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen because he venerated them by uttering the twenty-four characters that read: “I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood.”⁶ Bodhisattva Never Disparaging

was Shakyamuni Buddha in one of his past lifetimes. King Suzudan performed menial labor in the service of the seer Asita⁷ for a thousand years in order to receive the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo. He even went so far as to make a bed of his own body for his master. As a result, he was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law consists of eight volumes. Reading these eight volumes is in effect equal to reading sixteen, for the sutra was expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha and verified by Many Treasures Buddha. The sixteen volumes, in turn, represent innumerable volumes, for the Buddhas of the ten directions verified their truth. In the same way, each character in the sutra equals two, for it was uttered by Shakyamuni and confirmed by Many Treasures. Again, a single character equals innumerable others, for the validity of the sutra was attested to by the Buddhas of the ten directions. The treasures bestowed by a single wish-granting jewel equal those bestowed by two such jewels or by innumerable jewels. Likewise, each character in the Lotus Sutra is like a single wish-granting jewel, and the innumerable characters of the sutra are like innumerable jewels. The character *myo* was uttered by two tongues: the tongues of Shakyamuni and Many Treasures. The tongues of these two Buddhas are like an eight-petaled lotus flower, one petal overlapping another, on which rests a jewel, the character of *myo*.

The jewel of the character *myo* contains all the benefits that the Thus Come One Shakyamuni received by practicing the six paramitas in his past existences: the benefits he obtained through the practice of almsgiving by offering his body to a starving tigress⁸ and by giving his life in exchange for that of a dove;⁹ the benefits he obtained when he was King Shrutasoma who kept his word, though it meant his death,

in order to observe the precepts;¹⁰ the benefits he obtained as an ascetic called Forbearance by enduring the tortures inflicted upon him by King Kali;¹¹ the benefits he obtained as Prince Earnest Donor¹² and as the ascetic Shojari,¹³ and all his other benefits. We, the people of this evil latter age, have not formed even a single good cause, but [by bestowing upon us the jewel of *myo*] Shakyamuni has granted us the same benefit as if we ourselves had fulfilled all the practices of the six paramitas. This precisely accords with his statement "Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children."¹⁴ Bound as we common mortals are by earthly desires, we can instantly attain the same virtues as Shakyamuni Buddha, for we receive all the benefits that he accumulated. The sutra reads, "Hoping to make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us."¹⁵ This means that those who believe in and practice the Lotus Sutra are equal to Shakyamuni Buddha.

To illustrate, a father and mother unite in conjugal harmony to give birth to a child. No one can dispute that the child is the flesh and blood of its parents. A calf begotten by an ox king will become an ox king; it will never become a lion king. A cub sired by a lion king will become a lion king; it will never become a human king or heavenly king. Now the votaries of the Lotus Sutra are the children of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, as the sutra states, "The living beings in it are all my children." It is not difficult for them to become kings of the Law just as Shakyamuni Buddha did.

Unfilial children, however, are not allowed to succeed their parents. King Yao had an heir named Tan Chu, and King Shun had a prince named Shang Chün. As both sons were lacking in filial piety, they were disowned by their respective fathers and demoted to the rank of commoners. Ch'ung-hua and

Yü were the children of commoners, but both were extremely filial. Hearing of this, King Yao and King Shun summoned Ch'ung-hua and Yü, and abdicated their thrones to them. Commoners became royalty in a day. Just as a commoner can become a king in this present life, so can an ordinary person become a Buddha instantly. This is the heart of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

How, then, can we obtain this benefit? Should we peel off our skins as the ascetic Aspiration for the Law did, follow the boy Snow Mountains' example and offer our bodies to a demon, or emulate Bodhisattva Medicine King in burning our arms? As the Great Teacher Chang-an stated, "You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other."¹⁶ The practice we should perform in order to master the correct teaching and attain Buddhahood depends upon the times. If there were no paper in Japan, then you should peel off your skin. If the Lotus Sutra had not yet been introduced to our country and a single demon were to appear who knew it, then you should offer your body to him. If there were no oil available in our country, then you should burn your arms. But of what use is it to peel off our skin when the country has an abundant supply of heavy paper?

Hsüan-tsang journeyed throughout India in search of the Buddha's teachings for seventeen years, covering a distance of a hundred thousand *ri*. Dengyo remained in T'ang China for only two years, but he traveled three thousand *ri* across the billowing sea to get there. These were all men, ancients, worthies, and sages. Never have I heard of a woman who journeyed a thousand *ri* in search of Buddhism as you did. True, the dragon king's daughter attained enlightenment without chang-

ing her present form, and the nun Mahaprajapati received a prediction that she would become a Buddha in the future. I am not certain, but they may have been female forms assumed by Buddhas or bodhisattvas. After all, those events occurred in the Buddha's lifetime.

The character of man and woman differs from the outset. Fire is hot, and water, cold. Fishermen are skilled in catching fish, and hunters are proficient in trapping deer. A sutra states that women are clever at being jealous, but I have never heard that women are clever at Buddhism. A woman's mind is compared to a refreshing breeze; even if one could bind the wind, it would be hard to grasp a woman's mind. A woman's mind is likened to writing on water because the characters do not remain on the surface. A woman is likened to a liar, for sometimes a liar's words are true, and sometimes, false. A woman's mind is compared to a river, for all rivers bend.

The Lotus Sutra, however, contains such phrases as "honestly discarding expedient means,"¹⁷ "all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth,"¹⁸ "honest and upright, gentle in intent,"¹⁹ and "gentle, peaceful, honest, and upright."²⁰ Those who believe in this sutra, therefore, must have minds that are as straight as a taut bowstring or a carpenter's inking line. One may call dung sandalwood, but it will not have the sandalwood's fragrance. A liar never becomes a truthful person simply because one calls him honest. All the sutras are the Buddha's golden teachings, his true words. When compared with the Lotus Sutra, however, they are false, flattering, abusive, or double-tongued.²¹ The Lotus Sutra alone is the truth of truths. Only honest people can keep faith in this sutra, a teaching free from all falsehood. Certainly you are a woman who believes in the [Buddha's] true words.

Think of it! Even if one were to meet a person who could cross the ocean carrying Mount Sumeru on his head, one could never find a woman like you. Even though one might find a person who could steam sand and make boiled rice of it, one could never meet a woman like you. You should know that Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, the Buddhas of the ten directions who are Shakyamuni's emanations, great bodhisattvas such as Superior Practices and Boundless Practices, Brahma, Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and other deities will protect you, just as a shadow accompanies the body. You are the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra among the women of Japan. Therefore, following the example of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, I bestow on you the Buddhist name Sage Nichimyo.²²

From Kamakura in Sagami Province to the northern province of Sado is a journey of more than a thousand *ri* over treacherous mountains and raging seas. There are sudden onslaughts of wind and rain, bandits lurk in the mountains, and pirates lie in wait on the sea. The people at every stage and

every post town are as bestial as dogs or tigers, and you must have felt as though you were undergoing the sufferings of the three evil paths in this life. Moreover, we live in troubled times. Since last year rebels have filled our country, and finally, on the eleventh day of the second month of this year, a battle broke out.²³ It is now almost the end of the fifth month, but society has not yet been restored to peace and security. Nevertheless, despite all the risks involved, you traveled to Sado carrying your infant daughter, since her father, from whom you have long been separated, was not to be depended upon for her care.

I cannot even imagine the hardships you must have suffered during your journey, much less describe them in words, so I will lay down my writing brush.

Nichiren

The twenty-fifth day of the fifth month in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*

To the Sage Nichimyo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter while at Ichinosawa on Sado Island and addressed it to a follower in Kamakura, a woman who had separated from her husband at a young age. Little is known about her except that she undertook the long and perilous journey from Kamakura with her infant daughter Oto to visit the Daishonin during his exile on Sado. The Daishonin was so impressed with this demonstration of faith that he wrote this letter, giving her the Buddhist name Sage Nichimyo (Sun Wonderful).

After the Daishonin went to live at Minobu, she again visited him there, and later, in the eighth month of 1275, the Daishonin sent her a letter addressed to her daughter, which was later given the title *The Supremacy of the Law*, suggesting that she was welcome to stay at Minobu should there be the need.

In the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin cites seven stories of Shakyamuni's bodhisattva practices in his past existences. By carrying out such severe practices in pursuit of Buddhism, Shakyamuni was able to attain Buddhahood.

In effect, the Daishonin likens Nichimyo's efforts in journeying to Sado to these bodhisattva austerities, and implies that her seeking spirit will ensure her enlightenment.

In the next part, Nichiren Daishonin explains that the practice of his Buddhism is not as difficult as that of Shakyamuni's Buddhism, because Nam-myoho-enge-kyo contains all the benefits that Shakyamuni Buddha accumulated through lifetimes of bodhisattva austerities. Therefore, by chanting

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we ordinary people can in this lifetime attain the same virtues and benefits as Shakyamuni Buddha himself. This is the central theme of this letter, in which the Daishonin explains the essence of his teaching: By chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, an ordinary person can become a Buddha.

In the final portion, the Daishonin praises her strong faith and confers upon her the title of sage, indicating that she will become a Buddha.

Notes

1. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

2. Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra.

3. Nirvana Sutra.

4. This story appears in the Nirvana Sutra.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 20.

7. This story is recounted in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, though the name Suzudan is not specifically mentioned.

8. According to the Golden Light Sutra, in a past existence, Shakyamuni was engaged in the paramita of almsgiving as Prince Sattva, son of King Maharatha. He found an injured tigress that had given birth and was too weak with hunger to feed her cubs. At that time he gave his body as an offering to feed her.

9. According to *The Garland of Birth Stories*, one day the god Vishvakarman disguised himself as a dove and Shakra changed himself into a hawk to test King Shibi. The hawk pursued the dove, which flew into King Shibi's robes for protection. To save the dove, Shibi offered his own flesh to the hungry hawk. King Shibi was Shakyamuni in one of his past existences when he was carrying out the paramita of almsgiving.

10. Shrutasoma, also called Universal Brightness, was the name of Shakyamuni when he was a king in a past existence engaged in the paramita of observing precepts. According to *Great Perfection of Wisdom*, King Universal Brightness and 99 other kings (999 kings according to another source) had been captured by King Deer

Feet and were about to be killed. King Universal Brightness asked King Deer Feet to let him keep a promise he had made to give offerings to a certain monk. Deer Feet granted him seven days' grace to fulfill his promise, and Universal Brightness returned to his country, where he gave the monk offerings and transferred the throne to his son. After proclaiming to the people that keeping one's promise is the most important precept, he returned to King Deer Feet; the latter was so impressed by the captured king's sincerity that he released him and the other kings, and moreover, converted to Buddhism.

11. This story appears in the Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish. The ascetic Forbearance was Shakyamuni when he was carrying out the paramita of forbearance in a past existence. The ascetic once preached the paramita to the female attendants of King Kali of Varanasi. The king assumed that the ascetic had been trying to seduce them and flew into a rage. Being informed that the ascetic was engaged in the practice of forbearance, the king cut off his hands, legs, ears, and nose. But the ascetic did not flinch. His blood turned into milk, and his body restored itself. At this sight, the king repented his conduct and thereafter protected the ascetic.

12. This story appears in the Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish and elsewhere. Born to a royal family, Prince Earnest Donor felt pity for the poor and suffering people of his country, and implored his father to give all his treasures to them. When his father had exhausted his treasures, the prince went into the sea to look

for a fabulous wish-granting jewel owned by the dragon king. He faced many obstacles but finally found the jewel and, bringing it back with him, caused treasures to rain down upon his people. This prince was Shakyamuni in a past existence.

13. Shojari was the name of Shakyamuni when he was an ascetic practicing the paramita of meditation in a past existence. According to *Great Perfection of Wisdom*, while Shojari was engaged in meditation, a bird happened to build a nest in his hair and laid several eggs. One day he gained a great insight, but, being aware of the eggs on his head, he did not move until they had hatched and the baby birds were able to fly away.

14. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

15. Ibid., chap. 2.

16. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

18. Ibid., chap. II.

19. Ibid., chap. 16.

20. Ibid.

21. These correspond to the four verbal evils of lying, flattery (or random and irresponsible speech), defamation, and duplicity.

22. In chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, showing respect toward all people for their innate Buddha nature, predicted that they would become Buddhas in the future. In the same spirit, Nichiren Daishonin gave the recipient of this letter the Buddhist name Sage Nichimyo. *Nichi* of Nichimyo comes from Nichiren, indicating the sun, and *myo*, or wonderful, is that of Myoho-rence-kyo.

23. Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune, had been plotting to seize power, but Tokimune heard of the plot and quickly suppressed it by having his brother killed.

The Pure and Far-Reaching Voice



THE ruler known as Duke Huan¹ of Ch'i loved to wear purple garments [and as a result the people of his state all did likewise]. The ruler known as King Chuang² of Ch'u disliked women with thick waists; as a result, all the courtesans in the state strove to acquire slim waists, and many of them starved to death in the process. Thus, what pleased one man was followed by all the people in the country, even though it did not accord with their personal tastes. To give an analogy, the ruler is like a great wind that bends the grass and trees, or a great ocean that draws to itself all the rivers and streams. If the grass and trees do not bend before the wind, will they not be broken and toppled? And if the little streams do not flow into the great ocean, to where else will they flow?

The ruler of a state is someone who in his former existence far excelled others in keeping the great precepts,³ and as a result heaven and earth and the various deities permitted him to become a ruler. The degree of merit he has acquired through keeping the precepts determines what country he rules. Two or three persons are not chosen to be ruler [but only one], and the deity kings of earth and heaven, of the oceans and mountains, all gather around and protect him. How then could the peo-

ple of that state turn their backs on their sovereign?

Even if the ruler should commit evil or perverse deeds, the first, second, or third time he does so, the deities will refrain from punishing him. But if he carries out acts that are particularly displeasing to the heavenly gods and other deities, then they will at first cause unusual disturbances in the heavens and strange occurrences on earth in order to reprimand him. And if he goes too far in his misdeeds, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities will abandon his state. Or, if the merit that the ruler has acquired by observing the precepts should be entirely exhausted, then when the time comes, his state may simply perish. Or, again, if his crimes and evil deeds become exceedingly numerous, then his state may be overthrown by a neighboring kingdom. For better or worse, the people of the state will invariably share the same fate as the ruler.

Such is the way of the world. And such, too, is the way of Buddhism. The Buddha long ago entrusted the protection of his teachings to the ruler. Therefore, even though wise men who are sages or worthies may appear, if they do not abide by the authority of the ruler, they will not be able to carry out the propagation of Buddhism. And even if it should later be propagated, at

the beginning it will without fail meet with great obstacles.

King Kanishka lived some four hundred years or more after the passing of the Buddha and ruled according to his will in the kingdom of Gandhara. He gathered five hundred arhats around him and paid honor to them, and he caused *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma* to be compiled in two hundred volumes. But all the people in the kingdom were followers of the Hinayana teachings, and it was very difficult for the Mahayana teachings to make any progress there. Moreover, King Pushyamitra led the five regions of India in wiping out the teachings of the Buddha and beheading Buddhist monks, and no one, no matter how wise, could oppose him.

Emperor T'ai-tsung was a very worthy ruler. He acknowledged the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang as his teacher and embraced the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics school, and none of his subjects ventured to do otherwise. The Dharma Characteristics school is a branch of Mahayana, but it teaches the doctrine of five natures, which represents a grave offense within the realm of Buddhism. It is an evil doctrine, worse than any of the fallacious teachings expounded by non-Buddhist religions, and should never have gained approval in any of the three countries of India, China, and Japan. In the end, it was discredited in Japan by the Great Teacher Dengyo. And yet, though the Dharma Characteristics school was greatly in error, Emperor T'ai-tsung put faith in its teachings, and no one opposed his example.

The True Word school bases itself upon the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. These are known as the three basic True Word sutras. In the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih

brought them to China from India. Emperor Hsüan-tsung respected these sutras more highly than the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai and Flower Garland schools. He regarded them as superior to the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises teachings. As a result, everyone in China came to believe that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra. And in Japan, too, down to the present time, people have believed that the Tendai school is inferior to the True Word school. The eminent priests of To-ji temple and of the Tendai school, who pursue the True Word teachings, are guilty of arrogance and of regarding what is inferior as superior!

If one places the Mahavairochana and Lotus sutras side by side and examines them without partiality or prejudice, one will see that, while the Mahavairochana Sutra is like the light of a firefly, the Lotus Sutra is like the full moon; that, while the teachings of the True Word school are like clusters of tiny stars, those of the Tendai school are like the sun. A person who is biased in the matter will say, "You have not fully understood the profound principles of the True Word school, and so you go on endlessly speaking ill of it." But more than six hundred years have passed since the True Word school was brought to China, and more than four hundred years since it spread to Japan, and I have generally acquainted myself with the various attacks and rebuttals that have been made by Buddhist teachers during that time. The Great Teacher Dengyo was the only person who truly grasped the fundamental nature of this school's teachings. Nevertheless, this school today is the foremost offender in all of Japan. What is superior it takes to be inferior, and what is inferior it takes to be superior. That is the reason why now, when its prayers are being used in an attempt to ward off the Mongol

invaders, such prayers are on the contrary about to bring the invaders down upon us.

The Flower Garland school was founded by the Dharma Teacher Fa-tsang. Because Empress Wu had placed her faith in its teachings, it enjoyed such great favor that none of the other schools could compete with it. Thus it would seem that the relative superiority of the schools has been determined by the power and authority of the ruler, and not by the doctrines that they teach.

Even scholars and teachers who have realized the profound meaning of Buddhism cannot prevail over the ruler's authority. Those who on occasion attempted to do so met with great persecution. The Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded by King Dammira, Bodhisattva Aryadeva was murdered by a non-Buddhist, Chu Tao-sheng was forced to withdraw to a mountain in Su-chou, and the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face and banished to the region south of the Yangtze River.

I, Nichiren, am not worthy to be called a votary of the Lotus Sutra, nor to be counted among the Buddhist priesthood. Moreover, I once followed along with the other people of my time in calling on the name of the Buddha Amida. The Reverend Shan-tao, who was reputed to be a reincarnation of the Buddha Amida, said, "[If people practice the Nembutsu continuously until the end of their lives], then ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land. . . . However, not even one person in a thousand can be reborn there [through any other teaching]."⁴ The Honorable Honen, who was revered as a reincarnation of Bodhisattva Great Power, interpreted this statement, saying: "In the latter age, of those who chant the Nembutsu but mix it with other practices such as devotion to the Lotus Sutra, not even

one person in a thousand will be reborn [in the Pure Land]. But of those who call on the name of the Buddha Amida alone, ten persons out of ten will be reborn [there]."⁵

For the past fifty years or more, all people throughout this country of Japan, both wise and ignorant, have honored this doctrine and placed faith in it, and not a one has questioned it. Only I, Nichiren, differ from all the others in that I point out that the Buddha Amida, in his original vow, pledged to save everyone "excepting only those who commit the five cardinal sins and those who slander the correct teaching."⁶ And I also point out that, according to the Lotus Sutra, "If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."⁷ These statements show Shan-tao and Honen to be slanderers of the correct teaching, and therefore they have surely been abandoned by the Buddha Amida upon whom they rely. And since they themselves have already rejected all the other Buddhas and sutras, they cannot possibly look to them for salvation. Just as the passage from the Lotus Sutra states, there can be no doubt that they are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

But since all the people throughout Japan are disciples of Shan-tao and Honen, I naturally cannot escape suffering such a great hardship [when I make such statements]. People hate me and ceaselessly plot in secret to do me injury.

I will leave aside the various persecutions that I suffered earlier and merely mention that last year, on the twelfth day of the ninth month, I incurred the wrath of the government authorities and, on the night of the same day, was to have been beheaded.⁸ Somehow or other, I lived to see the morning and

came instead to this island province of Sado, where I have been residing ever since. I have been abandoned by the world, abandoned by the Law of the Buddha, and the heavenly gods show me no pity. I am one who has been cast aside by both secular and Buddhist realms.

And yet in your sincerity you have sent your messenger all the way here to me, along with offerings for the third annual memorial service⁹ for your beloved mother, a matter of the utmost importance in your life. For the past two or three days I have felt as if I were dreaming. I feel like the temple administrator of Hossho-ji¹⁰ who, in exile on the island of Iogashima, suddenly encountered the youth who had long served him. When Yang Kung,¹¹ the barbarian of the north, had been taken captive in China and was being brought south, he saw wild geese crossing the sky, and [thinking that they must have come from his homeland in the north] he sighed with emotion. Yet I believe that his feelings did not surpass mine.

The Lotus Sutra states: "If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One's work."¹² One who recites even one word or phrase of the Lotus Sutra and who speaks about it to another person is the emissary of Shakyamuni Buddha, lord of the teachings. And I, Nichiren, humble person though I am, have received Shakyamuni Buddha's royal command and come to this country of Japan. Thus it is apparent from the sutra that anyone who speaks a word of slander against me will be committing a crime that will condemn him to the hell of incessant suffering, and anyone who offers

so much as a word or a phrase on my behalf will acquire greater blessings than if he had made offerings to countless Buddhas.

Shakyamuni Buddha is the lord of all the Buddhist teachings, the leader and teacher of all living beings. The eighty thousand teachings he expounded are all golden words; the twelve divisions of the scriptures are all true. The prohibition against the speaking of falsehoods that he observed over countless millions of kalpas has produced this entire body of sutras. Thus there can be no doubt about the truth of any of them.

This, however, represents the general view. If we inquire more specifically, we will find that the teachings that issued from the Thus Come One's golden mouth may be divided into the various categories of Hinayana and Mahayana, exoteric and esoteric teachings, and provisional and true sutras. The Lotus Sutra says, "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]."¹³ It also says, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."¹⁴ In view of these pronouncements, who could doubt [that the Lotus Sutra represents the ultimate truth]? And to this was added the testimony of the Thus Come One Many Treasures, and the Buddhas [of the ten directions] extended their tongues to the Brahma heaven as further proof.

Thus the entire text of this sutra is in fact three texts, each phrase is three phrases, and each word is three words, for the benefit of the Lotus Sutra is such that even a single word of it embodies the threefold blessings of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

To illustrate, it is like a wish-granting jewel. One such jewel is the same as a hundred such jewels. One wish-granting jewel can rain down countless

treasures, and a hundred jewels can likewise produce inexhaustible treasures. Or it is like grinding up a hundred medicinal plants to make a pill, or to make a hundred pills. Whether it be used for one pill or a hundred, the medicine will have the power to cure sickness. Or, again, it is like the great sea: each drop contains [the flavors of] all the multitude of streams that pour into the ocean, and the ocean itself contains the flavors of all the streams that flow into it.

The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law is a general name, while the twenty-eight chapters each have their particular names. Similarly, the Land of the Moon¹⁵ is the general name for India, while, more specifically, India is divided into five regions. Or we speak of Japan, which is a general name, or name the sixty-six provinces¹⁶ when we wish to be more specific.

The wish-granting jewels are the relics of Shakyamuni Buddha. The dragon kings received them and carried them on their heads, and Shakra held them in his hand and caused treasures to rain down.¹⁷ The reason why the body and bones of the Buddha can become wish-granting jewels is because the great precept¹⁸ he observed over a period of innumerable kalpas imbued his body with its fragrance and permeated his bones, so that they became jewels capable of saving all beings.

People say that a dog's fangs will dissolve when they come in contact with the bones of a tiger, or that a fish's bones will melt in the breath of a cormorant.¹⁹ Or they say that if one uses the sinews of a lion to make strings for a koto and plucks them, then strings made from the sinews of other animals will automatically snap, even though no one cuts them. The Buddha's preaching of the Law is called the lion's roar, and the Lotus Sutra is the foremost roar of the lion.

A Buddha has thirty-two features.

Each of these features is endowed with the characteristics of hundredfold merit that that Buddha has acquired. The knot of flesh on the crown of his head, the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows, and the other features are like fruit, while the practices that the Buddha has carried out in the past are like flowers that produce so many blessings; in this way, the thirty-two features come to appear in the body of the Buddha.

One feature of the Buddha is the unseen crown of his head.²⁰ Shakyamuni Buddha's body was sixteen feet in height, but a Brahman of the Bamboo Staff school was unable to measure it. When he attempted to see the top of Shakyamuni's head, he was unable to do so. Bodhisattva Worthy of Upholding²¹ likewise was unable to see the top of the Buddha's head, and so was the heavenly king Brahma. Inquiring as to the reason, we will find that in the past the Buddha bowed his head to the ground in order to pay reverence to his parents, his teacher, and his sovereign, and he acquired this feature as a result.

The foremost among the Buddha's thirty-two features is his pure and far-reaching voice.²² Lesser kings, great kings, and wheel-turning kings all possess this feature in some degree. Therefore, a single word from one of these kings can destroy the kingdom or insure order within it. The edicts handed down by rulers represent a type of pure and far-reaching voice. Ten thousand words spoken by ten thousand ordinary subjects cannot equal one word spoken by a king. The works known as the *Three Records* and the *Five Canons* represent the words of lesser kings.

What brings order to this small kingdom of Japan, what enables the heavenly king Brahma to command the inhabitants of the threefold world, and what enables the Buddha to command Brahma, Shakra, and the other deities, is none other than this pure and

far-reaching voice. The Buddha's utterances have become the works that compose the entire body of sutras and bring benefit to all living beings. And among the sutras, the Lotus Sutra is a manifestation in writing of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni's intent; it is his voice set down in written words. Thus the Buddha's heart is embodied in these written words. To illustrate, it is like seeds that sprout, grow into plants, and produce rice. Though the form of the rice changes, its essence remains the same.

Shakyamuni Buddha and the written words of the Lotus Sutra are two different things, but their heart is one.

Therefore, when you cast your eyes upon the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should consider that you are beholding the living body of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni.

Shakyamuni Buddha is already aware that you have sent offerings all the way here to the province of Sado. It was in truth a most loyal and devoted thing for you to do.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The ninth year of Bun'ei (1272)

Reply to Shijo Saburo Saemon-no-jo



Background

This letter was written at Ichinosawa on Sado Island in 1272 and addressed to Shijo Saburo Saemon-no-jo, commonly known as Shijo Kingo, a samurai and one of Nichiren Daishonin's followers who lived in Kamakura. It was prompted by the Daishonin's gratitude for offerings that Shijo Kingo had sent via messenger for his mother's third annual memorial service (held on the second anniversary of her death).

Soon after the Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island, Kingo sent a messenger to him with various offerings. Through this messenger the Daishonin entrusted Kingo with his treatise *The Opening of the Eyes*, which he had completed in the second month of 1272. A few months later, Kingo himself made the journey to Sado to visit the Daishonin. He again visited the Daishonin in the fifth month of 1273.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin first discusses the power of one person, the ruler, to influence an entire nation. This is especially evident in the propagation of Buddhist teachings, where

the ruler's support can ensure that Buddhism will prosper, while his opposition will greatly hinder its spread. Citing historical examples, the Daishonin points out that the merits of the various Buddhist schools, which ought to be determined on the basis of their respective teachings, have all too often been judged according to the preferences of those in power. His own tribulations, he adds, arise from the very fact that he has dared to criticize the doctrines in which both the ruler and his subjects believe.

Nevertheless, the Daishonin declares, in light of the Lotus Sutra he is the Buddha's envoy and has made his advent in Japan in accordance with the Buddha's mandate. Moreover, the Lotus Sutra, whose essence he is propagating, has been affirmed by all Buddhas and encompasses all truths. Each word or phrase of the sutra contains the merit of all Buddhas and is therefore comparable to a wish-granting jewel that is said to possess the power to produce inexhaustible treasures.

In the concluding section, from

which the letter takes its name, the Daishonin explains the significance of the Buddha's "pure and far-reaching voice." He designates this voice as foremost among the Buddha's thirty-two distinguishing physical features because it expresses the Buddha's mind or intent. This pure and far-reaching voice has been preserved in the written words of the Lotus Sutra; thus the sutra is itself the living body of Shakyamuni Buddha.

In feudal times, when Nichiren Daishonin lived, as well as earlier in India and China, the ruler and his ministers wielded a power over their subjects that was virtually absolute. As this let-

ter indicates, without the sovereign's consent it was extremely difficult to propagate the Buddhist teachings, and monks were obliged to obtain the support of powerful patrons in order to protect the teachings. Now, however, in those countries where sovereignty rests with the people and freedom of religion is guaranteed, citizens carry out the mission to protect and propagate Buddhism.

The Daishonin is ultimately emphasizing in this letter that the greatness of true Buddhism far surpasses such things as the authority of a ruler.

Notes

1. Duke Huan (r. 685–643 B.C.E.) was the fifteenth ruler of the state of Ch'i in China. He reformed the military system and made efforts to increase the wealth and military strength of his state. When feudal lords assembled to form a league in 651 B.C.E., he made himself their leader. The story of his purple garments is found in *Han Fei Tzu*.

2. Chuang (r. 613–591 B.C.E.) was the twenty-second ruler of the state of Ch'u. The more common version of the story, found in many early philosophical works, cites King Ling (r. 541–529 B.C.E.) as the ruler who liked slim waists.

3. The great precepts refer here to the ten good precepts for lay believers, prohibitions against the ten evil acts.

4. These views are expressed in Shantao's *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*, which advocates the Nembutsu, the practice of calling on the name of Amida Buddha, as the way of salvation.

5. *The Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

6. This refers to the eighteenth of the forty-eight vows that Amida Buddha is said to have made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

8. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution of 1271.

9. The third annual memorial service in Japan is actually held on the second anniversary of a person's death. In Japanese tradi-

tion, the second year following a person's death is commemorated as the third. Japanese tradition also places importance on the 7th, 49th, and 100th days after the death, and on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 23rd, 27th, 33rd, and 50th anniversaries of the death, and at such times people observe special memorial services for the deceased.

10. The temple administrator of Hossho-ji refers to Shunkan (d. 1179), an administrative director of Hossho-ji, a Tendai temple, in Kyoto. In 1177 he met with several other intimates of the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa at a villa at Shishigatani to plan an uprising against Taira no Kiyomori, who, as grand minister of state, held military control of the capital. The plot was discovered, and the conspirators were arrested. Together with Fujiwara no Naritsune and Taira no Yasuyori, Shunkan was banished to the island of Iogashima, about fifty kilometers south of Kyushu. The following year a pardon was granted for Naritsune and Yasuyori, but Shunkan remained in exile until his death. According to *The Tale of the Heike*, in the third year of Shunkan's exile, a youth called Ario who had served him since childhood went to the island to visit him with his daughter's letter.

11. Yang Kung: Source uncertain.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

13. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*

15. The Land of the Moon (Chin Yüeh-chih) was a name for India used in

China and Japan. In the latter part of the third century B.C.E., a central Asian tribe called the Yüeh-chih ruled a part of India. Since Buddhism was brought to China via this territory, the Chinese seem to have regarded the land of the Yüeh-chih (moon tribe) as India itself.

16. The sixty-six provinces refer to the entire country of ancient Japan. This division of the country was in force from 813 until the Meiji Restoration in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

17. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the god Shakra caused treasures to rain down throughout the land of Jambudvipa in a battle with asuras.

18. The great precept refers here to the truth of the Lotus Sutra.

19. Source unknown. The first analogy indicates the hardness of a tiger's bones, implying the superiority of the tiger over other beasts, and the latter probably means that a fish swallowed by a cormorant seems to be digested completely, leaving no bones.

20. "The unseen crown of his head" is one of a Buddha's eighty characteristics.

This feature is generally identified with a protuberant knot of flesh—one of a Buddha's thirty-two features—on the crown of a Buddha's head. It is said that the crown of a Buddha's head cannot be seen by either human or heavenly beings; this represents the boundlessness of a Buddha's wisdom and his enlightened life.

21. A bodhisattva appearing in the *Accumulated Treasures* and other sutras. In his *Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* Miao-lo says that Bodhisattva Worthy of Upholding failed in an attempt to measure the Buddha's body. This represents the greatness of the Buddha's body and wisdom. This part of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* is a comment on a passage of T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight*, which says that the great heavenly king Brahma was unable to see the top of the Buddha's head.

22. Also called the voice that reaches to the Brahma heaven. According to *Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the voice of a Buddha delights those who hear it; it touches the depths of people's hearts and arouses a feeling of reverence.

On Prayer

Nichiren, the shramana of Japan



QUESTION: Of the types of prayer that one offers based upon the teachings of the Flower Garland school, the Dharma Characteristics school, the Three Treatises school, the three Hinayana schools,¹ the True Word school, or the Tendai school, which type is effective?

Answer: Since they represent the preaching of the Buddha, they can all in some sense be considered prayer. But prayer that is based upon the Lotus Sutra is a prayer that is certain to be fulfilled.

Question: What is the reason for that?

Answer: The persons of the two vehicles, though they spent kalpas numerous as the dust particles of the land practicing the sutras that correspond to the four flavors, could never attain Buddhahood. But, by listening to the Lotus Sutra for just an instant, they became Buddhas. For this reason, Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, and the others who make up the twelve hundred [arhats] and the twelve thousand [arhats],² and all the others of the two vehicles who attained Buddhahood, will certainly respond to the prayers of those who practice the Lotus Sutra. And they will take upon themselves the pains of such practitioners.

Therefore, it is stated in the “Belief and Understanding” chapter [of the

Lotus Sutra]: “The World-Honored One in his great mercy makes use of a rare thing, in pity and compassion teaching and converting, bringing benefit to us. In numberless millions of kalpas who could ever repay him? Though we offer him our hands and feet, bow our heads in respectful obeisance, and present all manner of offerings, none of us could repay him. Though we lift him on the crown of our heads, bear him on our two shoulders, for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands reverence him with all our hearts; though we come with delicate foods, with countless jeweled robes, with articles of bedding, various kinds of potions and medicines; with ox-head sandalwood and all kinds of rare gems, construct memorial towers and spread the ground with jeweled robes; though we were to do all this by way of offering for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands, still we could not repay him.”

In this passage from the sutra, the four great voice-hearers, having heard the message of the “Simile and Parable” chapter and learned how they can become Buddhas, are expounding on how difficult it is to repay one’s debt of gratitude to the Buddha and to the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, we can understand that, to persons of the two vehicles, the practitioners of this sutra are more important than a father or a

mother, than a beloved child, than their own two eyes or their body and life itself.

Though I do not think that the great voice-hearers such as Shariputra and Maudgalyayana would actually cast aside a practitioner who praised any of the teachings put forth by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime, still it is likely that they feel a small degree of resentment toward the various sutras that were preached previous to the Lotus Sutra. This is because in them a strong warning has been given that “within the Buddha’s teachings they [voice-hearers] are like seeds that have already been spoiled.”³ But now these voice-hearers have become Thus Come Ones such as Flower Glow, Rare Form, and Universal Brightness,⁴ a most unexpected stroke of good fortune. They must feel as though the K’un-lun Mountains had split open and they were able to enter those jewel-filled mountains. That is why the passage of appreciation says, “This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought.”⁵

So there can be no doubt that all persons of the two vehicles will protect the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. Even lowly creatures know enough to repay a debt of gratitude. Thus the bird known as the wild goose will invariably carry out its filial duty to the mother bird when she is about to die. And the fox never forgets its old hillock.⁶ If even animals will do such things, then how much more so should this be true of human beings?

A man named Wang Shou was traveling along a road when he became hungry and weary. Beside the road was a plum tree that was loaded with fruit. Wang Shou ate the fruit and thereby satisfied his hunger. But he said to himself, “I have eaten the fruit of this plum tree and thus restored my strength and spirits. It would not be right if I failed to repay this debt of

gratitude.” So saying, he took off his robe and hung it on the plum tree before going on his way.

A man named Wang Yin was traveling along a road when he became thirsty. Crossing a river, he drank some of the water, and then he tossed a coin into the river as payment for the water he had drunk.

A dragon will invariably protect a monk who is wearing a Buddhist surplice. The reason is that a dragon once received a Buddhist surplice from the Buddha and, placing it around its beloved child in the dragon palace, was able to prevent the child from being eaten by garuda birds.

A garuda bird will invariably protect one who acts with filial duty toward one’s parents. Dragons would shake Mount Sumeru and eat the beloved chicks of the garuda bird after they fell from their nests. But the Buddha instructed the garuda bird to take the offerings of rice that Buddhist monks set aside from the alms given them by filial persons and to place these offerings on top of Mount Sumeru. In this way, the garuda bird was able to prevent its chicks from being eaten by dragons.

Heaven will invariably protect a person who observes the precepts and practices goodness. If people who are born into the human realm do not observe the precepts or practice goodness, then when they die, they will in most cases be reborn in the realm of the asura. And if those in the realm of the asura become very numerous, they will grow arrogant and will inevitably offend against heaven.

However, if people who are born into the human realm observe the precepts and practice goodness, when they die, they will invariably be reborn in the realm of heavenly beings. And if those in the realm of heavenly beings become very numerous, the asuras will be frightened and will not dare to

offend against heaven. That is the reason why heaven invariably protects people who observe the precepts and practice goodness.

Persons of the two vehicles are more excellent in the virtue gained from their observance of the precepts and more astute in wisdom than ordinary people in the six paths. Therefore, how could they possibly ever abandon those who practice the Lotus Sutra, since the Lotus Sutra is the means that has enabled them to attain Buddhahood?

Moreover, although the bodhisattvas and ordinary people had practiced the teachings of the various sutras preached in the forty and more years previous to the Lotus Sutra for a period of countless kalpas in order to become Buddhas, none ever succeeded in attaining Buddhahood. But they were able to attain Buddhahood by practicing the Lotus Sutra. And now these Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions are endowed with the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics that distinguish a Buddha, and are looked up to by living beings in the other nine realms, just as stars cluster about the moon, as the eight mountains surround Mount Sumeru, as the people of the four continents look up to the sun, or as common people look up to a wheel-turning king. And is the fact that these Buddhas are looked up to in this manner not due to the benefit and blessing of the Lotus Sutra?

Therefore, in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha gives this warning: "There is no need to enshrine the relics of the Buddha there."⁷ And the Nirvana Sutra says, "What the Buddhas take as their teacher is the Law. Therefore, the Thus Come Ones honor, respect, and make offerings to it." In the passage from the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha is saying that his relics need not be enshrined in the stupa alongside the Lotus Sutra. And the passage from the Nirvana Sutra indicates that the Buddhas should

honor, respect, and make offerings to the Lotus Sutra.

The Buddhas, because they were enlightened by the Lotus Sutra, were able to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, if they should fail to preach the sutra to others, they would be withholding from others the seeds of Buddhahood and would be committing a fault. For this reason, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni made his appearance in this saha world and prepared to preach it. But the devil king of the sixth heaven, otherwise known as the fundamental darkness, entered into the bodies of all the people and caused them to hate the Buddha and impede his preaching.

Thus the king known as Virudhaka killed five hundred people of the Shakya clan; Angulimala chased after the Buddha; Devadatta rolled a huge stone down on him; and Chinchā, the daughter of a Brahman, tied a bowl to her belly and claimed to be pregnant with the Buddha's child.

The lord of a Brahman city proclaimed that a fine of five hundred *ryo* of gold should be levied against anyone who invited the Buddha into the city. As a result, the people of the city blocked the road with thorns, threw filth into the wells, built a barricade of spikes at the gate, and put poison in the Buddha's food, all because of their hatred of him.

The nun Utpalavarna was murdered, Maudgalyayana was killed by Brahmans of the Bamboo Staff school, and Kalodayin was buried in horse dung, all because of animosity toward the Buddha.

Nevertheless, the Buddha managed to survive these various ordeals, and, at the age of seventy-two, forty-two years after he first began preaching the Buddhist teachings, at a mountain called Gridhrakuta northeast of the city of Rajagriha in central India, he began to preach the Lotus Sutra. He preached it for a period of eight years. Then, on

the bank of the Ajitavati River at the city of Kushinagara in eastern India, in the middle of the night on the fifteenth day of the second month, when he was eighty years of age, he entered nirvana.

But before that, he had revealed his enlightenment in the form of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, the words of this sutra are indeed the very soul of Shakyamuni Thus Come One. And since every single word constitutes the soul of the Buddha, Shakyamuni Thus Come One will protect those who practice this sutra as though he were protecting his very own eyes. He will accompany them just as a shadow accompanies a body. How then could the prayers of such persons not be answered?

During the first forty and more years of the Buddha's teaching life, the various bodhisattvas had tried to attain Buddhahood through the sutras beginning with the Flower Garland Sutra, but they were unable to do so. But when the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra was preached, announcing the concise replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle,⁸ then "the bodhisattvas seeking to be Buddhas in a great force of eighty thousand, as well as the wheel-turning kings [who] come from ten thousands of millions of lands, all press their palms and with reverent minds wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment." And when, as a result, they heard the expanded replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, then it was as the sutra states, "When the bodhisattvas hear this Law, they will be released from all entanglements of doubt."⁹

After that, bodhisattvas from this world and from other regions assembled together like gathering clouds or so many stars. And when the "Treasure Tower" chapter was preached, the Buddhas of the ten directions gathered

round, each accompanied by countless numbers of bodhisattvas.

Manjushri appeared from the sea accompanied by countless bodhisattvas,¹⁰ and in addition there were the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas¹¹ and the bodhisattvas more numerous than the sands of eight Ganges Rivers;¹² the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, who emerged from the earth;¹³ the bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of six hundred and eighty ten thousands, millions, nayutas of Ganges Rivers who appear in the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter; the bodhisattvas multiplied a thousand times; the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a world; the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a major world system; the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of an intermediate world system; the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a minor world system; the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of four four-continent worlds, or the dust particles of three four-continent worlds, two four-continent worlds, or one four-continent world; and the people as numerous as the dust particles of eight worlds.

There were the eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas of the "Medicine King" chapter; the eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas and the forty-two thousand heavenly sons of the "Wonderful Sound" chapter; the eighty-four thousand people of the "Universal Gateway" chapter; the sixty-eight thousand people of the "Dharani" chapter; the eighty-four thousand people of the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter; and the bodhisattvas as numerous as the Ganges sands and the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a major world system of the "Encouragements" chapter.

If we were to count up all these

bodhisattvas, they would be as numerous as the dust particles of the worlds of the ten directions, as the plants and trees in the worlds of the ten directions, as the stars in the worlds of the ten directions, or as the raindrops in the worlds of the ten directions. All of these beings attained Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra and are dwelling on the earth, under the earth, or in the sky of this present major world system.

The Venerable Mahakashyapa lives on Mount Kukkutapada, Manjushri lives on Mount Clear and Cool, Bodhisattva Earth Repository lives on Mount Kharadiya, Perceiver of the World's Sounds lives on Mount Potalaka, Bodhisattva Maitreya lives in the Tushita heaven, Nanda and the countless other dragon kings and asura kings live at the bottom of the sea or at the seaside, Shakra lives in the heaven of the thirty-three gods, Brahma lives in the Summit of Being heaven, Maheshvara lives in the sixth heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, the four heavenly kings live on the slopes of Mount Sumeru, and the sun, the moon, and the crowds of stars appear before our eyes and shine over our heads. The river gods, the stream gods, and the mountain gods were all among the honored ones present at the assembly when the Lotus Sutra was preached.

It has now been over twenty-two hundred years since the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra. Human beings have a short life span, and therefore there are no persons alive today who have seen the Buddha with their own eyes. But in the heavenly realm the span of a day is long, and the beings there have long lives; as a result, there are countless heavenly beings still alive who have seen the Buddha and listened to him preach the Lotus Sutra.

Fifty years in the life of a human

being is equivalent to no more than one day and one night in the lives of beings in the heaven of the four heavenly kings. And these heavenly beings, passing such days and nights, with thirty such days to a month and twelve such months to a year, live to be five hundred years old. Therefore, twenty-two hundred or more years in the lives of human beings will be equivalent to only forty-four days in the lives of beings in the heaven of the four heavenly kings.

Hence from the point of view of the deities of the sun and moon and the heavenly king Vaishravana, it has been only forty-four days, or less than two months, since the Buddha passed away. And from the point of view of Shakra and Brahma, not even a month, not even an hour, has passed since the Buddha departed. In such a short time, how could these heavenly beings have forgotten the vow that they took in the presence of the Buddha, or the debt of gratitude they owe to the sutra that allowed them to attain Buddhahood, and thus abandon the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra? When we think of it in this way, we can feel greatly assured.

Therefore, we know that the prayers offered by a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra will be answered just as an echo answers a sound, as a shadow follows a form, as the reflection of the moon appears in clear water, as a mirror collects dewdrops,¹⁴ as a magnet attracts iron, as amber attracts particles of dust, or as a clear mirror reflects the color of an object.

Concerning the ways of the ordinary world, though a man may not be inclined to a certain act, if he is urged to it by his parents, his sovereign, his teachers, his wife and children, or his close friends, and if he is a person of conscience, he will overlook his own inclinations and will sacrifice his name and profit, and even his life, to perform that act. How much more earnest will

he be, then, if the act is something that springs from his own heart. In such a case, even the restraints of his parents, his sovereign, or his teachers cannot prevent him from carrying out the action.

Thus it was that a worthy man named Fan Yü-ch'i cut off his own head so that it could be presented to Ching K'o, and Chi-cha, having pledged to present his sword to the lord of Hsü, hung it on the lord's grave.

Similarly, at the gathering on Eagle Peak, the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood in her present form.¹⁵ In the Hinayana sutras, women were despised because they are hindered by the thick clouds of the five obstacles and bound by the strong cords of the three obediences; and in the Mahayana sutras expounded in the first forty and more years of the Buddha's preaching, women were rejected, since they were thought to be incapable of carrying out religious practice over many kalpas. Or though it had been stated that "the first time they conceive the desire to do so, they can attain enlightenment,"¹⁶ this was indicated as a possibility in name only, with no actual examples to support it. So, in effect, the attainment of Buddhahood by women was denied.

Thus, even a woman who was in the realm of human or heavenly beings had no hope of ever finding the way to become a Buddha. How much less hope was there for this woman [described in the Lotus Sutra], a humble being born among the creatures known as dragons, who had not yet reached maturity but was only eight years old. And yet, contrary to all expectations, through the instruction of Manjushri, in the short space of time between the "Teacher of the Law" and "Devadatta" chapters when the Buddha was preaching the "Treasure Tower" chapter, she attained Buddhahood in the midst of the ocean. This was a most wonderful

happening! If it had not been for the power of the Lotus Sutra, the foremost among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, how could such a thing have come about?

Therefore, Miao-lo remarks of the event, "The sutra here demonstrates its power by revealing that practice is shallow but the benefit that results is profound indeed."¹⁷ And because the dragon girl was able to attain Buddhahood through this sutra, how could she ever abandon someone who is a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, even if she had not been admonished against it by the Buddha? Therefore, in the verse that she uttered in praise of the Buddha, she stated, "I unfold the doctrines of the great vehicle to rescue living beings from suffering."¹⁸

Her oath was the oath taken by her retinue, or all the creatures known as dragons, whose number is so vast that "the mouth cannot express it, the mind cannot fathom it."¹⁹ The dragon king Sagara, though a lowly creature, cared profoundly for his daughter. Therefore, he took the finest treasure in all the great ocean, a wish-granting jewel, and had his daughter present it as alms to the Buddha, in recognition of the fact that she had attained Buddhahood in her present form. This jewel was equivalent in value to a major world system.

Devadatta was the grandson of King Simhananu, the son of Shakyamuni Buddha's uncle, King Dronodana, and an elder brother of the Venerable Ananda. His mother was a daughter of the rich man Suprabuddha. He was thus a member of the family of a wheel-turning king and held a high social position in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa.

While he was still an ordinary member of society, the woman he had intended to marry, Yashodhara, was taken away by Prince Siddhartha, and he thereafter looked upon Siddhartha

as he would an enemy from a past existence.

Later, he broke his ties with his family and joined the Buddhist Order, but when there were large gatherings of human and heavenly beings, the Buddha would censure him, calling him a fool or one who eats the spit of others. In addition, being a man who cared deeply about fame and personal profit, he envied the attention that was paid to the Buddha. He then began observing the five ascetic practices in an attempt to appear more admirable than the Buddha. He pounded iron to make a thousand-spoked wheel pattern [to imprint on the soles of his feet], gathered together fireflies to form a tuft of white hair between his eyebrows, and committed to memory sixty thousand and eighty thousand jeweled teachings.²⁰ He erected an ordination platform on Mount Gayashirsha and lured many of the Buddha's disciples over to his side. He smeared poison on his fingernails and thus attempted to poison the feet of the Buddha. He beat the nun Utpalavarna to death and rolled a huge rock down on the Buddha, injuring the latter on the toe. He was guilty of committing three cardinal sins and, in the end, gathered about him all the evil men of the five regions of India and strove to harm the Buddha and his disciples and lay supporters.

King Bimbisara was the foremost of the Buddha's lay supporters. Each day he dispatched five hundred carriages, day after day supplying alms to the Buddha and his disciples. But Devadatta, driven by his intense jealousy, talked to Prince Ajatashatru and in time persuaded him to attack his father, whereupon he pinned the king down with seven foot-long spikes.

In the end, the earth in front of the northern gate of the capital city of Rajagriha split open, and Devadatta fell into the great citadel of the Avichi hell. There was not a single being in the

entire major world system who did not witness the event.

One would suppose that, as a result, Devadatta would never be able to escape from the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering, even though as many kalpas should pass as there are the dust particles of the land. And yet, amazing as it is, and admirable as well, in the Lotus Sutra he became a Thus Come One called Heavenly King. And if Devadatta could become a Buddha, then all the countless other evil people who were enticed by him, since they shared with him the same karmic cause and effect, must surely have been able to escape from the pains of the hell of incessant suffering.

This is entirely due to the benefit and blessing of the Lotus Sutra. Thus Devadatta and all the countless persons who attended him can now dwell in the house of the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra [in order to protect them]. What a comforting thought!

The various bodhisattvas, who were as numerous as the dust particles of the land, had advanced to the level of near-perfect enlightenment, which means they had freed themselves of all but their fundamental darkness. When they were fortunate enough to encounter the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, they thought that they would be able to smash this great boulder of fundamental darkness. But in the first forty and more years of his preaching life, Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, said that, while he could explain the causes of enlightenment, he could not explain its effects. Therefore, he did not make clear to them the benefits of perfect enlightenment. Hence not a single one of them could advance to the stage of perfect enlightenment. This was contrary to their expectations.

But during the eight years when he preached at Eagle Peak, the Buddha revealed the effects of enlightenment, which are called the one vehicle of

Buddhahood. All the bodhisattvas thus advanced to the stage of perfect enlightenment, so that their enlightenment was equal to that of Shakyamuni Thus Come One. It was as though they had climbed to the very top of Mount Sumeru and could see in all four directions. All became bright and clear, as though the sun had appeared in the midst of a long night. Even if the Buddha had not instructed them to do so, could they have failed to resolve to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra or to take upon themselves the sufferings of its practitioners?

Therefore, they made a vow, saying, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way,"²¹ "Never begrudging our bodies or lives,"²² or "We will preach this sutra far and wide."²³

Furthermore, Shakyamuni Buddha, who is like a kind father, Many Treasures Buddha, who is like a loving mother, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, who had appeared in order to add their testimony and who are like affectionate parents, were assembled together, so that it was as though two moons had come together, or two suns had appeared side by side.

At that time the Buddha spoke three times in warning, saying: "So I say to the great assembly: After I have passed into extinction, who can guard and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!"²⁴

Then the great bodhisattvas who filled four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands in each of the eight directions bent their bodies, bowed their heads, and pressed their palms together, and all raised their voices in unison, saying, "We will respectfully carry out all these things just as the World-Honored One has commanded."²⁵ Three times they cried out, not sparing their voices. How then could they fail to take upon themselves

the sufferings of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra?

Fan Yü-ch'i gave his head to Ching K'o, and Chi-cha hung his sword on the grave of the lord of Hsü; in both cases they acted so as not to go back on promises they had made. If even these persons of China, a land far from the birthplace of Buddhism, could, because of a promise made to a friend, sacrifice their own lives or hang on a grave a sword that meant more to them than life itself, then how much more can one expect from the great bodhisattvas, who from the first have been beings of great compassion and have taken profound vows to undergo suffering on behalf of others? How could they ever cast aside the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, even if the Buddha had not admonished them against doing so?

What is more, it was through the Lotus Sutra that these bodhisattvas attained Buddhahood, and because the Buddha fervently admonished them concerning it, they took solemn vows in the presence of the Buddha. There can be no doubt, therefore, that they will aid its practitioner.

The Buddha is the sovereign of the human and heavenly realms and the parent of all living beings. Moreover, he is the teacher who leads and opens the way. Though one may be a parent, if of humble station, one cannot at the same time assume the role of sovereign. And though one may be a sovereign, if not also a parent, one may inspire fear. And though one may be both a parent and a sovereign, one cannot be a teacher as well.

The various Buddhas [other than Shakyamuni], since they are known as World-Honored Ones, may be regarded as sovereigns. But since they do not make their appearance in this saha world, they are not teachers. Nor do they declare that "the living beings in it [the threefold world] are all my children."²⁶ Thus Shakyamuni Buddha

alone fulfills the three functions of sovereign, teacher, and parent.

Nevertheless, during the first forty and more years of his preaching life, Shakyamuni cursed Devadatta, censured the various voice-hearers, and refused to teach the bodhisattvas the doctrines pertaining to the fruits of enlightenment. Though people did not actually say so to others, they sometimes wondered in their hearts whether this Buddha was not in fact Papiyas, the devil king of the sixth heaven, so greatly did he trouble them.

They continued to harbor these doubts for forty and more years, until the preaching of the Lotus Sutra began. But then, during the eight years at Eagle Peak, the treasure tower appeared in the air, and the two Buddhas²⁷ sat side by side in it like the sun and the moon. The various other Buddhas ranged themselves over the ground like so many great mountains gathered together, the bodhisattvas who had emerged from the earth, as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, ranged themselves in the air like so many stars, and the Buddha revealed the blessings that the various Buddhas enjoy as the result of their enlightenment. It was as though a storehouse of treasures had been unlocked and the contents presented to poor people, or as though the K'un-lun Mountains, with all their riches, had broken open.

During these eight years, the people who were present at the assembly became profoundly aware of the rarity and wonder of these events; it was as if they were gathering up nothing but gems. The bodhisattvas, unbegrudging of their lives, unstinting with their words, vowed to do as the Buddha had encouraged them. Then, in the "Entrustment" chapter, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni emerged from the treasure tower and closed its doors. The various other Buddhas thereupon

returned to their respective lands, and the bodhisattvas who had appeared with them followed along in company with the Buddhas.

The people were feeling increasingly lonely, when the Buddha announced, "Three months from now I will enter nirvana."²⁸ The announcement astounded them and made them feel even more forlorn.

Having heard the Lotus Sutra, the bodhisattvas, persons of the two vehicles, and the other human and heavenly beings were all imbued with a deep sense of gratitude for the Buddha's compassion, and wanted to show the Buddha how willing they were to sacrifice their bodies and lives for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. How terrible it would be, they thought, their hearts in a turmoil, if the Buddha were to really enter nirvana as he said he would!

At that time, on the fifteenth day of the second month, during the hour of the tiger and the hour of the hare (3:00 to 7:00 A.M.), when the Buddha was eighty years old, on the bank of the Ajitavati River at the city of Kushinagara in the country of Shravasti in eastern India, the Buddha's voice was heard announcing that he would pass into extinction. His voice radiated upward as far as the Summit of Being heaven and echoed abroad throughout the entire major world system.²⁹ Eyes grew dim, and hearts sank.

From throughout the five regions of India, its sixteen great states, its five hundred middle-sized states, its ten thousand small states, and its countless smaller states scattered about like grains of millet, the people gathered together, none having had time to prepare clothing or food, and without distinction as to class or status. Oxen and horses, wolves and dogs, eagles and vultures, gnats and gadflies, to the number of fifty-two different species, also gathered together. Those of any one species were more numerous than the dust

particles of the land, to say nothing of the number of all fifty-two species together.

All these different species of beings brought flowers, incense, clothing, and food as their last offerings to the Buddha. Their voices resounded, crying out that the jeweled bridge for all living beings was about to collapse, that the eye of all living beings was about to be put out, that the parent, sovereign, and teacher of all living beings was about to pass away. Not only did their hair stand on end, but their tears flowed. Not only did their tears flow, but they beat their heads, pressed their hands to their chests, and cried aloud, not sparing their voices. The blood of their tears and the blood of their sweat fell upon Kushinagara more heavily than a torrential rain and flowed more abundantly than a mighty river. All this they did solely because the Lotus Sutra had opened for them the way to Buddhahood, and they could never repay the debt of gratitude they owed the Buddha.

Even in this scene of grief, there were those who declared angrily that the enemies of the Lotus Sutra should have their tongues cut out, that they should never be allowed to sit with the others in the assembly. Bodhisattva Kashyapa vowed that he would appear in the form of frost and hail in the lands of the enemies of the Lotus Sutra. At that time the Buddha raised himself slightly from his reclining position and praised him, saying happily, "Well spoken! Well spoken!"

The other bodhisattvas, guessing where the Buddha's wishes lay, supposed that if they declared their intention to attack the enemies of the Lotus Sutra this might prolong the Buddha's life a little, and one by one they vowed to do so. In this way the bodhisattvas and the heavenly and human beings called upon the enemies of the Lotus Sutra to appear, hoping that if they

could fulfill the oath they had taken in the presence of the Buddha then Shakyamuni Buddha as well as Many Treasures and the other Buddhas and Thus Come Ones would understand that, faithful to the vow they had made before the Buddha, they would begrudge neither their reputations nor their lives in defense of the Lotus Sutra.

One may ask why the results of these vows should be so long in appearing. And yet, though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered. If the bodhisattvas, the human and heavenly beings, the eight kinds of nonhuman beings, the two sages,³⁰ the two heavenly deities,³¹ and the ten demon daughters would by some unlikely chance fail to appear and protect the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, then above them they would be showing disdain for Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas, and below they would be guilty of deceiving the beings of the nine realms.³²

It makes no difference if the practitioner himself is lacking in worth, defective in wisdom, impure in his person, and lacking in virtue derived from observing the precepts. So long as he chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, they will invariably protect him. One does not throw away gold because the bag that holds it is dirty; one does not ignore the sandalwood trees because of the foul odor of the eranda trees around them; and one does not refuse to gather lotuses because the pond in the valley where they grow is not clean. If they ignore the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, they will be going against their vow.

Now that the Former and Middle Days of the Law are over, persons who observe the precepts are as rare as tigers

in a marketplace, and persons of wisdom are harder to find than the horns of a ch'i-lin. While waiting for the moon to rise, one must rely upon a lantern, and when there are no true gems at hand, gold and silver must serve as jewels. The debt of gratitude one owes to a white crow may be repaid to a black crow,³³ and the debt one owes to a sage priest may be repaid to an ordinary priest.³⁴ So, if you earnestly pray that blessings be given to you without delay, how can your prayers fail to be answered?

Question: When I examine the reasoning and the textual proofs you have presented above, I would have to say that, if there are a sun and a moon in the sky, if there are plants and trees on the earth, if there are day and night in this country of ours, then so long as the earth fails to turn upside down and the tides of the ocean continue to ebb and flow, there can be no doubt that the prayers of those who put faith in the Lotus Sutra will be answered in this world, and that they will enjoy good circumstances in their next existence.

Nevertheless, during the past twenty years and more, the eminent leaders of the Tendai and True Word schools have in many cases offered prayers regarding important matters of state, but such prayers have by no means proved effective. Indeed, the prayers of these priests would seem to be even less effective than those of persons who support the teachings of non-Buddhist scriptures. This sets me to wondering if the pronouncements of the [Lotus] sutra are in some way false, if the actions of the practitioners of the sutra are to blame, or if the time or the people's capacity is not appropriate for such actions. And this puts me in doubt regarding my future existence.

But leaving that point aside for the moment, I am told that you were a disciple of the priests of Mount Hiei. They say that the offenses of the fathers

are visited upon the sons, and those of the teachers are visited upon the disciples. When the priests of Mount Hiei burned the halls and pagodas of Onjo-ji temple and of the mountain temple,³⁵ along with thousands and tens of thousands of Buddhist images and sutras, those were terrible deeds! They threw the people of the time into turmoil and turned them against Mount Hiei. What is your opinion? I have heard a little about these events in the past, but I would like now to hear you speak in greater detail. I am full of questions. When priests behave in such an evil manner, it seems to me that they are no longer acting in accord with the spirit of the three treasures, and that heaven and earth should no longer lend them shelter. I would suppose, therefore, that their prayers would not be answered. What is your opinion?

Answer: I have touched on this matter in the past, but this time I will summarize the issues. This is a matter of vital concern to the country of Japan, and because many people fail to understand it, they create negative karma through their words.

First of all, as to the origin of the temple on Mount Hiei, it was founded by the Great Teacher Dengyo in the reign of Emperor Kammu, some two hundred years after Buddhism was introduced to this country. Earlier, Prince Shotoku had declared that Kyoto, which was later to become the capital, appeared to be highly suitable for the royal residence. But the actual founding of the capital at that location was delayed until after the T'ien-t'ai, or Tendai, school had been introduced to Japan. According to the records of Prince Jogu, or Shotoku, the prince stated, "Two hundred or more years after my passing, the Buddhist Law will spread throughout Japan."³⁶ Later, in the Enryaku era (782-806), the Great Teacher Dengyo founded the temple

on Mount Hiei, and Emperor Kammu established the capital Heiankyo. Thus the prophecy of Prince Shotoku was fulfilled.

In this way the mountain temple and the royal house were like the pine and the cypress, and resembled the orchids and the grasses. When the pine withers, the cypress, too, is bound to wither, and when the orchids wilt, the grasses wilt as well. Thus it seemed that the prosperity of the royal reign brought joy to the mountain temple, and that the decline of royal power brought sadness to the mountain. And now that the world has changed, and power has passed to the government in the Kanto region,³⁷ what must be their thoughts?

In the third year of the Jokyu era (1221), the year with the cyclical sign *kanoto-mi*, on the nineteenth day of the fourth month—around the time of the disturbance between the court and the barbarian warriors³⁸—by command of the Retired Emperor of Oki, altars were set up, and fifteen secret ceremonies were carried out for the first time by forty-one practitioners of such secret ceremonies in an attempt to overcome the Kanto government through the power of incantation.

These ceremonies included the one-character gold-wheel ceremony (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Jien, the Tendai chief priest, and twelve attendant priests at the command of Imperial Regent Motomichi); the ceremony of the four heavenly kings (carried out by the imperial administrator of priests of Joko-ji temple [Shinsho], with eight attendant priests at Hirose Palace, at the command of Lady Shumeimon'in); the ceremony of the wisdom king Immovable (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Joho and eight accompanying priests at the command of Lord Kazan'in Zemmon [Fujiwara Tadatsune]); the Great Awesome Virtue ceremony (carried out by the

Administrator of Priests Kangon with eight accompanying priests at the command of Lady Shichijoin); the ceremony of the wheel-turning king (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Joken with eight accompanying priests at the command of the same person as above); the ten-altar Great Awesome Virtue ceremony (carried out by ten priests—the Administrator of Priests Kakucho, the Dharma Seal Shunsho, the Dharma Seal Eishin, the Dharma Seal Goen, the Supervisor of Priests Yuen, the Administrator of Priests Jiken, the Supervisor of Priests Kenjo, the Supervisor of Priests Senson, the Supervisor of Priests Gyohen, and the Dharma Eye Jikkaku—along with six attendant priests each, carried out for the most part at the main temple-building); the ceremony of Wish-granting Wheel (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Myokoin with eight accompanying priests at the command of Lady Gishumon'in); and the ceremony of the heavenly king Vaishravana (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Jojuin [Ryoson] of Mii with six accompanying priests at the command of Shichin).

And there were also objects of devotion that were fashioned in a single day. The secret ceremonies based on them included the ceremony of the wisdom king Craving-Filled of the prescribed method (carried out by the head of Ninna-ji temple in Shishin-den Palace from the third day of the fifth month and for the following fourteen days); the ceremony of Buddha Eye (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Daijo for twenty-one days); the ceremony of the six characters (carried out by the Supervisor of Priests Kai-ga); the ceremony of the wisdom king Craving-Filled (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Kangon for seven days); the ceremony of Immovable (carried out by Kanju-ji temple's administrator of priests with eight

accompanying priests, all holding supervisory posts in the priesthood); the Great Awesome Virtue ceremony (carried out by the Administrator of Priests Aki); and the ceremony of the boy Diamond Pounder (carried out by the same person). This completes the list of the fifteen ceremonies performed before altars.

On the fifteenth day of the fifth month, Iga Taro Hogan Mitsusue³⁹ was attacked and defeated in the capital. On the nineteenth day of the same month, word of this reached Kamakura. When the news arrived in the capital that a large force of troops had been dispatched on the twenty-first day to attack the capital, the remainder of the ceremonies were performed, beginning on the eighth day of the sixth month. These consisted of the ceremony of the Honorable Star King (performed by the Administrator of Priests Kakuchō), the ceremony of the wisdom king Great Commander (performed by the Supervisor of Priests Zō), the ceremony of the five altars (performed by the Administrator of Priests Daijō, the Dharma Seal Eishin, the Supervisor of Priests Zenson, the Supervisor of Priests Yuen, and the Supervisor of Priests Gyōhen), and the ceremony of the Protection Sutra (presided over by the head of Ninna-ji; it was the second time this ceremony was performed in our country).

On the twenty-first day of the fifth month, the governor of Musashi⁴⁰ started for the capital on the Tokaidō road, while the leader of the Genji clan of Kai⁴¹ set out on the Tosandō road, and Lord Shikibu⁴² advanced via the Hokuriku road. On the fifth day of the sixth month the defending forces at Otsu were defeated by the Genji of Kai, and on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the sixth month the two sides engaged in battle at the Uji Bridge. On the fourteenth, the defenders of the capital suffered defeat, and

on the fifteenth of the same month, the governor of Musashi entered the Rokujo headquarters along with his men.

On the eleventh day of the seventh month the Retired Emperor Gotoba was banished to the island province of Oki, the Retired Emperor Tsuchimikado was banished to the province of Awa, and the Retired Emperor Juntoku was banished to the island province of Sado. In addition, seven members of the court were put to death.

The great evil doctrine of these ceremonies over the years steadily made its way to the Kanto region, where it was embodied in the superintendents or attendant priests of various temples who repeatedly performed these ceremonies. The performers of these ceremonies from the beginning could not distinguish between correct and erroneous teachings, between superior and inferior doctrines, but assumed that it was sufficient merely to revere the three treasures. So, without a thought, they employed these ceremonies. And now not only the provinces of Kanto but the chief priests and superintendents of Mount Hiei, To-ji, and Onjo-ji have all come under the jurisdiction of the Kanto authorities, so that, as a result, the latter are in the position of supporting these ceremonies.

Question: Why do you insist upon referring to the True Word teaching as an incorrect doctrine?

Answer: The Great Teacher Kobo has stated, "The Mahāvairochana Sutra is first, the Flower Garland Sutra is second, and the Lotus Sutra is third."⁴³ But one should examine this ranking carefully. In what sutra did the Buddha discuss the relative worth of these three sutras and deliver this judgment? If there is in fact a sutra that declares that the Mahāvairochana Sutra ranks first, the Flower Garland second, and the Lotus third, then we should accept that statement as true. But if there is no

such passage, then it is not possible to accept this assertion.

The Lotus Sutra states, "Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!"⁴⁴ Here the Buddha is referring to all the teachings that he has expounded and stating that among these the Lotus ranks in first place. The Buddha's preaching and the writings of the Great Teacher Kobo are as much at variance with each other as are fire and water. We should investigate and clarify this matter.

Over a period of several hundred years, ordinary priests and high-ranking priests have studied the writings of Kobo, and eminent and humble, high and low, have put their faith in them and honored the Mahavairochana Sutra as the foremost among all the sutras. This does not accord with the intention of the Buddha. Thoughtful persons should examine the matter with great care. For if we put faith in writings that do not accord with the intention of the Buddha, how can we hope to attain Buddhahood? And if we follow such writings in offering prayers for the nation, how can we fail to bring about misfortune?

Moreover, Kobo writes, "The Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee."⁴⁵ The meaning of this statement is that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai and others stole the ghee of the True Word teachings and called it the ghee of the Lotus Sutra. This statement is the most important point.

When the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai applied the simile of ghee to the Lotus Sutra, basing himself on a passage in the Nirvana Sutra,⁴⁶ he declared that among all the sutras the Lotus Sutra is worthy to be compared to ghee. The True Word teaching was introduced to China from India two hundred years or more after the time of T'ien-t'ai. How then could T'ien-t'ai possibly

have stolen the ghee of the True Word teaching and called it the ghee of the Lotus Sutra? Of all strange events, this would be the strangest!

What evidence is there then for calling persons who lived two hundred years or more before the True Word teaching was even introduced to China thieves? Are we to put faith in these writings of the Great Teacher Kobo? Or are we to put faith in the Nirvana Sutra where the Buddha likens the Lotus Sutra to ghee?

If we are to regard the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai as a thief, then how are we to interpret this passage in the Nirvana Sutra? And if we accept the passage in the Nirvana Sutra as reliable and conclude that the writings of Kobo are incorrect, then what are we to think of people who put faith in such erroneous teachings? All I can say is that one should compare the writings of the Great Teacher Kobo and the pronouncements of the Buddha, and then put one's faith in the one that proves to be correct.

Question: I am still in doubt. The Mahavairochana Sutra represents the teaching expounded by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. And if that is so, then to use the teaching expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha to attempt to controvert the teaching expounded by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana is surely not at all in accord with reason, is it?

Answer: Who were the parents of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, and in what country did he appear when he expounded the Mahavairochana Sutra? Even if he had simply appeared in the world without parents, then in what sutra is it mentioned that such a Buddha would appear in the world to expound his teaching during the 5,670 million years between the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha and the appearance of Maitreya, the Compassionate Honored One? If there are

no passages of proof, then who would put faith in such an assertion? The True Word doctrines are full of mistaken assertions of this kind, which is why I spoke of them as an erroneous teaching.

The list of errors is all but inexhaustible. I have done no more than give one or two examples. In addition to the True Word, the authorities rely on the Zen and Nembutsu schools. These doctrines all represent provisional teachings of the type set forth before the truth had been fully revealed. They are not the tenets that lead to the attainment of Buddhahood, but rather will create karma that condemns one to the hell of incessant suffering. Persons who practice them are guilty of slandering the Law, so how could their prayers possibly be answered?

One who is a ruler of a nation has become so because in the past he upheld the correct teaching and served the Buddha. It is through the calculations of the heavenly kings Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and others that all rulers, great and small, succeed in acquiring their districts and domains. Thus the sutra says, "Now when I use the five types of vision to clearly perceive the three existences, I see that in their past existences all the rulers served five hundred Buddhas, and that is the reason that they were able to become emperors and sovereigns."⁴⁷

But if one turns one's back on the Lotus Sutra and follows the erroneous teachers of the True Word, Zen, and

Nembutsu schools, then although one may carry out all kinds of good deeds, these will never accord with the will of the Buddha and will go against the intention of the gods. One should give very careful thought to this matter.

It is a rare thing to be born as a human being. And if, having been born as such, you do not do your best to distinguish between the correct doctrine and the incorrect so that in the future you may attain Buddhahood, then you are certainly not fulfilling your true worth as a human being.

Moreover, after the Great Teacher Jikaku had visited China, he turned against the doctrines of his original teacher, the Great Teacher Dengyo, and worked to spread the True Word doctrines on Mount Hiei. In order to do so, he offered up prayers and claimed that as a result he had had a dream in which he shot an arrow at the sun and caused the sun to roll over and over. For more than four hundred years now, the people have all looked upon this as an auspicious dream. But in a country such as Japan, it is in fact a dream of particularly ill omen. King Chou of the Yin dynasty shot an arrow at the sun, and as a result he perished. Even though this dream is a matter associated with the reincarnation [of a Buddha], you should ponder it very carefully.

In response to your questions, what I have touched on here is like a mere hair from the hides of nine head of cattle.



Background

Prayers based upon the Lotus Sutra will definitely be answered, writes Nichiren Daishonin. In contrast, he emphasizes, prayers based upon mistaken teachings

not only will go unanswered, but will create suffering both for those who offer them and for those on whose behalf they do so.

This is the theme of *On Prayer*, written by Nichiren Daishonin in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), when he was in exile on Sado Island. The writing is thought to be a reply to questions raised by Sairen-bo, a disciple of the Daishonin and former priest of the Mountain [Jikaku] branch of the Tendai school, who at the time was also living in exile on Sado Island.

Sairen-bo and the Daishonin exchanged a number of letters concerning various important Buddhist doctrines. In this letter, the Daishonin distinguishes between the efficacy of prayer based on schools that prevailed in Japanese society of the day—including the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, Precepts, True Word, and Tendai schools—and prayer based upon the Lotus Sutra. The authorities of the contemporary imperial court and shogunate relied to a great degree upon the teachings and prayers of the True Word, Tendai, Zen, and Nembutsu schools.

It was because the prayers offered by priests of the True Word and Tendai schools were ineffectual, the Daishonin declares, that the imperial forces were defeated in the Jokyu Disturbance—a struggle for power between the imperial court and the Kamakura shogunate in 1221. Placing their trust in these schools, the court had requested that prayers be offered for its protection and victory.

Ultimately, however, despite such prayers, not only were the imperial forces defeated in battle, but three retired emperors were exiled to distant islands. Thus, concludes the Daishonin, such prayers do not simply go unanswered; they actually bring about misfortune.

On the other hand, prayers based on the Lotus Sutra are true prayers, the Daishonin says. He then states the reasons: all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, people of the two vehicles (voice-hearers and

cause-awakened ones), and human and heavenly beings present in the assembly of the Lotus Sutra feel a great sense of gratitude because they attained Buddhahood through the sutra. To repay these debts of gratitude, they will certainly protect those who uphold the Lotus Sutra.

The Daishonin mentions the dragon king's daughter and the evil Devadatta in particular, noting that because their attainment of Buddhahood was considered an especially remarkable achievement their debt of gratitude is correspondingly great; thus, he assures Sairen-bo, they, too, will never fail to guard the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

The Daishonin also firmly refutes the statement made by Kobo, the founder of the True Word school in Japan, who claimed in his work *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind* that the Mahavairochana Sutra ranks first, the Flower Garland Sutra second, and the Lotus Sutra third. To support his contention that True Word doctrines are misleading, the Daishonin cites this statement made by the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra, "I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!"

The letter's heading, "Nichiren, the shramana of Japan," expresses his conviction that he is truly a shramana, or seeker of the way, and that he is the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment as a seeker of the way in India. In this sense this designation can also be said to convey the Daishonin's conviction that he is the true shramana of Japan, and that he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

In conclusion, the Daishonin urges Sairen-bo to offer prayers based upon the correct doctrines of the Lotus Sutra and to fulfill his true potential as a human being by aspiring to attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. The three Hinayana schools refer to the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools.

2. The “twelve hundred [arhats]” refers to the Buddha’s disciples who received a prophecy of attaining Buddhahood in the “Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Each of them was given the title of the Thus Come One Universal Brightness. The “twelve thousand [arhats]” indicates those who assembled at the ceremony of the preaching of the Lotus Sutra.

3. A rephrasing of a passage in the Vimalakirti Sutra: “With regard to the Law of the Buddha, they have become like rotten seeds.”

4. Flower Glow and Rare Form are the names that Shariputra and Subhuti will acquire on attaining Buddhahood, as prophesied by the Buddha in the “Simile and Parable” chapter and the “Bestowal of Prophecy” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, respectively. With regard to the title of Universal Brightness, *see* n. 2.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 4.

6. This appears in the “Nine Pieces” of *Elegies of Ch’u*. A commentary on *Elegies of Ch’u* by Chu Hsi of the Sung dynasty states, “The old fox dies, invariably turning its head toward the hillock. This is because it never forgets the place of its birth.” The source of the story of the wild goose is unknown.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

8. Shakyamuni expressed the idea of “the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle” concisely in the form of the revelation of the true aspect of all phenomena, that is, the ten factors of life. Hence the expression “concise.” In the “Expedient Means” chapter and in subsequent chapters Shakyamuni elaborates on this idea, and this more detailed explanation corresponds to the “expanded” replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

10. *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

11. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. This number of bodhisattvas made a vow before Shakyamuni Buddha to propagate the sutra in the worlds of the ten directions after his passing.

12. *Ibid.*, chap. 15. These bodhisattvas from other worlds vowed to spread the sutra in the saha world after the Buddha’s passing.

13. *Ibid.* This refers to the numerous bodhisattvas known as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

14. Vapor condenses on a mirror placed outside at night. It was said that the mirror drew this water down from the moon.

15. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

16. Flower Garland Sutra.

17. *The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.”*

18. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

19. *Ibid.*

20. The “thousand-spoked wheel pattern” is one of the thirty-two features that a Buddha is said to possess, appearing as a mark on the sole of each foot. The “tuft of white hair” is another of a Buddha’s thirty-two features. It is said to radiate light. The “sixty thousand and eighty thousand jeweled teachings” refers to the teachings of Brahmanism and the teachings of Buddhism, respectively.

21. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

24. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

25. *Ibid.*, chap. 22.

26. *Ibid.*, chap. 3. This is Shakyamuni Buddha’s own statement.

27. The two Buddhas refer to Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasures Buddha. This event occurred in the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

28. Universal Worthy Sutra, an epilogue to the Lotus Sutra.

29. This event is described in the Nirvana Sutra.

30. The bodhisattvas Medicine King and Brave Donor, who vowed to protect the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in the “Dharani” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

31. Vaishravana and Upholder of the Nation, two of the four heavenly kings.

32. The nine realms refer to the first nine of the Ten Worlds, which indicate transient and deluded states of life.

33. This story is found in Chang-an’s *Annotations on “The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind.”* When a snake was about to bite the king, who was lying on the grass

resting, a white crow flew down to alert the king. Saved from the danger, the king ordered his vassals to find the bird, but they were unable to do so. Determined to express his appreciation, the king then bestowed his favor on a black crow.

34. "An ordinary priest" refers here to the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. The "sage priest" indicates Shakyamuni Buddha.

35. The mountain temple refers to Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei.

36. *Gleanings from the Records on Prince Jōgu.*

37. The government in the Kanto region is the Kamakura government that made Kanto (eastern Japan) its base. The imperial court was located in Kyoto in the western part of the country.

38. Reference is to the Jōkyū Disturbance, in which the Retired Emperor Gotoba, along with two other retired emperors, attempted to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate. The imperial forces were defeated, and as a result, Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki. Hence he was called the Retired Emperor of Oki.

39. Iga Taro Hogan Mitsusue (d. 1221) was a magistrate who was stationed in Kyoto.

40. The governor of Musashi refers here to Hojo Yasutoki (1183–1242), who later became the third regent of the Kamakura government.

41. Here, Takeda Nobumitsu. The Genji clan of Kai refers to a powerful family descended from the Genji clan whose influence extended throughout Kai and Shinano provinces.

42. Lord Shikibu is another name for Hojo Tomotoki (1193–1245), a younger brother of Hojo Yasutoki.

43. A rephrasing of a statement found in *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind.*

44. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

45. *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism.* Kobo likened the True Word teachings to ghee, the finest of the five flavors.

46. The Nirvana Sutra mentions the process of converting milk into ghee and concludes that ghee is supreme among the five flavors.

47. Benevolent Kings Sutra.

The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind
Established in the Fifth Five-Hundred-Year Period
after the Thus Come One's Passing

Nichiren, the shramana of Japan



VOLUME five of *Great Concentration and Insight* states: "Life at each moment¹ is endowed with the Ten Worlds. At the same time, each of the Ten Worlds is endowed with all Ten Worlds, so that an entity of life actually possesses one hundred worlds. Each of these worlds in turn possesses thirty realms,² which means that in the one hundred worlds there are three thousand realms. The three thousand realms of existence are all possessed by life in a single moment. If there is no life, that is the end of the matter. But if there is the slightest bit of life, it contains all the three thousand realms. . . . This is what we mean when we speak of the 'region of the unfathomable.'"

Note: "[Three thousand] realms" might also read "[three thousand] factors," but the number is the same. The only difference lies in the method of expansion. Another copy of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "Each world is endowed with the three realms of existence."³

Question: Is the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life explained in *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*?

Answer: Miao-lo states that it is not.

Question: Then is it explained in

The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: Miao-lo states that it is not.

Question: What are his exact words?

Answer: He says, "None of them reveal that a single moment of life contains the three thousand realms."⁴

Question: Is this principle mentioned in any of the first four volumes of *Great Concentration and Insight*?

Answer: No, it is not.

Question: What proof is there of this?

Answer: Miao-lo says, "When at last he revealed the method of meditation in *Great Concentration and Insight*, he at the same time employed the 'three thousand realms' as a way to understand."⁵

Question: Volume two of *Profound Meaning* states, "Each of the Ten Worlds contains the other nine, and in those one hundred worlds are one thousand factors." Volume one of *Words and Phrases* states, "Each sense field⁶ is endowed with the Ten Worlds, each of which again is endowed with all of the ten within itself. Since each of those hundred worlds is endowed with the ten factors, the total becomes one thousand." *The Profound Meaning of the "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" Chapter*⁷ comments, "The Ten Worlds are all

mutually inclusive, thus making one hundred worlds. One thousand factors are inherent in life. Even though these are not visible, life by its nature possesses all of them.”

Isn't the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life mentioned in the first four volumes of *Great Concentration and Insight*?

Answer: Miao-lo says it is not.

Question: What does he say exactly?

Answer: Volume five of *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* reads: "In comparison with the chapter on correct meditation,⁸ the preceding chapters fall short of describing the practice in its entirety. But they do contain the twenty-five preparatory exercises that lead to understanding, and thus they provide the expedient means to the correct practice. The first six chapters, then, are all meant to bring about understanding." Also in the same volume: "When at last he revealed the method of meditation in *Great Concentration and Insight*, he at the same time employed the 'three thousand realms' as a way to understand. This principle is the ultimate revelation of his final and supreme teaching. That is why Chang-an states in his introduction [to *Great Concentration and Insight*], '*Great Concentration and Insight* reveals the teaching that T'ien-t'ai Chih-che himself practiced in the depths of his being.' He had good reason for saying this. I hope that those who read this work and seek to understand it will not allow their minds to be distracted by anything else."

T'ien-t'ai Chih-che propagated his teachings for thirty years. During the first twenty-nine years, expounding the doctrines contained in *Profound Meaning, Words and Phrases*, and other works, he explained the five periods and the eight teachings as well as the hundred worlds and thousand factors. He not only refuted the erroneous doctrines of the preceding more than five hun-

dred years, but also clarified matters that had not been fully explained by the Buddhist scholars of India. The Great Teacher Chang-an states: "Even the great scholars of India were not in a class with him, and the Chinese teachers—well, one need hardly mention them. This is no idle boast—the doctrine he taught was indeed of such excellence."⁹ How pitiful that T'ien-t'ai's successors allowed those thieves, the founders of the Flower Garland and True Word schools, to steal the priceless gem of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and then, ironically, became their followers! The Great Teacher Chang-an was fully aware this would happen when he remarked in sorrow, "If this teaching should be lost, it would be a tragedy for the future."¹⁰

Question: What is the difference between the principle of the hundred worlds and thousand factors and that of three thousand realms in a single moment of life?

Answer: The former concerns only sentient beings, but the latter applies to both sentient and insentient beings.

Question: If insentient beings are endowed with the ten factors, is it correct to assume that plants and trees have minds and can attain Buddhahood like sentient beings?

Answer: This is a matter that is difficult to believe and difficult to understand. T'ien-t'ai defined two points that are "difficult to believe and difficult to understand." One lies in the realm of doctrinal teachings and the other in the realm of meditative practice. With regard to the former, in the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra we read that persons of the two vehicles and icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, are forever barred from attaining Buddhahood, and that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, attained enlightenment for the first time in this world. Nevertheless,

we find that the theoretical and the essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra repudiate both these statements. One Buddha who says two things as opposite as fire and water—who could believe him? This is the point that is “difficult to believe and difficult to understand” in the realm of doctrinal teachings.

The point that is “difficult to believe and difficult to understand” in the realm of meditative practice concerns the principle of the hundred worlds and thousand factors and that of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which explains that even insentient beings are endowed with the ten factors of life, and that they are endowed with both material and spiritual aspects.

Both the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist scriptures permit wooden or painted images to be used as objects of devotion, but T’ien-t’ai and his followers were the first to explain the principle behind this practice. If a piece of wood or paper lacked the cause and effect [of Buddhahood] in either the material or the spiritual aspect, it would be futile to rely on it as an object of devotion.

Question: What authority do you have for stating that a plant, a tree, or a land manifests cause and effect, or the ten factors?

Answer: Volume five of *Great Concentration and Insight* says, “The realm of the environment also has the ten factors. Thus an evil land has appearance, nature, entity, power, and so on.” Volume six of *The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra”* states: “Appearance exists only in what is material; nature exists only in what is spiritual. Entity, power, influence, and relation in principle combine both the material and the spiritual. Internal cause and latent effect are purely spiritual; manifest effect exists only in what is material.” *The Diamond Scalpel*¹¹

states: “A plant, a tree, a pebble, a speck of dust—each has the Buddha nature, and each is endowed with cause and effect and with the function to manifest and the wisdom to realize its Buddha nature.”

Question: You have told us about the sources of this doctrine. Now what is meant by the observation of the mind?

Answer: The observation of the mind means to observe one’s own mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it. This is what is called observing the mind. For example, though we can see the six sense organs of other people, we cannot see our own. Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs. Similarly, various sutras make reference here and there to the six paths and the four noble worlds [that constitute the Ten Worlds], but only in the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra and of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai’s *Great Concentration and Insight* can one see one’s own Ten Worlds, hundred worlds and thousand factors, and three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

Question: What part of the Lotus Sutra do you refer to, and what section of T’ien-t’ai’s commentaries?

Answer: The “Expedient Means” chapter in volume one of the Lotus Sutra states, “The Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings.” This refers to the world of Buddhahood inherent in the nine worlds. The “Life Span” chapter states: “Thus, since I attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My life span is an immeasurable number of asamkhya kalpas, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering extinction. Good men, originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last

twice the number of years that have already passed.” Here the sutra refers to the nine worlds inherent in Buddhahood.

The sutra states, “Devadatta will be called the Thus Come One Heavenly King.”¹² This indicates that the world of hell also contains Buddhahood. In the sutra it says, “There were demon daughters, the first named Lamba . . . [The Buddha said to them], ‘If you can shield and guard those who accept and uphold the mere name of the Lotus Sutra, your merit will be immeasurable.’”¹³ Thus, the world of hungry spirits contains all the Ten Worlds. When the sutra speaks of “the dragon girl . . . attaining impartial and correct enlightenment,”¹⁴ it is indicating that the world of animals has the Ten Worlds. The sutra says that, by listening to one verse or one phrase of the sutra, the asura king Balin will attain supreme perfect enlightenment.¹⁵ Thus the world of asuras contains the Ten Worlds. The sutra says, “If there are persons who for the sake of the Buddha fashion and set up images . . . then all have attained the Buddha way,”¹⁶ meaning that the world of human beings contains the Ten Worlds. The sutra states that the great heavenly king Brahma and the other deities declared, “We too in the same way will surely be able to attain Buddhahood.”¹⁷ Thus the world of heavenly beings contains the Ten Worlds. The sutra says, “Shariputra . . . will be able to become a Buddha with the name Flower Glow Thus Come One.”¹⁸ Thus the world of voice-hearers contains the Ten Worlds. The sutra says, “Those who seek to become pratyekabuddhas, monks, and nuns . . . all press their palms and with reverent minds wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment.”¹⁹ Thus the world of pratyekabuddhas, or cause-awakened ones, has the Ten Worlds. The sutra describes the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth, numer-

ous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, and who declared, “We ourselves wish to gain this great Law, true and pure.”²⁰ Thus the world of bodhisattvas contains the Ten Worlds. The sutra says, “Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of others.”²¹ Thus the world of Buddhahood contains the Ten Worlds.

Question: Although I can see both my own six sense organs and those of others, I cannot see the Ten Worlds in myself or others. How can I believe in them?

Answer: The “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “[This Lotus Sutra is] the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” [In describing how difficult it will be to fulfill the teachings of the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha’s passing,] the “Treasure Tower” chapter speaks of the six difficult and nine easy acts. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai states, “Because the theoretical and the essential teachings [of the Lotus Sutra] contradict all the earlier sutras, they are extremely difficult to believe and difficult to understand.”²² The Great Teacher Chang-an comments, “The Buddha intended these as his ultimate teachings. How could they ever be easy to understand?”²³ The Great Teacher Dengyo says, “The Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and to understand because in it the Buddha directly revealed what he had attained.”²⁴

Those who were born in the days of Shakyamuni Buddha and heard his teachings in person had formed deep karmic bonds with him in past existences. In addition, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, as well as Many Treasures Buddha, the Buddhas of the ten directions who are Shakyamuni’s emanations, the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and the other bodhisattvas such as Manjushri and Maitreya, aided them and encouraged them to believe, but even then there

were those who failed to take faith. Five thousand people left the assembly, [arrogantly thinking that they had understood what they had not]. All human and heavenly beings [other than those already present in the assembly]²⁵ were moved to other worlds. How much more difficult it was to believe in the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing—in the Former and Middle Days of the Law—and even more difficult it is now at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law! If it were easy for you to believe in, it would not be the Buddha's correct teaching.

Question: The passages from the Lotus Sutra and the explanations by T'ien-t'ai, Chang-an, and others that you have cited are free from obscurities and doubtful points. But you seem to be saying that fire is water, or that black is white. Although they are the teachings of the Buddha, I find it difficult to accept them. Now I look repeatedly at people's faces, but I see only the human world. I do not see the other worlds. And the same is true when I look at my own face. How am I to believe in the Ten Worlds?

Answer: When we look from time to time at a person's face, we find him or her sometimes joyful, sometimes enraged, and sometimes calm. At times greed appears in the person's face, at times foolishness, and at times perversity. Rage is the world of hell, greed is that of hungry spirits, foolishness is that of animals, perversity is that of asuras, joy is that of heaven, and calmness is that of human beings. These worlds, the six paths, are all present in the physical appearance of the person's face. The remaining four noble worlds are hidden and dormant and do not appear in the face, but if we search carefully, we can tell that they are there.

Question: Although I am not entirely certain about the six paths, it would appear from what you have said that

we possess them. But what about the four noble worlds that cannot be seen at all?

Answer: Earlier you doubted that the six lower worlds exist within the human world, but when I illustrated the point through an analogy, you understood. Perhaps it will be the same with the four noble worlds. I will try to employ reasoning to explain a bit about the matter. The fact that all things in this world are transient is perfectly clear to us. Is this not because the worlds of the two vehicles are present in the human world? Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the bodhisattva world within him. Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate. But since you possess the other nine worlds, you should believe that you have Buddhahood as well. Do not permit yourself to have doubts. Expounding on the human world, the Lotus Sutra says, "The Buddha wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings." The Nirvana Sutra states, "Those who study the teachings of the great vehicle, though they have the eyes of ordinary beings, are said to have the eyes of the Buddha." That ordinary people born in the latter age can believe in the Lotus Sutra is due to the fact that the world of Buddhahood is present in the human world.

Question: The Buddha clearly explained that each of the Ten Worlds has the same Ten Worlds within itself. Nonetheless, I find it difficult to believe that our base hearts could be endowed with the world of Buddhahood. If I cannot believe it, I will become an icchantika. With your great compassion, please help me believe, and save me from the torture of the Avichi hell.

Answer: You have already seen and heard the sutra passage concerning "the one great reason" [why the Buddhas appear in the world]. If you still do not believe, then how can anyone—

from Shakyamuni Buddha on down to the four ranks of bodhisattvas or we ordinary people of the latter age who are at the stage of being a Buddha in theory²⁶—save you from disbelief? Nevertheless, I will try to explain. After all, some could not attain enlightenment through the direct teaching of the Buddha, but were able to do so later through the preaching of Ananda and other disciples.

People can attain enlightenment in two ways: by meeting the Buddha and hearing the Lotus Sutra, or by believing in the sutra even though they do not meet the Buddha. Even before the advent of the Buddha, some Brahmans in India realized the correct view of life through the four Vedas. In China before the arrival of Buddhism, some realized the correct view through Taoism and Confucianism. Many bodhisattvas and ordinary people, endowed with keen faculties, perceived [even before they heard the Lotus Sutra] that Shakyamuni had planted the seeds of Buddhahood within them in the days of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence or in the far more distant past [when he attained his original enlightenment]. They understood this by hearing the Mahayana sutras of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods. They were like the pratyekabuddhas [who could perceive the impermanence of life] at the sight of scattering blossoms or falling leaves. These, then, are the type of people who gained the way through teachings other than the Lotus Sutra.

But many who neither received the seeds of Buddhahood nor formed ties with the Buddha in past existences cling to Hinayana or provisional Mahayana teachings, and even if they are fortunate enough to encounter the Lotus Sutra, they cannot advance beyond their Hinayana or provisional Mahayana views. They are convinced that their own views are correct, and as a

result they place the Lotus Sutra on the same level as the Hinayana sutras or [the provisional Mahayana sutras such as] the Flower Garland and the Mahavairochana. Some even regard the Lotus Sutra as subordinate to these. The Buddhist teachers who preach such views of the Lotus Sutra are inferior to the worthies and sages of Confucianism and Brahmanism. But let us set this matter aside for the moment.

The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is as difficult to believe as fire existing in a stone or flowers within a tree. Yet under the right conditions such phenomena actually occur and are believable. To believe that Buddhahood exists within the human world is the most difficult thing of all—as difficult as believing that fire exists in water or water in fire. Nevertheless, the dragon is said to produce fire from water and water from fire, and although people do not understand why, they believe it when they see it occur. Since you now believe that the human world contains the other eight worlds, why are you still unable to include the world of Buddhahood? The Chinese sage kings Yao and Shun were impartial toward all people. They manifested one aspect of Buddhahood within the human world. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging saw the Buddha in everyone he met, and Prince Siddhartha was a human who became a Buddha. These examples should help you believe.

Note: The teaching that follows must be kept in the strictest secrecy.

Question: Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, is the Buddha who has completely destroyed the three categories of illusion. He is the sovereign of all rulers, bodhisattvas, persons of the two vehicles, human and heavenly beings, and others in the ten directions. Whenever the Buddha moves, Brahma attends him on the left and Shakra on the right. The four kinds of Buddhists and the eight kinds of nonhuman beings follow

behind, while the vajra-bearing gods²⁷ march in the vanguard. With his eighty thousand teachings he leads all living beings to emancipation. How could a Buddha such as this dwell in the hearts of us ordinary people?

Both the teachings before the Lotus Sutra and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra itself tell us that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in this world. Searching for the cause of his enlightenment, we find that he practiced bodhisattva austerities in past existences as Prince Earnest Donor, Bodhisattva Learned Youth, King Shibi, and Prince Sattva. The Buddha practiced his austerities for three asamkhya kalpas or a hundred major kalpas, or for kalpas equal in number to countless dust particles, or for countless asamkhya kalpas, or from the time he first set his mind on enlightenment, or for as long as major world system dust particle kalpas. He served as many as seventy-five, seventy-six, or seventy-seven thousand Buddhas,²⁸ passed through innumerable kalpas and, having completed his practice, became, in this life, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Are you saying that within each of us exists the world of the bodhisattva, which is endowed with all the blessings the Buddha attained as a result of his practice?

Looking into the results of his practice, we see that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, first attained enlightenment in this life. For more than forty years the Buddha revealed himself in four different ways in the four kinds of teachings,²⁹ thus, by expounding the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, the theoretical teaching, and the Nirvana Sutra, he was able to benefit all living beings.

When he preached the Lotus Treasury World³⁰ [in the Flower Garland Sutra], Shakyamuni appeared as Vairochana Buddha seated on the lotus pedestal with other Buddhas surrounding

him in the ten directions. When he preached the Agama sutras, he appeared as a Buddha who had eliminated illusions and attained the way by practicing thirty-four kinds of spiritual purification. When he preached the Correct and Equal sutras, he was accompanied by a great multitude of Buddhas. One thousand Buddhas joined him when he preached the Wisdom sutras. In the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras, he made a dignified appearance as the twelve hundred and more honored ones.³¹ In the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha manifested himself in four different ways, corresponding to the four kinds of lands. When the Buddha preached the Nirvana Sutra, those assembled saw him variously as a Buddha sixteen feet tall, as having a small or large body, as Vairochana Buddha, or as a Buddha with a body as vast as space. Thus he manifested four kinds of bodies.³² When the Buddha passed into extinction at the age of eighty, he left his relics³³ to benefit people in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law.

Now, the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra says that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, attained Buddhahood numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, and that the cause that made this possible was the practice he had carried out at that time. Since then he has manifested emanation bodies throughout the worlds of the ten directions and preached all the sacred teachings of his lifetime to teach and convert people as numerous as the dust particles of the land. When we compare the number of disciples in the essential teaching with that of disciples in the theoretical teaching, the former is like the ocean, and the latter, like a drop of water, or the one, like a great mountain, and the other, like a speck of dust. What is more, a bodhisattva of the essential teaching is far

superior to any bodhisattva of the theoretical teaching, including Manjushri, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, or any of the others who gathered from the worlds in the ten directions. The difference between them is even greater than that between Shakra and a monkey. Are you saying that besides these bodhisattvas, the persons of the two vehicles who obtained their enlightenment by destroying their illusions, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the four wheel-turning kings, and the immense flames of the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering—all beings and all things in the ten directions are inherent in the Ten Worlds and in the three thousand realms of our own lives? Even if you say that this is what the Buddha taught, I still cannot believe it.

When we consider the matter in this light, we see that the sutras that came before the Lotus Sutra are genuine in both substance and wording. The Flower Garland Sutra describes enlightenment [at the stage of security] as "ultimately perfect and free from all falsehood and defilement, like the empty sky." The Benevolent Kings Sutra reads, "[If one obtains the great wisdom of nirvana], one can penetrate the ultimate source of delusion and realize one's essential nature until nothing but wonderful wisdom remains." In the Diamond Wisdom Sutra it says, "[When one reaches enlightenment], nothing but pure goodness will remain." Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha states in *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, "Only pure blessings exist within the matrix of the Thus Come One." Bodhisattva Vasubandhu remarks in his *Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*, "When adamant meditation is achieved, other remaining defilements and a lesser form of non-defilement will draw forth the ultimate consciousness of perfect clarity and total purity.

Then, being no longer necessary, they will be abandoned forever."

A careful comparison of the Lotus Sutra and the sutras taught before it shows that those sutras are innumerable, and that they have been taught over a long time. Therefore, although both are the Buddha's teachings, if these two contradict each other, you should accept the earlier sutras. Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha was the Buddha's eleventh successor, whose appearance had been foretold by the Buddha himself. Vasubandhu was the author of one thousand treatises and was numbered among the four ranks of bodhisattvas. How then can you believe the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, a lowly priest living far away from the birthplace of Buddhism who [interpreted the sutras but] did not write a single treatise? Still, I might be able to disregard the many and accept the few, if the Lotus Sutra said anything to prove this point. But where in the sutra can you find any passages that definitely verify the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and three thousand realms in a single moment of life?

In the Lotus Sutra we find the following passage: "He [the Buddha] has rooted out evil from among the phenomena."³⁴ Neither Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* nor Bodhisattva Saramati's *Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood* makes any mention of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. Nor are there any writings by the great teachers of the northern and southern schools in China, or by the priests of the seven temples of Japan, that expound this principle. It is simply T'ien-t'ai's own biased view, and Dengyo made the mistake of transmitting it. That is what the Teacher of the Nation Ch'ing-liang³⁵ meant when he said, "This is an error of T'ien-t'ai's." The Dharma Teacher Hui-yüan said, "By defining Hinayana doctrines as the Tri-

pitaka teachings, T'ien-t'ai has confused Hinayana and Mahayana, [for both contain the Tripitaka, or three divisions of the canon]." Ryoko³⁶ criticized him, saying, "T'ien-t'ai is the only one who did not understand the true meaning of the Flower Garland Sutra." Tokuitsu reproached him, saying, "See here, Chih-i, whose disciple are you? With a tongue less than three inches long you slander the teachings that come from the Buddha's long broad tongue that can cover even his face!"³⁷ The Great Teacher Kobo commented, "The Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee [of the dharmas or True Word] and claim that it is the possession of their own school."³⁸ Thus, the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is not mentioned in either the provisional or the true teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. It did not appear in the writings of any of the four ranks of Indian scholars, and no Chinese or Japanese teacher has ever espoused it. How then do you dare to believe it?

Answer: Your criticisms are extremely harsh. Nonetheless, the differences between the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras are clear from the text of the sutras themselves. In them we find statements that the Buddha did not reveal the truth in the first forty-two years of his teaching, and that he will reveal it in the Lotus Sutra. Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions presented themselves to attest to the truth of the Lotus Sutra, something they did not do for any other sutra. With the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni enabled the people of the two vehicles to attain Buddhahood, whereas with the earlier sutras he did not. In the earlier sutras he stated that he attained enlightenment for the first time in this world, but in the Lotus Sutra he revealed that his enlightenment actually occurred in the remote past.³⁹

I will now address the problems

posed by the scholars you mentioned above. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai comments: "Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they employed the provisional Mahayana teachings, which were suited to the times. The Buddhist teachers who came later, however, were biased in their understanding, and the scholars obstinately clung to their own views, until in the end they began to battle with one another. Each defended one small corner of the teachings and thereby completely departed from the sacred way of the Buddha."⁴⁰ The Great Teacher Chang-an says of T'ien-t'ai, "Even the great scholars of India were not in a class with him, and the Chinese teachers—well, one need hardly mention them. This is no idle boast—the doctrine he taught was indeed of such excellence."

In their hearts Vasubandhu, Nagarjuna, Ashvaghosha, Saramati, and other Buddhist scholars knew [the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life], but they did not reveal it to others because the time for it to be expounded had not yet come. As for the Buddhist teachers in China who preceded T'ien-t'ai, some kept this treasure in their hearts, and others knew nothing about it. Among those who came after him, some accepted this doctrine only after first trying to disprove it, and others never accepted it at all.

Concerning the passage in the Lotus Sutra that you quoted, "He [the Buddha] has rooted out evil from among the phenomena," here the Buddha is referring to a teaching from one of the earlier sutras. But when you take a closer look at the sutra, it is clear that the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is being explained. For, in the same sutra, this passage is found: "The Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings."

T'ien-t'ai comments on this passage as follows: "If people do not possess innate Buddha wisdom, how could the Buddha say he wanted to open it? One must understand that Buddha wisdom is inherent in all human beings."⁴¹ The Great Teacher Chang-an concludes, "How could people open the door to and realize their Buddha wisdom if it did not exist within them? How could a person show the poor woman her treasure repository if the treasure repository did not exist?"⁴²

It is, however, extremely difficult to convince you that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, exists within us [just as the other nine worlds do]. Therefore, he gives us this admonishment beforehand: "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand."⁴³ The "six difficult and nine easy acts" he expounds in the next chapter explains how difficult it is. Hence the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, "Because the theoretical and the essential teachings [of the Lotus Sutra] contradict all the earlier sutras, they are extremely difficult to believe and difficult to understand—no less difficult than facing an enemy who is armed with a spear."⁴⁴ The Great Teacher Chang-an comments, "The Buddha intended these as his ultimate teachings. How could they ever be easy to understand?" The Great Teacher Dengyo remarks, "The Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and to understand because in it the Buddha directly revealed what he had attained."

In the more than eighteen hundred years after the Buddha's passing, only three persons throughout the three countries perceived this correct doctrine. They are Shakyamuni Buddha of India, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che of China, and the Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan. These three men are all Buddhist sages.

Question: What about Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu?

Answer: Those sages knew, but did not expound it. They expounded part of the theoretical teaching, but did not expound either the essential teaching or the truth that the Buddha had observed in his mind. Perhaps the people in their age were capable of believing it, but the time was not ripe to expound it. Or perhaps neither the people's capacity nor the time was appropriate.

After the advent of T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, many Buddhists learned of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life through the wisdom of these two sages. They included Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school; more than one hundred priests of the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north in China; Fa-tsang and Ch'ing-liang of the Flower Garland school; the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school; the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung of the True Word school; and Tao-hsüan of the Precepts school. At first they all opposed T'ien-t'ai, but later they totally accepted his teachings.

Now, to dispel the grave doubts you have about Buddhahood within the human world, I refer you to the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which states: "[Good men], such persons are like a prince newly born to the king of a country and his queen. When he is one day, two days, or seven days old; one month, two months, or seven months old; one year, two years, or seven years old, though he is not yet able to manage the affairs of state, already he is respected and looked up to by the ministers and the people. He is a companion to the sons of other great kings, and the king and queen love and dote on him and are forever talking with him. Why? Because he is still just a child.

“Good men, the person who upholds this sutra is like this. The Buddhas, who are the king, and the sutra, which is the queen, join together in harmony to give birth to this bodhisattva son. If the bodhisattva is able to hear this sutra, whether it is one line or one verse, one repetition, two repetitions, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or immeasurable, countless repetitions equal to the sands of a million ten thousand Ganges Rivers, though he cannot fully grasp the extent of its truth . . . already he is revered and looked up to by all the four kinds of Buddhists and the eight kinds of non-human beings, and he has the great bodhisattvas for his companions. . . . He is constantly guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, who pity and love him, favor and shelter him, because he is new in these studies.”

The Universal Worthy Sutra says: “This great vehicle sutra is the treasure storehouse of the Buddhas, the eye of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences, the seed from which spring the Thus Come Ones of the three existences. . . . You should practice the great vehicle and never let the seed of Buddhahood die out.” It also declares: “This correct and equal sutra is the eye of the Buddhas. It is through this sutra that the Buddhas are able to acquire the five types of vision. A Buddha’s three types of bodies are born from this correct and equal sutra, which is the great seal of the Law that assures entry into the sea of nirvana. It is from this sea that a Buddha’s three types of pure bodies are born. These three types of bodies are fields of good fortune for human and heavenly beings.”

Now we should go on to survey the entire range of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni’s teachings, the exoteric and esoteric as well as Hinayana and Mahayana, and specifically the sutras on which each school, such as the

Flower Garland and the True Word, depends for its doctrine. For example, the Flower Garland Sutra describes Vairocana Buddha seated on the lotus pedestal extending in the ten directions; the Great Collection Sutra, a cloud of Buddhas who had gathered together; the Wisdom Sutra, the emergence of one thousand Buddhas teaching the nonduality of pure and impure; and the Mahavairocana and Diamond Crown sutras, the more than twelve hundred honored ones. These sutras all explain the past practices of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhahood he consequently attained in this life, but they do not reveal the original cause for his enlightenment in the remote past.

It is true that the immediate attainment of Buddhahood is revealed in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, but they do not mention Shakyamuni Buddha teaching his disciples since major world system dust particle kalpas ago or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. Therefore, no revelation is made of when the Buddha started teaching or when he finished.⁴⁵ The Flower Garland Sutra seems to belong to the higher two and the Mahavairocana Sutra to all of the four teachings—the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings—but these sutras actually fall into the category of the Tripitaka and connecting teachings, the two lower of the four, because they do not expound the three inherent potentials of the Buddha nature.⁴⁶ Then how can we define these sutras as the seeds of enlightenment?

The translators of the newer versions of the sutras⁴⁷ learned about T’ien-t’ai’s doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life when they came to China. When they translated Sanskrit sutras into Chinese, some put T’ien-t’ai’s principle into their translations, and others claimed that the originals they had brought from India already contained it. Some of the

scholars of the T'ien-t'ai school were simply pleased that other schools were expounding the same doctrine as theirs, while others praised the Buddhism of India and slighted that of China, or discarded their original doctrines and adopted new ones. These scholars yielded to their devilish nature and to foolishness. Ultimately, however, without the seed of Buddhahood, that is, the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, sentient beings cannot become Buddhas, and any statue or painting would be an object of devotion in name only.

Question: You have not yet fully answered my question about the Ten Worlds, Buddhahood in particular, being inherent in the human world.

Answer: The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra states, "Although they have not yet been able to practice the six paramitas, the six paramitas will of themselves appear before them." The Lotus Sutra says, "All wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment." The Nirvana Sutra states, "*Sad*⁴⁸ indicates perfect endowment." Bodhisattva Nagarjuna comments, "*Sad* signifies six."⁴⁹ *The Profound Meaning of the Four Mahayana Treatises*⁵⁰ states, "*Sad* connotes six. In India the number six implies perfect endowment." In his commentary Chitsang writes, "*Sad* is translated as perfect endowment."⁵¹ The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai remarks, "*Sad* is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as *myo*, or wonderful."⁵² If I add my own interpretation, it will be as if I had profaned these passages, but in essence they mean that Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. If we believe in these five characters, we will naturally be granted the same benefits as he was.

With full understanding of Shakyamuni's teachings, the four great voice-hearers said, "This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought."⁵³

They represent the world of the voice-hearer that is within ourselves. The Buddha stated, "At the start I took a vow, hoping to make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us, and what I long ago hoped for has now been fulfilled. I have converted all living beings and caused them all to enter the Buddha way."⁵⁴ Shakyamuni Buddha, who has attained perfect enlightenment, is our own flesh and blood. His practices and the resulting virtues are our bones and marrow. The "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "He who is capable of guarding the Law of this sutra will thereby have offered alms to me and to Many Treasures. . . . One who guards this sutra will also have offered alms to the emanation Buddhas who have come here adorning and making brilliant all the various worlds." Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves. By searching them out within us, we can receive the benefits of all these Buddhas. This is what is meant by the following passage: "If one listens to them [the preachers of the Law] for even a moment, one will immediately attain supreme perfect enlightenment."⁵⁵ The "Life Span" chapter reads, "It has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood." The Shakyamuni Buddha within our lives is the eternal Buddha since time without beginning, who obtained the three bodies more than numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. The "Life Span" chapter states, "Originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last twice the number of years that have already passed." He was speaking of the world of the bodhisattva within ourselves. The bodhisattvas, as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds,

who emerged from beneath the earth, are the followers of the Shakyamuni Buddha present in our lives. They follow the Buddha just as T'ai-kung Wang and Tan, the Duke of Chou,⁵⁶ served as ministers to King Wu of the Chou dynasty and later assisted his son and successor, the infant King Ch'eng; or just as the Chief Minister Takenouchi⁵⁷ supported Empress Jingu and later her grandson Crown Prince Nintoku as a highly valued minister. The bodhisattvas Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices represent the world of the bodhisattva within ourselves. The Great Teacher Miao-lo says: "You should understand that one's life and its environment at a single moment encompass the three thousand realms. Therefore, when one attains the Buddha way, one puts oneself in accord with this fundamental principle, and one's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena."⁵⁸

First, at his place of enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha [preached the Flower Garland Sutra in which he] revealed the Lotus Treasury World. In the following fifty years, until he entered nirvana in the grove of sal trees, Shakyamuni preached about the lands of the various Buddhas, such as the Lotus Treasury World and the Land of Secret Solemnity [in the Secret Solemnity Sutra], revealed the three kinds of lands when he three times purified countless lands [in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra], and revealed the four kinds of lands according to the four different views⁵⁹ [in the Nirvana Sutra]. These lands—the Land of Transition, the Land of Actual Reward, and the Land of Tranquil Light; the Land of Peace and Sustenance, the Pure Emerald World, the Land of Secret Solemnity, and the lands of all the other Buddhas—are transient lands that change in the course of the kalpas of formation, [continuance, decline, and disintegration]. The

Buddhas of these lands had been magically conjured by Shakyamuni Buddha, and when the lord of teachings entered nirvana, all these Buddhas likewise entered extinction. In the same way, their lands also vanished.⁶⁰

The saha world Shakyamuni Buddha revealed in the "Life Span" chapter is the eternal pure land, impervious to the three calamities and to the cycle of the four kalpas. The Buddha neither has entered into extinction in the past nor will be born in the future. And the same is true of his disciples. This means that their lives are perfectly endowed with the three thousand worlds, that is, with the three realms of existence. The Buddha did not reveal this truth in the theoretical teaching, or the first fourteen chapters, of the Lotus Sutra because the time was not right and the people's capacity was not yet developed.

Shakyamuni Buddha did not transmit the five characters of Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the heart of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, even to the bodhisattvas Manjushri and Medicine King, let alone to any lesser disciples. He summoned from beneath the earth the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds and, as he preached the eight chapters,⁶¹ transferred it solely to them.

The true object of devotion is described as follows:

The treasure tower sits in the air above the saha world that the Buddha of the essential teaching [identified as the pure and eternal land]; Myohorenge-kyo appears in the center of the tower with the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures seated to the right and left, and, flanking them, the four bodhisattvas, followers of Shakyamuni, led by Superior Practices. Manjushri, Maitreya, and the other bodhisattvas, who are all followers of the four bodhisattvas, are seated below. All the other major and minor bodhisattvas,

whether they are disciples of the Buddha in his transient status or of the Buddhas of the other worlds, are like commoners kneeling on the ground in the presence of nobles and high-ranking court officials. The Buddhas who gathered from the other worlds in the ten directions all remain on the ground, showing that they are only temporary manifestations of the eternal Buddha and that their lands are transient, not eternal and unchanging.

During the entire fifty years of Shakyamuni's teaching, only in the last eight years did he preach the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Again, of all these chapters, only in the eight chapters did he reveal and transfer the object of devotion to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.⁶² During the two millennia of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, statues were made showing Mahakashyapa and Ananda flanking the Shakyamuni Buddha of Hinayana, and Manjushri and Universal Worthy flanking the Shakyamuni Buddha of the provisional Mahayana, the Nirvana Sutra, and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Even though statues and paintings were made of these Shakyamuni Buddhas during the two millennia, no image or statue was made of the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter.⁶³ Only in the Latter Day of the Law will the representation of that Buddha appear.

Question: During the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the four ranks of bodhisattvas and the teachers constructed images of and built temples and pagodas for Buddhas of other worlds or for the Shakyamuni Buddha of Hinayana, of provisional Mahayana, of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, or of the theoretical teaching of the sutra. No one in India, China, or Japan, however, neither rulers nor subjects, revered the object of devotion of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching and the four great

bodhisattvas. Though I think I generally understand what you are saying, I have never heard such a thing before, and therefore it startles my ears and perplexes my mind. Will you explain it to me again in greater detail?

Answer: All the teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded during his lifetime—all the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the first four flavors of teachings that preceded the sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra that came after the Lotus—make an unbroken series of teachings like one perfect sutra. [These teachings can be divided into three parts—preparation, revelation, and transmission].⁶⁴ Preparation indicates the part from the Flower Garland Sutra, his first preaching at the place of enlightenment, to the Wisdom sutras; revelation indicates the ten volumes of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, and the Universal Worthy Sutra; and transmission indicates the Nirvana Sutra. The ten volumes of the revelation section likewise can be divided into these three parts. The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra are preparation. The fifteen and a half chapters from the "Expedient Means" chapter to the nineteen-line verse of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter are revelation. The remaining eleven and a half chapters and one volume, from the section in the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter clarifying the four stages of faith for people in the Buddha's lifetime to the Universal Worthy Sutra, are transmission.

The ten volumes of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, and the Universal Worthy Sutra can also be divided into two parts: theoretical and essential.⁶⁵ Each part has the three divisions. In the theoretical teaching, preparation comprises the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus

Sutra, revelation comprises eight chapters, from the “Expedient Means” through the “Prophecies” chapters, and transmission comprises five chapters, from the “Teacher of the Law” to the “Peaceful Practices.” The Buddha of the theoretical teaching declared that he first attained Buddhahood in this life. He revealed the hundred worlds and thousand factors inherent in life, but he did not expound their eternal nature. Since the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra thus directly reveals a part of the Buddha’s own enlightenment, it excels all the other sutras that the Buddha had preached, now preached, or would preach, and is the correct teaching that is difficult to believe and difficult to understand.

The relationship between Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples can be traced back to the time when, as the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, he planted the seeds of Buddhahood in their lives. In Shakyamuni’s present lifetime a few of these disciples discovered the seeds when they heard the Flower Garland Sutra and the other teachings of the first four flavors. This was not, however, the Buddha’s true intention. Their discovery through these teachings was like poison having a positive effect. Ordinary people and the persons of the two vehicles came to the Lotus Sutra gradually through the first four flavors of teachings. They then revealed the seeds of Buddhahood from within themselves and were able to obtain the fruit of enlightenment.

Among the human and heavenly beings who listened to the eight chapters for the first time in Shakyamuni’s days, some took the seeds into their lives by hearing just a single phrase or verse. Some nurtured and harvested the seeds they had received. Others brought their seeds to fruition when they came to the Universal Worthy and Nirvana sutras. Still others appeared

in the Former, Middle, or Latter Day of the Law and, through the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings, obtained the fruit of enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra. These last are like the disciples in Shakyamuni’s lifetime who discovered their seeds of Buddhahood through the first four flavors of teachings.

Preparation, revelation, and transmission also exist in the fourteen chapters of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The first half of the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter is preparation. The latter half of this chapter, the “Life Span” chapter, and the first half of the following “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter—one chapter and two halves—are revelation. The remainder is transmission.

The Buddha of the essential teaching denies that he first attained Buddhahood in this life. The difference between the theoretical and the essential teachings is as great as that between heaven and earth. The latter reveals the eternity of the Ten Worlds and, further, the realm of the environment. The theoretical teaching, the first four flavors of teachings, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra were all preached according to the capacities of the people. All these teachings that fall into the three categories of preaching⁶⁶ are therefore easy to believe and easy to understand. In contrast, the essential teaching, which transcends the three categories, is difficult to believe and difficult to understand, for it directly reveals the Buddha’s own enlightenment. Nevertheless, even the difference between the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life of the theoretical teaching and that of the essential teaching pales into insignificance [before the ultimate teaching contained in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter].⁶⁷

The essential teaching⁶⁸ [contained in the depths of the “Life Span” chap-

ter] also has its preparation, revelation, and transmission. Shakyamuni Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra in the past as the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence. When he appeared in his present life [in India], he also preached teachings for some fifty years, from the Flower Garland Sutra to the fourteen chapters of the theoretical teaching [of the Lotus Sutra] and the Nirvana Sutra. All these sutras as well as the countless sutras of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences are preparation for revealing [the heart of] the “Life Span” chapter.

All the teachings other than the “one chapter and two halves” are Hinayana in nature and erroneous. Not only do they fail to lead to enlightenment, but also they lack the truth. Those who believe in them are meager in virtue, heavy with defilement, ignorant, poor, solitary, and like birds and beasts [that do not know their own parents].

The first half of the Lotus Sutra and the sutras preceding it contain the perfect teaching, but even this is not the cause for Buddhahood. Much less so are teachings of a Hinayana nature, such as the Mahavairochana Sutra. It is out of the question to think that the scholars and teachers of the seven schools, including the Flower Garland and the True Word, preach the cause for attaining Buddhahood.

These inferior sutras seem to fall within the Tripitaka, connecting, and specific teachings, but actually they are no better than the lowest two. They may maintain that their doctrines are incomparably profound, but nowhere do they clarify when the Buddha planted the seeds of Buddhahood, or when he nurtured and reaped them. These doctrines are no different from Hinayana, which demands that one reduce one’s body to ashes and annihilate one’s consciousness, for they do not reveal when the Buddha started

teaching and when he finished. If a consort of a king were to conceive by a beast, her baby would be inferior to a chandala.

Setting aside these lesser teachings, the eight chapters of the revelation section [the second through the ninth chapters] of the theoretical teaching seem to have been expounded for the sake of the persons of the two vehicles rather than for the ordinary people and bodhisattvas in Shakyamuni’s lifetime. From a more profound viewpoint, they are intended for the ordinary people after the Buddha’s passing—in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law—and, in particular, for the ordinary people in the beginning of the Latter Day.

Question: On what authority do you say so?

Answer: The “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?” The “Treasure Tower” chapter states, “They [the Buddhas] make certain that the Law will long endure. . . . [The Thus Come One Many Treasures, I myself], and these emanation Buddhas who have gathered here, surely know this is our aim.” Look at what the “Encouraging Devotion” and “Peaceful Practices” chapters state about the future. The theoretical teaching was preached for the people after Shakyamuni Buddha’s passing.

As regards the essential teaching, it was addressed exclusively to the people early in the Latter Day of the Law. On the surface, the Buddha seems to have preached this teaching for the enlightenment of the people of his day; he planted the seeds of Buddhahood in their lives in the remote past [numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago] and nurtured the seeds through his preaching as the sixteenth

son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence [major world system dust particle kalpas ago] and through the first four flavors of teachings and the theoretical teaching in this life. Then with the essential teaching he brought his followers to the stage of near-perfect enlightenment and finally to that of perfect enlightenment.

In actuality, however, the essential teaching bears no resemblance whatsoever to the theoretical teaching. The preparation, revelation, and transmission of the essential teaching are intended entirely for the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. The essential teaching of Shakyamuni's lifetime and that revealed at the beginning of the Latter Day are both pure and perfect [in that both lead directly to Buddhahood]. Shakyamuni's, however, is the Buddhism of the harvest, and this is the Buddhism of sowing. The core of his teaching is one chapter and two halves, and the core of mine is the five characters of the daimoku alone.

Question: On what authority do you say [that the essential teaching is meant for the generations of the Latter Day of the Law]?

Answer: The "Emerging from the Earth" chapter states: "At that time the bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who had gathered from the lands of the other directions, greater in number than the sands of eight Ganges Rivers, stood up in the midst of the great assembly, pressed their palms together, bowed in obeisance, and said to the Buddha: 'World-Honored One, if you will permit us in the age after the Buddha has entered extinction to diligently and earnestly protect, embrace, read, recite, copy, and offer alms to this sutra in the saha world, we will preach it widely throughout this land!' At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattvas and mahasattvas: 'Leave off, good men! There is no need for you to protect and embrace this sutra.'" This state-

ment totally contradicts the Buddha's exhortations in the preceding five chapters from the "Teacher of the Law" [to the "Peaceful Practices"]. In the latter part of the "Treasure Tower" chapter is the passage: "In a loud voice he [Shakyamuni Buddha] addressed all the four kinds of believers, saying, 'Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this saha world?'" Medicine King and the other great bodhisattvas, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings would have followed Shakyamuni's command before anything else even if no other Buddha had supported his exhortations, but Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas from throughout the ten directions came to this world to exhort them to propagate the sutra after Shakyamuni's passing. Thus, hearing the Buddha's solemn appeal, the bodhisattvas all pledged, saying, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives,"⁶⁹ for they desired solely to fulfill the Buddha's will.

[In the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter,] however, the Buddha suddenly reversed himself and forbade all the bodhisattvas, more numerous than the sands of eight Ganges Rivers, from propagating the sutra in this world. We therefore face what appears to be an insoluble contradiction, one that is beyond ordinary understanding.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che gave three reasons for Shakyamuni's stopping the bodhisattvas, and three more for his summoning the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Essentially, the great bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha in his transient status and the great bodhisattvas who gathered from the other worlds were not qualified to inherit the "Life Span" chapter that reveals the eternal Buddha's inner truth. At the dawn of the Latter Day evil people who slander the correct teaching would fill the land, so Shakyamuni Buddha re-

jected the pledge of these bodhisattvas and instead summoned the multitude of great bodhisattvas from beneath the earth. He entrusted them with the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the heart of the “Life Span” chapter, for the enlightenment of all beings in the land of Jambudvīpa. The bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha in his transient status were also unqualified because they had not been the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha since the time he had first set his mind on and attained enlightenment in the remote past. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai states, “[The Buddha said of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth,] ‘These are my disciples, destined to propagate my Law.’”⁷⁰ Miao-lo says, “The children propagate the Law of the father, and this benefits the world.”⁷¹ *The Supplement to “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra”*⁷² states, “The Law embodied therein [in the Lotus Sutra] is the Law that was realized countless kalpas in the past, and therefore it was entrusted to persons who had been the Buddha’s disciples from countless kalpas in the past.”

[In the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter] Bodhisattva Maitreya questioned Shakyamuni Buddha as follows: “We ourselves have faith in the Buddha, believing that he preaches in accordance with what is appropriate, that the words spoken by the Buddha are never false, and that the Buddha’s knowledge is in all cases penetrating and comprehensive. Nevertheless, in the period after the Buddha has entered extinction, if bodhisattvas who have just begun to aspire to enlightenment should hear these words, they will perhaps not believe or accept them but will be led to commit the crime of rejecting the Law. Therefore, World-Honored One, we beg you to explain so we may put aside our doubts, and so that, in future ages when good men hear of this matter, they will not entertain doubts!”⁷³ Here Bodhisattva

Maitreya was imploring the Buddha to preach the “Life Span” chapter for those to come after his passing.

The “Life Span” chapter states: “Some are completely out of their minds, while others are not. . . . Those children who have not lost their senses can see that this is good medicine, outstanding in both color and fragrance, so they take it immediately and are completely cured of their sickness.” The sutra explains that all bodhisattvas, persons of the two vehicles, and human and heavenly beings received the seeds of Buddhahood numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. The seeds were nurtured by the preaching of the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence as well as by Shakyamuni Buddha’s four flavors of teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Then they finally gained the way when they heard the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

The “Life Span” chapter continues: “Those who are out of their minds are equally delighted to see their father return and beg him to cure their sickness, but when they are given the medicine, they refuse to take it. Why? Because the poison has penetrated deeply and their minds no longer function as before. So although the medicine is of excellent color and fragrance, they do not perceive it as good. The father thinks to himself, ‘I must now resort to some expedient means to induce them to take the medicine.’ So he says to them: ‘I will leave this good medicine here. You should take it and not worry that it will not cure you.’ Having given these instructions, he then goes off to another land, where he sends a messenger home to announce . . .” According to the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter, [the good medicine of the “Life Span” chapter is left for those] “in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law.”

Question: Who is the messenger mentioned in the passage, "he sends a messenger home to announce"?

Answer: It means the four ranks of sages. They fall into four categories. [First,] most of the four ranks of sages of Hinayana appeared in the first five hundred years of the Former Day of the Law, and [second,] most of those of [provisional] Mahayana came in the second five hundred years. Third, those of the theoretical teaching appeared mainly in the next thousand years, the Middle Day of the Law, and the rest, in the beginning of the Latter Day. Fourth, the four ranks of sages of the essential teaching are the bodhisattvas emerging from the earth, numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, who are certain to appear in the beginning of the Latter Day. When the sutra says, "he sends a messenger home to announce," it refers to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. "This good medicine" is the heart of the "Life Span" chapter, or Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, which is endowed with name, entity, quality, function, and teaching.⁷⁴ Since the Buddha would not entrust this good medicine even to the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, how much less could he have done so to the bodhisattvas of other worlds?

The "Supernatural Powers" chapter states: "At that time the bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who had emerged from the earth, numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, all in the presence of the Buddha single-mindedly pressed their palms together, gazed up in reverence at the face of the Honored One, and said to the Buddha: 'World-Honored One, after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the lands where the emanations of the World-Honored One are present, and in the place where the Buddha has passed into extinction, we will preach this sutra far and wide.'" T'ien-t'ai says, "The great assembly witnessed the

Bodhisattvas of the Earth alone making this pledge."⁷⁵ Tao-hsien remarks: "As far as transmission goes, this sutra was entrusted solely to the bodhisattvas who had welled up out of the earth. The reason for this is that the Law embodied therein is the Law that was realized countless kalpas in the past, and therefore it was entrusted to persons who had been the Buddha's disciples from countless kalpas in the past."⁷⁶

Bodhisattva Manjushri is a disciple of the Buddha Immovable, who dwells in the Golden-colored World to the east. Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds is a disciple of the Buddha Infinite Life in the west. Bodhisattva Medicine King is a disciple of the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue.⁷⁷ Bodhisattva Universal Worthy is a disciple of the Buddha Jeweled Dignity. They came to this saha world to help Shakyamuni Buddha teach the people of his day. They were bodhisattvas of the provisional and theoretical teachings, and were not entrusted with the supreme Law, so they could not possibly appear and propagate it in the Latter Day.

[In the "Supernatural Powers" chapter] the sutra states: "At that time the World-Honored One . . . before all these he displayed his great supernatural powers. He extended his long broad tongue upward till it reached the Brahma heaven . . . The other Buddhas, seated on lion seats underneath the numerous jeweled trees, did likewise, extending their long broad tongues." In no other sutra, whether Hinayana or Mahayana, exoteric or esoteric, is there a passage that describes Shakyamuni Buddha and all the other Buddhas, seated together, extending their tongues to the Brahma heaven.

The Amida Sutra states that Buddhas covered a major world system with their broad long tongues, but lacks the truth that such a gesture would sub-

stantiate. The Wisdom Sutra tells how the Buddha's tongue covered a major world system and radiated infinite light when he expounded the *prajna* (wisdom). Yet this certainly cannot be a proof [comparable to that of the "Supernatural Powers" chapter]. Because these two sutras include provisional teachings, they obscure the Buddha's enlightenment in the remote past.

After the Buddha displayed his ten supernatural powers, he entrusted the five characters of the Mystic Law to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. As the sutra states: "At that time the Buddha spoke to Superior Practices and the others in the great assembly of bodhisattvas, saying: 'The supernatural powers of the Buddhas, as you have seen, are immeasurable, boundless, inconceivable. If in the process of entrusting this sutra to others I were to employ these supernatural powers for immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of *asamkhyā* kalpas to describe the benefits of the sutra, I could never finish doing so. To put it briefly, all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One, all the freely exercised supernatural powers of the Thus Come One, the storehouse of all the secret essentials of the Thus Come One, all the most profound matters of the Thus Come One—all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra.'"⁷⁸ T'ien-t'ai says, "The passage that follows the words 'At that time the Buddha spoke to Superior Practices' constitutes the third stage of the chapter, the transfer of the essence of the Lotus Sutra."⁷⁹ Dengyo states: "The 'Supernatural Powers' chapter says, 'To put it briefly, all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One . . . are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra.' From this it is clear that all the doctrines, all the freely exercised supernatural powers, the storehouse of all the secret essentials, and all the most profound matters possessed

by the Buddha as the fruit of his enlightenment—all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in the Lotus Sutra."⁸⁰ Demonstrating ten supernatural powers, the Buddha transferred the five characters of Myōhōrenge-kyō to the four great bodhisattvas: Superior Practices, Firmly Established Practices, Pure Practices, and Boundless Practices.

[Miao-lo states that] the first five of the ten supernatural powers are meant for those living in Shakyamuni's lifetime, and the last five for the generations after his passing.⁸¹ But in a deeper sense all are intended for future generations. The Buddha confirmed this later in the same chapter, "Because after the Buddha has passed into extinction there will be those who can uphold this sutra, the Buddhas are all delighted and manifest immeasurable supernatural powers."

The following "Entrustment" chapter states: "At that time Shakyamuni Buddha rose from his Dharma seat and, manifesting his great supernatural powers, with his right hand patted the heads of the immeasurable bodhisattvas and mahasattvas and spoke these words: 'Now I entrust it [the Lotus Sutra] to you.'" The Buddha first transferred the Lotus Sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and then to the bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha in his transient status, the bodhisattvas of other worlds, Brahma, Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and others. Then "Shakyamuni Buddha caused the Buddhas who were emanations of his body and had come from the ten directions to return each one to his original land, saying, 'The tower of Many Treasures Buddha may also return to its former position.'"⁸² After the Bodhisattvas of the Earth had departed, from the "Medicine King" chapter through the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha transferred the sutra again to the people taught by him in his transient status and to the bodhisattvas

from other worlds. This was gleaning in order to entrust.⁸³

Question: Did the Bodhisattvas of the Earth then appear in Jambudvīpa during the two millennia of the Former and Middle Days of the Law to spread the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: No, they did not.

Question: Your answer comes as a surprise. If the Lotus Sutra, especially the essential teaching, is intended primarily for those people living after the Buddha's passing, and the Buddha entrusted the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, why did they not appear during the Former and Middle Days of the Law to spread the sutra?

Answer: I will not say.

Question: I am asking you again, what was the reason?

Answer: I will not disclose it.

Question: Once more, what was the reason?

Answer: If I disclose it, all will refuse to believe and, what is worse, will slander the sutra, as in the Latter Day of the Law of Awesome Sound King Buddha. Even my own disciples would slander the sutra if I tried to explain, so I can only keep silent.

Question: Nonetheless, I urge you to answer. Unless you do, you will be guilty of the fault of greed and stinginess.

Answer: Then since I have no choice, I will try to give you a brief explanation. The "Teacher of the Law" chapter states, "[Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world], how much more will this be so after his passing?" The "Life Span" chapter states, "I will leave this good medicine here." The "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter speaks of "the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law." The "Medicine King" chapter says, "In the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa." A pas-

sage in the Nirvana Sutra reads, "Suppose that a couple has seven children, one of whom falls ill. Though the parents love all their children equally, they worry most about the sick child."

With the clear mirror of these passages one can guess the Buddha's intent. They show that the Buddha did not appear for the sake of those present during the eight years when he revealed the Lotus Sutra at Eagle Peak, but for those who would come after him in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. His advent was specifically for people like us, those living in the beginning of the Latter Day, not for those who lived in the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days. "The sick child" mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra represents those who slander the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing. The Buddha will now "leave this good medicine here" especially for those who, the sutra says, though the medicine is of excellent color and fragrance, do not perceive it as good.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth did not appear in the Former or Middle Day of the Law for good reason.

Hinayana and provisional Mahayana were spread in the first millennium, the Former Day of the Law, because the time was not ripe [for the Lotus Sutra] and the people were not ready to embrace it. The four ranks of bodhisattvas in the Former Day led those who had received the seeds of Buddhahood by hearing the Lotus Sutra during Shakyamuni's lifetime to harvest the fruit of Buddhahood through Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings. [If the Bodhisattvas of the Earth had spread the Lotus Sutra at that time instead of later,] the people would have reviled it and thereby destroyed all the merit they had accumulated by maturing their seeds. Therefore, the bodhisattvas did not appear then. People of the Former Day are like those in the Buddha's life-

time who gradually matured and attained enlightenment through the first four flavors of teachings.

In the middle and latter part of the Middle Day of the Law, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds was reborn as Nan-yüeh, and Bodhisattva Medicine King as T'ien-t'ai. Preaching the text of the theoretical teaching and employing the meaning of the essential teaching to supplement it, they fully revealed the doctrine of the hundred worlds and thousand factors and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. They expounded it in principle, but they did not establish the actual practice of the five characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo or establish the object of devotion of the essential teaching. The time was not right for propagation, although even then some people had the proper capacity.

Now, in the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, Hinayana adherents attack the doctrines of Mahayana, and provisional Mahayana believers denounce the true Mahayana teaching. East is mistaken for west, and heaven and earth are turned upside down. The four ranks of bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching are gone, and all the heavenly gods have deserted the country and no longer lend it protection. At this time the Bodhisattvas of the Earth appear in the world for the first time solely to bring the medicine of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo to the ignorant people of the Latter Day. This is what is meant by the words, "Even if one reviles the correct teaching and falls into the evil paths, one can create causes for the eventual attainment of benefit."⁸⁴

You who are my disciples, take this to heart! The countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth were the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, from the time he first set his mind on and attained enlightenment in the remote past. But they did not come to his

place of enlightenment in India, nor did they come to the grove of sal trees when he entered nirvana. They were unfaithful to him. They also failed to appear when the Buddha preached the first fourteen chapters, or the theoretical teaching, of the Lotus Sutra, and they left the assembly when he preached the last six chapters of the essential teaching. They only attended the Buddha during the first eight chapters of the essential teaching. Since these noble bodhisattvas received [the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo] and made a solemn oath to Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, is it possible that they will not appear now at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law? Know this: in the time for the practice of shakubuku the four bodhisattvas appear as worthy rulers who rebuke and convert ignorant rulers, and in the time for the practice of shoju they appear as priests to embrace and spread the correct teaching.

Question: Does the Buddha predict their coming in the Latter Day of the Law?

Answer: The Buddha states, "In the last five-hundred-year period the Lotus Sutra will spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa."⁸⁵ The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai predicts, "In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."⁸⁶ Miao-lo predicts, "The beginning of the Latter Day of the Law will not be without inconspicuous benefit."⁸⁷ The Great Teacher Dengyo says, "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand."⁸⁸ The latter part of this quotation means that his was not the right time for propagation. The Great Teacher Dengyo, who was living in Japan, foresaw the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, saying: "Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age

when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu.⁸⁹ As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, 'Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?' There is good reason for this statement."⁹⁰

"A time of conflict" in this commentary refers to the two disasters of internal strife and invasion from the western sea that are occurring at present. At this time the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear and establish in this country the object of devotion, foremost in Jambudvīpa, that depicts Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching attending [the eternal Buddha]. This object of devotion has never appeared in India or China. Its time had not come when Prince Jōgu in Japan constructed Shitenno-ji temple, so he could only make a statue of Amida, a Buddha of another world, the object of devotion. When Emperor Shōmu erected Todai-ji temple, he enshrined a statue of the Buddha of the Flower Garland Sutra [Vairocana Buddha] as the object of devotion, but could not manifest the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher Dengyō almost revealed the truth of the sutra. The time had not yet come, however, and so he built a statue of the Buddha of the Eastern Region,⁹¹ but did not represent the four bodhisattvas of the essential teaching in any form. Ultimately, this was because the revelation of the true object of devotion had been entrusted only to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. They have been waiting for the right time to emerge from beneath the earth and carry out the Buddha's decree. They did not appear

in the Former or Middle Day. But if they do not appear in the Latter Day of the Law, their vows would be outright lies, and the prophecies of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions would be no more than froth on the waters.

We have recently experienced great earthquakes, huge comets, and other calamities such as never occurred in the Former or Middle Day. These signs could not be caused by garuda birds, asura demons, or dragon deities. They must foretell the appearance of the four great bodhisattvas. T'ien-t'ai states, "By observing the fury of the rain, we can tell the greatness of the dragon that caused it, and by observing the flourishing of the lotus flowers, we can tell the depth of the pond they grow in."⁹² Miao-lo says, "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."⁹³ When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs.

Showing profound compassion for those unable to comprehend the gem of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the Buddha wrapped it within the five characters [of Myōhō-*renge-kyō*], with which he then adorned the necks of the ignorant people of the latter age. The four great bodhisattvas will protect anyone who embraces the five characters as faithfully as T'ai-kung Wang and the Duke of Chou supported King Wen, and as devotedly as the Four White-Haired Elders⁹⁴ served Emperor Hui.

Written by Nichiren.

The twenty-fifth day of the fourth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273), with the cyclical sign *mizunoto-tori*

COVER LETTER

I have received an unlined robe,⁹⁵ three sumi inksticks, and five writing brushes.

I have written down some of my thoughts concerning the doctrine of observing the mind. I am sending the treatise to Ota, Kyoshin-bo,⁹⁶ and the others. It explains an important matter that concerns me, Nichiren, and must be kept secret. Only those of single-minded faith should be allowed to read it.

The treatise contains many difficult points and few answers. What it reveals, however, has never been heard of before and is bound to startle those who read or hear of it. If you do show it to others, never allow three or four persons to read it together at one time.

In the more than 2,220 years since the Buddha's passing, the heart of this treatise has never been revealed before.

Despite the official persecution facing me, I expound it now in the fifth five-hundred-year period, when the time is ripe for its propagation. I hope those who read it will remain firm in their faith so that both teacher and disciples can together reach the pure land of Eagle Peak and behold with reverence the faces of Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the fourth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273), with the cyclical sign
mizunoto-tori

Reply to Toki



Background

Nichiren Daishonin completed this work, one of his most important, in the fourth month of 1273, during his exile at Ichinosawa on the island of Sado. It was addressed specifically to Toki Jonin, a leading disciple who lived in Shimosa Province, and its cover letter instructed that because it revealed the Daishonin's ultimate teaching it should be shown only to those with strong faith.

In another of his major works, *The Opening of the Eyes*, written on Sado Island a year earlier, the Daishonin explains the object of devotion in terms of the Person. He declares that he is endowed with the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, implying that he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who leads all people to Buddhahood. In the present work, the

Daishonin explains the object of devotion in terms of the Law and declares that the Gohonzon that embodies the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the object of devotion in the Latter Day. Faith and practice based on the Gohonzon enable everyone to perceive the Buddha nature in his or her own life and attain Buddhahood.

Four important elements are contained in the full title of this work, *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind Established in the Fifth Five-Hundred-Year Period after the Thus Come One's Passing*. They are the time, the Buddha's teaching, the people's capacity, and the Law. Concerning the time, a Buddha appears in accordance with the deep desire of the people to see him. The time for his advent is defined as the "fifth five-hundred-year period after the Thus

Come One's [Shakyamuni's] passing." Concerning the Buddha's teaching, this is indicated by the word "established." In establishing the Gohonzon, Nichiren Daishonin, considering the people's capacity, depicted the essence of the Lotus Sutra, or the Law he perceived. The people's capacity means that "for observing [the true nature of] the mind." The Law is indicated by the phrase "the object of devotion."

Nichiren Daishonin embodied in the object of devotion the state of life he enjoyed as the eternal Buddha so that people could attain the same condition of enlightenment. A description of the Gohonzon in the text includes a depiction of the ceremony of the transmission of the Law: "Myoho-rence-kyo appears in the center of the tower with the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures seated to the right and left, and, flanking them, the four bodhisattvas, followers of Shakyamuni, led by Superior Practices" (p. 366).

The text may be broadly divided into four sections. The first section explains the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. The Daishonin elucidates this doctrine by referring to the works of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China, who based his exposition on the Lotus Sutra, and to the works of other Chinese scholars.

The second section discusses the meaning of "observing the mind." T'ien-t'ai established a complex practice of meditation as a means to perceive the true nature of one's own life. This was to observe one's mind, or to perceive all the three thousand realms in a single moment of one's own life.

Here the Daishonin proclaims that the practice of observing one's mind in the Latter Day of the Law is none other than to chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with firm faith in the true object of devotion, saying: "Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he

consequently attained are all contained within the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. If we believe in these five characters, we will naturally be granted the same benefits as he was" (p. 365). This is the principle that embracing the true object of devotion is in itself enlightenment.

The third section describes the Gohonzon, the object of devotion, by classifying the entire body of the Buddhist teachings into three categories: preparation, revelation, and transmission. In terms of the Daishonin's teachings, preparation includes all the teachings of all Buddhas throughout time and space; revelation is Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the Law implied in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter; and transmission, the teachings of all Buddhas seen in the light of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

The Daishonin asserts that Shakyamuni's is the Buddhism of the harvest, meaning that he expounded his enlightenment as an effect only, without revealing the cause. The Daishonin's teaching, however, is called the Buddhism of sowing, for it teaches the cause for attaining enlightenment directly, thus guiding people compassionately in their quest for the ultimate state of life.

In this section, Nichiren Daishonin identifies the object of devotion implied in the "Life Span" chapter as the entity of the Law for propagation in the Latter Day. He states that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth will surely appear in the world to establish this supreme object of devotion.

The fourth section brings the treatise to a close by declaring that the eternal Buddha who appears in the Latter Day of the Law will establish the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo out of profound compassion for the people of that age, who are ignorant of the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

Notes

1. In *Great Concentration and Insight*, the Chinese word for “one mind” or “one thought” is used here, but in Nichiren Dai-shonin’s teaching it is interpreted as indicating the entire psychosomatic entity; hence the word is translated as “life” rather than “mind.”

2. Each of the Ten Worlds is endowed with ten factors, each of which in turn is endowed with the three realms of existence. The thirty realms refer to the ten factors multiplied by the three realms.

3. The Japanese text contains two parenthetical notes, one directly following the beginning clause, “Volume five of *Great Concentration and Insight* states,” and the other following the quotation. They are translated together here. T’ien-t’ai’s *Great Concentration and Insight* elucidates two ways to arrive at the “three thousand” of the “three thousand realms in a single moment of life”: (1) The hundred worlds are multiplied by the three realms of existence and then by the ten factors to arrive at the “three thousand factors.” (2) The hundred worlds are multiplied by the ten factors and then by the three realms of existence to arrive at the “three thousand realms of existence.” Although the method differs, the principle is the same.

4. *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”*

5. *Ibid.*

6. “Each sense field” refers to each of the six sense organs (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) and the objects that stimulate them.

7. T’ien-t’ai’s annotations on the “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, recorded by his disciple Chang-an.

8. The seventh chapter, which is regarded as the core of *Great Concentration and Insight* because it explains the practice of meditation.

9. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, T’ien-t’ai’s major work, recorded by Chang-an.

10. Introduction to *Profound Meaning*.

11. A work by Miao-lo that maintains that even insentient beings are endowed with the potential for Buddhahood.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

13. *Ibid.*, chap. 26.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

15. A rephrasing of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

20. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

21. *Ibid.*, chap. 16.

22. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

23. *The Annotations on “The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind.”*

24. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

25. According to the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the five thousand arrogant people, who are mentioned in the preceding sentence, left the assembly as Shakyamuni began to preach about “the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle,” because they supposed they had attained what they had not attained. In the “Treasure Tower” chapter, Shakyamuni transforms the lands three times to accommodate the Buddhas who assemble from the ten directions. He purifies the saha world by removing all heavenly and human beings to other worlds, leaving only the assembled multitude.

26. This stage refers to the first of the six stages of practice, when one has not yet heard the correct teaching and is ignorant of Buddhism. See also six stages of practice in Glossary.

27. Deities who wield weapons to protect Buddhism. Vajra (Skt) means diamond-pounder, a symbol for firmness or hardness.

28. In Hinayana Buddhism a bodhisattva is supposed to serve seventy-five thousand Buddhas for one asamkhyā kalpas, seventy-six thousand Buddhas for another asamkhyā kalpas, and seventy-seven thousand Buddhas for a third asamkhyā kalpas.

29. The text has been augmented slightly here for clarity. The “four different ways” refers to the four different aspects Shakyamuni assumed when he preached the four kinds of teachings—the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings.

30. The land of Vairochana Buddha, who appears in the Flower Garland Sutra, the first sutra Shakyamuni taught after attaining enlightenment.

31. Venerable Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others inscribed on the two mandalas on the Diamond and Womb realms.

32. "A Buddha sixteen feet tall" indicates the inferior manifested body of the Buddha, and "a small or large body," the superior manifested body. Vairochana Buddha refers to a Buddha of the reward body, and "a body as vast as space," to a Buddha of the Dharma body.

33. Here the Buddha's teachings.

34. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

35. The Teacher of the Nation Ch'ing-liang was the honorary title given to Ch'eng-kuan (738-839), the fourth patriarch of the Chinese Flower Garland school. Hui-yüan (n.d.), who appears in the next sentence, was an eighth-century T'ang dynasty priest who studied the Flower Garland doctrines under Fa-tsang (643-712), the third patriarch and doctrinal systematizer of the Flower Garland school.

36. No documents about Ryoko are extant, but he is thought to have been a Japanese Flower Garland priest. Tokuitsu, who appears in the next sentence, was a Dharma Characteristics priest who disputed frequently with the Great Teacher Dengyo on doctrinal matters. Chih-i is another name for T'ien-t'ai.

37. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*. The "long broad tongue" is one of the thirty-two features of a Buddha; it is symbolic of the Buddha's honesty.

38. The essence of this statement is found in *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*.

39. This paragraph has been expanded in translation for the sake of clarity.

40. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

41. *Profound Meaning*.

42. *On "The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind."*

43. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

44. *Words and Phrases*.

45. The language of the text both here and in the preceding paragraph is highly condensed and technical; it has been expanded in translation for clarity.

46. Innate Buddhahood, the wisdom to perceive it, and the deeds that cause the Buddha nature to develop.

47. The reference here is to the translations of Indian scriptures by Hsüan-tsang (602-664) and by later translators such as Shan-wu-wei.

48. *Sad* corresponds to *sad* of *Saddhar-*

ma-pundarika-sutra, the Sanskrit name of the Lotus Sutra.

49. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. It is said that the number six was the base of the ancient numerical system in India.

50. A work by Chün-cheng, a T'ang-dynasty scholar of the Three Treatises school.

51. The quotation has not been identified.

52. *Profound Meaning*.

53. Lotus Sutra, chap. 4.

54. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

55. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

56. When King Wu of the Chou dynasty did battle with King Chou of the Yin dynasty, T'ai-kung Wang, as supreme commander, defeated the armies of Yin. Tan, the Duke of Chou, was the younger brother of King Wu. King Wu's son, Ch'eng, was still a child when his father Wu passed away, so his uncle, Tan, acted as a regent and administered the affairs of state on his behalf.

57. A legendary general and statesman who appears in the ancient chronicles of Japan. Takenouchi is said to have served five emperors.

58. *On "Great Concentration and Insight."*

59. According to the Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law, those present in the grove of sal trees at the time of the Buddha's entry into nirvana perceived the scene in four different ways in accordance with their capacity and state of life: (1) as a grove composed of earth, trees, plants, and stone walls; (2) as a place adorned with the seven kinds of treasures, including gold and silver; (3) as a place where all Buddhas carry out their practices; and (4) as the inconceivable realm that all Buddhas attain. These four views are interpreted as corresponding to the four kinds of lands (*see* Glossary).

60. The wording of the Japanese text has been expanded here for clarity.

61. "Eight chapters" here refers to the chapters from "Emerging from the Earth" through "Entrustment," which describe the Ceremony in the Air (*see* Glossary).

62. The wording of the Japanese text has been expanded here for clarity.

63. Here the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter indicates Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, or the Law implicit in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter.

64. Preparation indicates a teaching that prepares the way for the revelation of the truth, and that readies people to accept the truth. Revelation is the truth that the Buddha imparts. Transmission indicates the admonishment following revelation, which urges that the truth be transmitted to posterity.

65. The “theoretical teaching” generally means the first half, and the “essential teaching,” the second half, of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Here the Daishonin includes the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the Universal Worthy Sutra with the Lotus Sutra to form what is known as the threefold Lotus Sutra. As described here, the “theoretical teaching” indicates the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, and the “essential teaching,” the last fourteen chapters and the Universal Worthy Sutra.

66. “Three categories of preaching” refers to “the sutras I [Shakyamuni] have preached, now preach, and will preach,” mentioned in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. *The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra”* says that the Lotus Sutra stands above “the sutras I have preached” (the provisional sutras), “[the sutra] I now preach” (the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra), and “[the sutras] I will preach” (the Universal Worthy and the Nirvana sutras).

67. The wording has been reordered somewhat in translation.

68. The Daishonin uses the term “essential teaching” here to indicate not the latter half of the Lotus Sutra but the ultimate teaching contained within the “Life Span” chapter, that is, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Hereafter this term is used in two different ways. Similarly, the “‘Life Span’ chapter” and the “one chapter and two halves” are either meant literally or refer to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that they contain.

69. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

70. *Words and Phrases.*

71. *On “The Words and Phrases.”*

72. A commentary on T’ien-t’ai’s *Words and Phrases* and Miao-lo’s *On “The Words and Phrases”* by Tao-hsien, a priest of the T’ien-t’ai school in China during the T’ang dynasty.

73. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15. In the quotation, the expression “these words” refers to Shakyamuni’s declaration that the Bodhi-

sattvas of the Earth are his original disciples.

74. These are the five major principles (see Glossary) formulated by T’ien-t’ai in his *Profound Meaning* to explain the title of the Lotus Sutra.

75. *Words and Phrases.*

76. *The Supplement to “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.”* See n. 72.

77. The Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue is described in the “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. When Bodhisattva Medicine King practiced austerities in a previous existence, he expounded the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha Jeweled Dignity, who appears in the next sentence, is described in the “Universal Worthy” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. According to the sutra, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy came to the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra from the Buddha Jeweled Dignity’s land in the east.

78. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

79. *Words and Phrases.*

80. *Outstanding Principles.*

81. *On “The Words and Phrases.”*

82. The quotations from the “Entrustment” chapter describe the conclusion of the Ceremony in the Air, which begins in the “Treasure Tower” chapter.

83. “Gleaning” here means gathering those left behind for the purpose of entrusting the teachings to them. This transfer takes place in the six chapters from the “Medicine King” to the “Encouragements” chapters and in the Universal Worthy and the Nirvana sutras.

84. *On “The Words and Phrases.”*

85. Here the reading of this sentence from the “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra is changed. The sutra passage is generally rendered as follows: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa.” Such a change is possible in rendering the classical Chinese into Japanese.

86. *Words and Phrases.*

87. *On “The Words and Phrases.”*

88. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

89. T’ang refers to China, and Katsu to a Tungusic nation that ruled over northeastern China and northern Korea in the sixth and seventh centuries. “A land to the east of T’ang and to the west of Katsu” indicates Japan according to old maps.

90. *Outstanding Principles.*

91. The Buddha of the Eastern Region refers to the Buddha Medicine Master.

92. *Words and Phrases.*

93. On "*The Words and Phrases.*"

94. Emperor Kao-tsu (247-195 B.C.E.), founder of the Han dynasty, tried to disown his son, the future Emperor Hui. Hui's mother persuaded four eminent elders, who lived on Mount Shang, to become his advisers. They were known as Master Tung-yüan, the Scholar Lu-li, Ch'i Li-chi, and Master Hsia-huang. On seeing these

four elders, the emperor was so impressed by their dignity that he accepted Hui as his successor.

95. An unlined robe for summer use, made of hemp cloth or crinkled silk.

96. Ota is Ota Jomyo, an official employed in the Kamakura shogunate's Office of Legal Affairs. Kyoshin-bo is also known as the lay priest Soya. Together with Toki Jonin, they were leading followers of the Daishonin in Shimosa Province.

The True Aspect of All Phenomena

Written by Nichiren



QUESTION: The “Expedient Means” chapter in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “The true aspect of all phenomena [can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature . . . and] their consistency from beginning to end.” What does this passage mean?

Answer: It means that all beings and environments in the Ten Worlds, from hell, the lowest, to Buddhahood, the highest, are without exception manifestations of Myoho-*renge-kyo*. If there is an environment, living beings are bound to dwell there. A commentary states, “Living beings and their environments always manifest Myoho-*renge-kyo*.”¹ Another says: “The true aspect invariably manifests in all phenomena, and all phenomena invariably manifest in the ten factors. The ten factors invariably manifest in the Ten Worlds, and the Ten Worlds invariably manifest in life and its environment.”² And “Both the beings and the environment of the Avichi hell exist entirely within the life of the highest sage [Buddha], and what is more, the life and the environment of Vairochana [Buddha] never transcend the lives of common mortals.”³ These explanations are precise and clear. Who could have doubts? Thus, the entire realm of phenomena is no different than the five characters of Myoho-*renge-kyo*.

Even the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, in performing the function of the benefit of the five characters of Myoho-*renge-kyo*, manifested themselves as the two Buddhas, and seated together in the treasure tower, nodded in mutual agreement.

No one but Nichiren has ever revealed teachings like these. Though T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo knew about them in their hearts, they never put them into words. They went about their lives keeping this knowledge to themselves. And there was good reason for this. The Buddha had not entrusted them with the task, the time had not yet come, and they had not been the Buddha’s disciples from the distant past. Only Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, and the other foremost leaders and guiding teachers among the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can not only appear during the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law and spread the five characters of Myoho-*renge-kyo*, the essence of all phenomena, but also give concrete form to the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated side by side in the treasure tower. The reason is that what they are to spread and give concrete form to is none other than the teaching of the actual three thousand realms in a single moment of life in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching.

Therefore, the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, are Buddhas who are functions [of Myohorenge-kyo]. It is Myohorenge-kyo that is the true Buddha.⁴ This is what is described in the sutra as “the Thus Come One’s secret and his transcendental powers.”⁵ The “Thus Come One’s secret” refers to the entity of the Buddha’s three bodies, and it refers to the true Buddha. “His transcendental powers” refers to the functions of the three bodies, and it refers to provisional Buddhas. A common mortal is an entity of the three bodies, and a true Buddha. A Buddha is a function of the three bodies, and a provisional Buddha. In that case, though it is thought that Shakyamuni Buddha possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for the sake of all of us living beings, that is not so. On the contrary, it is common mortals who endow him with the three virtues.

The “Thus Come One” is explained clearly in T’ien-t’ai’s commentary as follows: “The Thus Come One is a general designation for the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences, for the two Buddhas, the three Buddhas,⁶ the true Buddha, and provisional Buddhas.”⁷ The “true Buddha” here means common mortals, whereas “provisional Buddhas” means Buddhas. However, because of the difference between ordinary people and Buddhas that stems from the disparity between delusion and enlightenment, ordinary people are unaware that they are endowed with both the entity and the functions of the three bodies.

“All phenomena” in the sutra refers to the Ten Worlds, and the “true aspect,” to what they actually are. The “true aspect” is another name for Myohorenge-kyo; hence all phenomena are Myohorenge-kyo. Hell’s displaying the form of hell is its true aspect. When hell changes into the realm of hungry spirits, that is no

longer the true form of hell. A Buddha displays the form of a Buddha, and a common mortal, that of a common mortal. The entities of all phenomena are entities of Myohorenge-kyo. That is the meaning of “the true aspect of all phenomena.” T’ien-t’ai states that the profound principle of the true aspect is the originally inherent Myohorenge-kyo.⁸ This interpretation identifies the phrase “true aspect” with the theoretical teaching and “the originally inherent Myohorenge-kyo” with the essential teaching. You should ponder this interpretation deep in your heart.

Although not worthy of the honor, I, Nichiren, was nevertheless the first to spread the Mystic Law entrusted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices for propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. I was also the first, though only Bodhisattva Superior Practices is so empowered, to inscribe [the object of devotion as] the embodiment of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past as revealed in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching, of Many Treasures Buddha who appeared when the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the theoretical teaching was preached, and of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who arrived with the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter. Though people may hate me, they cannot possibly alter the fact of my enlightenment.

Therefore, to have exiled me, Nichiren, to this remote island is, I believe, an offense that can never be expiated, even with the passing of countless kalpas. A passage from the “Simile and Parable” chapter reads, “If I were to describe the punishments [that fall on persons who slander this sutra], I could exhaust a kalpa and never come to the end.” On the other hand, not even the wisdom of the Buddha can fathom the blessings that one will obtain by giving alms to Nichiren and by becoming his disciple and lay supporter. The sutra reads, “[The benefits he gains thereby

will be such that] even the Buddha wisdom could never finish calculating their extent.”⁹

Nichiren alone took the lead in carrying out the task of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. He may even be one of them. If Nichiren is to be counted among the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, then so must his disciples and lay supporters. The sutra states: “If one [of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction] is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One’s work.”¹⁰ Who else but us can this possibly refer to?

When praised highly by others, one feels that there is no hardship one cannot bear. Such is the courage that springs from words of praise. The votaries born in the Latter Day of the Law who propagate the Lotus Sutra will encounter the three types of enemies, who will cause them to be exiled and even condemn them to death. Yet Shakyamuni Buddha will enfold in his robe those who nonetheless persevere in propagating. Heavenly gods will make them offerings, support them with their shoulders, and carry them on their backs. They possess great roots of goodness and deserve to be great leaders for all living beings. Thus extolled by Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities, the Mother of Demon Children and the ten demon daughters, the four heavenly kings, Brahma, Shakra, King Yama, the gods of the waters and winds, the gods of the seas and mountains, the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy and Manjushri, and the gods of the sun and

moon—thus praised by all these honored ones, I, Nichiren, have been able to endure countless harsh trials. When praised, one does not consider one’s personal risk, and when criticized, one can recklessly cause one’s own ruin. Such is the way of common mortals.

Now, no matter what, strive in faith and be known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and remain my disciple for the rest of your life. If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And if you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past. The sutra states, “Ever since the long distant past I have been teaching and converting this multitude.”¹¹ There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku. At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well. Does this not signify “emerging from the earth”? At the time when the Law has spread far and wide, the entire Japanese nation will chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, as surely as an arrow aimed at the earth cannot miss the target.

But now you must build your reputation on the Lotus Sutra and give yourself up to it. At the Ceremony in the Air, when the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions gathered together, the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, nodded in agreement. What they decided on was nothing other than the perpetuation of the Law throughout the Latter Day. Many Treasures Buddha had offered Shakyamuni Buddha a place beside him, and when they unfurled the ban-

ner of Myoho-enge-kyo, the two leaders of the entire multitude made their decision together. Could there have been anything false in their decision? Their ultimate purpose in meeting was to provide a way for all of us living beings to attain Buddhahood.

Although I was not at that ceremony, on looking at the sutra, this is crystal-clear. On the other hand, I may have been at the ceremony, but since I am a common mortal, it is beyond my power to know the past. There is no doubt, however, that in my present life I am the votary of the Lotus Sutra, and that in the future I will therefore reach the seat of enlightenment without fail. Judging the past from this point of view, I must have been at the Ceremony in the Air. There can be no discontinuity between the three existences of past, present, and future.

Because I view things this way, I feel immeasurable delight even though I am now an exile. Joy as well as sorrow moves us to tears. Tears express our feelings for both blessings and misfortune. The one thousand arhats shed tears in memory of the Buddha, and in tears Bodhisattva Manjushri chanted Myoho-enge-kyo. From among those one thousand arhats, the Venerable Ananda replied in tears, "This is what I heard."¹² The tears of all the others fell, wetting their inkstones, and they wrote Myoho-enge-kyo, followed by "This is what I heard." I, Nichiren, now feel exactly as they did. I am now in exile because I spread the five and seven characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. I spread this teaching because "This is what I heard": Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasures Buddha left Myoho-enge-kyo for the future and for all living beings in the country of Japan.

I cannot hold back my tears when I think of the great persecution confronting me now, or when I think of the joy of attaining Buddhahood in the

future. Birds and crickets cry, but never shed tears. I, Nichiren, do not cry, but my tears flow ceaselessly. I shed my tears not for worldly affairs but solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. So, indeed, they must be tears of amrita. The Nirvana Sutra states that, while the tears one has shed in past existences at the death of one's parents, brothers, sisters, wives, children, and other relatives surpass the quantity of water in the four great seas, one weeps not a drop for the Buddha's teachings. One becomes a votary of the Lotus Sutra by virtue of one's practice in past existences. It is karmic relationships that determine which among the many trees are made into images of the Buddha. It is also because of karma that some become statues of Buddhas of the provisional teachings.

In this letter, I have written my most important teachings. Grasp their meaning firmly, and make them a part of your life. Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of devotion in all of Jambudvīpa. Be sure to strengthen your faith, and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The seventeenth day of the fifth
month

POSTSCRIPT:

I wrote before about the doctrines that have been handed down to me. Those I have revealed to you in this particular

letter are very important. Is there not a mystic bond between us? Are you not the embodiment of one of the four bodhisattvas, including Superior Practices, who led the Bodhisattvas of the Earth equal in number to the sands of the sixty thousand Ganges Rivers? There must be some profound reason for our relationship. I have given you the teachings that concern myself. Nichiren may be one of the followers of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who are equal in number to the sands of the sixty thousand Ganges Rivers, for I have been chanting Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo out of my desire to guide all the men and women in Japan. The sutra says, “[Among these bodhisattvas were four leaders.] The first was called Superior Practices . . . These four bodhisattvas were the foremost leaders and guiding teachers.”¹³ A bond of karma from the past has led you to become my disciple. By all means keep this letter to yourself. I have herein committed to writing the doctrines of my own enlightenment. I will end here.

Reply to Sairen-bo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Sairen-bo Nichijo while at Ichinosawa on Sado Island in the fifth month of the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273). For some reason Sairen-bo was also in exile on Sado, where he had been converted by the Daishonin in the second month of 1272. A former Tendai priest, he already knew something about “the true aspect of all phenomena”; it was a fundamental concept in the Tendai school of Buddhism. He could not, however, satisfactorily come to grips with this concept through T'ien-t'ai's theory alone, so he asked the Daishonin for an explanation. *The True Aspect of All Phenomena* is the Daishonin's reply.

Though comparatively short, this document elucidates two important elements of the Daishonin's Buddhism. It was completed a month after Nichiren Daishonin wrote *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, in which he explained the Gohonzon, the object of devotion that can lead all people in the Latter Day of the Law to enlightenment. *True Aspect of All Phenomena* begins with a passage from the “Expedient Means” chapter—the heart of

the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra—that implies that no phenomenon is in any way different from the true aspect, or Myoho-renge-kyo. It also implies that all the innumerable forms and realities that exist, both concrete and abstract, are manifestations of Myoho-renge-kyo. The Daishonin then explains the essence of the Lotus Sutra, Myoho-renge-kyo, and its embodiment, the Gohonzon. This is the first element—the object of devotion in terms of the Law.

After clarifying the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin states that Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, will propagate that teaching, and that he himself is carrying out the mission entrusted to that bodhisattva. In light of his own behavior and his fulfillment of the predictions in the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin suggests that he himself is Bodhisattva Superior Practices. A more profound interpretation, however, identifies him as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, whose purpose was to establish the Gohonzon for the enlightenment of all people in the

Latter Day. Thus *True Aspect of All Phenomena* also explains the object of devotion in terms of the Person. This is the second element. Referring to both the Person and the Law, the Daishonin clarifies the fundamental object of devotion for the people of the Latter Day. He brings together the points he expounded in *The Opening of the Eyes* completed in 1272, which focuses on the second element, and in *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, which focuses on the first element.

The latter half of this letter explains to Sairen-bo that those who devote themselves to propagating the correct teaching in the same spirit as the Daishonin are themselves Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The Daishonin predicts that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread widely in the future, and concludes by setting forth the key elements of Buddhist practice in the Latter Day of the Law—namely, faith, practice, and study.

Notes

1. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*
2. *The Diamond Scalpel.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Here the entity of Myoho-renge-kyo is identified as the "true Buddha" and its function as a "provisional Buddha."
5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.
6. The two Buddhas refer to a Buddha in his true, original status (the Dharma body) and a Buddha in the form in which he appears in response to the people's desires in order to save them (the manifested body). The three Buddhas indicate the three bodies of a Buddha—the Dharma

body, the reward body, and the manifested body.

7. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*
8. This statement is attributed to T'ien-t'ai, but its source has not yet been satisfactorily identified.
9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.
10. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.
11. *Ibid.*, chap. 15.
12. A phrase that opens many sutras. The "I" indicates the person who recites what the Buddha taught, so that it may be set down in the form of a sutra.
13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

Letter to Gijo-bo



I HAVE carefully reviewed your question about the Buddhist teachings. The blessing of the Lotus Sutra is a state of life that can only be understood between Buddhas. It is an inner enlightenment that even the wisdom of Shakyamuni's emanations throughout the ten directions may be no match for. That is why, as you well know, even the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai commented on the character *myo*, saying that it is defined as beyond ordinary comprehension.¹ As for this sutra, however, it is divided into various practices. These are the teachings that were known only by men such as T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo. The Great Teacher Dengyo in particular, even though he was the reincarnation of T'ien-t'ai, sent envoys to T'ang China on many occasions in an effort to resolve the doubts of others. So what is really important is that the teachings of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life are the essence of this sutra. These teachings are described in the work entitled *Great Concentration and Insight*.

Next, the teaching of the "Life Span" chapter is what I, Nichiren, personally depend on. Although T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo also understood it in a general way, they never put it into words or

proclaimed it. The same is true of Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu. The verse section of the chapter states, "... single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives." As a result of this passage, I have revealed the Buddhahood in my own life. The reason is that it is this sutra passage that has enabled me to embody the Three Great Secret Laws, or the reality of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, that is found in the "Life Span" chapter. But keep this secret, keep it secret.

The Great Teacher of Mount Hiei [Dengyo] journeyed to China and received instruction on the point of this passage. "Single" of "single-mindedly" means the one pure way, and "mind" means all phenomena.² That is why the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, explaining the Chinese character for "mind," said that its four brush strokes represent the moon and three stars, and that this implies that the mind of the effect [of Buddhahood] is pure and clean.³ I, Nichiren, say that "single" stands for *myo*, or mystic, "mind" for *ho*, or law, "desiring" for *ren*, or lotus, "see" for *ge*, or flower, and "Buddha" for *kyo*, or sutra. In propagating these five characters, practitioners should "not hesitate even if it costs them their lives."

"Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha" may be read as follows:

single-mindedly observing the Buddha, concentrating one's mind on seeing the Buddha, and when looking at one's own mind, perceiving that it is the Buddha. Having attained the fruit of Buddhahood, the eternally inherent three bodies, I may surpass even T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, and excel even Nagarjuna and Mahakashyapa. The Buddha wrote that one should become the master of one's mind rather than let one's mind master oneself.⁴ This is what I

mean when I emphatically urge you to give up even your body, and never begrudge even your life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the fifth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273)

Reply to Gijo-bo



Background

This letter was written at Ichinosawa on Sado Island in the fifth month, 1273, to Gijo-bo, who had been the Daishonin's senior at Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province. Nearly a month earlier, Nichiren Daishonin had written *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, in which he had explained both the object of devotion in terms of the Law and the correct practice for attaining enlightenment in the Latter Day. This letter briefly restates the profound contents of *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*.

Nichiren Daishonin says that, of all the chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the "Life Span" chapter is particularly im-

portant to him. He quotes a passage, "... single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha . . .," and notes, "As a result of this passage, I have revealed the Buddhahood in my own life." He declares that in his capacity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law he has realized and embodied Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws, which is implied in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter.

This is one of the earliest references in his writings to the Three Great Secret Laws: the invocation (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), the object of devotion (the Gohonzon), and the place of worship (the sanctuary).

Notes

1. This statement is found in the introduction to *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

2. The "one pure way" refers to the

true aspect inherent in all phenomena.

3. Source unknown.

4. This statement is found in both the Nirvana Sutra and the Six Paramitas Sutra.

On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings



ON examination [of the Lotus Sutra], we find that those who are born in this land and believe in this sutra when it is propagated in the Latter Day of the Law will be subjected to hatred and jealousy even greater than that which arose in the lifetime of the Thus Come One. In that age, the master who taught and converted the people was the Buddha, and his disciples were great bodhisattvas and arhats. Moreover, the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra only after he had developed and trained the living beings who were to hear it, including the human and heavenly beings, the four kinds of believers, and the nonhuman beings such as the eight kinds of beings. Still, many of them harbored hatred and jealousy.

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, though the teaching, the people's capacity, and the time for propagation are in accord, we must expect all the more hostility. For this is the age when quarrels and disputes prevail, and the pure Law is obscured and lost.¹ Moreover, the teacher is but an ordinary practitioner, and his disciples come from among evil people defiled by the three poisons. For this reason, people shun the good teacher and associate with evil teachers.

What is more, once you become a disciple or lay supporter of the votary

who practices the true Lotus Sutra in accord with the Buddha's teachings, you are bound to face the three types of enemies. Therefore, from the very day you listen to [and take faith in] this sutra, you should be fully prepared to face the great persecutions of the three types of enemies that are certain to be more horrible now after the Buddha's passing. Although my disciples had already heard this, when both great and small persecutions confronted us, some were so astounded and terrified that they even forsook their faith. Did I not warn you in advance? I have been teaching you day and night directly from the sutra, which says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"² You have no reason at all to be frightened when you see or hear that I have been driven from my dwelling place, wounded, and, having incurred the wrath of the rulers, sent into exile in distant provinces twice.

Question: The votaries who practice according to the Buddha's teachings should "enjoy peace and security in their present existence."³ Why then are you beset by the three powerful enemies?

Answer: Shakyamuni Buddha faced the nine great persecutions for the sake

of the Lotus Sutra. In the distant past, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was likewise attacked with staves, tiles, and stones. Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face, and the Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was opposed by the seven schools of the north and the three schools of the south, and the Great Teacher Dengyo was hated by the six schools [of Nara]. The Buddha and these bodhisattvas and great sages were all votaries of the Lotus Sutra, yet they suffered great persecutions. If you deny that they practiced according to the Buddha's teachings, then where can you find those who did? This is the age of conflict in which the pure Law has been lost. Moreover, in this evil country, the ruler, his ministers, and even the common people are without exception tainted by evil. They have opposed the correct teaching and revered erroneous doctrines and teachers instead. Therefore, demons have burst into the country, causing the three calamities and seven disasters to strike again and again.

This is indeed an accursed time to live in this land! However, the Buddha has commanded me to be born in this age, and it is impossible for me to go against the decree of the Dharma King. And so, as the sutra dictates, I have launched the battle between the provisional and the true teachings. Donning the armor of endurance and girding myself with the sword of the wonderful teaching, I have raised the banner of the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra. Then, drawing the bow of the Buddha's declaration, "I have not yet revealed the truth,"⁴ and notching the arrow of "honestly discarding the provisional teachings,"⁵ I have mounted the carriage drawn by the great white ox⁶ and battered down the gates of the provi-

sional teachings. Attacking first one and then another, I have refuted opponents from the eight and ten schools, such as the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts. Some have fled headlong while others have retreated, and still others have been captured to become my disciples. I continue to repulse their attacks and to defeat them, but legions of enemies exist who oppose the single Dharma King and the handful who follow him. So the battle goes on even today.

"The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines."⁷ True to the letter of this golden saying, in the end, every last one of the believers of the provisional teachings and schools will be defeated and join the retinue of the Dharma King. The time will come when all people will abandon the various kinds of vehicles and take up the single vehicle of Buddhahood, and the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land. When the people all chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung.⁸ In their present existence the people will be freed from misfortune and disasters and learn the art of living long. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal. There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra's promise of "peace and security in their present existence."

Question: How should one practice if one is to be faithful to the Buddha's teachings?

Answer: The Japanese people of this age are one in their opinion of what practice accords with the Buddha's teachings. They believe that, since all vehicles are opened up and incorporated in the one vehicle of Buddhahood,

no teaching is superior or inferior, shallow or profound, but all are equal to the Lotus Sutra. Hence the belief that chanting the Nembutsu, embracing the True Word teaching, practicing Zen meditation, or professing and reciting any sutra or the name of any Buddha or bodhisattva equals following the Lotus Sutra.

But I insist that this is wrong. The most important thing in practicing the Buddhist teachings is to follow and uphold the Buddha's golden words, not the opinions of others. Our teacher, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, wished to reveal the Lotus Sutra from the moment he first attained the way. However, because the people were not yet mature enough to understand, he had to employ provisional teachings as expedient means for some forty years before he could expound the true teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which serves as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha drew the line between the provisional teachings and the true teaching, and clearly distinguished the expedient means from the truth. He declared, "[Preaching the Law in various different ways], I made use of the power of expedient means. But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."⁹ The eighty thousand bodhisattvas, including Great Adornment, understood perfectly why Shakyamuni had preached the provisional teachings, demonstrated that they were nothing more than expedient means, and finally discarded them entirely.¹⁰ They expressed their understanding by declaring that one "will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment"¹¹ by embracing any of the sutras that were preached before the Lotus Sutra and that require countless kalpas of practice [to attain Buddhahood].

Finally the Buddha was ready to preach the Lotus Sutra, the revelation

section of his entire body of teachings,¹² and stated, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."¹³ He also warned, "[In the Buddha lands of the ten directions there is only the Law of the one vehicle], there are not two, there are not three, except when the Buddha preaches so as an expedient means,"¹⁴ and taught, "honestly discarding expedient means"¹⁵ and "not accepting a single verse of the other sutras."¹⁶ Thus, ever since that time, the Mystic Law, "the Law of the one vehicle" of Buddhahood, has been the only teaching that enables all people to become Buddhas. Although no sutra other than the Lotus Sutra can provide even the slightest benefit, the scholars of the Latter Day claim that all sutras must lead to enlightenment because they were expounded by the Thus Come One. Therefore, they arbitrarily profess faith in any sutra and follow whatever school they choose, whether True Word, Nembutsu, Zen, Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, or Precepts. The Buddha said of such people, "If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."¹⁷ Thus the Buddha himself concluded that one's practice accords with the Buddha's teachings only when one bases one's faith firmly on the standard of these sutra passages, believing fully that "there is only the Law of the one vehicle."

Question: Then it would be wrong to say that faith in any sutra or any Buddha of the expedient and provisional teachings equals faith in the Lotus Sutra. But what of those who believe only in the Lotus Sutra and carry out the five practices set forth in the sutra or follow the practices described in the "Peaceful Practices"

chapter? Could we not say that their practice accords with the Buddha's teachings?

Answer: Anyone who practices Buddhism should first understand the two types of practice—shoju and shakubuku. All the sutras and treatises fall into one or the other of these two categories. Though scholars in this country may have studied Buddhism extensively, they do not know which practice accords with the time. The four seasons continually repeat themselves, each in turn manifesting its own characteristics. In summer it is hot; in winter, cold. Flowers blossom in spring, and fruit ripens in autumn. Therefore, it is only natural to sow seeds in spring and reap the harvest in fall. If one sowed in autumn, could one harvest in spring? Heavy clothing is useful in bitter cold, but of what use is it in sweltering heat? A cool breeze is pleasant in summer, but what good is it in winter? Buddhism works in the same way. There is a time when the Hinayana teachings are disseminated for the benefit of humanity, a time when the provisional Mahayana doctrines are disseminated for the benefit of humanity, and a time when the true Mahayana teaching is spread to enable people to obtain the fruit of Buddhahood. The two millennia of the Former and Middle Days of the Law required the spread of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings, but the first five hundred years of the Latter Day call for only the Lotus Sutra, the pure and perfect teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood, to be spread abroad widely. As predicted by the Buddha, now is the age of quarrels and disputes when the pure Law becomes obscured and lost, and the provisional and true teachings are hopelessly confused.

When one must face enemies, one needs a sword, a stick, or a bow and arrows. When one has no enemies,

however, such weapons are of no use at all. In this age, the provisional teachings have turned into enemies of the true teaching. When the time is right to propagate the teaching of the one vehicle, the provisional teachings become enemies. When they are a source of confusion, they must be thoroughly refuted from the standpoint of the true teaching. Of the two types of practice, this is shakubuku, the practice of the Lotus Sutra. With good reason T'ien-t'ai stated, "The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines."

The four peaceful practices¹⁸ [in the "Peaceful Practices" chapter] correspond to shoju. To carry them out in this age would be as foolish as sowing seeds in winter and expecting to reap the harvest in spring. It is natural for a rooster to crow at dawn, but strange for him to crow at dusk. Now, when the true and the provisional teachings are utterly confused, it would be equally unnatural for one to seclude oneself in the mountain forests and carry out the peaceful practice of shoju without refuting the enemies of the Lotus Sutra. One would lose the chance to practice the Lotus Sutra.

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, who is carrying out the practice of shakubuku in strict accordance with the Lotus Sutra? Suppose someone, no matter who, should unrelentingly proclaim that the Lotus Sutra alone can lead people to Buddhahood, and that all other sutras, far from enabling them to attain the way, only drive them into hell. Observe what happens should that person thus try to refute the teachers and the doctrines of all the other schools. The three powerful enemies will arise without fail.

Our teacher, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, practiced shakubuku during the last eight years of his lifetime, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai for more than thirty years, and the Great Teacher

Dengyo for more than twenty. I have been refuting the provisional doctrines for more than twenty years, and the great persecutions I have suffered during this period are beyond number. I do not know whether they are equal to the nine great persecutions suffered by the Buddha, but surely neither T'ien-t'ai nor Dengyo ever faced persecutions as great as mine for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. They encountered only hatred, envy, and slander, whereas I twice incurred the wrath of the rulers and was exiled to remote provinces. Furthermore, I was nearly beheaded at Tatsunokuchi, wounded on the forehead [at Komatsubara], and slandered time and again. My disciples have also been exiled and thrown into prison, and my lay supporters have been evicted and had their fiefs confiscated. How can the persecutions faced by Nagarjuna, T'ien-t'ai, or Dengyo possibly compare with these? Understand then that the votary who practices the Lotus Sutra exactly as the Buddha teaches will without fail be attacked by the three powerful enemies.

In the more than two thousand years that have passed since the Buddha's advent, Shakyamuni himself, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo were the only three who perfectly carried out the Buddha's teachings. Now in the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren and his disciples and lay believers are just such practitioners. If we cannot be called votaries faithful to the Buddha's teachings, then neither can Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai, or Dengyo. Could Devadatta, Kokalika, Sunakshatra, Kobo, Jikaku, Chisho, Shan-tao, Honen, Ryokan, and others like them be called votaries of the Lotus Sutra? Could Shakyamuni Buddha, T'ien-t'ai, Dengyo, or Nichiren and his disciples and lay believers be the practitioners of the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, Precepts, or other schools? Could the Lotus Sutra be called an expedient and provisional

teaching, and the sutras of the Nembutsu and other schools be the Lotus Sutra? None of this could ever be possible, even if east were to become west and west become east; even if the earth and all its trees and plants were to fly up and become the heavens, and the sun, the moon, and the stars were to tumble down and become the earth.

What a great pity it is that all the Japanese people are delighted to see Nichiren and his disciples and lay believers suffer at the hands of the three powerful enemies! What befell another yesterday may befall oneself today. Nichiren and his followers have but a short time to endure—merely the time it takes for frost or dew to vanish in the morning sun. When our prayers for Buddhahood are answered and we are dwelling in the true land of Tranquil Light where we will experience the boundless joy of the Law, what pity we will feel for those who sink to the bottom of the great citadel of the Avichi hell and meet extreme suffering there! How they will envy us then!

Life flashes by in but a moment. No matter how many terrible enemies you may encounter, banish all fears and never think of backsliding. Even if someone were to cut off our heads with a saw, impale our bodies with lances, or shackle our feet and bore them through with a gimlet, as long as we are alive, we must keep chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Then, if we chant until the very moment of death, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will come to us instantly, exactly as they promised during the ceremony at Eagle Peak. Taking our hands and bearing us on their shoulders, they will carry us to Eagle Peak. The two sages,¹⁹ the two heavenly kings,²⁰ and the ten demon daughters will guard us, while all the heavenly gods and benevolent deities will raise a canopy over our heads and unfurl

banners on high. They will escort us under their protection to the treasure land of Tranquil Light. How can such joy possibly be described!

Nichiren

The fifth month of the tenth year of

Bun'ei (1273), cyclical sign *mizumoto-tori*

To all my followers

Keep this letter with you at all times and read it over and over.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to all his followers in the fifth month of 1273, while he was still enduring the severe privations of exile on Sado Island. The title, *On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings*, indicates practicing in exact accordance with what the Buddha taught.

This title can be said to indicate two important points. One is that Nichiren Daishonin lived in accord with Shakyamuni's teachings and fulfilled all the prophecies of the Lotus Sutra. The other is that the Daishonin's followers in the Latter Day of the Law are to carry out and fulfill his teachings.

In this letter the question is raised: Why must believers experience hardships when the Lotus Sutra promises "peace and security in their present existence"? Nichiren Daishonin answers that those who practice the Lotus Sutra exactly according to the Buddha's teachings are bound to face the three

powerful enemies, whose appearance was predicted in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the sutra. In other words, one proves oneself to be a true votary only by facing and overcoming great obstacles for the sake of the Buddha's teachings. In essence, this means to forthrightly make clear what is the correct teaching of Buddhism and to mercifully transmit the teaching to others.

One month before writing this letter, the Daishonin completed the treatise *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, in which he revealed the true object of devotion—the Gohonzon—for the people of the Latter Day of the Law. He also revealed that the practice based on it—chanting with firm faith in it—leads to enlightenment. This present letter was written subsequently to clarify the importance of another practice—shakubuku, or spreading this teaching to others.

Notes

1. A reference to a description of the fifth five-hundred-year period in the Great Collection Sutra, which says that, in this age, rival Buddhist schools will quarrel endlessly among themselves and Shakyamuni's correct teaching will be obscured and lost.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

4. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

5. Nichiren Daishonin here cites the

phrase "honestly discarding expedient means" from chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra with a slight alteration.

6. "The carriage drawn by the great white ox" symbolizes the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood, described in the parable of the three carts and the burning house that appears in the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

7. This is T'ien-t'ai's statement from *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

8. Fu Hsi and Shen Nung were legendary kings who reigned over ideal societies in ancient China.

9. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

10. The wording of the Japanese text has been slightly adjusted for clarity in this paragraph.

11. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

12. Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings can be divided into three parts—preparation, revelation, and transmission. Preparation indicates the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings; revelation indicates the Immeasurable Meanings, Lotus, and Universal Worthy sutras; and transmission indicates the Nirvana Sutra.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Practice by peaceful deeds, words, thoughts, and vows, as set forth in the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

19. The bodhisattvas Medicine King and Brave Donor.

20. Vaishravana and Upholder of the Nation, two of the four heavenly kings (*see* Glossary).

On the Buddha's Prophecy

Composed by the shramana Nichiren



THE seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."¹ On the one hand, it is deplorable to me that more than 2,220 years have already passed since the Buddha's demise. What evil karma prevented me from being born in his lifetime? Why could not I have seen the four ranks of sages in the Former Day of the Law, or T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo in the Middle Day of the Law? On the other hand, I rejoice at whatever good fortune enabled me to be born in the last five-hundred-year period and to read these true words of the sutra.

Even if I had been born in the Buddha's lifetime, it would have served no purpose, for those who embraced the four flavors of teachings had not yet heard of the Lotus Sutra. Again, my being born in either the Former or the Middle Day of the Law would have been meaningless, for neither the scholars of the three schools of the south or the seven schools of the north [in China], nor those of the Flower Garland, True Word, or any other schools, believed in the Lotus Sutra.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, "In the last five-hundred-year period,

the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."² Does this not describe the time of wide propagation? The Great Teacher Dengyo says, "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand."³ These words reveal how much he longed for the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. If we consider the rewards of living in the different ages, it is clear that mine surpass those of Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, and excel those of T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo.

Question: You are not the only person living in this "last five-hundred-year period"; why are you in particular so overjoyed to be living now?

Answer: The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁴ The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, "It will be much worse in the future because the principles [of the Lotus Sutra] are so hard to teach."⁵ The Great Teacher Miao-lo explains, "The purpose of the phrase 'the principles are so hard to teach' is to let us know how hard it is to enable people to understand these principles."⁶ The Dharma Teacher Chih-tu states: "It is said that good medicine tastes bitter. This sutra, which is like good medicine, dispels attachments to the

five vehicles and establishes the one ultimate principle. It reproaches those in the ranks of ordinary beings and censures those in the ranks of sagehood, denies [provisional] Mahayana and refutes Hinayana. . . . That is why all these types of people try to make hindrances [for a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra].”⁷ The Great Teacher Dengyo states: “Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T’ang and to the west of Katsu. As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, ‘Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?’ There is good reason for this statement.”⁸ The Great Teacher Dengyo seems to be describing his own day, but actually he is referring to our present time. His words “The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand” have just such a meaning.

The sutra states, “Evil devils, the devils’ people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, kumbhanda demons, and others will seize the advantage.”⁹ Another part of the sutra details these “others”: “Whether it be a yaksha, or a rakshasa, or a hungry spirit, or a putana, or a kritya, or a vetada, or a skanda, or an umaraka, or an apasmara, or a yaksha kritya, or a human kritya . . .”¹⁰ These passages explain that those who in previous lifetimes embraced the four flavors and three teachings, non-Buddhist teachings, or doctrines concerning the realms of human and heavenly beings appear in this life as devils, or heavenly or human beings who persecute the votary of the true and perfect teaching when they see or hear of him.

Question: In comparing the Former and Middle Days with the Latter Day of the Law, the first two were far superior in terms of both time and the people’s capacity. Why are these factors of time and capacity ignored in the Lotus Sutra, which refers exclusively to this age?

Answer: The Buddha’s intent is difficult to fathom. Indeed, I am unable to grasp it. We may attempt to understand, however, by taking the Hinayana sutras as a point of reference. During the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, Hinayana was fully endowed with the three elements of teaching, practice, and proof. During the thousand years of the Middle Day, teaching and practice alone remained; proof no longer existed. In the Latter Day of the Law, teaching alone remains; neither practice nor proof exists. On examining this from the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra, we find that in the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law persons who possessed all three had most probably formed ties with the Lotus Sutra during the Buddha’s lifetime. They were born again in the Former Day and were able to obtain the proof of Hinayana through its teaching and practice. Those born in the Middle Day had not developed strong ties to the Lotus Sutra during the Buddha’s lifetime and were therefore unable to attain proof through Hinayana. They turned instead to provisional Mahayana and thus were able to be born in the pure lands of the ten directions. In the Latter Day of the Law, no benefit is derived from either Mahayana or Hinayana. Hinayana retains nothing but its teaching; it has neither practice nor proof. Mahayana still has its teaching and practice, but no longer provides any proof of benefit, either conspicuous or inconspicuous.

Furthermore, the schools of Hinayana and provisional Mahayana established during the Former and Middle

Days of the Law cling all the more stubbornly to their doctrines as they enter the Latter Day. Those who espouse Hinayana reject Mahayana, and those who espouse provisional teachings attack the true teaching, until the country is overrun with slanderers of the Law. Those who fall into the evil paths because of their mistaken practice of Buddhism outnumber the dust particles of the land, while those who attain the Buddha way by practicing the correct teaching are fewer than the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. At such a time, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities abandon the country, and only perverse heavenly beings and perverse demons remain, possessing the minds and bodies of the ruler, his subjects, and monks and nuns, and causing them to curse, revile, and heap shame on the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

If, however, in the time after the Buddha's passing, a person renounces his attachments to the four flavors and three teachings, and converts to faith in the Lotus Sutra that is true Mahayana, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, as well as the bodhisattvas numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from beneath the ground, will protect him as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Under their protection, he will [establish and] spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa the object of devotion of the essential teaching, or the five characters of Myōhōrenge-kyō.

It was the same with Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who lived in the Middle Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King. He propagated widely throughout his land the teaching of twenty-four characters that begins, "I have profound reverence for you . . ." and was attacked with sticks of wood by the whole population. The twenty-four characters of Never Disparaging and the five characters of

Nichiren are different in wording, but accord with the same principle. The end of the Buddha Awesome Sound King's Middle Day and the beginning of this Latter Day of the Law are exactly the same in method of conversion. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was a practitioner at the initial stage of rejoicing; Nichiren is an ordinary practitioner at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth.¹¹

Question: How can you be certain that you are the votary of the Lotus Sutra prophesied to appear at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law?

Answer: The Lotus Sutra states, "[Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world], how much more will this be so after his passing?" Another passage reads, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves."¹² A third passage says, "Again and again we will be banished."¹³ A fourth reads, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁴ A fifth reads, "Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him."¹⁵ A sixth reads, "Evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, kumbhanda demons, and others will seize the advantage."

That the people might believe in the Buddha's words, I have held up the bright mirror of these scriptural passages before the ruler, his subjects, and the four categories of Buddhists throughout Japan. But I can find none other than myself who has lived these passages. As for the time, now is most certainly the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, but had Nichiren not appeared, the Buddha's words would be false.

Question: You are an extremely arrogant priest—even more arrogant than Mahadeva or Sunakshatra. Is this not so?

Answer: Insulting Nichiren is an offense even graver than those of Devadatta or Vimalamitra. My words may sound arrogant, but my sole purpose is to fulfill the Buddha's predictions and reveal the truth of his words. In all Japan, who but Nichiren can be called the votary of the Lotus Sutra? By denouncing Nichiren, you would make lies of the Buddha's prophecies. Are you not then an extremely evil man?

Question: You certainly fit the Thus Come One's prophecies. But are there not perhaps other votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the five regions of India or the land of China?

Answer: Throughout the four continents of the world there are surely not two suns. So, within the four seas, how can there be two rulers?

Question: On what basis do you say that?

Answer: The moon appears in the west¹⁶ and sheds its light eastward, but the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day. The Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "Does this not mean that Buddhism has been lost in India, the country of its origin, and must now be sought in the surrounding regions?"¹⁷ Thus, no Buddhism is found in India anymore. During the 150 years or so since barbarians from the north invaded the Eastern Capital in the time of Emperor Kao-tsung,¹⁸ both Buddhism and imperial authority became extinct in China. Concerning the collection of scriptures kept in China, not one Hinayana sutra remains, and most Mahayana sutras have also been lost. Even when Jakusho and other priests set out from Japan to take some sutras to China,¹⁹ no one was found there who could embrace these sutras and teach them to others. It was as though there were only wooden or stone

statues garbed in priests' robes and carrying begging bowls. That is why Tsun-shih said, "It [Buddhism] came first from the west, like the moon appearing. Now it is returning from the east, like the sun rising."²⁰ These remarks make it clear that Buddhism is lost in both India and China.

Question: Now I can see no Buddhism exists in either India or China, but how do you know no Buddhism exists in the other three continents—in the east, west, and north?²¹

Answer: The eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "After the Thus Come One has entered extinction, I will cause it [the Lotus Sutra] to be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa and will see that it never comes to an end."²² The words "throughout Jambudvīpa" indicate that the other three continents are excluded.

Question: I have seen that the Buddha's prophecy applies to you; now what do you yourself predict?

Answer: In the light of the Buddha's prophecy, "the last five-hundred-year period" has already begun. I say that without fail Buddhism will arise and flow forth from the east, from the land of Japan. Omens will occur in the form of unusual disturbances in the heavens and terrible calamities on earth that will be greater in magnitude than ever before witnessed in the Former or Middle Day of the Law. When the Buddha was born, when he turned the wheel of the Law, and also when he entered nirvana, the omens, both auspicious and inauspicious, were greater than any ever observed. The Buddha is the teacher of all sages. The sutras describe how, at the time of his birth, light shone forth in five colors in all directions, and the night became as bright as noon. At the time of his passing, twelve white arcs crossed the sky from north to south, the sun's light was extinguished, and the day became as dark as midnight. There followed the

two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law; sages, some Buddhist and some not, were born and died, but never were there any omens of such magnitude.

From the beginning of the Shoka era (1257) through this year, however, tremendous earthquakes and extraordinary phenomena in the heavens have occurred, exactly like the signs that marked the Buddha's birth and death. You should know from this that a sage like the Buddha has been born. A great comet crossed the sky, but for which ruler or subject did this omen appear? The earth tilted, and gaping fissures opened three times, but for which sage or worthy did this occur? You should realize that these great omens, both good and bad, are of no ordinary, secular significance. They are signs that the teachings of the supreme Law are ascending and that the other teachings are in decline. T'ien-t'ai states, "By observing the fury of the rain, we can tell the greatness of the dragon that caused it, and by observing the flourishing of the lotus flowers, we can tell the depth of the pond they grow in."²³ Miao-lo says, "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."²⁴

Twenty-one years have gone by since I, Nichiren, understood this principle [and began propagation]. During this period I have suffered difficulties day after day and month after month. In the last two or three years, among other things, I was almost put to death. The chances are one in ten thousand that I will survive the year or even the month. If anyone questions these things, let that person ask my disciples for details.

What fortune is mine to expiate in one lifetime the offenses of slandering the Law I have accumulated from the infinite past! How delighted I am to

serve Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, whom I have never seen! I pray that before anything else I can guide and lead the ruler and those others who persecuted me. I will tell the Buddha about all the disciples who have aided me, and before I die, I will transfer the great blessings deriving from my practice to my parents who gave me life. Now, as if in a dream, I understand the heart of the "Treasure Tower" chapter.²⁵ As the sutra states: "If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed!"²⁶

The Great Teacher Dengyo says: "Shakyamuni taught that the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai trusted and obeyed Shakyamuni and worked to uphold the Lotus school,²⁷ spreading its teachings throughout China. We of Mount Hiei inherited the doctrine from T'ien-t'ai and work to uphold the Lotus school and to disseminate its teachings throughout Japan."²⁸ I, Nichiren of Awa Province, have doubtless inherited the teachings of the Law from these three teachers, and in this era of the Latter Day I work to uphold the Lotus school and disseminate the Law. Together we should be called the four teachers of the three countries. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Written by Nichiren,
the shramana of Japan.

The eleventh day of the intercalary fifth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273), with the cyclical sign *mizunoto-tori*

Background

Nichiren Daishonin was fifty-two years old when he wrote this letter during his exile at Ichinosawa on the island of Sado in 1273. It is addressed to his disciples and lay supporters in general.

The title, *On the Buddha's Prophecy*, points to two prophecies: One is Shakyamuni Buddha's prediction that the votary of the Lotus Sutra will appear at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law and spread the sutra's teachings despite great persecutions. The other is the Daishonin's own prophecy that in the Latter Day and on into the eternal future his teachings will spread throughout the world to benefit humankind.

This letter can be divided into seven sections according to content: (1) Nichiren Daishonin relates that it is a greater blessing to be born in the Latter Day of the Law and to have faith in the Lotus Sutra than to have met Shakyamuni Buddha or the great sages who appeared in the Former and Middle Days of the

Law; (2) he cites statements and prophecies made by Shakyamuni and other Buddhist teachers concerning the Latter Day of the Law, the greatness of the Lotus Sutra, and the persecutions that will surely befall its votary; (3) he outlines the decline of Shakyamuni's Buddhism and proclaims that the correct teaching of Buddhism will spread throughout the world in the Latter Day; (4) he identifies himself as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, that is, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law; (5) he shows that Buddhism is no longer alive in India or China, and that the correct teaching of Buddhism will arise in the eastern land of Japan; (6) he expands on his prophecy by comparing the omens that have appeared in his age with those that appeared in Shakyamuni's; and (7) he declares that the supreme Law is now arising and warns his followers that carrying out widespread propagation will be difficult.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23. "The last five-hundred-year period" refers to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

2. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

3. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

5. *Words and Phrases*.

6. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

7. *The Supplement to the Meanings of the Commentaries on the Lotus Sutra*. Chih-tu (n.d.) was a disciple of Miao-lo.

8. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*. "A land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu" indicates Japan according to old maps.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23. For yakshas, see Glossary. Kumbhandas are demons that drain human beings of vitality.

10. *Ibid.*, chap. 26. Rakshasas are demons that eat human flesh; putana, or "stink-

ing demons," are hungry ghosts; kritya, or "vengeful demons," can cause corpses to wreak harm on their enemies; vetada demons can cause a corpse to kill someone; skanda, umaraka, and apasmara are reddish-yellow, black, and blue demons, respectively.

11. The initial stage of rejoicing refers to the first of the five stages of practice of the Lotus Sutra formulated by T'ien-t'ai. At this stage one rejoices on hearing the truth. The stage of hearing the name and words of the truth refers to the stage of first hearing the correct teaching, the second of the six stages of practice (see Glossary), at which point one understands theoretically that one possesses the Buddha nature, and that all phenomena are manifestations of the Law. Both indicate the initial stages of practice.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

15. *Ibid.*, chap. 20.

16. This refers to the fact that the new moon is first seen in the west just after sunset. On successive nights, as the moon grows fuller, it appears to have moved a little farther toward the east. Of course, the direction of the moon's movement is from east to west, the same as that of the sun and stars, but because of its orbital motion, it appears each day to have moved slightly in retrograde, from west to east.

17. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

18. Kao-tsung (1107-1187) was the first emperor of the Southern Sung dynasty. The "Eastern Capital," K'ai-feng, was captured by barbarians from the north in 1127, forcing Kao-tsung to establish a new capital south of the Yangtze River.

19. Jakusho (d. 1034) was a priest who traveled to China in 1003 to study T'ien-t'ai's doctrine. He brought with him a copy of a writing of Nan-yüeh's that had been lost in China. Jakusho died on the mainland without returning to Japan.

20. These words appear in Tsun-shih's preface to *The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight*, a work by Nan-yüeh.

Tsun-shih (964-1032) was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in Sung-dynasty China. Nan-yüeh's work had been lost for centuries in China; but a copy was brought there from Japan by Jakusho, a priest of the Japanese Tendai school. Tsun-shih therefore said, "It [Buddhism] is returning from the east."

21. In Buddhist cosmology there are four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru. Jambudvīpa, located to the south, is the only one in which Buddhism can spread.

22. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.

23. *Words and Phrases.*

24. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

25. The heart of the "Treasure Tower" chapter refers to the "six difficult and nine easy acts" (see Glossary) set forth by Shakyamuni to show how difficult it will be to embrace the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after his death.

26. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

27. The Lotus school refers to T'ien-t'ai's teachings, which are based on the Lotus Sutra. It also means the Daishonin's teachings.

28. *Outstanding Principles.*

Reply to Hakiri Saburo



IN Kamakura there are humble priests named Chikugo-bo, Acharya Ben, and Acharya Daishin.¹ Please send for them, show them respect, and hold discussions with them. I will explain in outline the important teachings. They are somewhat familiar with the great Law that has not yet been propagated in Japan, and therefore you should pursue your studies under them.

In your letter, you write as follows: "As soon as your letter reached me, the doubts that I had previously entertained were swept away, just as a strong wind blows away the layers of cloud and the bright moon comes into view. For people of the present age, however, whether high or low, these teachings are difficult to believe. That is because the Lotus Sutra promises that those who practice the Buddha's teachings 'will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.'² If this is so, then why is it that the priest Nichiren, though he calls himself a votary of the Lotus Sutra, should meet with so much persecution? People are saying that it must be because he is untrue to the Buddha's will."

With regard to these unjust criticisms, however, the persecutions I have encountered are due to my karma from past existences.³ There is no need to be surprised at my having incurred

the wrath of the government authorities.

By way of explanation, if you examine the text of the Lotus Sutra, you will find it stated that in the Latter Day of the Law, when people practice the Lotus Sutra just as it teaches, they are bound to meet with many persecutions. This is made perfectly clear in the text, and anyone who has eyes need only look to see what is there.

Thus, for example, the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁴ And the fifth volume reads, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."⁵ It also says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, with rocks and tiles."⁶ And it continues: "In that evil age there will be monks [with perverse wisdom] . . . Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement . . . they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. . . . Because in the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us, they

will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us . . . Evil demons will take possession of others and through them curse, revile, and heap shame on us . . . again and again we will be banished.”⁷

The Nirvana Sutra says: “There are icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. They pretend to be arhats, living in deserted places and speaking slanderously of the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle. When ordinary people see them, they all suppose that they are true arhats and speak of them as great bodhisattvas.” It also says: “After the Former Day of the Law has ended and the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. . . . Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice.” The Parinirvana Sutra states, “There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds.”

Now when I hold up this bright mirror of the sutra texts and turn it toward the country of Japan, all is reflected there without the slightest obscurity. The “forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement”—who are they? Those who are “respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers”—who are they? “When ordinary people see them, they all suppose that they are true arhats and speak of them as great bodhisattvas”—to whom does this refer? Those who “give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline but scarce-

ly ever read or recite the sutras”—who are they?

As we see from these passages of scripture, the Buddha Shakyamuni observed with his Buddha eye the situation that would prevail at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. If in the present age there were no persons of the type that he described, then the World-Honored One would be guilty of false and baseless talk. [And if that were the case,] who would put faith in the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and in the doctrine of the eternally inherent Buddha nature that was preached in the grove of sal trees?⁸

Now when, in order to prove the truth of the Buddha’s words, I read these sutra passages and apply them to this country of Japan, I interpret them as follows. The passage about “forest-dwelling monks” who are “living in deserted places” refers to [the priests of] Kencho-ji, Jufuku-ji, Gokuraku-ji, Kennin-ji, Tofuku-ji, and the other temples of the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools in Japan. These diabolical temples have appeared in the world in order to bring destruction upon the Buddhist temples of the Lotus, or Tendai, school on Mount Hiei and in other places.

Those who “wear clothing of patched rags” and “give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline” are the present-day observers of the precepts with their surplices made from five, seven, or nine pieces of cloth.⁹ Those who are “respected and revered by the world” and “spoken of as great bodhisattvas” are men like Doryu, Ryokan, and Shoichi. The “world” that looks up to them refers to the ruler of the nation and others like him in our present age. And the “ignorant people” and “ordinary people” are all the people of Japan, both high and low.

Because I am an ordinary person, I

am unable to believe in the Buddha's teaching. But with regard to what I am saying here, I know the situation as well as one knows fire or water when one touches one's hand to it.

According to the scripture,¹⁰ if a votary of the Lotus Sutra should appear, he will be cursed and reviled, attacked with swords and staves, and banished. But if one applies this passage of the sutra to the world today, not a single person is found whom it fits. Who then should be looked upon as the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

Could it be that the enemies of the Lotus Sutra have made their appearance, but that no one exists who upholds the sutra? But that would be like saying that there is an east, but no west, or that heaven exists, but earth does not. Were this the case, the words of the Buddha would be no more than lies, would they not?

It may seem like self-praise on my part, but having pondered this, I will give credence to the words of the Buddha. I, the priest Nichiren, am the votary referred to in the scripture.

Moreover, the Buddha, speaking of the events of a past lifetime, says in the "Never Disparaging" chapter, "At this time there was a bodhisattva named Never Disparaging. . . they spoke ill of him and cursed him . . . some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him." In this way, Shakyamuni Buddha cited his own practice as a bodhisattva in the past to encourage and hearten [the votary of the Lotus Sutra] in the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

In the past, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was beaten with sticks and staves for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, and was at once able to attain the supreme stage of perfect enlightenment. Now I, Nichiren, for the sake of the same sutra, have in this lifetime been attacked with swords and staves,

and have twice been banished to distant places. Can there be any doubt therefore that in the future I will attain the wonderful fruit of Buddhahood?

After the passing of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, the four ranks of bodhisattvas appeared in the Former and Middle Days of the Law and worked to propagate the Lotus Sutra, but even at those times they encountered numerous persecutions. The twentieth of Shakyamuni's successors, Bodhisattva Aryadeva, was killed, and the twenty-fifth, the Venerable Aryasimha, had his head cut off. The eighth successor, Buddhmitra, and the thirteenth, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, each carried a red flag and stood before the entrance to the ruler's palace [in hopes of attracting his notice], the former for twelve years and the latter for seven.

Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, the priest Fa-tsu was murdered, the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face, and the Dharma Teacher Hui-yüan was berated and accused. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai confronted in debate the leaders of the ten schools of northern and southern China, and the Great Teacher Dengyo refuted the erroneous views of the six schools of Nara.

Depending upon whether these men lived in the time of a wise ruler or a foolish one, their views were accepted or rejected, but in no case were they untrue to the Buddha's will. Even during the Former and Middle Days of the Law, they encountered such persecutions. How much more likely then is one to meet persecutions in the Latter Day! For the sake of the Lotus Sutra, I have already met with the wrath of the authorities, but I count that as the greatest good fortune. It is like exchanging tiles and rubble for gold and silver.

And yet I cannot help but grieve at the words of the Benevolent Kings Sutra that "Once the sages have de-

parted, then the seven disasters are certain to arise." The seven disasters include major droughts and great military uprisings.

The Sovereign Kings Sutra states, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, the stars and constellations, along with the winds and rains, all fail to move in their proper seasons."

Now who is meant by "evil people [who] are respected and favored"? It is men such as I spoke of earlier. And who is meant by "good people [who] are subjected to punishment"? It is the one whom I mentioned above, who has "again and again been banished." And the passage on the "stars and constellations" refers to the strange and portentous occurrences that have taken place in the skies and on the earth during the past twenty years or so.

If these passages from the sutras are true, then the banishment of Nichiren is a portent that foretells the downfall of the nation. Even before I incurred the wrath of the authorities, I foresaw that this would happen and stated the reason in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. Who can doubt that what I say is true? And that is why I grieve.

It has now been 2,222 years since the passing of the Buddha. During the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and others acted as the Buddha's envoys, propagating his teachings. However, they propagated only the two teachings of Hinayana and provisional Mahayana and did not propagate the teachings of true Mahayana.

Some five hundred years after the beginning of the Middle Day of the Law, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai appeared in China, refuted the erroneous views of the schools of the north and south, and established the correct teaching. In the area of doctrinal study, he propounded the theory of the five

periods, and in the area of meditative practices,¹¹ he set forth the concept of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. All of China joined in praising him as a Little Shakyamuni. However, though he propounded perfect meditation and perfect wisdom,¹² he did not spread the perfect precepts.

Then, eighteen hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, the Great Teacher Dengyo appeared in Japan and refuted the erroneous views that had been held by the six schools of Buddhism during the two hundred or more years since the time of Emperor Kimmei. In addition, he propounded the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment that T'ien-t'ai had not yet spread. These are the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment administered at the ordination platform on Mount Hiei.

Nevertheless, in the more than two thousand years since the Buddha's passing, though there have been tens of thousands of temples built in the three lands of India, China, and Japan, there have been no temples or pagodas dedicated to the lord of the essential teaching, nor has anyone yet propagated the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo that were specifically entrusted to the bodhisattvas who emerged from beneath the earth as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds. Although scriptural passages exist saying that they should be propagated, they can be found nowhere in the land. Is this because the time and the people's capacity are not yet ripe?

The Buddha, speaking of the future, said, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."¹³ The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai predicted, "In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."¹⁴ And the Great

Teacher Dengyo wrote, "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people."¹⁵ These passages from the sutra and its commentaries all point to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

Moreover, a non-Buddhist [of India] once said, "One hundred years after I pass away, the Buddha will appear in the world."¹⁶ And a Confucian scholar predicted, "One thousand years from now, the Buddha's teaching will be transmitted to China."¹⁷ Thus even such predictions by ordinary persons are found to tally with the truth. How much more trustworthy, therefore, should be the pronouncements of such persons as Dengyo and T'ien-t'ai, to say nothing of the explicit predictions that came from the golden mouths of the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures!

You must understand this. The time has come for the lord of the essential teaching, who has not yet appeared, to make his advent, and for the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, which have never before been propagated, to be spread throughout Jambudvīpa. Can any doubt exist?

However, there are persons who have repeatedly heard about these matters from the priest Nichiren and yet, now that I have met with these great difficulties, have abandoned their faith. You, on the other hand, have heard my teachings only once or twice, and then only for an hour or two. Even so, I have been told that you have not yet abandoned your faith but continue to practice it. This cannot be due solely to causes formed in your present existence. The Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, "Therefore we know it is because of seeds planted in previous existences that in the latter age one is able to hear the Law even for an instant, and having

heard it, take faith in it."¹⁸ He also said, "Having been born at the end of the Middle Day of the Law, I have been able to behold these true words of the sutra. Unless one has planted the mystic cause in a previous existence, they are truly difficult to encounter."¹⁹

The Lotus Sutra says in essence that persons who in past existences have made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas will be reborn in the human world and take faith in this Lotus.²⁰ The Nirvana Sutra states in essence that persons who give alms to as many Buddhas as there are sands in the Hiranyavati and Ganges rivers will be reborn in a later evil age and take faith in this sutra.

King Ajatashatru was an evil man who killed his father and imprisoned his mother. Nevertheless, when he came to the assembly where the Buddha was preaching the Nirvana Sutra and heard the teachings of the Lotus Sutra,²¹ not only did he recover from the sores that had broken out in his present existence [as a result of his evil deeds], but his life was prolonged by forty years; and even though he did not originally possess roots of faith, in the end he reached the first stage of security and was given the Buddha's prediction that he would attain Buddhahood.

Devadatta was a man of incorrigible disbelief, the worst in the entire land of Jambudvīpa. In all the earlier sutras preached during the lifetime of the Buddha, he was cast aside as hopeless. But he encountered the Lotus Sutra, and was granted a prediction that he would become a Buddha called the Thus Come One Heavenly King.

Judging from these examples, we may conclude that for evil people living in the latter age the attainment of Buddhahood depends not upon whether their offenses are slight or grave, but solely upon whether or not they have faith in this sutra.

In your case, you are a member of a warrior family, an evil man who day and night is involved in the business of killing. Since you have not left your household [to become a priest], but have remained a warrior to the present, by what means can you escape the three evil paths? Should you not think about this very carefully?

The heart of the Lotus Sutra is the revelation that one may attain supreme enlightenment in one's present form without altering one's status as an ordinary person. This means that without casting aside one's karmic impediments one can still attain the Buddha way. Thus T'ien-t'ai said, "The other sutras only predict Buddhahood . . . for the good, but not for the evil; . . . This [Lotus] sutra predicts Buddhahood for all."²² And Miao-lo said, "The meaning of the perfect teaching lies solely in the fact that those who oppose can be saved as well as those who follow. In

the other three teachings,²³ the fate of these two types of people is fixed."²⁴

Although I should write something about whether or not the Buddha way can be gained in various degrees depending on the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, this is a matter to be discussed with someone thoroughly familiar with Buddhist terms and categories. However, there are disciples to whom I have taught the essentials on this point. You should summon them and hear the gist of the matter from them. At that time I will write you further on the subject.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The third day of the eighth month
in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273),
with the cyclical sign *mizunoto-tori*

Reply to Nambu Rokuro Saburo of
Kai Province



Background

This letter was written in the eighth month of 1273, at Ichinosawa, Sado, in response to doubts raised by Hakiri Rokuro Saburo, also known as Nambu Rokuro Saburo. Hakiri Saburo is thought to have been a son of Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of Minobu, the district where the Daishonin lived in his later years.

Saburo had asked why the Daishonin, who called himself a votary of the Lotus Sutra, had been undergoing so many difficulties when he should have been enjoying peace and security as promised in the Lotus Sutra. He was by no means the only one to entertain this doubt; a number of the Daishonin's disciples had been badly shaken by the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and Sado Exile. Saburo also asked whether one

could not to a certain extent attain the Buddha way through the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

The Daishonin answers the first question by citing passages from the Lotus and Nirvana sutras predicting how difficult it will be to propagate the correct teaching, and by referring to historical examples of people who met with persecution for the sake of Buddhism. The Buddha himself foretold that the votaries of the Lotus Sutra are bound to encounter opposition and hostility. The Daishonin declares that his trials demonstrate that he is in fact the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. He then briefly reviews the sequence of propagation of the Buddhist teachings in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law,

and declares that the time has come for Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the supreme Law implied in the depths of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, to spread throughout the world.

Notes

1. Chikugo-bo is another name for Nichiro (1245–1320), one of Nichiren Daishonin's six senior disciples, and Acharya Ben, for Nissho (1221–1323), also one of the six senior disciples and the Daishonin's first convert among priests. Acharya Daishin was a priest-disciple of the Daishonin.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

3. Another copy of the manuscript reads: "With regard to these unjust criticisms, however, I have been prepared for them from the very beginning." This variation in meaning arises from a difference of two Chinese characters in a four-character phrase.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

5. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. In the Lotus Sutra, however, the phrase "with rocks and tiles" appears not in this chapter. It is an interpolation from the "Never Disparaging" chapter.

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

8. This refers to the Nirvana Sutra, which Shakyamuni is said to have expounded in a grove of sal trees immediately before his entry into nirvana.

9. The "surplices made from five, seven, or nine pieces of cloth" is another expression for the "three robes" that were among the few belongings that the precepts allowed priests to possess.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

11. "Meditative practice" refers to the observation of the mind, a form of meditation developed by T'ien-t'ai, in which one focuses on the true nature of the mind rather than on an exterior object. In *Great Concentration and Insight*, T'ien-t'ai taught a meditation to perceive the principle of the unification of the three truths in a single mind and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

12. "Perfect meditation" indicates a meditation to perceive the three thousand

Concerning the second question, he says that familiarity with Buddhist terms is necessary and encourages Saburo to ask the Daishonin's priest-disciples to help resolve his doubts.

realms in a single moment of life, and "perfect wisdom" is the wisdom gained from understanding the three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

14. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

15. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

16. Source unknown.

17. According to a passage in *The Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs* attributed to *The Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou*, on the eighth day of the fourth month in the twenty-fourth year (trad. date 1029 B.C.E.) of the reign of King Chao, the fourth ruler of the Chou dynasty, five-colored rays of light spread across the sky; the earth shook; and the rivers, streams, wells, and ponds overflowed with water. The Grand Historian Su Yu said, "A sage has been born in the western region. One thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country." According to tradition, Buddhism was introduced to China just as he had predicted, 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing, during the reign of Emperor Ming in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67).

18. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

19. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

20. A rephrasing of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

21. The Nirvana Sutra restates such essential principles of the Lotus Sutra as the eternally inherent Buddha nature.

22. *Words and Phrases*.

23. The other three teachings are the Tripitaka, connecting, and specific teachings and refer collectively to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

24. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

Reply to Kyo'o



JUST when I was longing to hear from you once again, the messenger whom you took the trouble to send arrived. In my present circumstances, your gift of money is far more valuable than any treasure to be found on land or sea.

Since I heard from you about Kyo'o, I have been praying to the gods of the sun and moon for her every moment of the day. Always cherish the Gohonzon that I gave you some time ago for her protection. The Gohonzon was never known, let alone inscribed, by anyone in the Former or Middle Day of the Law. The lion king is said to advance three steps, then gather himself to spring, unleashing the same power whether he traps a tiny ant or attacks a fierce animal. In inscribing this Gohonzon for her protection, Nichiren was like the lion king. This is what the sutra means by "the power [of the Buddhas] that has the lion's ferocity."¹ Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?

It is written that those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra will be protected by the Mother of Demon Children and by the ten demon daughters. Such persons will enjoy the happiness of the wisdom king Craving-Filled and the good fortune of the heav-

enly king Vaishravana. Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will move about without fear like the lion king. Among the ten demon daughters, the protection of Kunti is the most profound. But your faith alone will determine all these things. A sword is useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then one will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff. I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi ink, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart. The Buddha's will is the Lotus Sutra, but the soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Miao-lo states in his commentary that the heart of this sutra is the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment and his immeasurable life span.²

Kyo'o's misfortune will change into fortune. Muster your faith, and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved? There can be no doubt about the sutra passages that say, "This sutra can fulfill their desires, as a clear cool pond can satisfy all those who are thirsty,"³ and "They will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences."⁴ I will write you again.

When I am pardoned from exile in

this province, I will hasten to Kama-kura where we will meet. If we consider the power of the Lotus Sutra, we will find perpetual youth and eternal life before our eyes. My only worry is that her life may be as short-lived as dew; therefore, I am praying with all my might for the heavenly gods to protect her. [Kyo'o,] follow in the footsteps of Lady Pure Virtue or the

dragon king's daughter. Nam-myohorenge-kyo, Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The fifteenth day of the eighth month

Reply to Kyo'o



Background

This brief letter was written in the eighth month of the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273) and was addressed to Kyo'o, Shijo Kingo's infant daughter. Since Kyo'o was then only one year old, however, it may be assumed that the letter was meant for Shijo Kingo and his wife, Nichigen-nyo. They had two children, Kyo'o (Sutra King) and another daughter, Tsukimaro (Full Moon), who was a year older. Both were apparently named by Nichiren Daishonin.

This letter was written in response to news that Kyo'o had become seriously ill. At this time the Daishonin

was living in exile on Sado Island.

The Daishonin explains the significance of the Gohonzon, the object of devotion. At the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271, the Daishonin revealed his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. Only after this did he begin to inscribe the Gohonzon and bestow it on his followers, particularly those who had staunch faith in his teachings.

In this letter, the Daishonin says that the boundless benefits of the Gohonzon will surely cure Kyo'o's sickness and urges Kingo and his wife to believe firmly in the Gohonzon.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.
2. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.
4. *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

On Offering Prayers to the Mandala of the Mystic Law



I HAVE offered prayers to the Gohonzon of Myoho-*renge-kyo*. Though this mandala has but five or seven characters, it is the teacher of all Buddhas throughout the three existences and the seal that guarantees the enlightenment of all women. It will be a lamp in the darkness of the road to the next world and a fine horse to carry you over the mountains of death. It is like the sun and moon in the heavens or Mount Sumeru on earth. It is a ship to ferry people over the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. It is the teacher who leads all people to Buddhahood and enlightenment. This great mandala has never yet been propagated anywhere in Jambudvīpa in the more than 2,220 years since the Buddha's passing.

[The prescription of] medicine differs according to the illness. A slight ailment can be treated with ordinary medicine, but for grave illnesses, an elixir should be used. During the more than 2,220 years since the Buddha's passing, the people's illnesses of earthly desires and negative karma were not serious, and a succession of wise men appeared in order to act as physicians and dispense medicine appropriately as these illnesses required. These men came from the Dharma Analysis Treasury school, the Establishment of Truth school, the Precepts, Dharma Char-

acteristics, and Three Treatises schools, as well as the True Word, Flower Garland, Tendai, Pure Land, and Zen schools. Each of these schools prescribed its own medicine. For example, the Flower Garland school set forth the principle of the six forms and the ten mysteries, the Three Treatises school advocated the middle path of the eight negations,¹ the Dharma Characteristics school stressed the perception that all phenomena derive from consciousness only,² the Precepts school upheld the two hundred and fifty precepts, the Pure Land school invoked the name of Amida Buddha, the Zen school expounded the "perceiving one's true nature and attaining Buddhahood," the True Word school propounded the meditation on the five elements,³ and the Tendai school taught the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

Now, however, we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, and the medicines of these various schools no longer cure the people's illnesses. Moreover, all the Japanese have become *icchantikas* and people of grave slander. Their offense is even worse than that of killing one's father or mother, fomenting a rebellion, or causing a Buddha to bleed. Japan is filled with individuals whose respective offenses exceed even those of one who were to gouge out the eyes

of all the human beings of a major world system, or raze all temples and pagodas in the worlds of the ten directions. Consequently, the heavenly deities glare down furiously upon our nation day after day while the earthly deities tremble in continual rage. Nevertheless, all the people of our day believe themselves to be without fault, and none doubt that they will be reborn in the pure land or attain Buddhahood.

The blind cannot see or know the shining sun, and someone who is sound asleep will not feel even an earthquake that is reverberating like a great drum. So too it is with all the people of Japan [who do not realize their own offenses]. The offenses committed by the men are heavier than those committed by the women. In like manner, the nuns' offenses are heavier than the laymen's and the priests' more serious than the nuns'. Among the priests, the offenses of those who observe the precepts are worse than those of priests who violate them, and those of learned priests are graver still.⁴ Such priests are like those with white leprosy among lepers and, among those with white leprosy, the most malignant.

Then, what great physician or what efficacious medicine can cure the illnesses of all people in the Latter Day of the Law? They cannot be cured by the mudras and mantras of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, the forty-eight vows of the Thus Come One Amida, or the twelve great vows of the Thus Come One Medicine Master, not even his pledge to "heal all ills." Not only do such medicines fail to cure these illnesses; they aggravate them all the more.

Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, brought together the Thus

Come One Many Treasures and all the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions, and left one elixir—the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo—for the people of the Latter Day of the Law. He refused to entrust it to any of the bodhisattvas such as Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Vajrasattva, Universal Worthy, Manjushri, Medicine King, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds, let alone to Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, [or any other person of the two vehicles]. Rather, there were four great bodhisattvas, including Superior Practices, who had been disciples of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni since [he first attained Buddhahood] numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. Not even for a moment had they ever forgotten the Buddha. Shakyamuni summoned these great bodhisattvas and transferred Myoho-enge-kyo to them.

A woman who takes this efficacious medicine will be surrounded and protected by these four great bodhisattvas at all times. When she rises to her feet, so too will the bodhisattvas, and when she walks along the road, they will also do the same. She and they will be as inseparable as a body and its shadow, as fish and water, as a voice and its echo, or as the moon and its light. Should these four great bodhisattvas desert the woman who chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, they would incur the wrath of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions. You may be certain that their offense would be greater than even that of Devadatta, their falsehood more terrible than Kokalika's. How reassuring, how encouraging! Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren



Background

Neither the date nor the recipient of this letter is known. But it is generally supposed that the letter was given to the lay nun Sennichi, the wife of Abutsu-bo, in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273). The "Mystic Law" in the title indicates both the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo and the seven characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The mandala of the Mystic Law refers to the Gohonzon—the object of devotion inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin with Nam-myoho-enge-kyo down its center. The Daishonin also mentions elsewhere that the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra should be made into an object of devotion.

In terms of the principle of three

thousand realms in a single moment of life, the daimoku down the center of the Gohonzon represents the enlightened "single moment of life" of Nichiren Daishonin, and the characters on both sides of it, "the three thousand realms." Because the former includes the latter, the Daishonin says that "this mandala has but five or seven characters."

The Daishonin emphasizes that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the medicine that will cure the illnesses (that is, sufferings) of all people in the Latter Day of the Law, and that the lay nun Sennichi, a woman who chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, will be protected by the four bodhisattvas at all times.

Notes

1. "The eight negations" refers to the eight expressions of negation in Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*: "Neither birth nor extinction, neither cessation nor permanence, neither uniformity nor diversity, neither coming nor going." The doctrine of the eight negations indicates that the Middle Way, or true nature of all phenomena, cannot be defined as either existence or non-existence; it is non-substantial and transcends all duality.

2. The perception that all phenomena arise from the alaya-consciousness.

3. The meditation on the five elements is an esoteric form of meditation intended to let one realize that self and environment are composed of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space; that the five parts of the body, namely, crown, face,

chest, abdomen, and knees, are governed by the five syllables of the esoteric mantra *avahakha*; and that one's own life is ultimately one with the five Buddhas who are embodiments of the five aspects of Mahavairochana Buddha's wisdom.

4. In this passage the Daishonin states that the more highly respected the perpetrator, the heavier in effect the offense will be. Men had the greater influence in Japanese society, so their errors with respect to Buddhism made a heavier impact than the same errors committed by women. Similarly, the clergy carried more influence than the laity, and, among the clergy, those priests who observed the precepts and were well learned commanded the highest respect; thus their errors had a graver influence on society than anyone else's.

The Entity of the Mystic Law

Composed by Nichiren



QUESTION: What is the entity of Myoho-*renge-kyo*?

Answer: All beings and their environments in any of the Ten Worlds are themselves entities of Myoho-*renge-kyo*.

Question: If so, then is it possible to say that all living beings, such as ourselves, are entities of the Mystic Law in its entirety?

Answer: Of course. The sutra says, "This reality [the true aspect of all phenomena] consists of the appearance, nature . . . and their consistency from beginning to end."¹

The Great Teacher Miao-lo comments on this as follows: "The true aspect invariably manifests in all phenomena, and all phenomena invariably manifest in the ten factors. The ten factors invariably manifest in the Ten Worlds, and the Ten Worlds invariably manifest in life and its environment."²

T'ien-t'ai commented, "All phenomena consisting of the ten factors, Ten Worlds, and three thousand realms are entities of the Lotus Sutra."³

The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh says, "Question: What does Myoho-*renge-kyo* represent? Answer: *Myo* indicates that all living beings are *myo*, or mystic. *Ho* indicates that all living beings are *ho*, or the Law."⁴ T'ien-t'ai also says, "The Law of all living beings is mystic."⁵

Question: If the entity of all living beings is the Mystic Law in its entirety, then are all the actions and their results that are associated with the nine worlds, from the world of hell up to that of bodhisattvas, in effect entities of the Mystic Law?

Answer: The mystic principle that is the essential nature of phenomena possesses two aspects, the defiled aspect and the pure aspect. If the defiled aspect is operative, this is called delusion. If the pure aspect is operative, this is called enlightenment. Enlightenment constitutes the realm of Buddhahood. Delusion constitutes the realms of ordinary mortals.

These two aspects, the deluded and the enlightened, are indeed two different phenomena, and yet both are workings of the one principle, that is, the essential nature of phenomena, or the true aspect of reality. It is like a piece of crystal. If the crystal is placed in the sun's rays, it will attract them and produce fire. But if it is placed in the moon's rays, it will produce water. The crystal is a single entity, but the effects it produces differ according to the circumstances.

The mystic principle of the true aspect of reality is like this. The mystic principle of the true aspect of reality is one, but if it encounters evil influences, it will manifest delusion, while

if it encounters good influences, it will manifest enlightenment. Enlightenment means enlightenment to the essential nature of phenomena, and delusion, ignorance of it.

It is like the case of a person who in a dream sees himself performing various good and evil actions. After he wakes up and considers the matter, he realizes that it was all a dream produced by his own mind. This mind of his corresponds to the single principle of the essential nature of phenomena, the true aspect of reality, while the good and evil that appeared in the dream correspond to enlightenment and delusion. When one becomes aware of this, it is clear that one should discard the ignorance associated with evil and delusion, and take as one's basis the awakening that is characterized by goodness and enlightenment.

The Complete and Final Teaching on Perfect Enlightenment Sutra declares, "The beginningless illusions and ignorance that beset all living beings are all produced by the perfectly enlightened mind of the Thus Come Ones."

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "Ignorance or illusions are in themselves enlightenment to the essential nature of phenomena. But due to the influence of delusions, enlightenment changes into ignorance." The Great Teacher Miao-lo comments on this as follows: "Enlightenment has no separate entity but completely depends upon ignorance; and ignorance has no separate entity but completely depends upon enlightenment."⁶

Ignorance is a state of delusion that must be cut off, whereas enlightenment is the state that one must manifest. How then can we say that they are a single entity? To resolve doubts on this point, one should have a clear grasp of the passages that have been quoted here. The example of the

dream given in the ninety-fifth volume of *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* and the T'ien-t'ai school's example⁷ of the piece of crystal cited above are very interesting illustrations.

Further proof of the truth that ignorance and enlightenment are one in essence is found in the passage in the Lotus Sutra that reads, "These phenomena are part of an abiding Law, [and] the characteristics of the world are constantly abiding."⁸ *Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "Enlightenment and ignorance are not different things, not separate things. To understand this is what is called the Middle Way."

There are many passages of proof asserting that the mystic principle of the true aspect of reality possesses two aspects, the defiled and the pure. But none can surpass the one in the Flower Garland Sutra that says, "The mind, the Buddha, and all living beings—these three things are without distinction," or the passage in the Lotus Sutra that describes the true aspect of all phenomena.

The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh says, "The entity of the mind is endowed with two aspects, the defiled and the pure. However, it does not have two different forms but is single in nature and without distinction."⁹ And the example of the mirror¹⁰ that he gives truly presents a thorough explanation of the subject. For a more detailed understanding, one may also refer to his interpretations in *The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight*.

Another good explanation is given in the sixth volume of Miao-lo's *Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,"* in the passage that reads: "While the three thousand realms remain latent [in ordinary beings], they are all designated by the term 'ignorance.' But when the three thousand realms all manifest themselves as the result [of Buddhahood], then they are all designated by the term 'eternal

happiness.' However, because the three thousand realms themselves remain unchanged, ignorance is essentially one with enlightenment. Since the three thousand realms all remain constant, they possess both entity and function." This commentary makes the matter perfectly clear.

Question: If all living beings are entities of Myoho-enge-kyo, then are ordinary people like ourselves who are ignorant and deluded, unenlightened and dull-witted, also entities of the Mystic Law?

Answer: Though there are a great many people in the world today, they all fall into two categories—those who believe in the provisional teachings and those who believe in the true teaching. Those who believe in the provisional and expedient teachings, such as the Nembutsu, cannot be called entities of Myoho-enge-kyo. But those who believe in the Lotus Sutra, which is the true teaching, are entities of Myoho-enge-kyo, mystic entities of the true aspect of reality. The Nirvana Sutra says, "Among all living beings, those who believe in the Mahayana are called the Mahayana people."

The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh in his *Four Peaceful Practices* writes, "The Great Diligence Sutra says, 'Ordinary beings and the Thus Come One share a single Dharma body. Being pure and mystic beyond comparison, it is called Myoho-enge-kyo.' " He also says: "Those who practice the Lotus Sutra are pursuing through this single act of devotion the mind that is endowed with all manner of fortunate results. These are present simultaneously and are not acquired gradually over a long period of time. This is like the blossom of the lotus that, when it opens, already possesses a large number of seeds. Hence such persons are called the people of the one vehicle." He also says: "The people of the two vehicles, particularly the voice-hearers, and the bo-

dhisattvas of inferior capacity choose to follow the way of expedient means, practicing methods that assure gradual progress over a long period of time. But the bodhisattvas of superior capacity honestly discard expedient means and do not carry out the practice of gradual progress. If they are able to complete the meditation based on the Lotus Sutra, then they will thereby possess all manner of fortunate results. Persons such as these are called the people of the one vehicle."

The phrase "practice of gradual progress" that appears in this commentary by Nan-yüeh has been interpreted by the scholars of our time to refer to the specific teaching. In fact, however, it refers to the way of expedient means, as opposed to the way of the Lotus Sutra, which is endowed simultaneously with causes and results. Hence the term "practice of gradual progress" includes the perfect teaching preached before the Lotus Sutra,¹¹ the various Mahayana sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, and the Mahayana and Hinayana sutras that belong to the sudden and gradual teachings.

As proof, we may cite the following passage in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra: "Then I preached the twelve divisions of the correct and equal sutras,¹² the teaching of great wisdom, and the Flower Garland teaching of the ocean-imprint meditation, describing the many kalpas of practice for bodhisattvas."

But the bodhisattvas of superior capacity honestly discard expedient means and do not carry out the practice of gradual progress. They practice the Lotus Sutra, and when they attain its truth, they simultaneously acquire all manner of fortunate results. Persons such as these are called the people of the one vehicle.

When we consider the meaning of these various passages, we understand that none of the ordinary people and

sages of the three vehicles, the five vehicles,¹³ the seven expedient means, the nine worlds, or the four flavors and three teachings can be called Mahayana followers who are entities of Myohorenge-kyo. Though there are Buddhas in these teachings, they are Buddhas of the provisional teachings and cannot be called Buddhas in the true sense. This is because the Buddhas of the provisional teachings in their three bodies¹⁴ have not yet freed themselves from impermanence. How then could beings in realms other than Buddhahood be [called entities of Myohorenge-kyo]? That is why it is said that a person of humble station born in the Latter Day of the Law is more worthy of respect than the kings and high ministers who lived during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days.

Nan-yüeh says in his commentary, "All living beings have within themselves the storehouse of the Dharma body, and therefore they are in no way different from the Buddha."¹⁵ That is why the Lotus Sutra says, "The pure and ordinary eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind that one received at birth from one's father and mother are also like this."¹⁶

Nan-yüeh also writes, "Question: In what sutra does the Buddha explain the eyes and the other sense organs and designate them by the name Thus Come One? Answer: The Great Diligence Sutra says, 'Ordinary beings and the Thus Come One share a single Dharma body. Being pure and mystic beyond comparison, it is called Myohorenge-kyo.'¹⁷ This comes from a sutra other than the Lotus, but since the Lotus later clarified the same point, it is all right to quote it here.

If we take up the word "share" that is used in this passage of the Great Diligence Sutra and apply it in our argument, we may say that those who share in and believe in the Lotus Sutra are entities of that mystic sutra. But those

who do not share in it, such as the Nembutsu believers, are not entities of the mystic sutra because they have already turned their backs on their Buddha nature, that is, the Thus Come One of the Dharma body.

In essence, the entity of Myohorenge-kyo is the physical body that the disciples and followers of Nichiren who believe in the Lotus Sutra received from their fathers and mothers at birth. Such persons, who honestly discard expedient means, put faith in the Lotus Sutra alone, and chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo, will transform the three paths of earthly desires, karma, and suffering into the three virtues of the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation. The threefold contemplation and the three truths will immediately become manifest in their minds,¹⁸ and the place where they live will become the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. The Buddha who is the entity of Myohorenge-kyo, of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching, who is both inhabiting subject and inhabited realm, life and environment, body and mind, entity and function, the Buddha eternally endowed with the three bodies—he is to be found in the disciples and lay believers of Nichiren. Such persons embody the true entity of Myohorenge-kyo; this is all due to the meritorious workings that the spontaneous transcendental powers inherent in it display. Could anyone venture to doubt it? Indeed it cannot be doubted!

Question: The Great Teacher T'ient'ai has explained that the term Myohorenge is used in two different senses, one meaning the entity of Myohorenge and the other being figurative in meaning. What are these two kinds of *rengé*, or lotus?

Answer: The figurative *rengé*, or lotus, is explained in detail in the three metaphors of the lotus blossom unfolding the seed, the lotus blossom opening to reveal the seed inside, and the lotus

blossom falling and the seed ripening, so one should refer to them. The lotus that is the entity of Myoho-enge is explained in the seventh volume of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* as follows: “*Renge*, or lotus, is not a symbol; it is the actual name of the entity. For example, at the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, the various things in the world had no names. The sage observed the principles that govern them and on that basis made up names for them.” He also writes: “Now the name *renge* is not intended as a symbol for anything. It is the teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra. The teaching expounded in the Lotus Sutra is pure and undefiled and explains the subtleties of cause and effect. Therefore, it is called *renge*, or lotus. This name designates the true entity that the meditation based on the Lotus Sutra reveals, and is not a metaphor or figurative term.”

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai also writes: “Question: Does the term *renge* in fact mean the *renge*, or lotus, that is the essence of the meditation based on the Lotus Sutra? Or does it in fact mean the ordinary lotus that is a species of plant?”

“Answer: It in fact refers to the lotus that is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. But because the essence of the Lotus Sutra is difficult to understand, the metaphor of the lotus plant is introduced. People of sharp faculties will hear the name and immediately grasp the principle. They have no need to rely upon a metaphor but can understand the Lotus Sutra directly. But people of intermediate or inferior perception will not understand immediately. Only through the medium of a metaphor will they be able to understand. Thus the easily understood metaphor of an actual lotus plant is used to make clear the difficult-to-understand lotus that is the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

“Thus, in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha employed three cycles of preaching in accordance with the respective understanding of those of superior, intermediate, or inferior capacity. For people of superior capacity, the *renge*, or lotus, that is the name of the Law was taught. But, for people of intermediate or inferior capacity, the lotus was used as a metaphor or symbol. As long as one understands that the word is being used both as a name for the Law itself and as a metaphor, depending upon which of the three groups of people is being addressed, then there should be no reason to argue over it.”

This passage of commentary means that the supreme principle [that is the Mystic Law] was originally without a name. When the sage was observing the principle and assigning names to all things, he perceived that there is this wonderful single Law [*myoho*] that simultaneously possesses both cause and effect [*renge*], and he named it Myoho-enge. This single Law that is Myoho-enge encompasses within it all the phenomena comprising the Ten Worlds and the three thousand realms, and is lacking in none of them. Anyone who practices this Law will obtain both the cause and the effect of Buddhahood simultaneously.

The sage practiced with this Law as his teacher and attained enlightenment, and therefore he simultaneously obtained both the mystic cause and the mystic effect of Buddhahood, becoming the Thus Come One of perfect enlightenment and fully realized virtues.

Thus the Great Teacher Dengyo writes: “A single mind, the entity of Myoho-enge, simultaneously brings to maturity both the blossom of cause and the calyx of effect. The three cycles of preaching that the Buddha employed each contain both the lotus that is the entity and the lotus that is a metaphor. The Lotus Sutra as a whole consists of both entity and metaphor. In particular

we may note the seven parables, the three equalities, and the ten peerlessnesses, which each contain the lotus of the entity. And the teaching that fully sets forth this principle is called Myoho-*renge*-kyo [the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law].¹⁹

The Great Teacher Miao-lo says: "When interpreting the seven parables, one should understand the *renge*, or lotus, in each of them in terms of the doctrine of the provisional and true teachings. Why? Because these lotuses are no more than metaphors for the fact that the provisional teachings were set forth for the sake of the true teaching, and that the provisional teachings are opened in order to reveal the true teaching. All the seven parables are to be understood in this way."²⁰

In the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, a plant existed. The sage observed its principle and gave it the name *renge*, or lotus. The lotus plant resembles the principle of Myoho-*renge* in that it simultaneously contains both cause [blossom] and effect [seed]. Hence the plant came to bear the same name as the principle. The lotus that grows in water is the lotus that is a plant, such as the pink variety or the white variety. When we speak of the figurative lotus, or the lotus that is a metaphor, it is this lotus plant we mean. This lotus plant is used to help clarify the difficult concept of Myoho-*renge*. That is what the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai means when he says that, through the use of this metaphor, the difficult-to-understand Mystic Law is rendered more comprehensible.

Question: Since the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, has anyone become enlightened to the lotus that is the entity of the Mystic Law?

Answer: Shakyamuni Buddha²¹ became enlightened to this lotus that is the entity of the Mystic Law numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past, and in age after age

and lifetime after lifetime, declared that he had attained the way and revealed the fundamental principle he had realized with his enlightened wisdom.

In our present world as well, he appeared in the kingdom of Magadha in central India, intending to reveal this lotus of the Mystic Law. But the people lacked the proper capacity, and the time was not right. Therefore, he drew distinctions regarding this lotus of the single Law and expounded it as three kinds of flowers, delivering to the people the provisional teachings of the three vehicles. For over forty years he guided and led them with these temporary teachings according to their capacities. During this period, because the capacities of the people he addressed were so varied, he bestowed upon them the various flowers and plants of the provisional teachings, but he never spoke of Myoho-*renge*. That is why, in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha said: "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation [for six years] under the bodhi tree [and was able to gain supreme perfect enlightenment . . . But] in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."

But when he preached the Lotus Sutra, he cast aside the various plants and flowers of the Hinayana doctrines and the provisional teachings, which correspond to the expedient means of the four flavors and three teachings, and explained the unique doctrine of Myoho-*renge*. When he opened the three figurative lotuses to reveal the single lotus of Myoho-*renge*, the people of the provisional teachings with their four flavors and three teachings were able to gain the lotus of the first of the ten stages of security. Not until he revealed the lotus of "opening the near and revealing the distant" were they able to obtain the lotus of the highest result, advancing to the second stage of security, the third stage of security, the tenth stage, the stage of

near-perfect enlightenment, and finally, the highest stage of perfect enlightenment.

Question: Exactly which passages in which chapters of the Lotus Sutra expound the lotus that is the entity of the Mystic Law, and which ones expound the lotus that is a metaphor?

Answer: If we speak in terms of the three groups of voice-hearers, then we would say that the whole of the “Expedient Means” chapter expounds the lotus that is the entity, while the “Simile and Parable” and “Parable of the Phantom City” chapters expound the lotus that is a metaphor. However, it cannot be said that explanations of the lotus as a metaphor are entirely lacking in the “Expedient Means” chapter, nor can it be said that the other chapters are without explanation of the lotus as the entity.

Question: If so, then what passage contains a full elucidation of the entity?

Answer: The passage in the “Expedient Means” chapter that deals with the true aspect of all phenomena.

Question: How do we know that this passage deals with the lotus that is the entity?

Answer: Because T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo quote this passage when they explain the essence of the Lotus Sutra. And the Great Teacher Dengyo in his commentary also writes, “Question: What is the essence of the Lotus Sutra? Answer: Its essence is the true aspect of all phenomena.”²² This passage of commentary clarifies the matter. (Scholars of the time kept this commentary secret and did not reveal the name of the entity, but the passage is clearly referring to Myoho-enge.)

Furthermore, actual evidence of the entity is to be found in the examples of the three kinds of Buddhas²³ described in the “Treasure Tower” chapter, the bodhisattvas who appeared from the earth, and the dragon king’s daughter who attained Buddhahood in her

present form. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth offer actual evidence because, as a passage of the Lotus Sutra says, “[They are unsoiled by worldly things] like the lotus flower in the water.”²⁴ Thus we learn of the true entity of these bodhisattvas. And the dragon king’s daughter offers actual evidence because she made her appearance at the gathering at Eagle Peak, “seated on a thousand-petaled lotus blossom big as a carriage wheel.”²⁵

Moreover, the thirty-four manifestations of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound and the thirty-three manifestations of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds constitute further evidence. For, as the commentary says, “If he had not gained the mysterious power of perfect freedom of action through the meditation based on the Lotus Sutra, then how could he manifest these thirty-three different forms?”²⁶

In addition, there is the sutra passage that states, “. . . the characteristics of the world are constantly abiding.” All these passages are documentary proofs cited by the scholars of our time. Personally, however, I prefer to cite the passage in the “Expedient Means” chapter on the true aspect of all phenomena and the passage in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter that refers to “all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One.”²⁷ This last passage is also cited by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai in his commentary explaining the five major principles of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, I feel that this passage in particular can be cited as certain proof of the entity of the Mystic Law.

Question: The documentary proofs and actual proofs that you have cited above are particularly compelling. But why do you place such emphasis upon this one passage from the “Supernatural Powers” chapter?

Answer: This passage is profoundly significant, and that is why it is particularly pertinent.

Question: What is that profound significance?

Answer: In this passage, Shakyamuni Buddha explains that he is entrusting the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra, to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, his original disciples. The Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past, says elsewhere, "What I long ago hoped for has now been fulfilled. I have converted all living beings and caused them all to enter the Buddha way."²⁸ Thus, he has already fulfilled his earlier vow. Then, intending to charge his disciples with the task of accomplishing widespread propagation in the last five-hundred-year period after his passing, he called forth the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and entrusted them with the heart of the sutra, the lotus of the entity of the essential teaching. This passage represents the ultimate purpose for which Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the world, the secret Law that he attained in the place of meditation. It is this passage that gives proof of the lotus of the entity that, for those of us who live in the Latter Day of the Law, assures the attainment of Buddhahood in both the present and future.

Accordingly, at the present time in the Latter Day of the Law, other than the envoy of the Thus Come One, there can be no one who understands and produces this passage as proof of the lotus of the entity. Truly it is a passage of secret meaning. Truly it is a matter of great concern. Truly it is to be honored and admired. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo!

(This is what is meant by the statement²⁹ in the Lotus Sutra that the bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching preached before the sutra have assembled in a multitude of eighty thousand, wishing to hear the teaching of perfect endowment.)

Question: Concerning the doctrines of our school, when persons of other schools come and want to know what passages give proof of the lotus of the entity, what passages from the Lotus Sutra should be cited?

Answer: You should point to the title Myoho-rence-kyo that appears at the very beginning of each of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: But how do we know that the title Myoho-rence-kyo appearing in each chapter is the lotus of the entity of the Mystic Law? I ask this because, when the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai explained the title of the Lotus Sutra, he interpreted the lotus as a metaphor, so that we would have to say that this is the lotus that is a metaphor, would we not?

Answer: The *rence*, or lotus, in the title of the sutra is explained as both entity and metaphor. In the interpretation you have just referred to, T'ien-t'ai is explaining the lotus as a metaphor. This is what he does in the first volume of *Profound Meaning* where he discusses the six metaphors of the theoretical and essential teachings. But in the seventh volume of the same work, he interprets the lotus as the entity of the Mystic Law. Thus T'ien-t'ai's doctrine is flawless in that it reveals both interpretations, explaining the lotus in the title of the sutra as both entity and metaphor.

Question: How do we know that these two interpretations can be used and that the title can be taken as both entity and metaphor? When the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh explained the five characters Myoho-rence-kyo, he said, "*Myo* indicates that all living beings are *myo*, or mystic. *Ho* indicates that all living beings are *ho*, or the Law. *Renge*, or lotus, is a metaphor that is employed here." It would seem, then, would it not, that both Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai interpreted the lotus as a metaphor?

Answer: Nan-yüeh's interpretation is like that of T'ien-t'ai. While it is not entirely clear from the sutras that there can be two interpretations, that is, taking the lotus as both entity and metaphor, Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai discerned these two meanings through the treatises of Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna.

That is to say, in *The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* we read: "The words Myoho-enge have two meanings. First, they signify the lotus that appears on the surface of the water. . . . The way in which the lotus emerges from the muddy water is used as a metaphor to explain that, when the Thus Come One joins the multitude of listeners, seats himself on a lotus in the same manner as the various bodhisattvas, and expounds on the unsurpassed wisdom of the Thus Come One and on the enlightened state of purity, the various voice-hearers, hearing this, are able to obtain the secret storehouse of the Thus Come One. Second, the words Myoho-enge signify the lotus opening up. [This is a metaphor explaining that] ordinary beings, though exposed to the Mahayana teachings, are timid and fearful in mind and incapable of taking faith in them. Therefore, the Thus Come One 'opens' or reveals his Dharma body in its purity and wonder, awakening in them the mind of faith."

In this passage, the word "various" in the phrase "the various bodhisattvas" refers to the fact that the bodhisattvas of both the Mahayana and Hinayana teachings, upon arriving on the scene when the Lotus Sutra is preached, are able, for the first time, to understand the lotus of the Buddha. This is clear from the above passage in *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*. Therefore, we know that the statement³⁰ that the bodhisattvas had already gained entrance [to enlightenment] through the various sutras was no more than an expedient.

T'ien-t'ai explains this passage of *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* as follows: "If we are to explain the meaning of the treatise, we would say that, when the Thus Come One causes ordinary beings to see the Dharma body in its purity and wonder, he is showing them the lotus that opens through a mystic cause. And when the Thus Come One enters the multitude of listeners and seats himself on a lotus, he is indicating that the land produced as a mystic reward is itself the lotus."³¹

Again, when T'ien-t'ai wishes to give a detailed explanation of the dual interpretation of the lotus as both entity and metaphor, he quotes the passage in the Great Collection Sutra that reads, "I now bow in reverence before the lotus of the Buddha," and the passage in *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* that has just been quoted, to support his argument. As he explains: "According to the Great Collection Sutra, the lotus is both the cause and the effect of religious practice. When the bodhisattvas seat themselves on the lotus, this is the lotus of the cause. But the lotus of the Buddha that one bows before in reverence is the lotus of the effect. Or, according to *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, the land surrounding one is the lotus. That is, the bodhisattvas, by practicing the Law of the lotus, are as a result able to obtain the land of the lotus. Thus we should understand that the objective realm and the subjective being who depends upon it, the cause [that is the bodhisattva] and the effect [that is the Buddha], are all the Law of the *rengé*, or lotus. Therefore, what need is there to employ metaphors? But because dull-witted people cannot understand the lotus of the essential nature of phenomena, an ordinary lotus is introduced as a metaphor to assist them. What harm is there in that?"³²

And elsewhere he says, "If we do not use a lotus, then what are we to

employ as a metaphor for all the various teachings that have been described above? It is because the Law and the metaphor are expounded side by side that we refer to them by the phrase Myoho-enge.”³³

Next, we come to *Great Perfection of Wisdom* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, which states, “The lotus represents both the Law itself and a metaphor for it.” The Great Teacher Dengyo, explaining the above passages from the treatises of Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna, writes as follows: “The passage in *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra* says that the lotus of what is called Myoho-enge-kyo has two meanings. It does not say that an ordinary lotus has two meanings. On the whole, what is admirable here is the fact that the Law and the metaphor that is used for it resemble each other. If they did not resemble each other, then how could the metaphor help people understand the meaning? That is why *Great Perfection of Wisdom* says that the lotus is both the Law itself and a metaphor for it. A single mind, the entity of Myoho-enge, simultaneously brings to maturity both the blossom of cause and the calyx of effect. This concept is difficult to understand, but through the use of a metaphor, it can be made easy to understand. The teaching that fully sets forth this principle is called Myoho-enge-kyo.”³⁴

These passages from the treatises and their explanations quoted here will make the matter clear, and one should therefore examine them carefully. Nothing is hidden or held back, and hence the dual explanations of the lotus as both entity and metaphor are fully expounded.

In the final analysis, the meaning of the Lotus Sutra is that the metaphor is none other than the entity of the Law and that the entity of the Law is none other than the metaphor. That is why the Great Teacher Dengyo in his commentary says: “The Lotus Sutra con-

tains a great many metaphors and parables. However, when it comes to the major parables, we find that there are seven of them. These seven parables are none other than the entity of the Law, and the entity of the Law is none other than these metaphors and parables. Therefore, there is no entity of the Law outside of the metaphors and parables, and there are no metaphors and parables outside of the entity of the Law. In other words, the entity of the Law refers to the entity of the truth of the essential nature of phenomena, while the metaphors and parables represent the entity of the Mystic Law as manifested in actual phenomena. The manifestations are none other than the entity of the truth, and the entity of the truth is none other than the manifestations. Therefore, it can be said that the Law and its metaphors constitute a single entity. This is why the passages from the treatises and the annotations by the Tendai school all explain the lotus as both the Law itself and a metaphor for it.”³⁵

This passage is perfectly clear in meaning, and therefore I need say nothing further.

Question: During the Thus Come One's lifetime, who was able to realize the lotus of the entity of the Law?

Answer: During the period of the four flavors and three teachings that preceded the Lotus Sutra, there were persons of the three vehicles, the five vehicles, the seven expedient means, and the nine worlds, and the bodhisattvas of the provisional perfect teaching, as well as the Buddha of this teaching. But with the exception of the Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching, neither any of these persons nor the Buddha of the theoretical teaching had so much as heard the name of the lotus of the entity expounded in the essential teaching, much less realized it.

During the first forty and more years

of his teaching life, the Buddha did not make clear the doctrine of the lotus of unsurpassed enlightenment that reveals the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle. That is why the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra says, "They will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment," by which it means that the lotus of the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, which the Buddha revealed in the theoretical teaching, was never expounded in the period before the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. Much less, then, did he reveal the lotus of the entity, that of "opening the near and revealing the distant," of "the true identity that is difficult to conceive," of "the fusion of reality and wisdom," and of "originally inherent and not created." How could Maitreya and the others, who were taught and converted by the Buddha in his transient status, have had any understanding of such things?

Question: How do we know that the bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching expounded before the Lotus Sutra, or the bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching set forth in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, were not enlightened to the lotus of the entity of the essential teaching?

Answer: The bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching expounded before the Lotus Sutra did not understand the lotus of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and the bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching set forth in the theoretical teaching did not understand the lotus of the essential teaching.

T'ien-t'ai says, "Even successors of the Buddha of the provisional teachings do not know people who have received instruction from the Buddha of the theoretical teaching, and people taught by that Buddha do not know people who have received instruction from the Buddha of the essential teaching."³⁶ The Great Teacher Dengyo explains, "This is a direct way, but it is not

the great direct way."³⁷ He also says, "Because they have not yet understood the great direct way to enlightenment."³⁸ The point being made in these passages is clear.

The bodhisattvas of the teachings preached before the Lotus Sutra or of the theoretical teaching have, in a certain sense, eradicated delusion and gained understanding of truth. Nevertheless, in the light of the essential teaching, they have gained only a temporary cutting off of delusion, not the kind that extends beyond a certain dimension. Therefore, it is said that they have in fact not yet cut off delusion.

Thus, although it is said that the bodhisattvas had already gained entrance [to enlightenment] through the various sutras, the term "gained entrance" is simply applied here in a temporary manner as a means of disparaging the achievement of the people of the two vehicles. Therefore, even the great bodhisattvas of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching arrive at the realization of the lotus of the Buddha only when they are exposed to the essential teaching, and achieve a true cutting off of delusion only when they hear the teachings of the "Life Span" chapter.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, commenting on the passage in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter in which a period of time measuring fifty small kalpas is, through the Thus Come One's supernatural power, made to seem to the members of the assembly as though it were no more than half a day, says: "To the awakened ones, what seemed like a short period of time was understood to be a long one lasting fifty small kalpas; but to those who were still deluded, the long period seemed to be as short as half a day."³⁹

Miao-lo in turn explains this comment by saying: "The bodhisattvas have already freed themselves from ignorance, and so they are referred to here

as the 'awakened ones.' The ordinary beings of the assembly, however, have not yet advanced beyond the rank of worthy persons,⁴⁰ and thus they are referred to as the 'deluded ones.'"⁴¹

The meaning of these passages is quite clear. It indicates that the bodhisattvas of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and of the theoretical teaching were in fact still deluded, and only the Bodhisattvas of the Earth were worthy of being called awakened ones.

Nevertheless, at the present time there are certain persons of the Tendai school who, when they discuss the essential teaching and the theoretical teaching, declare that there is no difference between the two, and in interpreting the passages under discussion, they assert that the people taught and converted by the Buddha in his transient status are to be included in the category of "awakened ones." This is a gross error of interpretation. Since the meaning of the sutra passage and the annotations regarding it is perfectly clear, I do not see how anyone could put forward such an unreasonable assertion.

If we examine the passage in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, we see that it states that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth praised the Thus Come One for a period of fifty small kalpas, but to the members of the assembly on Eagle Peak who had been taught by the Buddha in his transient status, this seemed like no more than half a day.

T'ien-t'ai in his explanation introduces the terms "awakened ones" and "deluded ones." He explains that, because the assembly members who had been taught by the Buddha in his transient status were deluded ones, they accordingly believed that the interval of time was no more than half a day, though this was a mistaken interpretation of the facts. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth, on the other hand, were

the awakened ones, and they therefore viewed the interval of time as being fifty small kalpas in duration, which was the correct interpretation of the facts.

Miao-lo proceeds to comment on this by saying that the bodhisattvas who had freed themselves from ignorance were the awakened ones, and those who had not yet freed themselves from ignorance were the deluded ones. It is perfectly clear that this is what the above quotations mean. There are some scholars who say that some among the bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha in his transient status had attained the first stage of security or advanced beyond it in the course of bodhisattva practice and hence had already freed themselves from ignorance. They say so because they were taught that the various sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra offer a means of attaining Buddhahood, when in fact they do not offer any such means.

Those who have received either the teachings prior to the Lotus Sutra or the theoretical teaching may in a certain sense attain the stage of perfect enlightenment, but when seen in terms of the true Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching, such people are still in the company of the deluded or in the rank of worthy persons. The three bodies of the Buddha as they appear in the provisional teachings have not yet escaped from the realm of impermanence, and they are therefore in effect phantom Buddhas such as one would see in a dream.

As long as those who have received the teachings prior to the Lotus Sutra or the theoretical teaching have not yet received instruction in the essential teaching, they are to be described as people who have not yet extirpated illusion. But once they have received such a teaching, they qualify for the first stage of security.

Miao-lo comments as follows:

“When the Buddha proceeds beyond his transient status and reveals his true identity, all the listeners enter the first stage of security.”⁴² This may be contrasted to what has been said above about such people being in the rank of worthy persons. People who have received the teachings prior to the Lotus Sutra or the theoretical teaching are in the category of the deluded. They are Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have not yet freed themselves from ignorance. How true! How true!

Therefore, we understand that, once the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching had been revealed, all those in the assembly on Eagle Peak became enlightened to the lotus of the entity. Those of the two vehicles, the icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, and the determinate groups,⁴³ as well as women and evil men, all gained an awakening to the lotus of the eternal Buddha.

The Great Teacher Dengyo, explaining the lotus of the “one great reason” [why the Buddhas appear in the world], writes: “The ‘one great matter,’ the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra, is the revelation of the lotus. The word ‘one’ signifies that it is the one reality. The word ‘great’ signifies that it is broad and all-encompassing in nature. And the word ‘matter’ refers to the working of the essential nature of phenomena. This one great reason or ‘ultimate matter’ is the truth or the teaching, the wisdom, and the practice of the perfect teaching, or the Dharma body, the wisdom, and the emancipation of the perfect teaching. Through this, the persons of the one vehicle, those of the three vehicles, those of the determinate groups, those of the indeterminate group, those who believe in Buddhist teachings, those who believe in non-Buddhist teachings, those who have no desire to become Buddhas, and those who are unable to believe in the correct teachings—all of these be-

ings, every one of them, are brought to the realm of the wisdom penetrating all phenomena. Thus, this ‘one great reason’ opens the door of Buddha wisdom to all beings, shows it, causes them to awaken to it, and induces them to enter into it, and all of them attain Buddhahood.”⁴⁴

Thus we may say that the so-called evil people such as women, icchantikas, those of the determinate groups, and persons of the two vehicles, all at Eagle Peak, were able to gain an awakening to the lotus of the entity of the Mystic Law.

Question: In our present age, the period of the Latter Day of the Law, who has obtained the lotus of the entity?

Answer: Observing the situation in the world today, we would have to say that, although there are many people who are destined to fall into the great Avichi hell, there is no one who has obtained the lotus of the Buddha. The reason is that people put their faith in the expedient means of the provisional teachings that cannot lead to enlightenment, and slander the lotus of the truth, the entity of the Lotus Sutra.

The Buddha states, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”⁴⁵

T’ien-t’ai comments on this as follows: “This [Lotus] sutra opens the seeds of Buddhahood inherent in the beings of each of the six paths. But if one slanders the sutra, then the seeds will be destroyed.”⁴⁶

I, Nichiren, would like to say this. The Lotus Sutra is linked to the seeds of Buddhahood inherent in the beings of each of the Ten Worlds. But if one slanders this sutra, then it means that one is destroying the seeds of Buddhahood in the beings of each of the Ten Worlds. Such a person is certainly

bound to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. When might he manage to get out of hell again?

But those who follow the teachings of Nichiren honestly discard the mistaken doctrines of the provisional teachings and the incorrect theories of the mistaken teachers, and, with all sincerity, put their faith in the correct teaching and the correct doctrines of the correct teacher. Accordingly they are able to gain the lotus of the entity and to manifest the mystic principle of the entity of the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. This is because they put their faith in the golden words of the Buddha indicated in the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Question: The great teachers such as Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo employed the Lotus Sutra to spread widely the perfect teaching of the one vehicle, but they did not recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Why is that? Does this mean that they did not know about the lotus of the entity, or that they failed to understand it?

Answer: It is said that the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King.⁴⁷ If so, then they were present on Eagle Peak when the Buddha preached the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching, and at that time they became enlightened to the lotus of the entity. But when they appeared in the world [as Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai, respectively], they knew it was not the right time to spread the Mystic Law. Therefore, for the words "Mystic Law" they substituted the term "concentration and insight" and instead engaged in the meditation on

the three thousand realms in a single moment of life and in the practice of the threefold contemplation in a single mind. But even these great teachers recited Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as their private practice, and in their hearts they understood these words to be the truth.

Thus the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh in his *Method of Repentance through the Lotus Sutra*⁴⁸ employs the words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai employs the words Nam-byodo-daie-ichijo-myoho-renge-kyo,⁴⁹ Keishu-myoho-renge-kyo,⁵⁰ and Kimyo-myoho-renge-kyo.⁵¹ And the document⁵² concerning the vow taken by the Great Teacher Dengyo on his deathbed carries the words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Question: The evidence you have presented is perfectly clear. But if these men understood the truth, as the evidence indicates that they did, then why did they not spread a knowledge of it abroad?

Answer: There are two reasons. First of all, the proper time to do so had not yet arrived. Second, these men were not the persons entrusted with the task of doing so.

It is the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo that are the great pure Law that will be spread widely in the Latter Day of the Law. And it is the great bodhisattvas who sprang up from the earth in numbers equal to the dust particles of a thousand worlds to whom this was entrusted. It was for this reason that those such as Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo, though in their hearts they clearly perceived the truth, left it to the leader and teacher of the Latter Day to spread it widely, while they themselves refrained from doing so.



COVER LETTER

Question: The lotus of the entity of the Mystic Law is difficult to understand, and therefore metaphor is used to make its meaning clear. But is there any example in the sutras to support such a practice?

Answer: The sutra says, “[They are] unsoiled by worldly things like the lotus flower in the water. Emerging from the earth . . .” Here we see that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the lotus of the entity of the Mystic Law, and that the lotus is being used here as a simile. But I will write to you about this again at some future time.

This teaching represents the ultimate

principle of the entire Lotus Sutra. It is the ultimate purpose of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni’s advent, as well as the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra, which was entrusted to the great bodhisattvas who sprang up out of the earth so that they might spread it widely in the Latter Day of the Law. Only when the ruler of our nation has shown himself to have faith may this doctrine be revealed. But until then it should remain a secret teaching. I, Nichiren, have just completed transmitting it to you, Sairen-bo.

Nichiren



Background

From the cover letter, it is clear that this treatise was addressed to Sairen-bo, one of Nichiren Daishonin’s followers. However, it does not bear the date or the name of the place where it was written. One view is that it was authored in the tenth year of Bun’ei (1273), at Ichinosawa on Sado Island, when the Daishonin was in exile.

Sairen-bo was a learned scholar of the Tendai school and had been living in exile on Sado for some unknown reason. *Reply to Sairen-bo* reveals that he converted to the Daishonin’s teachings in the second month of 1272.

The Entity of the Mystic Law explains the great benefit of having faith in the Gohonzon. When examined in terms of the concept of teaching, practice, and proof, this treatise corresponds to proof, while *The Opening of the Eyes* and *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind* are related to teaching and practice, respectively. “Teaching” means the Buddha’s teaching, and “practice” means the practice that accords exactly

with the teaching. “Proof” means the merit resulting from the practice of the teaching.

Opening of the Eyes establishes a five-fold comparison, a system of comparative classification of all of Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings, and demonstrates the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras. Ultimately it clarifies the supremacy of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo among all the Buddhist teachings, and accordingly it corresponds to “teaching.” *Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind* states that embracing faith in the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment. Upholding the Mystic Law amounts to completing all the practices in which the Buddhas engaged and acquiring all the benefits and virtues that they obtained through these practices. Therefore, it corresponds to “practice.” *Entity of the Mystic Law* corresponds to “proof,” because it reveals that by believing in the Mystic Law one can manifest oneself as the entity of Myoho-rence-kyo.

In this treatise, Nichiren Daishonin uses the question-and-answer format to make his teaching more accessible to his contemporary and later followers. Its contents are divided into six parts. The first part teaches that the beings of the Ten Worlds and their environments, that is, all things and phenomena in the universe, are entities of Myoho-enge-kyo. Concerning this view, a question is posed: "If the entity of all living beings is the Mystic Law in its entirety, then are all the actions and their results that are associated with the nine worlds, from the world of hell up to that of bodhisattvas, in effect entities of the Mystic Law?" In reply to this question, the Daishonin states that, just as Buddhahood is the functioning of the Mystic Law, so likewise are the nine worlds of illusion and suffering. This is explained from the viewpoint of the defiled aspect and the pure aspect, both of which constitute the functioning of a single Law, that is, the Mystic Law.

The second part reveals from a more profound standpoint that actually only those who believe in the Mystic Law are entities of the Mystic Law. The Daishonin states, "The Buddha who is the entity of Myoho-enge-kyo, of the 'Life Span' chapter of the essential teaching, . . . is to be found in the disciples and lay believers of Nichiren." In the third part, citing T'ien-t'ai's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, the Daishonin discusses the lotus of the entity and also uses the lotus figuratively. The lotus flower was used as a metaphor to explain the lotus of the entity, since the entity of the Law itself is difficult to understand. He clarifies the lotus of the entity that inherently exists and is not created, and identifies it as the supreme single Law that simultaneously possesses both cause and effect. He also says that a sage perceived the reality of this Law and named it Myoho-enge. This is what

the lotus of the entity means. The lotus blooms and produces seeds at the same time and so represents the simultaneity of cause and effect, which is the expression of the Mystic Law.

In the following three parts, the treatise describes those who have become enlightened to the lotus of the entity. The fourth part reveals that Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened to the lotus of the entity numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past. Shakyamuni Buddha himself declared in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "It has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood."

Next, this treatise asserts that the passage in the "Expedient Means" chapter on the true aspect of all phenomena and the passage in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter on the transmission of the essence of the Lotus Sutra both contain perfect elucidations of the lotus of the entity. Then the treatise explains that the title "Myoho-enge-kyo" itself, appearing at the beginning of each of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, represents the lotus of the entity. In response to the question regarding who was able to obtain the lotus of the entity during Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime, the fifth part singles out those who received instruction from the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching.

The sixth and last part clarifies who is able to obtain the lotus of the entity in the present Latter Day of the Law. This part also makes clear what Law it is that enables the people of the Latter Day to realize the lotus of the entity and to attain Buddhahood. Clarification of this point is found in the passage that states: "But those who follow the teachings of Nichiren . . . are able to gain the lotus of the entity and to manifest the mystic principle of the

entity of the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. This is because they put their faith in the golden words of the Buddha indicated in the 'Life Span' chapter of the essential teaching and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo." "The Buddha indicated in the 'Life Span' chapter" means the advocate of the teaching implicit in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter.

Subsequently this treatise explains why the Mystic Law was not propagated in the Former and Middle Days. It identifies Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as the great pure Law that is to spread in the Latter Day. Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai of China and Dengyo of Japan em-

ployed the recitation of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as their private practice, but they did not spread this practice to other people. The treatise sets forth two reasons for this fact: "First of all, the proper time to do so had not yet arrived. Second, these men were not the persons entrusted with the task of doing so."

Then, in conclusion, the Daishonin writes, "It was for this reason that those such as Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo, though in their hearts they clearly perceived the truth, left it to the leader and teacher of the Latter Day to spread it widely, while they themselves refrained from doing so."

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. *The Diamond Scalpel*.
3. Source unknown.
4. *On the Peaceful Practices of the Lotus Sutra*.
5. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.
6. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*
7. This example appears in T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight*. Hence the expression "T'ien-t'ai school" is used to mean the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, the founder of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school.
8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
9. *The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight*.
10. The example of the mirror is expounded in *Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight*. Through the example of the inseparable relationship between an object and its image reflected in the mirror, Nan-yüeh reveals that a living being and a Buddha are "two but not two" in essence; in other words, common mortals of the nine worlds are inherently endowed with Buddhahood.
11. A reference to the teaching that expounds the concept of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. But this teaches it in name only with no actual examples of its having occurred, or postulates various distinctions and exceptions.
12. The "twelve divisions of the correct

and equal sutras" refers to all the Mahayana teachings. The "twelve divisions" is a classification of the sutras according to style and content.

13. The five vehicles refer to the three vehicles of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas plus the human and heavenly realms.

14. In sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, the three bodies were held to exist separately, such as Mahavairochana in the Dharma-body aspect and Amida in the reward-body aspect. However, on the basis of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, T'ien-t'ai maintained that the three bodies are not separate entities but three integral aspects of one Buddha.

15. *On the Peaceful Practices*.

16. A summary of a passage in the "Benefits of the Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

17. *On the Peaceful Practices*.

18. The "threefold contemplation" and the "three truths" here mean subjective wisdom and objective reality, respectively, and the expression that these "will immediately become manifest in their minds" represents the fusion of wisdom and reality. See Glossary for threefold contemplation and three truths.

19. Source unknown.

20. *On "The Profound Meaning."*

21. Shakyamuni Buddha attained en-

lightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past and realized that his life is the entity of the Mystic Law.

22. A summary of a section from *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

23. The three kinds of Buddhas refer to Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha.

24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

25. Ibid., chap. 12. In this chapter, it states, "Manjushri was seated on a thousand-petaled lotus blossom," and in the latter part of this chapter it says that the dragon king's daughter perfected the bodhisattva practice and appeared in a world to the south called Spotless World, where she seated herself on a jeweled lotus flower, acquired the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics of a Buddha, and thence proceeded to preach the Lotus Sutra to all living beings.

26. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

27. Shakyamuni declares to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, "All the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One, all the freely exercised supernatural powers of the Thus Come One, the storehouse of all the secret essentials of the Thus Come One, all the most profound matters of the Thus Come One—all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra." After this statement, he transfers the essence of the Lotus Sutra to Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

28. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

29. This refers to the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. "The teaching of perfect endowment" indicates the heart of the sutra, the lotus of the entity of the essential teaching.

30. This is found in *On "The Profound Meaning."*

31. *Profound Meaning.*

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

35. Source unknown.

36. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

37. *A Commentary on the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.*

38. Ibid.

39. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

40. The rank of worthy persons, according to the T'ien-t'ai school, corresponds to the ten stages of faith, the first ten of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

41. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

42. *On "The Profound Meaning."*

43. The determinate groups refer to the first three of the five natures, a doctrine set forth by the Dharma Characteristics school dividing human beings into five groups according to their inborn religious capacity. They are those predestined to be voice-hearers, those predestined to be cause-awakened ones, and those predestined to be bodhisattvas. These three are called the determinate groups, because the state they will achieve is predetermined.

44. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

45. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

46. This appears in *On "The Words and Phrases."*

47. According to the T'ien-t'ai school's tradition, Nan-yüeh and his disciple T'ien-t'ai were said to have been incarnations of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Bodhisattva Medicine King, respectively, because they attained a great awakening through the "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter and the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

48. This work, in which the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo appear, was actually authored by T'ien-t'ai.

49. These words mean single-minded devotion to the one vehicle, that is, Myoho-enge-kyo of the great impartially-perceiving wisdom.

50. These words mean "I bow my head before Myoho-enge-kyo."

51. These words mean "I dedicate my life to Myoho-enge-kyo."

52. Reference is to *The Record of Transmission at Hsiu-ch'an-ssu Temple.*

On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins



I HAVE read your letter carefully. In the past as well, when I was exiled to the province of Izu on account of the Lotus Sutra, I rejoiced at heart, though, when I say so, I suppose people will think that I am speaking immodestly.

If, since the beginningless past, I had ever incurred blame for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, whether I was sincerely devoted to it or not, would I then have been born in this lifetime as a mere ordinary mortal? [Therefore, when I was condemned to exile,] though I felt downcast for a while, seeing that it was for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, I was also delighted, for I thought that I might thereby eradicate to some small extent the offenses of my previous existences. However, the various grave sins of the ten evil acts, the four major offenses, the six major offenses, the eight major offenses, the ten major offenses, the five sins¹ that condemn one to the hell of incessant suffering, the slander of the correct teaching, and the sin of incorrigible disbelief accumulated since the beginningless past must stand taller than a huge mountain, run deeper than the great sea.

When it comes to the five cardinal sins, the commission of even one of them will condemn one to the hell of incessant suffering for the space of an entire kalpa. A kalpa is the length of

time it takes for the life span of human beings to decrease from eighty thousand years to ten years, decreasing at the rate of one year every hundred years, and then to increase again to eighty thousand years at the same rate.² One who murders one's parent will fall into the hell of incessant suffering and undergo its terrible pain without a moment's respite for such a period of time.

As for the person who slanders the Lotus Sutra, though he may not be serious at heart, if he so much as manifests the outward appearance of animosity, disparages the sutra even in jest, or makes light, not of the sutra itself, but of those who act in its name, then, the sutra says, he will fall into the hell of incessant suffering for countless kalpas of the kind described above.

The people who cursed and struck Bodhisattva Never Disparaging at first behaved with such animosity, but later they took faith in him and became his followers, looking up to him and treating him with great respect, honoring him as the heavenly deities would the lord Shakra and standing in awe of him as we do the sun and moon. Despite this, the great offense of their initial slander was difficult to extinguish, so they were condemned to the great Avichi hell for a thousand kalpas and abandoned by the three treasures for two hundred million kalpas.

If one were to liken [the retribution for] the five cardinal sins and slander of the Law to illness, then the five cardinal sins would be comparable to sunstroke, the effects of which appear suddenly. Slander of the Law, on the other hand, is like white leprosy, which seems minor at first but bit by bit becomes very serious indeed. Those who commit slander of the Law are in most cases reborn in the hell of incessant suffering or, in a few cases, in one of the six lower paths. If they are reborn in the realm of human beings, then, the sutra tells us, they will suffer from poverty, low status, white leprosy, and so forth.

When I hold up the bright mirror of the Lotus Sutra before me, all is crystal-clear; there can be no doubt that in my previous existences I was guilty of slandering the Law. If in my present existence I do not wipe out that offense, then in the future how can I escape the pains of hell?

How could I gather together all the grave offenses that I have accumulated in age after age since the far distant past and eradicate them all in my present lifetime, so that I may be spared great pain in the future? When I pondered this question, it occurred to me that now, in the present age, slanderers of the Law fill every province of the nation. What is more, the ruler of the nation is himself the foremost perpetrator of such slander. If in such a time I do not expunge these heavy sins, then at what time can I expect to do so?

Now if I, Nichiren, insignificant person that I am, were to go here and there throughout the country of Japan denouncing these slanders, then innumerable persons among the four categories of Buddhists who follow erroneous doctrines would in one instant join their innumerable voices in reviling me. At that time the ruler of the nation, allying himself with those priests who slander the Law, would

come to hate me and try to have me beheaded or order me into exile. And if this sort of thing were to occur again and again, then the grave offenses that I have accumulated over countless kalpas would be wiped out within the space of a single lifetime. Such, then, was the great plan that I conceived, and it is now proceeding without the slightest deviation. So, when I find myself thus sentenced to exile, I can only feel that my wishes are being fulfilled.

Nevertheless, being no more than an ordinary person, I have at times been apt to regret having taken such a course. And if even I am troubled by such feelings, then how much more so in the case of a woman such as your wife, who is unaware of all the circumstances surrounding the matter. Persons like you and her do not have full knowledge of the Buddhist teachings, and it pains me to think how greatly you must regret that you ever chose to follow Nichiren. And yet, contrary to what might be expected, I hear that you two are even firmer and more dedicated in your faith than I myself, which is indeed no ordinary matter. I wonder if Shakyamuni Buddha himself may have entered your hearts, and it moves me so that I can barely restrain my tears.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo says in his commentary (*The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* volume seven), "Therefore we know it is because of seeds planted in previous existences that in the latter age one is able to hear the Law even for an instant, and having heard it, take faith in it." He also says (*The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* volume two), "Having been born at the end of the Middle Day of the Law, I have been able to behold these true words of the sutra. Unless one has planted the mystic cause in a previous existence, they are truly difficult to encounter."

During his first forty and more years of teaching, Shakyamuni Buddha kept secret the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo. Not only that, he still remained silent concerning them when he preached the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, which comprise the theoretical teaching. It was only with the "Life Span" chapter that he spoke openly regarding the two characters of *rengé*, which [represent the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo and] indicate the true effect and the true cause.³ The Buddha did not entrust these five characters to Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Maitreya, Medicine King, or the others of their group. Instead he summoned forth the bodhisattvas Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices and their followers from the great earth of Tranquil Light and transferred the five characters to them.

What took place then was no ordinary ceremony. The Thus Come One Many Treasures, who lives in the World of Treasure Purity, made his appearance, seated in a tower that emerged from the earth and was adorned with seven kinds of treasures. Shakyamuni purified four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of worlds in addition to this major world system, planted them with rows of jeweled trees measuring five hundred yojanas high at intervals of an arrow-shot length, placed a lion seat five yojanas in height beneath each jeweled tree, and seated on these seats all the Buddhas from the ten directions, who were his emanations.

Thereupon the Thus Come One Shakyamuni removed his soiled robe, opened the treasure tower, and took a seat beside the Thus Come One Many Treasures. It was as though the sun and moon had appeared side by side in the blue sky, or as though the heavenly king Shakra and the king Born from the Crown of the Head⁴ had been able to sit together in the Hall of the Good

Law. Manjushri and the other bodhisattvas of this world, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds and the other bodhisattvas of the other worlds were gathered together in open space throughout the ten directions like so many stars filling the sky.

At this time in this place the great bodhisattvas, such as Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse, equal in number to the dust particles of the worlds of the ten directions, who had gathered at the seven places and eight assemblies of the Flower Garland Sutra⁵ and were disciples of Vairochana Buddha, who sits on the lotus pedestal of the worlds of the ten directions; the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who had gathered like clouds at the Great Treasure Chamber when the sutras of the Correct and Equal period were preached; Subhuti, Shakra, and the thousand Buddhas who had gathered to hear the Wisdom sutras; the four Buddhas and four bodhisattvas,⁶ included among the nine honored ones on the eight-petaled lotus of the Mahavairochana Sutra; the thirty-seven honored ones⁷ of the Diamond Crown Sutra; and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the realm of phenomena in the ten directions who are to gather at the city of Kushinagara to listen to the Nirvana Sutra—all these assembled. All these figures were recognized by Manjushri, Maitreya, and the others of their group, who talked together with them, so it appeared that the great bodhisattvas, such as Manjushri and Maitreya, were quite accustomed to their being in attendance.

It was under such circumstances that the four bodhisattvas emerged from the earth. When Bodhisattva Manjushri, whose teaching the Thus Come One Shakyamuni was the ninth to inherit⁸ and who is the mother of the Buddhas of the three existences,⁹ and Bodhisattva Maitreya, who will succeed Shakyamuni Buddha after his

next rebirth, stood beside these four bodhisattvas, they seemed to be of no significance whatsoever. They were like humble mountain folk mingling in the company of nobles and high ministers, or like apes and monkeys seating themselves beside lions.

Having summoned the four bodhisattvas, Shakyamuni Buddha entrusted them with the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. And this entrustment, too, was no ordinary affair, for the Buddha first manifested ten supernatural powers. When he extended his long broad tongue upward as far as the limit of the world of form, all the other Buddhas did likewise, so that the tongues of the Buddhas extended up into the air above the four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of worlds like a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million red rainbows filling the sky. Marvelous indeed was the sight!

In this manner the Buddha displayed the wonders of his ten supernatural powers, and in what is termed the transfer of the essence of the sutra, he extracted the core of the Lotus Sutra and transferred it to the four bodhisattvas. He fervently enjoined them to bestow it after his passing upon all living beings of the ten directions. After that, he again manifested yet another supernatural power¹⁰ and entrusted this sutra and the other sacred teachings preached during his lifetime to Manjushri and the other bodhisattvas of this and other worlds, to the people of the two vehicles, and to the heavenly and human beings, dragon deities, and others.

These five characters Myoho-enge-kyo were not entrusted even to Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, or the other disciples, though these men had from the outset attended the Buddha as closely as a shadow follows the body. But, even setting that aside, why did the Buddha refuse to entrust them to the bodhisattvas such as Manjushri and

Maitreya? Even though they may have been lacking in capability, it would seem unlikely that he should reject them. There are in truth many puzzling aspects about the matter. But the fact was that the bodhisattvas from other worlds were rejected because their connection with this world was slight; or in other cases, although the bodhisattvas were of this saha world, they had only recently established connections with this world; or in still other cases, some were rejected because, although they were disciples of the Buddha, they had not been among his disciples when he first aroused the aspiration for and attained enlightenment in the remote past. Thus, among those who had been his disciples during the forty and more years preceding the preaching of the Lotus Sutra or during the preaching of the theoretical teaching, the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, there was not one who could be called an original disciple. We see from the sutra that only these four bodhisattvas had been the disciples of Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, since numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past; from the time he had first aroused the aspiration for and attained enlightenment, they had never followed any other Buddha, nor had they required the instruction of the theoretical and essential teachings.

Thus T'ien-t'ai says, "The great assembly witnessed the Bodhisattvas of the Earth alone making this pledge."¹¹ He also states, "[The Buddha said of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth,] 'These are my disciples, destined to propagate my Law.'¹² Miao-lo says, "The children propagate the Law of the father."¹³ And Tao-hsien states, "The Law embodied therein [in the Lotus Sutra] is the Law that was realized countless kalpas in the past, and therefore it was entrusted to persons who had been the Buddha's disciples from countless kalpas

in the past.”¹⁴ Thus these five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo were entrusted to these four bodhisattvas.

Nevertheless, after the Buddha’s passing, during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law, and the two hundred and twenty or more years that have elapsed since the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, nowhere in India, China, Japan, or any other place throughout Jambudvīpa have these four bodhisattvas so much as once made their appearance. Why is that?

Bodhisattva Manjushri, though he was not specifically entrusted with the teaching of Myoho-enge-kyo, remained in this world for four hundred and fifty years following the passing of the Buddha to spread the Mahayana sutras, and even in the ages thereafter he from time to time descended from Mount Fragrant or Mount Clear and Cool, assuming the form of an eminent monk in order to propagate the Buddhist teachings.¹⁵ Bodhisattva Medicine King took on the form of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds became the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh,¹⁶ and Bodhisattva Maitreya became Fu Ta-shih.¹⁷ Moreover, Mahakāshyapa and Ananda worked to spread the teachings of the Buddha after his passing for twenty and forty years, respectively. And yet in all this time, the Buddha’s legitimate heirs, to whom the teaching of Myoho-enge-kyo had been entrusted, failed to make their appearance.

During this period of twenty-two hundred and more years, worthy rulers and sage rulers have honored painted images or wooden images of Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, as their principal object of devotion. But although they have made depictions of the Buddhas of the Hinayana and the Mahayana teachings; of the Flower Garland, Nirvana, and Meditation su-

tras; of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra and of the Universal Worthy Sutra; of the Mahāvairocana and the other True Word sutras; and of the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures of the “Treasure Tower” chapter, the Shakyamuni Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter has never been depicted in any mountain temple or monastery anywhere. It is very difficult to fathom why this should be.

The Thus Come One Shakyamuni made specific reference to the last five-hundred-year period and never designated the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law as the time for propagating the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai said, “In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future,”¹⁸ indicating that its propagation should be left to the future. The Great Teacher Dengyo wrote, “The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand.”¹⁹ In this way, he rejected the end of the Middle Day of the Law as not being the time to propagate the Lotus Sutra.

Are we to assume, then, that the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who sprang up from the earth intend to remain silent and unmoving and to go back on the promise that they made when the teaching was entrusted to them by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions?

Yet even the worthy men described in the non-Buddhist scriptures know that one must await the right time. The cuckoo always waits until the fourth or fifth month to sing its song. Similarly, we read in the sutra that these great bodhisattvas must likewise wait until the Latter Day of the Law to appear.

Why do I say this? Both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings make clear that omens will always appear before a certain destined event actually

occurs. Thus, when the spider spins its web, it means that some happy event will take place, and when the magpie calls, it means that a visitor will arrive. Even such minor occurrences have their portents. How much more so do major events! Thus the six auspicious happenings described in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra are great omens exceeding in magnitude any other major signs appearing in the entire life of Shakyamuni Buddha. And the omens described in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter²⁰ are immeasurably greater in magnitude than these.

Therefore, T'ien-t'ai says, "By observing the fury of the rain, we can tell the greatness of the dragon that caused it, and by observing the flourishing of the lotus flowers, we can tell the depth of the pond they grow in."²¹ And Miaolo states, "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."²²

Now I, too, in discerning the significance of omens, will be included among the wise. The great earthquake that struck in the first year of the Shoka era (1257), with the cyclical sign *hinoto-mi*, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, at the time when the hour of the dog gives way to the hour of the boar (around 9:00 P.M.), and also the great comet that appeared in the first year of the Bun'ei era (1264), with the cyclical sign *kinoe-ne*, on the fourth day of the seventh month²³—these are major portents such as have never before occurred during the more than twenty-two hundred years since the Buddha's passing. I wonder if they are not major signs indicating that those great bodhisattvas are now about to make their appearance in this world, bearing the great Law.

Ten-foot-high waves do not rise up in a foot-wide pond, and the braying of a donkey cannot cause the winds to

blow. Though the government of Japan today is in chaos and the common people cry out in distress, such conditions alone could scarcely cause the appearance of such major omens. No one else understands that these are great signs foretelling that though the Lotus Sutra has perished it is in fact eternal.²⁴

During the more than two thousand years [since the Buddha's passing], there have been evil rulers who were cursed by their subjects and traitorous persons who were hated by all. But Nichiren, though guilty of no fault, has without respite for the past twenty years and more been cursed and abused, assaulted with swords and staves, and pelted with rocks and tiles by people both high and low. This is no ordinary occurrence.

Mine is like the case of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who, toward the end of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, was cursed and reviled over a period of many years. Moreover, Shakyamuni Buddha cited the example of this bodhisattva and predicted that, after his own passing, in the Latter Day of the Law, events would unfold in the same manner as in Never Disparaging's time. And yet, whether here close at hand in Japan or in the distant land of China, such a thing has never been known to happen on account of the Lotus Sutra.

Because people hate me, no one mentions the significance of these things. If I mention it myself, it may seem to be self-praise. If I fail to mention it, however, I will commit the offense of making lies of the Buddha's words. I speak of it because to hold one's own life lightly but to value the Law is the way of a worthy person.

I, Nichiren, resemble Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. Whether the ruler of a nation murders his parents, or a lowly subject does away with his father and mother, though the murderers differ greatly in social position, because

the cause is identical, both will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Similarly, though Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and I stand on different levels, we perform the same action. Therefore, if Bodhisattva Never Disparaging is destined to attain Buddhahood, can there be any doubt that I will gain the fruit of Buddhahood as well?

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was cursed by arrogant monks who observed all the two hundred and fifty precepts. I, Nichiren, am slandered and reviled by Ryokan, who is known as the foremost observer of the precepts. The monks who cursed Never Disparaging, though they followed him in the end, still had to suffer in the Avichi hell for one thousand kalpas. But Ryokan has yet to seek my teachings. Hence I do not know what will become of him. He may be destined to suffer in hell for countless kalpas. How truly pitiful!

Question: With regard to the great earthquake of the Shoka era, in your remonstrative letter *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, which you entrusted to the lay priest Yadoya for submission to His Lordship, the late lay priest of Saimyo-ji, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month in the first year of the Bunno era (1260), with the cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, you stated your opinion that heaven and earth had become angered because the people of Japan were destroying Buddhism by their reliance on Honen's *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, and that this error would bring about rebellion within the country and invasion from countries abroad. But now you say that the earthquake was an auspicious omen of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. How do you explain the discrepancy between these two views?

Answer: That is a very good question. The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world,

how much more will this be so after his passing?"²⁵ And in the seventh volume, referring again to the time "after his passing" when things will be much worse, the Buddha says, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa."²⁶ So we see that the hatred that abounds after the passing of the Buddha will come about in the last five-hundred-year period when Myohorenge-kyo will spread. And immediately following the above passage, the Buddha warns of dangers from "evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, and kumbhanda demons."

When the chief priest Hsing-man laid eyes on the Great Teacher Dengyo, he exclaimed, "The sacred words will not become extinct. Now I have encountered this man! All the doctrines that I have learned I will transfer to this acharya from the country of Japan."²⁷ And the situation today is just the same. Now, in the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, the time has come to propagate the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo so that all people throughout the country of Japan may receive the seeds of Buddhahood.

When a maidservant becomes pregnant with the ruler's child, the other women grow resentful. And when a person of humble birth is presented with a jewel from the king's crown, then great troubles are bound to arise. Thus the sutra says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."²⁸

The Nirvana Sutra declares, "If troubles are inflicted upon a sage, then the country where he dwells will be attacked by other countries." And the Benevolent Kings Sutra states essentially the same thing. If I, Nichiren, am attacked, then from heaven and earth and the four directions, great calamities will pour down like rain, jet up like

fountains, or come surging forward like waves. If the many priests, those hordes of locusts who afflict the nation, and the ministers in power in the government persist in their ever-increasing slanders and accusations against me, then great disasters will occur in growing magnitude.

When an asura demon tried to shoot at the god Shakra, his arrow rebounded and pierced him in the eye. And when the garuda birds attempted to attack the dragon king Anavatapta, flames erupted from their own bodies and consumed them. Is the votary who upholds the Lotus Sutra inferior to Shakra or the dragon king Anavatapta?

The Great Teacher Chang-an says, "One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy."²⁹ He also says, "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."³⁰

All the people throughout Japan have been led astray by the wild assertions of Honen, who tells them to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon" [the Lotus Sutra], or of the Zen school, which declares its teaching to be "a separate transmission outside the sutras," so that there is not a single one who is not destined to fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. So believing, over the past more than twenty years I have never ceased to cry out in a loud voice against these errors, fearing neither the ruler of the nation nor the common people. I am in no way inferior to the outspoken ministers Kuan Lung-feng and Pi Kan of old. I am like the thousand-armed Perceiver of the World's Sounds, the bodhisattva of great compassion, who strives to rescue at once all the beings confined to the hell of incessant suffering.

When several children are caught in a fire, though the parents wish to save

them all at the same time, having only two arms, they must decide which child to save first and which to leave until after. The Lotus Sutra is a parent with a thousand arms, ten thousand arms, or a million arms. The sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra have only one or two arms, as it were. But the Lotus Sutra, through which the Buddha has "converted all living beings and caused them all to enter the Buddha way,"³¹ is a bodhisattva with innumerable arms.

If we go by the Lotus Sutra and the commentary of Chang-an, then Nichiren is a compassionate father and mother to all the people of Japan. Heaven may be lofty, but it has keen ears with which to hear. Earth may be thick, but it has sharp eyes with which to observe. Heaven and earth by now know [how the situation stands]. And yet I, who am father and mother to all people, am cursed and reviled and sent into exile. The abuses of government that have taken place in this country in the past two or three years are such as have never been heard of in former ages, and exceed all bounds of reason.

In your letter you mentioned your filial devotion to your deceased mother. Reading it, I was so moved that I could barely hold back my tears.

Long ago in China there were five young men, one of whom was Yüan-chung.³² They had originally been strangers from different districts and had different surnames, but they took a vow to be brothers and never turned against one another, and in time they amassed three thousand treasures.

All the young men were orphans, and, grieved over this fact, when they met an old woman along the road, they decided to honor her as their mother. They did so for twenty-four years, never going against her wishes in the slightest.

Then the mother suddenly fell ill and was unable to speak. The five sons

gazed up at the sky and said: "Our efforts to care for our mother have not been appreciated, and she has been seized by an illness that prevents her from speaking. If heaven will grant our filial feelings any recognition, we pray that it will restore to her the power of speech."

At that time the mother spoke, saying to her five sons: "In past times I was the daughter of a man named Yang Meng of the district of T'ai-yüan. I was married to Chang Wen-chien of the same district, who has since died. We had a son named Wu-i. When he was seven, rebellion broke out in the area, and I do not know what became of him. You, my five sons, have taken care of me for twenty-four years, but I have never told you of this. My son Wu-i had markings like the seven stars of the Big Dipper on his chest, and on the sole of his right foot he had a black mole." When she had finished saying this, she died.

As the five sons were accompanying her body to the burial ground, they encountered the magistrate of the district along the road. The magistrate had happened to drop a bag containing important documents, and the five young men were accused of stealing it, arrested, and bound. When the magistrate confronted them, he demanded, "Who are you?" whereupon the five young men told him all they had learned from their mother.

When he heard this, the magistrate almost toppled from his seat, gazing up at the heavens, then bowing to the earth in tears. He freed the five men from their bonds, led them to his seat, and said, "I am Wu-i, and it was my mother you cared for! For these past twenty-four years I have known many pleasures, but because I could never stop thinking about my beloved mother, they were never real pleasures to me." In time he presented the five men to the ruler of the country, and each

was appointed to be the head of a prefecture.

In this way, even strangers were rewarded when they came together and treated someone as a parent. How much more so will be the case with actual brothers and sisters when they kindly take care of their own father and mother! How could heaven possibly fail to approve?

Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye used the Lotus Sutra to lead their father, who held erroneous views, to enlightenment. Devadatta was an enemy of the Buddha and was condemned by the sutras preached during the first forty and more years of the Buddha's teaching life. The moment of his death was terrifying: the earth split open, and he fell into the hell of incessant suffering. But in the Lotus Sutra he was summoned back and received the prediction that he would become the Thus Come One Heavenly King. King Ajatashatru killed his father, but just before the Buddha entered nirvana, he heard the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and was able to escape the great sufferings of the Avichi hell.

This province of Sado is like a realm of beasts. Moreover, it is filled with Honen's disciples, who hate me a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more than did the people of Kamakura. I am never certain whether I am going to survive the day. But thanks to the warm support of both of you, I have managed to sustain my life thus far. When I consider this, I suppose that, since Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas and great bodhisattvas of the ten directions all make offerings and pay reverence to the Lotus Sutra, these Buddhas and bodhisattvas must be informing your parents each hour of the night and day that you are assisting me. And the fact that you now enjoy your lord's favor must also be due to your parents' merciful protection.

Do not think of your siblings as siblings. Just think of them as your own children. It is true that among children there are those like the young of the owl, which are said to eat their own mother, or like the offspring of the hakei beast, which watch for a chance to devour their own father. Though your own son, Shiro,³³ takes care of his parents, if he is a bad person, perhaps there is nothing to be done. However, even a stranger, if you open up your heart to him, may be willing to lay down his life for you. So, if you treat your younger brothers as though they were your own sons, they may become your allies for life, and of course it will make a favorable impression on others as well. And if you likewise think of your younger sisters as daughters, then why would they not respond with filial devotion?

When I was exiled to this place, I assumed that no one would come to visit me. But I have no fewer than seven or eight persons with me here, and if it were not for your consideration, I do not know how we could manage to keep the whole group in provisions. I am certain that this is all because the characters of the Lotus Sutra have entered into your bodies in order to give us aid. I am praying that, no matter how troubled the times may become, the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters will protect all of you, praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground. There are many other matters to discuss, but I will close here.

Nichiren

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on Sado Island in 1273 to his devoted follower Shijo Kingo, who lived in Kamakura. Though in exile, the Daishonin says in this letter that his overriding emotion is one of joy. He has been banished precisely because he denounced the errors of those who slander the Lotus Sutra. Because he has met this great trial for the sutra's sake, the Daishonin explains, he is certain to thereby eradicate in this lifetime his evil karma accumulated since the distant past. This is the principle of "rebuking slander of the Law and eradicating sins" referred to in the letter's title.

The Daishonin goes on to explain that when Shakyamuni Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra he transferred the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the essence of his teaching, only to the

Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Though the Daishonin does not state so here directly, he implies that he is the very one carrying out the task of these Bodhisattvas of the Earth in propagating the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

The Daishonin subsequently likens himself to Never Disparaging, a bodhisattva appearing in the Lotus Sutra who revered all people as future Buddhas and met with abuse as a result. The fact that the Daishonin meets persecution just as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did for the sake of the Lotus Sutra indicates that he is the sutra's votary in the Latter Day of the Law.

The text then raises a question: In *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, the Daishonin interpreted the disasters befalling the country as the effect of widespread belief in misleading teachings. Now he

interprets them as omens of the spread of the Lotus Sutra. How are these two views to be reconciled? The Daishonin makes clear that no fundamental contradiction exists. On the one hand, when the time comes for the propagation of the Lotus Sutra, disasters arise when people persist in clinging to provisional teachings that no longer suit the times. On the other hand, when the votary of the Lotus Sutra who is to propagate its teaching points out such errors and is persecuted as a consequence, great calamities are sure to result. The Daishonin adds that in de-

nouncing the errors of other schools he has acted solely out of the bodhisattva spirit of compassion, as expressed by Chang-an: "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."

In the final part of the letter, the Daishonin praises Shijo Kingo's devotion to his deceased mother, and explains that such filial conduct will never fail to be rewarded. He concludes with expressions of gratitude to Shijo Kingo and his family, whose offerings have helped the Daishonin and his companions survive under the harsh conditions of banishment on Sado.

Notes

1. The five cardinal sins: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, injuring a Buddha, and causing disunity in the Buddhist Order.

2. According to ancient Indian cosmology, the human life span undergoes repeated cyclic periods of increase and decrease. The calculation here brings the length of a kalpa to 15,998,000 years.

3. The true effect refers to the enlightenment attained by the Buddha in the remote past, and the true cause, the cause of that enlightenment. "True effect" and "true cause" also indicate, respectively, the world of Buddhahood (effect) and the nine worlds (cause), which are both eternally inherent in life. Myoho-rence-kyo is the Law that simultaneously contains both cause and effect.

4. Born from the Crown of the Head, or Murdhagata in Sanskrit, appears in several sutras. He is said to have been born from the top of King Upasatha's head and grew up to become a gold-wheel-turning king. He ruled the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru and finally ascended to the heaven of the thirty-three gods on the summit of Mount Sumeru. According to the Nirvana Sutra, he was welcomed there by the god Shakra, who seated him by his side in the Hall of the Good Law, a hall located in the southwest outside Shakra's palace Joyful to See in the heaven of the thirty-three gods.

5. The preaching of the Flower Garland Sutra is described as occurring in eight suc-

cessive assemblies in seven different locations, beginning at the place of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment and then shifting to various heavens.

6. Buddhas and bodhisattvas who are pictured in the court of the eight-petaled lotus appearing in the center of the Womb Realm mandala. In this mandala, Mahavairochana Buddha sits in the center of the lotus.

7. Five Buddhas, centering around Mahavairochana, and thirty-two bodhisattvas described in the Diamond Crown Sutra.

8. This story appears in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In the distant past, Manjushri appeared as Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright, a disciple of Sun Moon Bright Buddha. After the Buddha's demise, Wonderfully Bright continued to embrace the Lotus Sutra that his teacher had expounded. The Buddha had fathered eight sons before renouncing the world. Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright led these sons to enlightenment. The last of them to attain Buddhahood was called Burning Torch Buddha, under whom Shakyamuni practiced the sutra for enlightenment in a previous existence. In this sense, Shakyamuni was "the ninth to inherit" Manjushri's teachings.

9. The Contemplation on the Mind-Ground and other sutras refer to Manjushri as the mother of all Buddhas. He is so called because he represents the supreme wisdom essential to attaining enlightenment.

10. At the beginning of the "Entrustment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha pats with his right hand the heads of the immeasurable bodhisattvas present and then transfers the Lotus Sutra to all of them.

11. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

14. *The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

15. According to the Nirvana of Manjushri Sutra, 450 years following the Buddha's passing, Bodhisattva Manjushri went to the Snow Mountains, where he expounded the Buddhist teachings for five hundred hermits. Thereafter, he assumed the form of a monk and, descending from the mountains, led many people to salvation. He later lived in a stupa on Mount Fragrant (Skt Gandha-madana), said to lie to the north of the Snow Mountains. According to the Flower Garland Sutra, Manjushri lives on Mount Clear and Cool (Chin Ch'ing-liang) in the east, which later came to be identified with Mount Wu-t'ai in China.

16. The reappearance of Medicine King and Perceiver of the World's Sounds as T'ien-t'ai and Nan-yüeh, respectively, is mentioned in *The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions*.

17. Fu Ta-shih (497-569) was a lay Buddhist in China. Fu Ta-shih's biography states that he descended from the Tushita heaven, which is the abode of Bodhisattva Maitreya, to expound the teaching of supreme enlightenment.

18. *Words and Phrases.*

19. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

20. This refers to the ground splitting open and the countless bodhisattvas emerging from the earth.

21. *Words and Phrases.*

22. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

23. This comet first appeared on the twenty-sixth day of the sixth month, began to shine with renewed brilliance on the fourth day of the seventh month, and continued to shine into the eighth month.

24. This indicates that in the Latter Day of the Law, although the Lotus Sutra has become ineffectual, the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo implied in the depths of the sutra's "Life Span" chapter will spread to benefit all people.

25. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

26. *Ibid.*, chap. 23.

27. *The Biography of the Great Teacher of Mount Hiei.*

28. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

29. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

32. Yüan-chung was a person from the state of Wei during the Chou dynasty (c. 1100-256 B.C.E.), China. The story of these five persons appears in Miao-lo's *Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

33. Details are unknown about Shiro. No other of the Daishonin's letters indicates that Shijo Kingo had a son. One of his younger brothers was named Shiro, but it is not certain if this is the person to whom the Daishonin was referring.

The Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Persecution



THE fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy [toward this sutra] abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?”¹ The fifth volume says, “It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe.”² The thirty-eighth volume of the Nirvana Sutra states, “At that time there were countless non-Buddhists. . . . Their hearts gave rise to fury.” It also says, “At that time there were innumerable non-Buddhists who plotted together and went as a group to Ajata-shatru, the king of Magadha, and said: ‘At present there is a man of incomparable wickedness, a monk called Gautama. O King, you have never examined him, and this arouses much fear in us. All sorts of evil people, hoping to gain profit and alms, have flocked to him and become his followers. [These people do not practice goodness, but instead use the power of spells and magic to win over men like] Mahakashyapa, Shari-putra, and Maudgalyayana.’” This well illustrates the meaning of the passage: “Since hatred and jealousy [toward this sutra] abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world. . . .”

The Preceptor Tokuitsu reviled the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai Chih-che, saying, “See here, Chih-i, whose disciple are you? With a tongue less than

three inches long you slander the teachings that come from the Buddha’s long broad tongue that can cover even his face!”³ Tokuitsu also said, “Surely T’ien-t’ai must be perverse and insane.” More than three hundred priests, including the prelates of the seven major temples in Nara such as the Supervisor of Priests Gomyo and the Discipline Master Keishin,⁴ hurled abuse at the Great Teacher Dengyo, saying: “Just as in a land west of China there was a Brahman named Demon Eloquence, so now in this eastern realm of Japan there is a shaved monk who spits out crafty words. Evil spirits invisibly invite such people to deceive and mislead the world.”⁵

However, Dengyo states in his *Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*: “Shakyamuni taught that the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai trusted and obeyed Shakyamuni and worked to uphold the Lotus school, spreading its teachings throughout China. We of Mount Hiei inherited the doctrine from T’ien-t’ai and work to uphold the Lotus school and to disseminate its teachings throughout Japan.”

During the lifetime of the Buddha as well as the two thousand years of the

Former and Middle Days of the Law that followed after his passing, there were only three votaries of the Lotus Sutra. They were the Buddha himself, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo. By contrast, Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung of the True Word school, Tu-shun and Chih-yen of the Flower Garland school, and the teachers of the Three Treatises and Dharma Characteristics schools all interpreted the sentences of the sutra of the true teaching so that they accorded with the meaning of the provisional sutras. Scholars such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu inwardly grasped the meaning of the Lotus Sutra but did not outwardly speak of it. Not even the four ranks of sages⁶ in the Former Day of the Law could compare with T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo when it came to propagating the Lotus Sutra just as it teaches.

If the Buddha's prediction is true, there must be a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, and the great difficulties that he encounters will surpass those that occurred during the Buddha's lifetime. The Buddha himself underwent nine great ordeals. He was slandered by Sundari; he was offered stinking rice gruel; he was forced to eat horse fodder; King Virudhaka massacred the greater part of the Shakya clan; he went begging but his bowl remained empty; the Brahman's daughter Chinchā slandered him; Devadatta dropped a boulder from atop a hill [in an attempt to kill him]; and the cold wind forced him to seek robes for protection.⁷ And in addition, he was denounced by all the non-Buddhists, as I mentioned earlier. If we go by the prediction in the sutra [that hatred and jealousy will be much worse after the Buddha's passing], then T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo did not fulfill the Buddha's prophecy. In view of all this, it must be that a votary of the Lotus Sutra will appear in the world at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, just as the Buddha predicted.

In any event, on the seventh day of the twelfth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273), a letter from the former governor of Musashi⁸ reached the province of Sado. The letter, to which he had set his seal, read:

We have heard a rumor that Nichiren, the priest exiled to the province of Sado, is leading his disciples and others in plotting some evil action. His scheme is nothing short of outrageous. From now on, those who follow that priest are to be severely punished. Should there be those who nevertheless still violate this prohibition, their names are to be reported. This is an official order.

Priest Kan'e⁹

The seventh day of the twelfth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei
To Echi no Rokuro Saemon-no-jo¹⁰

This letter reads that I am "plotting some evil action." Non-Buddhists slandered the Buddha, saying that Gautama was an evil man. I, Nichiren, have personally suffered each of the nine great ordeals. Among them, [those of my persecutions that correspond to] Virudhaka massacring the Shakya clan, going begging but being left with an empty bowl, and being forced to seek robes for protection from the cold wind have been great trials far surpassing those that occurred during the Buddha's lifetime.¹¹ These are hardships that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo never met. Truly you should know that, adding Nichiren to the other three, there is now a fourth votary of the Lotus Sutra who has appeared in the Latter Day of the Law. How glad I am to fulfill the words of prophecy from the sutra: "How much more will this be so after his passing?" How sad I feel that all the people of this country will fall into the Avichi hell! I will not go into detail here, or this letter will become too involved. You should seriously ponder this.

Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the first month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274), cyclical sign *kinoe-inu*

All my disciples and followers should read and listen to this letter. Those who are serious in their resolve should discuss it with one another.

POSTSCRIPT:¹²

Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu were both scholars who produced a thousand works. However, they expounded only the provisional Mahayana teachings. Though they understood the meaning of the Lotus Sutra in their hearts, they did not declare it in words. (An oral transmission exists concerning this.)¹³ T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo went so far as to expound it, but they left unrevealed the object of devotion of the essential teaching, the four bodhisattvas,¹⁴ the sanctuary, and the five characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Their reasons were, first, because the Buddha had not transferred these teachings to any of them, and second, because the time was not ripe and the people's capacity had not yet matured. Now the time has arrived, and the four bodhisatt-

vas will surely make their advent. I, Nichiren, was the first to understand this. It is said that the flight of a blue-bird heralds the appearance of the Queen Mother of the West, and that the singing of a magpie foretells the arrival of a guest.¹⁵ [In the same way, there are omens announcing the advent of the four bodhisattvas.] All those who consider themselves my disciples should know that now is the time for the four bodhisattvas to appear. Therefore, even if it should cost you your lives, you must never discard your faith.

Toki, Saburo Saemon-no-jo, Kawanobe, Acharya Yamato, and the rest of you, gentlemen and priests, should read this letter to one another and listen. In this defiled age, you should always talk together and never cease to pray for your next life.

To Kawanobe and his people
Acharya Yamato and the others¹⁶
all of my disciples and followers
Saburo Saemon-no-jo

Nichiren

Respectfully sent to Toki.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on Sado in 1274 to all his priest disciples and lay followers, including Toki Jonin and Saburo Saemon-no-jo (Shijo Kingo). Although the government issued a pardon a month later, the Daishonin was still being treated as a criminal, a fact evident from the orders issued by Hojo Nobutoki, the constable of Sado, quoted toward the end of this letter.

The postscript to this letter contains an early reference to the Three Great

Secret Laws—the object of devotion, the sanctuary, and the invocation or daimoku of the essential teaching. Neither Shakyamuni Buddha nor any of his successors in India, China, and Japan ever revealed them. These three form the core of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Among the extant writings, both originals and copies, this is the first in which the Daishonin mentioned the sanctuary, listing the name of each of the Three Great Secret Laws.

In closing, the Daishonin declares that he is the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law who

inherits the lineage of the votaries, Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.
2. Ibid., chap. 14.
3. Quoted in Dengyo's *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*. Tokuitsu's subsequent remark also appears in the same source. Tokuitsu was a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan during the early Heian period (794–1185). Tokuitsu criticized the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, or Chih-i (538–597), and his one vehicle doctrine of the Lotus Sutra as provisional and debated this point with Dengyo until the latter's death.
4. Keishin (n.d.) was a priest at Todai-ji temple in the early Heian period. He opposed Dengyo's project of constructing a Mahayana ordination platform.
5. Cited in *A Clarification of the Precepts*.
6. Here refers to Mahayana scholars such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu. See four ranks of sages in Glossary.
7. The ninth persecution, that of King Ajatashatru loosing drunken wild elephants on Shakyamuni and his disciples, is omitted here.
8. The former governor of Musashi refers to Hojo Nobutoki, who held the post of the governor of Musashi from 1267 to 1273 and was also the constable of Sado Province.
9. It is not certain whether Kan'e refers to Hojo Nobutoki himself or to someone who functioned as his secretary.
10. Homma Rokuro Saemon, a retainer of Hojo Nobutoki, who was steward of Niiho on Sado Island and deputy constable of the island.
11. "Virudhaka massacring the Shakya clan" probably refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and subsequent Sado Exile. The government attempted not only to behead the Daishonin at that time, but also arrested or punished many of his followers. While in the Buddha's lifetime many people of the Shakya clan were killed by King Virudhaka, Shakyamuni himself was not

threatened with execution by the secular authorities; in this sense, the Daishonin's ordeal surpassed that of the Buddha. Moreover, at the time of the Komatsubara Persecution, the Daishonin suffered a sword cut on his forehead, and his left hand was broken; and two of his followers were killed during the incident. As for the other two ordeals mentioned here, throughout much of his life, but especially while in exile on Sado, the Daishonin was forced to endure hunger, cold, and other privations far worse than those experienced by Shakyamuni Buddha for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

12. On the original manuscript, probably having run out of space, the Daishonin inserted this postscript at the beginning of the letter, which is where it appears in *The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin*. In preparing the translation, we have moved it to the end.

13. This note is in the Japanese text. It probably refers to a passage from *Great Concentration and Insight*, which reads: "Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they employed the provisional Mahayana teachings, which were suited to the times."

14. Four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. See four bodhisattvas in Glossary.

15. The Queen Mother of the West is a legendary goddess who dwells on a mountain in the western part of China. A similar statement is found in *A Collection of Stories and Poems*. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* states, "If a magpie chatters, it foretells the coming of a guest."

16. Little is known about Kawanobe and Acharya Yamato. Kawanobe, a lay believer, is thought to have been arrested and imprisoned at the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. One opinion identifies Acharya Yamato with Acharya Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Daishonin's six senior disciples.

The Swords of Good and Evil



NICHIREN is the most perverse person in Japan. The reason is this: Nichiren proclaims that, because the people revere the Buddha Amida, the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, Medicine Master, and other Buddhas even more than their own parents and lords, the three calamities and seven disasters are occurring in greater magnitude than in any previous age, and the unusual disturbances in the heavens and strange occurrences on earth are now more terrible than ever. I am forever reminding them that they will not only ruin themselves and destroy the country in this lifetime, but fall into the great Avichi hell in the next. Hence I have suffered this severe persecution. I might be compared to a summer insect that flies into a flame, or a mouse that dashes in front of a cat. I am like an animal that knows it is in danger and yet pays no heed. But I risk my life as a matter of conscious choice; therefore, I am a perverse person.

Stones are split open for their hidden gems, deer are slain for their hides and meat, fish are caught for their flavor, the kingfisher is killed for its gorgeous feathers, and a beautiful woman is envied for her beauty. This is the case with me. Because I am the votary of the Lotus Sutra, I have suffered all manner of persecution at the hands of the three powerful enemies. How wondrous that you

have, nonetheless, become a disciple and a supporter of such a person! There must be some profound reason for our relationship. Make every possible effort to deepen your faith, and reach the pure land of Eagle Peak.

I have received the two swords—a long one and a short one—that you sent as an offering for prayers. The long sword must have been made by a renowned swordsmith. It is fully equal to the celebrated swords Amakuni, Onikiri, and Yatsurugi,¹ or to those famous Chinese swords Kan-chiang and Moyeh.² You have offered this sword to the Lotus Sutra. While you wore it at your side, it was an evil sword, but now that it has been offered to the Buddha, it has become a sword for good, just like a demon who conceives a desire to attain the Buddha way. How wondrous, how wondrous!

In the next life you should use this sword as your staff. The Lotus Sutra is the staff that helps all the Buddhas of the three existences as they set their minds on enlightenment. However, you should rely on Nichiren as your staff and pillar. When one uses a staff, one will not fall on treacherous mountain paths or rough roads, and when led by the hand, one will never stumble. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will be your staff to take you safely over the mountains of death. The Buddhas

Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, as well as the four bodhisattvas headed by Superior Practices, will lead you by the hand on your journey. If I, Nichiren, precede you in death, I will come to meet you at your last moment. If you should precede me, I will be sure to tell King Yama all about you. Everything that I tell you is true. According to the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren is the guide who knows the passes and gorges along the way. Devote yourself single-mindedly to faith with the aim of reaching Eagle Peak.

Money serves various purposes according to our needs. The same is true of the Lotus Sutra. It is a lantern in the dark or a boat at a crossing. At times it is water and, at times, fire. This being so, the Lotus Sutra assures us of “peace and security in our present existence and good circumstances in future existences.”³

Of all the many places in Japan, Nichiren was born in the province of Awa. It is said that the Sun Goddess

first dwelt in this province, where she began exploring the land of Japan. An estate exists there dedicated to the goddess, who is the compassionate father and mother to all living beings in this country. Therefore, this province must be of great significance. What karma from the past caused Nichiren to be born in this same province? No reward could be greater. That is not the main point of this letter, so I will not go into further detail. But you should think about what I mean.

You must pray to the heavenly gods with all your heart. Be ever diligent in your faith so that your desire will be fulfilled. Please tell your wife all that I have said.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-first day of the second
month

Reply to Lord Yagenta



Background

This letter was written to Hojo Yagenta, a lay believer in Kamakura, on the twenty-first day of the second month; though no year is indicated, it is believed to be 1274. The letter was sent by the Daishonin from Ichinosawa on Sado Island seven days after a pardon for him was issued in Kamakura. Although the official date of the pardon was the fourteenth of that month, it did not reach the Daishonin until the eighth day of the third month.

Yagenta was a samurai who belonged to the ruling Hojo clan. He was a recipient in 1268 of one of the eleven

letters the Daishonin wrote remonstrating with top government officials and religious leaders after a delegate from Khubilai Khan arrived demanding tribute.

For a samurai, the sword was the embodiment of status and strength. Swords were also symbols of power and death, but the Daishonin explains that because Yagenta has offered his to the Lotus Sutra their basic nature has changed for the good. Yagenta's act amounts to a demonstration of faith and devotion. Some years later he became a lay priest.

Notes

1. The Amakuni sword was made by a swordsmith of the same name during the Nara period (710–794). The Onikiri sword was a cherished possession of the Minamoto clan. The Yatsurugi sword is thought to be the sacred sword of Yatsurugi Shrine, associated with Atsuta Shrine in present-day Nagoya.

2. Kan-chiang and Mo-yeh were a husband and wife who forged two superb swords for the king of Wu; the swords were named after them.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

Letter to Endo Saemon-no-jo



I RECENTLY received an official pardon, and I will return to Kamakura. Can this be the year in which the passage “What I long ago hoped for has now been fulfilled”¹ comes true for me?

Without your protection, could I possibly have sustained my life? Could I have survived to be pardoned? My life’s achievements are due entirely to you and to those like you. The Lotus Sutra says, “The young sons of heavenly beings will wait on him and serve him. Swords and staves will not touch him and poison will have no power to harm him.”² How reassuring this sutra is!

Therefore you must be an envoy

sent by the heavenly gods Brahma and Shakra. I will bestow my seals upon you as a promise that you will be re-born in [the pure land of] Eagle Peak. You should take one of them with you to your next existence. [When you arrive] at Eagle Peak, call out, “Nichiren, Nichiren,” and at that time I will come to meet you.

I will write to you again from Kamakura.

Nichiren

The twelfth day of the third month in the eleventh year of Bun’ei (1274), cyclical sign *kinoe-inu*

To Endo Saemon-no-jo



Background

On the eighth day of the third month in 1274, a government envoy arrived at Sado Island with a pardon for Nichiren Daishonin, thus ending more than two years of exile there. During this period the Daishonin wrote several of his most important works, laying the doctrinal foundations for his inscribing the object of devotion for attaining Buddhahood.

The Daishonin and his party left Ichi-

nosawa, Sado, on the thirteenth day of the third month. He wrote this letter to Endo Saemon-no-jo the day before his departure. Little is known about Endo Saemon-no-jo, though he appears to have been a samurai. According to one opinion, he was a relative of Abutsu-bo. This is the only extant letter addressed to him. In that sense, he may be said to represent the many courageous followers of the Daishonin whose

names have not come down to us.

Though extremely brief, this letter vividly conveys the Daishonin's gratitude for Endo's assistance during his

time of exile. He also warmly assures Endo that his devotion in faith will guarantee his future happiness.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. Ibid., chap. 14. This passage refers to the blessings of one who embraces the Lotus Sutra.

Hell Is the Land of Tranquil Light



I HAVE received your offering of various articles. Nothing would please me more than to know that you have communicated with the late Ueno, but I know that that is impossible. Unless it was in a dream, it is unlikely that you have seen him. Unless it was an illusion, how could you have seen him? Surely your late husband is in the pure land of Eagle Peak, listening and watching over this saha world day and night. You, his wife, and your children have only mortal senses, so you cannot see or hear him, but be assured that you will eventually be reunited [on Eagle Peak].

The men with whom you have exchanged marriage vows over the course of all your previous lifetimes must outnumber even the grains of sand in the ocean. Your vows this time, however, were ones made with your true husband. The reason is that it was due to his encouragement that you became a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. Thus you should revere him as a Buddha. When he was alive, he was a Buddha in life, and now he is a Buddha in death. He is a Buddha in both life and death. This is what is meant by that most important doctrine called attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "If one can uphold this [sutra], one will be upholding the Buddha's body."¹

Neither the pure land nor hell exists

outside oneself; both lie only within one's own heart. Awakened to this, one is called a Buddha; deluded about it, one is called an ordinary person. The Lotus Sutra reveals this truth, and one who embraces the Lotus Sutra will realize that hell is itself the Land of Tranquil Light.

Even if one were to practice the provisional teachings for immeasurable millions of years, if one should turn away from the Lotus Sutra, it would simply always be hell. I did not make this assertion; it was decided by Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions. To practice the provisional teachings is to be like a person scorched by fire who goes deeper into the flames, or like a drowning person sinking farther toward the bottom of the depths. Those who fail to embrace the Lotus Sutra are like persons going into fire or water. Those who rely on such evil teachers as Honen, Kobo, and other slanderers of the Lotus Sutra and believe in the Amida or Mahavairochana Sutra are going farther and farther into the fire or deeper and deeper into the depths of the water. How can they possibly escape agony? They will doubtless fall into the fiery pits of the hell of repeated rebirth for torture, the hell of black cords, and the hell of incessant suffering, or sink into the icy

depths of the hell of the crimson lotus and the hell of the great crimson lotus.² The second volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, "When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell, [be confined there for a whole kalpa, and when the kalpa ends, be born there again]. He will keep repeating this cycle for a countless number of kalpas."³

Your late husband has escaped such agonies, for he was a lay supporter of Nichiren, the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra reads, "If someone . . . should enter a great fire, the fire could not burn him. . . . If one were washed away by a great flood and called upon his name, one would immediately find oneself in a shallow place."⁴ It also reads, "The good fortune you gain thereby . . . cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water." How reassuring! How encouraging!

After all, even if one looks for hell in some faraway place, the iron rods of the wardens of hell and the accusing cries of the demon guards do not exist apart from one. This teaching is of prime importance, but I will impart it to you just as Bodhisattva Manjushri explained the secret teaching of the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form to the dragon king's daughter. After hearing it, strive even more earnestly in faith. One who, on hearing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, makes even greater efforts in faith is a true seeker of the way. T'ien-t'ai states, "From the indigo, an even deeper blue."⁵ This passage means that, if one dyes something repeatedly in indigo, it becomes even bluer than the indigo leaves. The Lotus Sutra is like the indigo, and the strength of one's practice is like the deepening blue.

The two characters for hell can be interpreted to mean digging a hole in the ground. Can anyone avoid having a hole dug for them when they die? This is what is called "hell." The flames that

burn one's body are the fires of the hell of incessant suffering. One's wife, children, and relatives vying for position around one's body as they move toward the grave are the wardens and demon guards of hell. The plaintive cries of one's family are the voices of the guards and wardens of hell. One's two-and-a-half-foot-long walking stick is the iron rod of torture in hell. The horses and oxen that carry one's body are the horse-headed and ox-headed demons, and the grave is the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. The eighty-four thousand earthly desires are eighty-four thousand cauldrons in hell. One's body leaves home for the mountain of death, while the river beside which one's filial children stand in grief is the river of three crossings. It is utterly useless to look for hell anywhere else.

Those who embrace the Lotus Sutra, however, can turn all this around. Hell becomes the Land of Tranquil Light; the burning fires of agony become the torch of the wisdom of a Thus Come One of the reward body; the dead person becomes a Thus Come One of the Dharma body; and the fiery inferno, the "room of great pity and compassion"⁶ where a Thus Come One of the manifested body abides. Moreover, the walking stick becomes the walking stick of the true aspect, or the Mystic Law; the river of three crossings becomes the ocean of "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana"; and the mountain of death becomes the towering peak of "earthly desires are enlightenment." Please think of it in this way. Both attaining Buddhahood in one's present form and "opening the door of Buddha wisdom"⁷ refer to realizing this and to awakening to it. Devadatta's changing the Avichi hell into the blissful Land of Tranquil Light, and the dragon king's daughter's attaining Buddhahood without changing her form, were nothing other than this. It is be-

cause the Lotus Sutra saves those who oppose it as well as those who follow it. This is the blessing of the single character *myō*, or mystic.

Bodhisattva Nagarjuna stated, “[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine.”⁸ The Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, “How can one seek the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light anywhere apart from Buddhagaya? This saha world does not exist anywhere outside the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.”⁹ He also said: “The true aspect invariably manifests in all phenomena, and all phenomena invariably manifest in the ten factors. The ten factors invariably manifest in the Ten Worlds, and the Ten Worlds invariably manifest in life and its environment.”¹⁰

The Lotus Sutra reads, “The true aspect of all phenomena [can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature . . . and] their consistency from beginning to end.”¹¹ The “Life Span” chapter states, “It has been immeasurable, boundless [hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas] since I in fact attained Buddhahood.” In this passage, “I” refers to all beings in the Ten Worlds. Because all beings of the Ten Worlds are inherently Buddhas, they dwell in the pure land. The “Expedient Means” chapter reads, “These phenomena are part of an abiding Law, [and] the characteristics of the world are constantly abiding.” Since it is the way of the world that birth and death are eternally unchanging charac-

teristics of life in the three existences of past, present, and future, there is no need to grieve or to be surprised. The single word “characteristic” represents the eight characteristics, or phases, of the Buddha’s existence. Even these eight phases do not transcend the two words birth and death. To be enlightened in this way is referred to as the attainment of Buddhahood in one’s present form by the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

Since your deceased husband was a votary of this sutra, he doubtless attained Buddhahood just as he was. You need not grieve so much over his passing. On the other hand, to grieve is only natural for ordinary people. However, even sages are sometimes sad. Could the lamenting of all the great enlightened disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha at his passing have been meant to show the behavior of ordinary people?

You should by all means perform as much good as you possibly can for the sake of your deceased husband. The words of a wise man of old also teach that “you should base your mind on the ninth consciousness, and carry out your practice in the six consciousnesses.”¹² How reasonable it is too! In this letter I have written my long-cherished teachings. Keep them deep within your heart.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the seventh
month

Reply to the wife of the late Ueno



Background

In the fifth month of the eleventh year of Bun’ei (1274), Nichiren Daishonin left Kamakura and went to live in a small dwelling at the foot of Mount

Minobu. In the seventh month, the Daishonin wrote this letter to the wife of Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, or Ueno. She was the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu,

who had succeeded his father as steward of Ueno in Suruga Province. She had raised nine children after her husband's death in 1265 and was a devoted mother and a sincere follower of the Daishonin. On this occasion she had

sent the Daishonin various offerings to commemorate the tenth anniversary of her husband's death. This letter expresses the Daishonin's appreciation for her thoughtfulness and devotion.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.
2. There are eight hot hells, each with sixteen subsidiary hells. The hell of repeated rebirth for torture is the first of the hot hells. There victims are slashed and pounded with swords and iron staves, whereupon their body immediately regenerates; they thus experience the same suffering repeatedly. The hell of black cords is the second of the hot hells. There the occupants are either sawed in half or slashed with red-hot axes. Suffering there is said to be ten times greater than in the hell of repeated rebirth for torture. Those who have committed the five cardinal sins are said to undergo indescribable torture in the lowest and severest hell, the hell of incessant suffering. The hell of the crimson lotus and the hell of the great crimson lotus are two of the eight cold hells. They are so called because the intense cold there makes one double over until one's back splits open and the bloody flesh blossoms like a crimson lotus flower.
3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, chap. 25. "His name" indicates the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the

World's Sounds. The quotation that follows is from chapter 23.

5. *Great Concentration and Insight*. This appears in Chang-an's preface.

6. A rephrasing of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "Great pity and compassion are the [Thus Come One's] room . . ."

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

8. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

9. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

10. *The Diamond Scalpel*.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

12. The source of this quotation is unknown. Concerning the nine consciousnesses, the first five relate to the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The sixth consciousness integrates the perceptions of the first five and renders them into a coherent image. The ninth, or amalā-consciousness, free from all karmic impurity, is the fundamental purifying force that is the Buddha nature. See also nine consciousnesses in Glossary.

On Recommending This Teaching to Your Lord and Avoiding the Offense of Complicity in Slander



I HAVE received the two thousand coins.

The foremost treasure of sentient beings is none other than life itself. Those who take life are certain to fall into the three evil paths. That is why the wheel-turning kings observed the precept of “not to kill” as the first of the ten good precepts, and why the Buddha taught the five precepts at the beginning of the Hinayana sutras and made “not to kill” the first of them. The Buddha also taught “not to kill” as the first of the ten major precepts in the Mahayana Brahma Net Sutra. The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra is the one that represents the merit of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni’s practice of the precept “not to kill.” Accordingly, those who take life will be abandoned by all the Buddhas of the three existences, and the gods of the six heavens of the world of desire will never protect them. The scholars of our time are aware of this, and I, Nichiren, have a general understanding of it.

The nature of killing varies, however. The offense of the person killed is either heavy or light. If one kills the person who has murdered one’s father, mother, sovereign, or teacher, although the offense remains the same, what would have been a grave offense probably becomes a light one instead. This

is something our contemporary scholars are acquainted with. But even bodhisattvas with their great compassion, if they make offerings to the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, are certain to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. On the other hand, even those who commit the five cardinal sins, if they show animosity toward those enemies, will definitely be reborn in the human or heavenly world. King Sen’yo and King Possessor of Virtue, who had destroyed, respectively, five hundred and countless enemies of the Lotus Sutra, became Shakyamuni Buddha in this world. His disciples such as Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and other countless followers were people who, at that time, were in the vanguard, defeating the enemy, or killing them, injuring them, or rejoicing in the fight. The monk Realization of Virtue became Kashyapa Buddha. He was a votary of the Lotus Sutra of great compassion who, at that time, urged King Possessor of Virtue to attack the enemies of the sutra as if they were the ones who had betrayed his father and mother in a previous lifetime.

Our present day corresponds to that time. If the ruler of our country had accepted what Nichiren said, he could very well have become like the two kings. Yet, in addition to rejecting it,

he has actually sided with the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, so that the entire nation attacks me. From the ruler on down to the common people, all have become slanderers of the Law whose offense exceeds the five cardinal sins. Therefore, all of you are also on the side of the ruler. Although at heart you are of the same mind as Nichiren, since your person is in service to your lord, it would have been extremely difficult for you to have avoided the offense of complicity in slander. How admirable it is that, despite this, you communicated this teaching to your lord and urged him to take faith in it. Even though he may fail to accept it now, you have managed to avoid the offense of complicity.

From now on, you should be careful about what you say. On the other hand,

surely the heavenly gods will protect you. I also will tell them to do so.

Determine to take every possible precaution. Those who hate you will be increasingly vigilant in watching for a chance to do you harm. Put a stop to all drinking parties at night. What dissatisfaction can there be in drinking sake alone with your wife? Do not let down your guard when you attend banquets with others in the daytime. Your enemies will have no opportunity to attack you, apart from your drinking. You cannot be too careful.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the ninth month

Reply to Saemon-no-jo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the ninth month of the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274) to Saemon-no-jo, commonly known as Shijo Kingo, who was one of his leading followers in Kamakura and a samurai in service to the Ema family, a branch of the ruling Hojo clan. The Daishonin praises Shijo Kingo for his courage in venturing to introduce the Daishonin's teaching to his lord, Ema.

The "offense of complicity in slander" in the title refers to the slander that occurs when, even though not committing slander oneself, one makes offerings to enemies of the Law or acts in concert with slanderers, failing to admonish them.

Shijo Kingo had recommended the Daishonin's teachings to Lord Ema around the time of the Daishonin's retirement to Mount Minobu. Like many other believers, Kingo had awak-

ened to a new conviction in faith when the Daishonin, against all odds, returned safely from Sado. While in exile, the Daishonin's prophecy of internal strife, made in his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, had materialized in the form of a power struggle within the ruling Hojo clan, and with the Mongols now readying their forces for attack, the fulfillment of his second prophecy, that of foreign invasion, seemed imminent. Those may have been among the reasons that prompted Shijo Kingo to speak to his lord.

Lord Ema was at that time a follower of the priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple. The Ema family is also said to have built Choraku-ji, a temple of the Pure Land school and one of the seven major temples in Kamakura. Lord Ema resented what he saw as his vassal's presumption in attempting to convert

him. At one point, he even threatened to transfer Kingo to the remote province of Echigo on the Sea of Japan if he did not renounce his faith in the Lotus Sutra. It took three years for the samurai to regain his lord's trust.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin

explains that "not to kill" is first among all Buddhist precepts. In one sense, however, slander of the Lotus Sutra is an even worse offense than killing, for one who opposes the sutra in effect denies the Buddha nature eternally inherent in all living beings.

The Unity of Husband and Wife



AS for false teachings that gouge out the eyes and delude the minds of the entire Japanese populace, in the final analysis, there is none more mistaken than that upheld by the teachers of the True Word school. But let us set this matter aside for now.

Although the ten similes¹ seem to illustrate the relative merit of the Lotus Sutra and all the other sutras, this was not the Buddha's true intention in expounding them. His aim was to compare the votaries of all other sutras with the votary of the Lotus Sutra and to show that the votary of the Lotus Sutra is like the sun and moon, while the votaries of the other sutras are like stars or lanterns.

How do we know this? The eighth simile² is followed by a most vital passage. It reads, "A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings." This twenty-two-character passage is the heart of the entire sutra, the eye of all living beings. Its meaning is that, while the votary of the Lotus Sutra is like the sun and moon, the great king Brahma, or the Buddha, the votaries of the Mahavairochana Sutra are like the stars, the streams and rivers, or like ordinary people.

For this reason, the Buddha surely considers anyone in this world who embraces the Lotus Sutra, whether lay

man or woman, monk or nun, to be the lord of all living beings, and Brahma and Shakra most certainly hold that person in reverence. When I think in this way, my joy is beyond expression.

Moreover, in pondering this sutra passage day and night and reading it morning and evening, I realize that the votary it refers to is not just any practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. Since "a person" in the phrase "a person who can accept and uphold this sutra" literally means any human being, I had thought that it must indicate anyone among the monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen in this world who believe in the Lotus Sutra. This, however, is not so. For, in a subsequent passage where the Buddha again refers to this person, he says, "If there is a woman . . ."

When I, Nichiren, read the sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, I have not the slightest wish to become a woman. One sutra condemns women as messengers of hell. Another describes them as great serpents. Still another likens them to bent and twisted trees. And there is even a sutra that describes them as people who have scorched the seeds of Buddhahood.

Buddhist scriptures are not alone in this regard; non-Buddhist writings also disdain women. Jung Ch'i-ch'i,³ for example, sings in praise of three pleasures, one of which is the pleasure of

not having been born into the world as a woman. It is widely accepted that disaster had its origins in the three women.⁴ Only in the Lotus Sutra do we read that a woman who embraces this sutra not only excels all other women, but also surpasses all men.

Even though she may be slandered by everyone, for a woman, there is ultimately no greater happiness than to be loved by the man she holds dearest. Let others hate you if they will. What have you to complain of, if you are cherished by Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, as well as by Brahma, Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon? As long as you are praised by the Lotus Sutra, what cause have you for discontent?

You say that you have now reached the unlucky age of thirty-three⁵ and for that reason sent offerings. I have presented them before Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra, and the god of the sun, and reported your sincerity to them. A person's body has a left and a right shoulder, on which there are two gods, one called Same Name and the other, Same Birth. These are two deities whom Brahma, Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon have assigned to protect each person. From the time we enter our mother's womb until the end of our life, they accompany us like our shadow or like our eyes. If we commit an evil act or perform a good deed, they report everything to the heavenly gods without omitting even a detail as minute as a dewdrop or a speck of dust. This is related in the Flower Garland Sutra and

is cited by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai in the eighth volume of his *Great Concentration and Insight*.

He states, however, that if a woman's faith is weak, even though she embraces the Lotus Sutra, she will be forsaken.⁶ For example, if a commanding general is fainthearted, his soldiers will become cowards. If a bow is weak, the bowstring will be slack. If the wind is gentle, the waves will never rise high. This all accords with the principles of nature.

Now [your husband] Saemon⁷ is a believer in the Lotus Sutra, without peer among the Buddhist lay believers in Japan. Being married to such a man, you also are foremost among the women of Japan. Because you live for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha surely regards you as equal to the dragon king's daughter. The character for woman implies "to depend." The wisteria depends on the pine tree, and a woman depends on a man. Make Saemon your teacher and be guided in the faith of the Lotus Sutra.

The bad luck of your thirty-third year will turn into the happiness of your thirty-third year. That is what is meant by the passage, "The seven disasters will instantly vanish, and the seven blessings will instantly appear."⁸ You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the first month

Reply to the wife of Shijo Kingo



Background

In the first month of the twelfth year of Bun'ei (1275), Nichigen-nyo, the wife

of Shijo Kingo, informed Nichiren Daishonin that she had turned thirty-

three, an age thought to be unlucky for women, and sent offerings. This letter, dated the twenty-seventh day of the same month, is the Daishonin's reply. In response to Nichigen-nyo's apprehensions, he assures her that a woman who embraces the Lotus Sutra surpasses all other people, and that, if her faith is strong, she will certainly be protected by the Buddhas and Buddhist gods.

The Daishonin praises Shijo Kingo as foremost among all Buddhist lay believers; as his wife, Nichigen-nyo is

also foremost among the women in Japan. "The wisteria depends on the pine tree, and a woman depends on a man" reflects the structure of Japanese society in the medieval period, when a woman's fortunes were largely determined by her husband. What the Daishonin urges here, however, is that Nichigen-nyo follow her husband in faith. This shared faith of husband and wife is the "unity" referred to in this letter's title and forms the ideal basis of marriage.

Notes

1. Ten comparisons set forth in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra to illustrate the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras.

2. The eighth simile states that voice-hearers who have attained the four stages of awakening (that is, stream-winner, once-returned, non-returned, and arhat) and cause-awakened ones are first among all ordinary people; in the same way, the Lotus Sutra is first among all teachings, whether they are expounded by Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or voice-hearers.

3. Jung Ch'i-ch'i (n.d.) was a man of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.). According to *Lieh Tzu*, he told Confucius that he had obtained three pleasures in this world: the first was to have been born a human being, the second was to have been born a man, and the third was to be able to enjoy a long life.

4. Mo Hsi, Ta Chi, and Pao Ssu, who were regarded in China as classic examples

of evil women. They were the favorites of, respectively, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, King Chou of the Yin dynasty, and King Yu of the Chou dynasty, and led these men astray into dissipation and misrule.

5. The idea of unlucky ages derives from the ancient Chinese philosophy of yin and yang. The ages of nineteen and thirty-seven were also considered unlucky for women.

6. *Great Concentration and Insight* reads, "The deities Same Name and Same Birth protect people. If one's faith is strong, then their protection is great." The Daishonin interprets this, applying it to the wife of Shijo Kingo.

7. Saemon was Shijo Kingo's official title.

8. "Seven blessings" means averting or eradicating the seven disasters. See seven disasters in Glossary.

Reply to Niama



I HAVE received the bag of sea laver that you sent. I would also like to express my appreciation for the offering of sea laver from Oama.

This area is called Mount Minobu. Suruga Province lies to the south, and it is more than a hundred *ri* from the coast at Ukishimagahara¹ in that province to this mountain in the district of Hakiri in Kai Province. The route is more difficult than ten times the distance on an ordinary path. The Fuji River,² the swiftest in all Japan, runs from north to south. High mountains rise to the east and west of this river, forming a deep valley where huge rocks stand about everywhere like tall folding-screens. The waters of the river rush through the valley like an arrow shot through a tube by a powerful archer. The river is so swift and rocky that sometimes a boat is smashed to pieces as it travels along the banks or attempts to cross the stream. Coming through this dangerous place, you arrive at a large mountain called the peak of Minobu.

To the east stands the peak of Tenshi; to the south, Takatori; to the west, Shichimen; and to the north, Minobu. It is as though four towering folding-screens had been set up. Climbing these peaks, you see a vast stretch of forest below, while going down to the valleys, you find huge rocks lined up

side by side. The howls of wolves fill the mountains, the chatter of monkeys echoes through the valleys, stags call plaintively to their does, and the cries of cicadas sound shrilly. Here spring flowers bloom in summer, and trees bear autumn fruit in winter. Occasionally you see a woodcutter gathering firewood, and those who visit from time to time are friends of old. Mount Shang where the Four White-Haired Elders retired from the world, and the deep recesses in the mountains where the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove³ secluded themselves, must have been like this place.

Climbing the peak, it looks as if seaweed were growing there, but instead you find only an expanse of ferns. Going down to the valley, you think surely it must be laver growing there, but it is only a dense growth of parsley.

Though I have long since ceased to think about my home, seeing this laver brings back many familiar memories, and I am saddened and find it hard to bear. It is the same kind of laver I saw long ago on the shore at Kataumi, Ichikawa, and Kominato.⁴ I feel an unwarranted resentment that, while the color, shape, and taste of this laver have remained unchanged, my parents have passed away, and I cannot restrain my tears.

But enough of this. I have been asked

to inscribe a Gohonzon for Oama, and I am troubled about it. The reason is as follows. This Gohonzon was never mentioned in the writings of the many Tripitaka masters who traveled from India to China, or in those of the priests who journeyed from China to India. All the objects of devotion ever enshrined in the temples throughout India are described without exception in *The Record of the Western Regions*, *The Biography of the Tripitaka Master of Tā-tz'u-en-ssu Temple*, and *The Transmission of the Lamp*. Nor have I found it mentioned among the objects of devotion of the various temples that were described by those sages who traveled from China to Japan, or by those wise men who went from Japan to China. Since the daily records of countless temples, such as Gango-ji and Shitenno-ji,⁵ the first temples in Japan, and many histories, beginning with *The Chronicles of Japan*, name them without omission, the objects of devotion of those temples are clearly known, but a Gohonzon has never been listed among them.

People say in doubt, "It was probably not expounded in the sutras or treatises. That is why the many wise men have neither painted nor carved images of it." However, the sutras are before their very eyes. Those who so doubt should examine whether or not it is found in the sutras. It is wrong to denounce this object of devotion merely because it was never painted or carved in previous ages.

For example, Shakyamuni Buddha once ascended to the heaven of the thirty-three gods to fulfill his obligations to his deceased mother. But because of the Buddha's transcendental powers, with the exception of the Venerable Maudgalyayana, no one in the entire land of Jambudvipa was aware of it. Thus, even though Buddhism is before their very eyes, if people lack the proper capacity, it will not be revealed, and if the time is not right, it will not

spread. This is a principle of nature. It is as if, for instance, the tides of the ocean were ebbing and flowing in accordance with the time, or the moon in the heavens were waning and waxing.

Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, treasured this Gohonzon in his heart for numberless major world system dust particle kalpas, and even after he appeared in this world, he did not expound it until more than forty years after his first preaching. Even in the Lotus Sutra he did not allude to it in the earlier chapters of the theoretical teaching. He began things in the "Treasure Tower" chapter, he revealed it in the "Life Span" chapter, and he brought things to a close in the "Supernatural Powers" and "Entrustment" chapters.

Bodhisattvas such as Manjushri, who lives in the Golden-colored World, Maitreya, in the palace of the Tushita heaven, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds, on Mount Potalaka, and Bodhisattva Medicine King, who is a disciple of the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue, all vied with one another in asking [the Buddha's permission to propagate the Gohonzon in the Latter Day of the Law], but he refused. The Buddha declared: "Those bodhisattvas are known for their excellent wisdom and profound learning, but since they have only recently begun to hear the Lotus Sutra, their understanding is still limited. Thus they would not be able to endure the great difficulties of the latter age. My true disciples I have kept hidden in the depths of the earth for numberless major world system dust particle kalpas. I will entrust it to them." So saying, the Buddha summoned Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the other bodhisattvas in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter and entrusted them with the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo, the heart of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Then the Buddha said: "Listen care-

fully. You must not propagate it in the first millennium of the Former Day of the Law or in the second millennium of the Middle Day following my death. In the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, slanderous monks will fill the land of Jambudvīpa, so that all the heavenly gods will demonstrate their rage, comets will appear in the sky, and the earth will quake like the movement of huge waves. Innumerable disasters and calamities, such as drought, fires, floods, gales, epidemics, famine, and war, will all occur at once. The people of Jambudvīpa will don armor and take up bows and staves, but since none of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or benevolent deities will be able to help them, they will all die and fall like rain into the hell of incessant suffering. At this very time, rulers can save their countries and the people be freed from calamities and in their next life escape the great fires of hell if they embrace and believe in this great mandala of the five characters.”

Though Nichiren is not Bodhisattva Superior Practices, believing that his already having attained a general understanding of this teaching is perhaps the design of that bodhisattva, he has been declaring it for these more than twenty years. When one resolves to propagate it, one will meet difficulties, as the sutra states: “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?”⁶ and “It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe.”⁷ Of the three powerful enemies predicted in the sutra, the first indicates, in addition to the sovereign, district and village stewards, lords of manors, and the ordinary populace. Believing the charges leveled by the second and third enemies, who are priests, these will curse or vilify the votary of the Lotus Sutra or attack him with swords and staves.

Though it is a remote place, Tojo Village in Awa Province is like the center of Japan because the Sun Goddess resides there. Though in ancient times she lived in Ise Province,⁸ when the emperors came to have deep faith in Hachiman and the Kamo shrines,⁹ and neglected the Sun Goddess, she became enraged. At that time, Minamoto no Yoritomo, the general of the right, wrote a pledge and ordered Aoka no Kodayu¹⁰ to enshrine her in the outer shrine of Ise. Perhaps because Yoritomo fulfilled the goddess’s wish, he became the shogun who ruled all of Japan. This man then decided on Tojo District as the residence of the Sun Goddess. That may be why this goddess no longer lives in Ise but in Tojo District in Awa Province. This is similar to the case of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, who, in ancient times, resided at Dazaifu, but later moved to Mount Otokoyama in Yamashiro Province, and now lives at Tsurugaoka in Kamakura, in Sagami Province.¹¹

Out of all the places in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, Nichiren began to propagate this correct teaching in Tojo District, in Awa Province, in Japan. Accordingly, the Tojo steward became my enemy, but his clan has now been half destroyed.

Because Oama is insincere and foolish, sometimes she believes, but other times she doubts. She is irresolute. When Nichiren incurred the wrath of the government authorities,¹² she discarded the Lotus Sutra. This is what I meant before, when I told her whenever we met that the Lotus Sutra is “the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.”¹³

If I present her with this Gohonzon for her salvation because I am greatly indebted to her, the ten demon daughters will certainly think I am a very partial priest. On the other hand, if just as the sutra says I do not give it to a person without faith, even if I am not

partial, perhaps, not realizing her own fault, she will harbor a grudge against me. I have explained the reason for my refusal in detail in a letter to Acharya Suke.¹⁴ Please send for the letter and show it to her.

You are of the same family as Oama, but you have demonstrated the sincerity of your faith. Because you have often sent offerings to me, both to the province of Sado and to this province, and because your resolve does not seem to wane, I will give you the Gohonzon. But I still worry whether you will maintain your faith to the end, and feel as if I were treading on thin ice or facing a drawn sword. I will write to you again in more detail.

Even though it is said that not only

Oama regrets, but in Kamakura, among the 999 out of 1,000 people who gave up their faith when I was arrested, perhaps since public feeling has now abated, there are some who regret as well, these could never be like her to me.

Please explain thoroughly that no matter how sorry I feel for her, since flesh is no substitute for bone,¹⁵ I do not intend to grant her request because she has turned against the Lotus Sutra.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the second
month

Reply to Niiama



Background

This letter was written in the second month of the twelfth year of Bun'ei (1275), the year after Nichiren Daishonin returned from his exile to Sado and retired to Mount Minobu. It was the Daishonin's response to a letter from Niiama and her husband's mother (or possibly, grandmother), Oama, requesting that the Daishonin inscribe a Gohonzon for them. In contrast to Oama (elder nun), the letter's recipient was called Niiama (younger nun).

Oama had been the wife of Hojo Tomotoki, the younger brother of the third regent, Yasutoki. Tomotoki was also the lord of Nagasa District in Awa Province, where the Daishonin was born. Tojo Village, which later itself became a district, was in this area. Niiama is said to have been the wife of either Tomotoki's son or grandson. Both women were widows and lived

together in Tojo. The Daishonin's family was apparently indebted to Oama for some kindness she had extended to them. Once when Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of the same area, put pressure on Oama in an effort to bring Seichoji temple under his control, the Daishonin exerted himself on her behalf in order to repay his obligation and to thwart Kagenobu's attempt.

Soon after the Daishonin proclaimed the correct teaching for the Latter Day of the Law, Oama became his follower. She was not steadfast, however, and abandoned her faith around the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. After the Daishonin situated himself at Minobu, she again changed her mind and asked him to grant her a Gohonzon. He refused, knowing her faith to be unstable. He did, however, bestow a Gohonzon upon Niiama.

Notes

1. An area in eastern Suruga Province (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) extending from the southern foot of Mount Ashitaka near Numazu to Suzukawa in Fuji City.

2. A river to the west of Mount Fuji flowing south into Suruga Bay. It is about 140 km long.

3. Shan T'ao, Hsi K'ang, Juan Chi, Juan Hsien, Wang Jung, Hsiang Hsiu, and Liu Ling. At the end of the Wei dynasty (220–265), because the government was corrupt and chaotic, they are said to have retired to a bamboo grove where they pursued the study of the philosophy of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu.

4. Places along the Pacific coast in Awa, the Daishonin's native province.

5. A temple of the Flower Garland school, Gango-ji is one of the seven major temples of Nara. The construction of this temple was begun in 588 by the court official Soga no Umako and was completed in 596. Shitenno-ji is the oldest extant Japanese Buddhist temple. Founded by Prince Shotoku in 587, it is located in what is now Osaka. It is said that Shotoku built it to demonstrate his gratitude for his victory with Soga no Umako over Mononobe no Moriya, and that he enshrined there statues of the four heavenly kings (Jpn shitenno).

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

8. Ise Province is in present-day Mie Prefecture; it is the site of the Grand Shrines of Ise. The inner and outer shrines enshrine

the ancestral gods of the imperial family.

9. Hachiman is a major Shinto deity, adopted by Buddhism as a protective deity. The Kamo shrines are two independent but closely related Shinto shrines in Kyoto.

10. Aoka no Kodayu (n.d.) was the first attendant of the shrine erected in Tojo Village by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199) to honor the Sun Goddess.

11. The original shrine to Hachiman was near Dazaifu, a local headquarters of the government, in Kyushu. The earliest extant reference to that shrine was recorded in 737. In 859, Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine was erected on Mount Otokoyama, south of Kyoto. Later, since Hachiman was adopted by the Minamoto family as their patron deity, he was identified with military prowess. Consequently, in 1191, Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura government, established Hachiman Shrine at Tsurugaoka in Kamakura.

12. Reference is to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, an unsuccessful attempt to execute the Daishonin on the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

14. Acharya Suke is believed to have been a follower of the Daishonin and a confidant of the lord of Tojo District. According to another view, he was among the priests of Seicho-ji temple, where the Daishonin had entered the priesthood.

15. The Daishonin may be comparing "flesh" to personal feelings, and "bone" to Buddhist principles.

The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith



THIS is in regard to the passage “This sutra is hard to uphold.”¹ According to Acharya Ben,² you said to him: “I have been practicing the Lotus Sutra correctly since last year, when you told me that those who embrace this sutra will ‘enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.’³ Instead, however, great hardships have showered down on me like rain.” Is this true, or did he give me a false report? In either case, I will take advantage of this opportunity to resolve any doubts you may have.

A passage from the Lotus Sutra reads that it is “the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.”⁴ Many hear about and accept this sutra, but when great obstacles arise, just as they were told would happen, few remember it and bear it firmly in mind. To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith. Those who uphold this sutra should be prepared to meet difficulties. It is certain, however, that they will “quickly attain the unsurpassed Buddha way.”⁵ To “continue” means to cherish Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the most important principle for all the Buddhas of the three existences. The

sutra reads, “We will protect and uphold what the Buddha has entrusted to us.”⁶ The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai stated, “One accepts because of one’s power of faith and continues because of one’s power of constant thought.”⁷ Another part of the sutra reads, “This sutra is hard to uphold; if one can uphold it even for a short while I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas.”⁸

A fire burns higher when logs are added, and a strong wind makes a kalakula grow larger. The pine tree lives for ten thousand years, and therefore its boughs become bent and twisted. The votary of the Lotus Sutra is like the fire and the kalakula, while his persecutions are like the logs and the wind. The votary of the Lotus Sutra is the Thus Come One whose life span is immeasurable; no wonder his practice is hindered, just as the pine tree’s branches are bent or broken. From now on, always remember the words “This sutra is hard to uphold.”

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixth day of the third month in
the twelfth year of Bun’ei (1275),
cyclical sign *kinoto-i*

To Shijo Kingo

Background

This short letter is one of thirty-seven still extant writings addressed by Nichiren Daishonin to his faithful disciple Shijo Kingo. Kingo was under great pressure from his lord, Ema, and other

fellow warriors to renounce his support for the Daishonin. This letter was written to encourage Kingo and to strengthen his resolve.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.
2. Nissho (1221–1323), one of the six senior priest-disciples of the Daishonin.
3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.
4. Ibid., chap. 10.
5. Ibid., chap. 11.
6. Ibid., chap. 13.
7. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.
8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

The Teaching, Practice, and Proof



DURING the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, those who embraced Hinayana or provisional Mahayana Buddhism as the basis of their faith and practiced these teachings in earnest could generally obtain the benefit of enlightenment. However, though they believed that this benefit had come directly from the sutras on which they had chosen to rely, in light of the Lotus Sutra, no benefit ever originated from any such provisional teachings. The reason [they were able to attain enlightenment] is that all these people had already established a bond with the Lotus Sutra during the lifetime of the Buddha, though the results they gained varied according to whether or not their receptivity had fully matured. Those whose capacity to understand the Lotus Sutra was fully mature attained enlightenment during the lifetime of the Buddha, while those whose capacity was inferior and immature [could not attain enlightenment at that time. But they] reappeared in the Former Day of the Law, and by embracing provisional Mahayana teachings such as the Vimalakirti, Brahma Excellent Thought, Meditation, Benevolent Kings, and Wisdom sutras, they gained the same proof of enlightenment as that obtained by those of higher capacity during the Buddha's lifetime.

Thus the Former Day of the Law

possessed all three: teaching, practice, and proof, whereas in the Middle Day of the Law, there were teaching and practice but no longer any proof. Now in the Latter Day of the Law, only the teaching remains; there is neither practice nor proof. There is no longer a single person who has formed a relationship with Shakyamuni Buddha. Those who possessed the capacity to gain enlightenment through either the provisional or true Mahayana sutras have long since disappeared. In this impure and evil age, Nam-myohorenge-kyo of the "Life Span" chapter, the heart of the essential teaching, should be planted as the seeds of Buddhahood for the first time in the hearts of all those who commit the five cardinal sins and slander the correct teaching. This is what is indicated in the "Life Span" chapter where it states, "I will leave this good medicine here. You should take it and not worry that it will not cure you."

In the past, in the Middle Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, not a single person knew of the three treasures. However, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging appeared, and to all living beings he declared the teaching of twenty-four characters that the Buddha Awesome Sound King had expounded. All those who heard this twenty-four-character teaching,

without a single exception, were later reborn with Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, and were at last able to obtain the benefit of enlightenment. This was solely because they had already received the seeds of Buddhahood when they first heard the teaching. The same thing occurs in our present era. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's age was the Middle Day of the Law, whereas this age is the defiled Latter Day of the Law. He was a practitioner at the initial stage of rejoicing, and I, Nichiren, am an ordinary practitioner at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. He sowed the seeds of Buddhahood with the twenty-four characters, while I do so with only the five characters [of Myoho-enge-kyo]. Although the ages are different, the process of attaining Buddhahood is exactly the same.¹

Question: You have mentioned above that the teaching, practice, and proof are not all present in each of the three periods of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. If so, how do you explain the Great Teacher Miao-lo's statement, "The beginning of the Latter Day of the Law will not be without inconspicuous benefit, for it is the time when the great teaching will be propagated"?²

Answer: The meaning of this passage is that those who obtained benefit during the Former and Middle Days of the Law received "conspicuous" benefit, because the relationship they formed with the Lotus Sutra during the lifetime of the Buddha had finally matured. On the other hand, those born today in the Latter Day of the Law receive the seeds of Buddhahood for the first time, and their benefit is therefore "inconspicuous." The teaching, practice, and proof of this age differ greatly from those of Hinayana, provisional Mahayana, the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, or the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. There is no one now who

can gain benefits [like those of the Former and Middle Days of the Law]. According to Miao-lo's commentary, the benefits in the Latter Day are inconspicuous, and people can therefore neither perceive nor understand them.

Question: Is there any sutra passage which says that inconspicuous benefits are limited to the Latter Day of the Law?

Answer: A passage from the "Medicine King" chapter in the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra reads: "This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa. If a person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra, then his illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age nor death." The Great Teacher Miao-lo says: "To regard the last five-hundred-year period after the Buddha's passing as the time when no one can attain benefit is a superficial viewpoint. The beginning of the Latter Day of the Law will not be without inconspicuous benefit, for it is the time when the great teaching will be propagated. The last five-hundred-year period corresponds to that time."³

Question: The passages you have quoted indicate that the propagation of the Lotus Sutra is limited to the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law. Yet the provisional Mahayana sutras say that their practices will still be appropriate throughout the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. How do you reply to this?

Answer: The above-mentioned commentary states that such an interpretation of the last five-hundred-year period is "superficial." From a more profound viewpoint, the Lotus Sutra will spread throughout the ten thousand years of the Latter Day. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai comments on the previously quoted sutra passage, stating: "It is not only the people who live during the Buddha's lifetime who obtain great benefits. In the last five-hundred-

year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future.”⁴ Does this annotation suggest anything other than the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law? The “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter in the sixth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra . . .” Also the “Peaceful Practices” chapter reads, “In the Latter Day of the Law, if one wishes to preach this sutra . . .” These quotations refer to [the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in] the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. All the Buddha’s teachings other than the Lotus Sutra are covered by his declaration: “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.”⁵ Moreover, there are some cases where the sutras have been revised according to the understanding of those who compiled them and therefore cannot be trusted.

The scholars of the various schools remain oblivious to the fact that the Buddha sowed the seeds of enlightenment when he expounded the Lotus Sutra in the past. How foolish they are! Quite unaware of the distant past, major world system dust particle kalpas ago or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, they abandon the wonderful teaching that is pure and perfect, and sink again into the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. It is pitiful beyond description that, though born in a land where the people’s capacity to receive the perfect teaching is fully mature, they vainly fall back into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. They are no different from a person who arrives at the bejeweled K’un-lun Mountains only to return to his impoverished country without a single gem, or one who enters a forest of sandalwood trees, yet goes back to the shards and rubble of one’s own land without ever plucking the aromatic champaka⁶ blossom. The

third volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, “Suppose that someone coming from a land of famine should suddenly encounter a great king’s feast.”⁷ And the sixth volume reads, “This, my land, remains safe and tranquil . . . My pure land is not destroyed.”⁸

In your letter you mentioned a difficult question put to you as to the assertion that people can partially achieve the way through their practice of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. In reply, you should quote the third volume of the Nirvana Sutra that reads, “Good men, study and practice [until you learn that the three treasures are one and eternal].” Further, quote the third volume of *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* that comments on this passage where it states, “Only those who have heard the Mahayana teachings in the remote past [can attain the way through practicing the Hinayana teachings],” and “Those who gained the way through the practice of the various sutras expounded before the Lotus were able to do so only because of their initial practice in the remote past.”⁹ Thus you should make clear that the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings provide no benefit of enlightenment whatsoever. Then explain that the same principle holds true in the time of propagation following the Buddha’s passing. All who obtained proof of enlightenment in the Former and Middle Days of the Law did so solely because of the relationship they had formed with the Lotus Sutra during the Buddha’s lifetime.

Should your opponents repeatedly insist that the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings provide a path to enlightenment, cite to them the Buddha’s own declaration in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra: “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” Ordinary people like ourselves at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth can expect to attain Buddhahood by relying on the teachings of the Bud-

dha. The words of the various teachers are in themselves of no use at all. The Buddha gave strict counsel against following them with his statement in the Nirvana Sutra, "Rely on the Law and not upon persons." Remind your opponents of this, and repeatedly cite the passage, "I have not yet revealed the truth," to refute their arguments. However, do not carelessly cite such passages as "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]"¹⁰ and "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines [and now must reveal the truth]."¹¹ Rather, keep these teachings in your heart, and never quote them without good reason.

Another difficult question you mentioned concerns the assertion that attaining the way indicated in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and that of the Lotus Sutra are ultimately the same. This question arises because the Meditation Sutra says that those who rely upon it will be reborn in the Pure Land. In reply, you should say that similar assertions can be found in other sutras, and cite again the teaching, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth," and others, such as "[The Buddha preaches so as an expedient means], merely employing provisional names and terms."¹² If they further contend that the Meditation Sutra and the Lotus Sutra were expounded during the same period of time, you should deal with this by quoting the passage from the "Teacher of the Law" chapter in which the Buddha says, "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, [this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand]." You can also quote relevant passages from the third volume of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*¹³ or the third volume of *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*¹⁴ Be sure, however, that you con-

sider these sutras and commentaries well, and do not quote them haphazardly.

In your letter you also mentioned the claims of the True Word school. First, ask upon which scriptural passage the Great Teacher Kobo based his denunciation of the Lotus Sutra as a doctrine of childish theory and of Shakyamuni as being still in the region of darkness. If they reply by citing some sutra, ask them which of the Buddhas of the three existences is represented by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. Then, ask them if they are aware of the deceit perpetrated by such priests as the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih. Tell them how Shan-wu-wei deceived the priest I-hsing when he dictated to him his commentary on the Mahavairochana Sutra.¹⁵ Although not the slightest indication of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is to be found in the Mahavairochana Sutra, this false interpretation stating that it is was put forth when the sutra was introduced to China. As regards the most perverted of their distortions, ask them if there is documentary proof in the teachings of any of the Buddhas of the three existences that permits them to tread on the head of Vairochana Buddha.¹⁶ If they retort in some way or other, then tell them about the Great Arrogant Brahman who used statues [of the three deities of Brahmanism¹⁷ and of the Buddha Shakyamuni] as the legs of his preaching platform. On other points, ask them in the same way just which sutra or treatise they can provide as proof of their assertions, and for the rest, debate with them as I have always taught you. No matter which school you may debate, if the teachings of the True Word school are mentioned, clearly refute that school's distorted views.

Next, as to the assertions of the Nembutsu school: The Dharma Teacher

T'an-luan defines the Nembutsu as the easy-to-practice way and the practices of the other schools as the difficult-to-practice way. Tao-ch'ò defines the Nembutsu teachings as the Pure Land teachings and all the other teachings as the Sacred Way teachings. Shan-tao distinguishes between correct and sundry practices, while Honen enjoins people to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon"¹⁸ all sutras other than those relating to Amida's Pure Land. Have those who cite these statements identify the exact sutra or treatise from which they are derived. Of sutras there are of course two types—true and provisional. Treatises can also be divided into two types—those that discuss Hinayana, Mahayana, or Buddhism in general, and those dealing with specific sutras or chapters. Moreover, there are those treatises that are faithful to the sutras and those that distort the sutras. One should clearly master these distinctions. Ask them if, from among the three Pure Land sutras, they can point out any passage verifying the above-mentioned assertions. Everyone chants the Nembutsu and praises Amida Buddha, but ask your opponents as before if there exists any teaching that affords a solid basis for this. In short, let them cite the sutra or treatise on which the adherents of the Nembutsu school in both China and Japan base their denunciation of the Lotus Sutra as a sundry practice, urging people to discard, close, ignore, and abandon it. When they fail to cite any passage that clearly validates these statements, tell them that, just as expounded in the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the grave offense they commit by slandering the true teaching on the basis of provisional teachings will surely plunge them into the great citadel of the Avichi hell, where they will be reborn again and again for a countless number of kalpas. Let the audience judge for themselves the seriousness of the offense that derives from following

the partial and mistaken doctrines of their school and forsaking the very teaching that all Buddhas of the three existences verified with the words: "All that you [Shakyamuni Buddha] have expounded is the truth!"¹⁹ Could any thinking person fail to discern which is true and which is false? Then, strictly denounce the teachers of their school.

How naive are those who cling only to the stump²⁰ of one sutra without knowing which are superior and which inferior among all the sutras! Even if one cannot [read all the sutras and] discern this for oneself, there can be no mistaking that the Lotus Sutra is the only sutra whose truth was attested to by Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas who are Shakyamuni's emanations. Should one nonetheless view the Lotus Sutra as false and misread the Buddha's words "I have not yet revealed the truth" as "I have already revealed the truth," one's distorted vision would be inferior even to that of cattle or sheep. Exactly what is meant by the passage in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter: "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand"? Does the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra not make it clear that Shakyamuni taught the practice of Buddhist austerities spanning myriads of kalpas before declaring, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth"? These passages are nothing less than the Buddha's own statements of the relative superiority of the various sutras he expounded during his some fifty years of teaching. The relative superiority of the sutras corresponds to whether or not they lead to Buddhahood.

Jikaku and Chisho held the view that, although the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are equal in terms of principle, the latter is superior in terms of practice. Shan-tao and

Honen maintained that no practice other than the Nembutsu suits the capacity of the people in the Latter Day. The Zen school claims to represent a special transmission apart from the sutras. Their views are as distorted as the eyesight of a person who mistakes east for west, or who cannot tell north from south. Their understanding is inferior to that of cattle or sheep, and their teachings are as ambiguous as a bat [that appears to be neither animal nor bird]. How could they not feel terror at defying the Buddha's words: "Rely on the Law and not upon persons" and "[If a person fails to have faith but] instead slanders this sutra, [immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world]"?²¹ They must have been possessed by evil demons, or become drunk on the bad liquor of inner darkness.

Nothing is more certain than actual proof. Look at the sudden death of Shan-wu-wei and the unexpected disaster that beset I-hsing, or how Kobo and Jikaku died. Could they have met such horrible fates if they were actually votaries of the correct teaching? How do you read the Meditation on the Buddha's Ocean-like Characteristics Sutra²² and other sutras, or Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's treatise²³ that describes the state of death? The Meditation Master I-hsing incorporated Shan-wu-wei's deceptions into his explanation of the Mahavairochana Sutra. Kobo denounced the Lotus Sutra as a doctrine of childish theory. Jikaku contended that the Mahavairochana Sutra was equal to the Lotus Sutra in terms of principle, but superior in terms of practice. T'an-luan and Tao-ch'o proclaimed that the Nembutsu alone suits the people's capacity in the Latter Day. Such views are commonplace in the false teachings of schools founded on provisional sutras. No one would wish to die as these people did. Say these things mildly but

firmly in a quiet voice with a calm gaze and an even expression.

In your letter you asked how to treat questions regarding the degree of benefit afforded by the various sutras other than the Lotus Sutra. First of all, state that the benefit of any of those sutras is incomplete. Then, ask your opponents if any of the sutras upon which their schools are based were confirmed as true and valid by Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Say that you have never heard of such, and that Many Treasures and the Buddhas who were Shakyamuni's emanations assembled to testify to the truth of the Lotus Sutra; how could they possibly attest to any other sutra? A Buddha never states two contrary things. Next, ask if there is any other sutra that mentions the six difficult and nine easy acts. Though there may be some among the sutras fabricated by people after the Buddha's passing that do so, there is not a single word or phrase in any other of Shakyamuni Buddha's entire fifty years of teachings that describes them. You should make all this clear.

Do the other sutras reveal that the Buddha originally attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago? Do they tell how the people formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra when it was expounded major world system dust particle kalpas ago? What other sutra teaches that one can gain immeasurable benefit by arousing even a single moment of faith in and understanding of it, or that incalculable benefits will accrue even to the fiftieth person who rejoices upon hearing of it? The other sutras do not claim that even the first, second, third, or tenth listener can obtain such great benefit, let alone the fiftieth. Moreover, they do not speak of even one or two dust particle kalpas, let alone such vast reaches of time as numberless major world system dust particle

kalpas or major world system dust particle kalpas. Only through the Lotus Sutra was Buddhahood opened to the people of the two vehicles, and the lowly dragon king's daughter enabled to attain enlightenment in her present form. All the other Mahayana sutras such as the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras fail to expound these wonders. [T'ien-t'ai made this quite clear when he declared that] the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles was put forth for the first time in the Lotus Sutra. We may be certain that, unlike Kobo or Jikaku, a learned man as enlightened as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai could not have fabricated any theories that were not based on the words or meaning of the sutras. The Lotus Sutra predicts that the evil Devadatta will attain enlightenment in a land called Heavenly Way, but what other sutra makes such an assertion? Even leaving all such questions aside, what other sutra reveals the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, or teaches that even plants and trees can attain Buddhahood? T'ien-t'ai explains that [all things having color or fragrance are] manifestations of the Middle Way, and Miao-lo adds that people are shocked and harbor doubts [when they hear for the first time the doctrine that insentient beings possess the Buddha nature].²⁴ Can their interpretations be classed with the distorted views of Jikaku and Chisho, who claim that the Mahavairochana Sutra is equal to the Lotus Sutra in terms of principle, but superior in terms of practice? T'ien-t'ai is one of the teachers who kept the torch of Buddhism burning as it passed through India and China to Japan. He is the sage who gained an awakening at P'u-hsien Monastery;²⁵ he is also the reincarnation of a bodhisattva and attained enlightenment by means of his inherent wisdom. How could he possibly have formulated any interpretations not based on the sutras or treatises?

Is any single great matter to be found in the other sutras? The Lotus Sutra contains twenty outstanding principles. Among those twenty, the most vital is the "Life Span" chapter's revelation that the Buddha first attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. People may well wonder what this revelation means. Explain that it teaches that common people like ourselves, who have been submerged in the sufferings of birth and death since time without beginning and who never so much as dreamed of reaching the shore of enlightenment, become the Thus Come Ones who are originally enlightened and endowed with the three bodies. That is, it reveals the ultimate principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. From this perspective, you should firmly establish that the Lotus Sutra is the most profound among all the Buddha's teachings.

You may bring forth this point in an official debate, but not during personal discussions. Should you indiscriminately mention it to whomever you meet, on any occasion or at any time, you will certainly incur punishment from the Buddhas of the three existences. This is the doctrine that I have always referred to as my own inner realization.

Can even the slightest indication of this doctrine be found in the Mahavairochana Sutra? The three Pure Land sutras state that about ten kalpas have passed since Amida Buddha attained enlightenment. Can this possibly compare with the Lotus Sutra's revelation above? Meet each argument with rebuttals such as these, citing each quotation in its proper context. Then tell your opponents to stop and consider this: It is precisely because the Lotus Sutra is so remarkably sublime that Many Treasures came from far away to testify to its truth, and that the emanation Buddhas assembled to join him. Then Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and

all the other Buddhas attested that the sutra is free from falsehood, extending their tongues all the way to the Brahma heaven.²⁶ Bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds appeared from beneath the earth and were specifically entrusted with the transmission of Myoho-enge-kyo to all living beings throughout the land of Jambudvīpa in this impure and evil latter age. Was it not precisely because these bodhisattvas were the Buddha's envoys that he denied all of the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of great bodhisattvas, saying, "Leave off, good men!"²⁷ If, as is the way with the adherents of misleading schools, they demand that you cite documentary evidence for these statements, quote the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and the ninth volume of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* and the ninth volume of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* which clarify the three reasons for the rejection of the bodhisattvas from other worlds²⁸ and the three reasons for the emergence of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.²⁹ Herein lies the matter of utmost importance for Nichiren and his followers.

Adherents of the various schools may attempt to attack you by citing the passage from *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* that states, "If one denounces the teachings others follow out of love for one's own, then even if one is the practitioner who observes the precepts, one will never escape the pains of hell." Ask them whether they know why Nagarjuna wrote this admonition, and if Nagarjuna could possibly have been ignorant of how serious an offense it is to slander the true teaching by clinging to provisional teachings. He stated, "The various sutras are not secret teachings; only the Lotus Sutra is secret."³⁰ He declared that the Lotus Sutra alone is the seed of

enlightenment, likening it to a great physician who can change poison into medicine. Is it possible that he later regretted having said these things, and therefore wrote that, if one denounces the teachings others follow out of love for one's own, one will be destined to fall into the evil paths? If so, he would have been directly contradicting the truthful words of the Lotus Sutra, in which the Buddha states, "Honestly discarding expedient means" and "Not accepting a single verse of the other sutras."³¹ This is hardly conceivable. Nagarjuna was a bodhisattva who appeared in accordance with Shakyamuni Buddha's prediction, as well as a scholar in the direct lineage of the Buddha's teaching. He may well have written this admonition in his treatise because he foresaw that such priests as Kobo and T'an-luan would slander the Lotus Sutra, the teaching that befits this age of the Latter Day of the Law. You should scoff at your opponents for not knowing the meaning of the words they cite. Tell them: "Are you yourselves not followers of those destined to fall into the evil paths? How pitiful! Are you not to be counted among those who will suffer for countless kalpas to come?"

In his appeal to the lord of Hoko-ji,³² Ryokan of the Precepts school stated as follows: "Of late I, Ninsho, have been most vexed by the priest called Nichiren who proclaims that those observing the precepts are destined to fall into hell. What sutra or treatise states such a thing? This is the first question. Moreover, though there is scarcely anyone in Japan today, whether of high or low rank, who does not chant the Nembutsu, he asserts that the Nembutsu forms the karmic cause for falling into the hell of incessant suffering. On what sutra is this based? I would like to ask Nichiren what reliable proof he has to justify this statement. This is the second question."

He sent the government six such questions concerning in general whether or not enlightenment can be achieved through the practice of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. If Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji again lets it be known, as he claimed in his appeal, that he desires to meet and debate with me, submit a petition to the government [requesting a public debate]. Say to Ryokan: "My teacher Nichiren incurred the wrath of the government and was exiled to the province of Sado in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271). In the first month of the eleventh year of Bun'ei,³³ he was pardoned and returned to Kamakura. On his return he remonstrated with Hei no Saemon about various matters and then secluded himself deep in the mountains of Kai Province. He has stated that, even if he were to be summoned by the emperor or empress, he will never emerge from the mountains to debate his teachings with the scholars of other schools. Therefore, although I, his disciple, am a mere novice and my knowledge of his teachings amounts to less than a hair from the hides of nine head of cattle, if anyone comes forth to state their doubts about the Lotus Sutra, I will do my best to reply to them." Then, explain my teachings in direct response to your opponent's questions.

Moreover, when you must reply to the six difficult questions posed in Ryokan's appeal, bear in mind, as I have always said, that Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly. As you debate the relative superiority and depth of the Lotus Sutra and other sutras, and whether or not they lead to enlightenment, remember that even the Shakyamuni Buddha described in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings or in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is no one to be in awe of; even less so are bodhisattvas at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment. Followers of schools based on the provisional teachings are of still less account. As

you debate, bear in mind that because we embrace the Lotus Sutra our position is like that of the great heavenly king Brahma, and it is not at all wrong to regard those who hold to lesser teachings as our subjects or even as barbarians.

The adherents of the Precepts school do violence to the precepts that exceeds even the devastation of a crumbling mountain or a flooding river. Far from attaining Buddhahood, they will not even be reborn in the world of human or heavenly beings. The Great Teacher Miao-lo states, "If one observes but a single precept, one will be born as a human being. But if one breaks even a single precept, one will instead fall into the three evil paths."³⁴ Who among Ninsho's followers in the Precepts school embraces even one of the prohibitions set forth in the Observance of the Precepts Sutra, the Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sutra, and other sutras, or truly observes the rules of discipline expounded in the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras, such as the Agama? Without doubt they are all destined to "fall into the three evil paths," or even sink into the hell of incessant suffering. How pitiful they are! You should tell them so and reproach them by citing the "Treasure Tower" chapter's explanation of what "observing the precepts and practicing [the rules of discipline]"³⁵ truly means. Then, pausing briefly, tell them that the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo, the heart of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, contain the benefit amassed through the countless practices and meritorious deeds of all Buddhas throughout the three existences. Then, how can these five characters not include the benefits obtained by observing all of the Buddhas' precepts? Once the practitioner embraces this perfectly endowed wonderful precept, he cannot break it, even if he should try. It is therefore called the precept of the diamond chalice.³⁶ Only by

observing this wonderful precept have the Buddhas of the three existences become Buddhas endowed with the three bodies—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body, which are each without beginning or end. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai wrote of this, "In the various teachings, he [the Buddha] kept this secret and did not transmit it."³⁷ Now in the Latter Day of the Law, any person—whether wise or ignorant, priest or lay believer, or of high or low position—who embraces Myoho-enge-kyo and practices it in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, cannot fail to gain the fruit of Buddhahood. For precisely this reason, in reference to the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the impure and evil age after the Buddha's passing, the sutra declares, "Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way."³⁸ On the other hand, those who practice the provisional teachings against the admonition of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will definitely fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Now that so wondrous a precept has been revealed, none of the precepts expounded in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings or in the theoretical teaching have the slightest power to benefit people. Since they provide not the slightest benefit, it is totally useless to observe them, even for a single day.

At the time when the wonderful precept of the essential teaching is to spread, there will doubtless be omens never witnessed in any previous age. The great earthquake of the Shoka era and the huge comet of the Bun'ei era³⁹ were two such signs. But who among our contemporaries, what school of Buddhism, is actually propagating the object of devotion and the sanctuary of the essential teaching? Not a single person carried out this task during the 2,220 years and more following the Buddha's passing. Now, more than 700 years after Buddhism was introduced

to Japan in the reign of the thirtieth emperor Kimmei, the great Law never heard of in previous ages is spreading throughout Japan. How reassuring it is to know that not only the people here, but those of India, China, and the entire land of Jambudvīpa will be able to attain Buddhahood!

Concerning the teaching, practice, and proof that I stressed earlier, [with regard to this great Law] the Latter Day of the Law possesses all three, just as the Former Day of the Law did with regard to Shakyamuni's teaching. Superior Practices, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, has already made his advent in this world, so the great Law, the essence of the Lotus Sutra that was entrusted to him, will spread without fail. For all the living beings of Japan, China, and the other countries of the world, it will be an event as rare as seeing the udumbara flower blossom to herald the advent of a gold-wheel-turning king. In the first forty-two years of his preaching life, as well as in the fourteen chapters of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha kept this great Law secret and did not teach it, expounding it only in the revelation portion of the essential teaching.⁴⁰

I have heard that, when the priest Ryokan knew I was far away in a distant province, he told everyone how he wished I would hasten to Kamakura so that he might debate with me and dispel the people's doubts. Demand to know if praising oneself and disparaging others⁴¹ in this fashion is one of the precepts his school practices. What is more, when I actually did return to Kamakura, Ryokan shut his gates and forbade anyone to enter. At times, he even feigned illness, saying that he had caught a cold. Tell him, "I am not Nichiren but merely one of his disciples. Though I speak with a bit of an accent and am rather dull-witted, I fully agree with his assertion that the

Precepts school is traitorous.” When in public debate, although the teachings that you advocate are perfectly consistent with the truth, you should never on that account be impolite or abusive, or display a concealed attitude. Such conduct would be disgraceful. Order your thoughts, words, and actions care-

fully, and be prudent when you meet with others in debate.

Nichiren

The twenty-first day of the third month

Sent to Acharya Sammi.



Background

In the fifth month, 1274, Nichiren Daishonin left Kamakura and went to live in a small dwelling in the wilderness of Mount Minobu. Here he continued to write letters and other documents, trained his disciples, and lectured on the Lotus Sutra. From this time, his disciples, centering around Nikko Shonin, took the leadership in propagation activities.

This letter is generally thought to have been written at Minobu in the third month of the twelfth year of Bun’ei (1275). It contains the Daishonin’s reply to questions from Sammi-bo, one of the Daishonin’s leading disciples, concerning his preparations for a religious debate.

Sammi-bo was noted for his eloquence and learning. He was a priest who had studied on Mount Hiei, delivered lectures for the aristocracy in Kyoto, and was for a while active in helping spread the Daishonin’s teachings. The Daishonin, however, chided him on several occasions for his arrogance. During the Atsuhara Persecution of 1279, he forsook his faith and is said to have met a tragic death, although the precise details are not known.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin states that Shakyamuni’s teachings no longer lead to enlightenment in the Latter Day of the Law, and that only Nam-myoho-enge-kyo combines the three elements of teaching, practice,

and proof essential to making Buddhism viable. In the opening section, he discusses the Buddha’s teaching, the practice of the teaching, and the proof, that is, the merit—strictly speaking, enlightenment—resulting from practice in the three consecutive periods of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. In terms of Hinayana Buddhism, he explains that in the Former Day there are teaching, practice, and proof; in the Middle Day there are teaching and practice but no longer any proof; and in the Latter Day only the teaching remains, and there is neither practice nor proof.

The Daishonin goes on to say that those who attained Buddhahood during Shakyamuni’s lifetime and in the Former and Middle Days of the Law were able to do so because they had already received the seeds of Buddhahood from Shakyamuni in the past and nurtured it over many lifetimes until their capacity for enlightenment had all but matured. For this reason, they were able to gain conspicuous benefit through Shakyamuni’s teachings—that is, they attained enlightenment immediately. In the Latter Day, however, people receive the seeds of Buddhahood for the first time. Because the seeds require a certain period of time to mature, the enlightenment of these people takes a while to become apparent and is therefore called inconspicuous benefit.

Next, asserting the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin points out the doctrinal errors of the True Word, Nembutsu, and other schools, and urges Sammi-bo to refute their misconcep-

tions fearlessly. Lastly, he stresses the benefit of Myoho-enge-kyo, the core of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and predicts that that teaching will spread widely without fail.

Notes

1. That is, in both Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's time and Nichiren Daishonin's, people hear and slander the correct teaching, but they are eventually able to attain Buddhahood by virtue of the bond they have thereby formed with it.

2. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

5. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

6. A large tree with leaves about twenty centimeters long and golden blossoms whose aroma can be smelled from a distance.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 16.

9. A rephrasing of a passage in *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* reads, "Whether one rejects or accepts [the Buddha's teachings], one should in all cases do so from the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra."

14. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra"* reads, "In evaluating the Buddhist sutras, one should judge on the basis of the Lotus Sutra whether to reject or accept them, because the Lotus Sutra is the single source from which all the other teachings come and to which they return."

15. In his compilation of Shan-wu-wei's commentaries on the Mahavairochana Sutra, I-hsing made it appear as if core doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school, such as the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, were part of the True Word teachings. Nichiren Daishonin explains the deception referred to here in more detail in *The Selection of the Time* (pp. 564-65).

16. This refers apparently to the initia-

tion rituals conducted in esoteric Buddhism in which candidates toss flowers on a mandala depicting various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other figures to determine with which figure they have a special relationship. It appears that, as part of the ritual, priests trod on the images. Here Vairochana Buddha refers to Shakyamuni Buddha.

17. The three deities of Brahmanism are Maheshvara, Vasudeva, and Narayana. Maheshvara was said to be a god who reigns over the major world system.

18. Honen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* and put them together as a set.

19. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11. In the sutra, these words are actually spoken by the Buddha Many Treasures. However, because all Buddhas do in fact verify the Lotus Sutra in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, the Daishonin attributes this statement to all the Buddhas.

20. Reference is to a story in *Han Fei Tzu* in which a farmer, planting his field, saw a rabbit run into a stump and break its neck. He abandoned his farming and stood guard by the stump, expecting to catch other rabbits. Here the Daishonin uses the "stump" to signify attachment to the provisional teachings without being able to distinguish between superior and inferior sutras.

21. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

22. There is no extant sutra by this name. It may refer to the Meditation on the Buddha Sutra, which tells of a monk who fell into the Avichi hell for confusing correct and incorrect teachings.

23. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, which reads in part, "One whose countenance turns dark at the moment of death will fall into hell."

24. Miao-lo in his *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* underscores T'ien-t'ai's

statement about the enlightenment of insentient beings by adding that this will shock and cause doubts.

25. The monastery on Mount Ta-su where T'ien-t'ai studied the threefold Lotus Sutra. As a result of intense practice, he is said to have attained an awakening through the "Medicine King" chapter of the sutra. For this reason, he was regarded as a reincarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King.

26. This is described in chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra.

27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

28. First, bodhisattvas from other worlds have their own tasks to fulfill in their respective worlds. Second, they have little connection with the people in the saha world. Third, if Shakyamuni had allowed them to carry out the mission of propagation, he would have had no reason to summon the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching.

29. First, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the Buddha's original disciples. Second, they have a deep relationship with the people of the saha world. Third, by summoning and entrusting them with the propagation of his teachings, Shakyamuni was able to verify his enlightenment that had been achieved in the remote past.

30. A rephrasing of a passage in *Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

31. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

32. The lord of Hoko-ji is another name for Hojo Tokimune (1251-1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

33. In actuality, the Daishonin returned to Kamakura in the third month, 1274.

34. On "*Great Concentration and Insight*."

35. A passage in the "Treasure Tower" chapter reads: "This sutra is hard to uphold; if one can uphold it even for a short while I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas. A person who can do this wins the admiration of the Buddhas. . . . This is what is called observing the precepts and practicing the rules of discipline."

36. The precept of the diamond chalice is the precept that is impossible to break, like the diamond chalice. It is mentioned in the Brahma Net Sutra, and Dengyo interprets the Buddha nature or the true aspect of all phenomena as the diamond chalice; this precept thus means to embrace the Lotus Sutra. In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it means to embrace the Gohonzon.

37. *Words and Phrases*. This is the portion in which T'ien-t'ai comments on the words "the Thus Come One's secret and his transcendental powers" in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra.

38. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

39. Reference is to the great earthquake that devastated the Kamakura area in the eighth month of 1257 and the huge comet that appeared in the seventh month of 1264.

40. The revelation portion of the essential teaching consists of the second half of the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, the entire "Life Span" chapter, and the first half of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Here it refers specifically to the "Life Span" chapter.

41. A reference to one of the ten major precepts among the fifty-eight rules of discipline for Mahayana bodhisattvas set forth in the Brahma Net Sutra, which is not to praise oneself or disparage others.

Reply to the Lay Priest Soya



I HAVE written out the prose section of the “Expedient Means” chapter for you. You should recite it together with the verse portion of the “Life Span” chapter, which I sent you earlier.

The characters of this sutra are all without exception living Buddhas of perfect enlightenment. But because we have the eyes of ordinary people, we see them as characters. For instance, hungry spirits perceive the Ganges River as fire, human beings perceive it as water, and heavenly beings perceive it as amrita. Though the water is the same, it appears differently according to one’s karmic reward from the past.

The blind cannot see the characters of this sutra. To the eyes of ordinary people, they look like characters. Persons of the two vehicles perceive them as the void. Bodhisattvas look on them as innumerable doctrines. Buddhas rec-

ognize each character as a golden Shakyamuni. This is what is meant by the passage that says, “[If one can uphold this sutra], one will be upholding the Buddha’s body.”¹ Those who practice with distorted views, however, are destroying this most precious sutra. You should simply be careful that, without differing thoughts, you single-mindedly aspire to the pure land of Eagle Peak. A passage in the Six Paramitas Sutra² says to become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you. I will explain in detail when I see you.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The third month in the twelfth year of Bun’ei (1275)

To the lay priest Soya



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Soya Kyoshin, a believer who lived in Soya Village of Katsushika District in Shimosa Province. Soya Kyoshin converted to the Daishonin’s teachings around 1260 and became one of the

leading believers in the area, together with Toki Jonin and Ota Jomyo. Later, he took the tonsure, and the Daishonin gave him the Buddhist name Horen Nichirai.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin

urges Soya Kyoshin to recite both a portion of the “Expedient Means” chapter and the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter, the two key chapters of the Lotus Sutra, in his daily prayers. He also states that each char-

acter of the Lotus Sutra is in fact a living Buddha of supreme enlightenment. Therefore, to uphold and recite this sutra is to uphold the body of the Buddha—that is, to attain Buddhahood in one’s present form.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.
2. A sutra translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Prajna of the T’ang dynasty. It explains in detail the six kinds of practices,

or “perfections” (Skt paramita), that bodhisattvas must carry out in order to attain enlightenment.

The Royal Palace



I HAVE received your fifteen hundred coins. I am pleased that you informed me in detail about the fire [that destroyed Gokuraku-ji temple]. Conflagration corresponds to the third of the seven disasters described in the Benevolent Kings Sutra and to the first of the seven disasters mentioned in the Lotus Sutra.¹

No sword can cut the air; no fire can burn water. Similarly, no fire can harm a sage, a worthy, a person of good fortune, or a person of wisdom. For example, the great city of Rajagriha in India is said to have enclosed nine hundred thousand dwellings, but huge fires broke out on seven occasions, and it was destroyed. When the king saw the people about to flee in despair, his grief knew no bounds. At that time a wise man advised him, saying: "Conflagration, as one of the seven disasters, occurs when a sage has left the country and the good fortune of the ruler has been exhausted. In this case, however, even though successive fires have destroyed the houses of the populace, they have never once engulfed the royal palace. This indicates that the fault lies not with the ruler but with the people. Therefore, if you name the entire city in which they dwell Rajagriha, 'the Royal Palace,' the god of fire will be afraid to burn their houses." The king thought this advice reason-

able and named the city Rajagriha, and fire never broke out again. This story teaches us that fire cannot destroy a person of great good fortune.

In this country, however, the shogun's palace has just burned down, a sign that the good fortune of Japan is about to be exhausted. Calamities are arising with growing frequency, probably because priests steeped in slander of the correct teaching are offering up fervent prayers in an attempt to subdue me.

A name reveals the essence of a thing. The slanderous sage, Priest Two Fires,² is the teacher of people high and low throughout Kamakura. One of the two fires was concentrated on his own grounds, reducing Gokuraku-ji [Paradise Temple] to Jigoku-ji [Hell Temple]. The other fire leaped over to devour the ruler's palace.

Furthermore, this double fire not only ravaged the country in this existence, but foretells that the teacher and his disciples throughout Japan will in their next life fall into the hell of incessant suffering, where they will burn in the Avichi flames. The ignorant priests did not heed the words of a man of great wisdom, and this disaster came about as a result. How pitiful! I have already written to you about this.

Incidentally, I have pastured the mare you gave me, and she has found a mate

and given birth to a chestnut-colored colt. What a wonderful horse! I want you to see it by all means.

I have heard a great deal about the lay nun of Nagoe here, too. I was told that someone happened to meet her and took her soundly to task for praising the doctrine of theoretical endowment.³

As for your wife's prayers, even though she does not doubt the Lotus Sutra, I suspect that her faith may be weak. I have found that even those who appear to believe just as the sutra teaches may not actually have strong faith at all, as you are already well aware. Moreover, a woman's mind is harder to understand than it is to tie up the wind. The fact that her prayers have gone unanswered is like a strong bow with a weak bowstring, or a fine sword in the hands of a coward. It is in no sense the fault of the Lotus Sutra. Explain to her thoroughly that she herself should discard the Nembutsu and the Precepts schools' teachings once and for all, and to the full extent of her ability teach others to do the same, just as you have steadfastly carried out your faith despite others' hatred. However much she may believe in the Lotus Sutra, I doubt that she feels as strongly about its enemies as she would about a courtesan.

In all worldly affairs, those who oppose their parents or disobey their ruler incur the wrath of heaven for their un-filial or disloyal conduct. But if one's parent or ruler becomes an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, then disobedience is an act of filial piety and repays one's debt of gratitude to the nation. Therefore, since I first read the Lotus Sutra, I have upheld my faith without faltering, even though my parents implored me, with their palms joined, to desist, and even though my teacher disowned me, the lord of Kamakura [the regent] twice exiled me, and I nearly had my head cut off. Because I have persevered

without fear, there are now people who think my teachings may be true. Nichiren may well be the only person in all Japan to disobey sovereign, parents, and teacher, and yet still in the end receive the protection of the heavenly gods. Watch what happens in the future. If those priests who abuse me should pray for the peace of the country, they will only hasten the nation's ruin. Finally, should the consequences become truly grave, everyone, from the ruler on down to the common people, will become a slave of the pig-tailed Mongols and have bitter regrets.

Setting aside the next life, as a warning to people in this life, I have enjoined the heavenly lords Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings to punish those who have become enemies of the Lotus Sutra. You will see by the results of my prediction⁴ whether or not I am the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

When I speak in this way, the ruler and others may think I am making threats, but I in no way speak out of hatred. I speak out of the profound compassion to enable them to eradicate in this life the tortures of the hell of incessant suffering, into which they are otherwise destined to fall. The Great Teacher Chang-an said, "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."⁵ Nichiren, who admonishes them for their evil, is father and mother to the ruler, and the teacher of all living beings.

There is much more that I would like to say, but I will stop here. I appreciate your offerings of one horseload of polished wheat and of ginger.

Nichiren

The twelfth day of the fourth month in the first year of Kenji (1275), cyclical sign *kinoto-i*

Reply to Shijo Kingo

Background

This letter was written in reply to a report from Shijo Kingo that fires had broken out at both Gokuraku-ji temple and the palace of the shogun, the military ruler. Gokuraku-ji, a temple of the True Word Precepts school in Kamakura, burned down in the third month of 1275.

Japan at that time was in a state of upheaval. In the tenth month of 1274, the Mongols launched a massive military attack against the southern part of the country. This contributed to the extreme anxiety of the people. The Mongol threat increased as another envoy from Khubilai Khan arrived in the fourth month of 1275, demanding that Japan swear allegiance to the Mongol empire or face another attack.

Nichiren Daishonin attributes the fires in Kamakura and other calamities to the people's loss of good fortune, which he says was brought about by their slander of the correct teaching. The title of this letter is taken from

the ancient story of Rajagriha (Royal Palace), the capital of the kingdom of Magadha, India. The Daishonin cites this story, which appears in T'ien-t'ai's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, to support his point about the necessity of good fortune.

In a play on words, the Daishonin refers to the chief priest of Gokuraku-ji, Ryokan-bo (Priest Ryokan), as Ryoka-bo (Priest Two Fires), to show that the burning of Gokuraku-ji and the shogun's palace stemmed from Ryokan's slander of the Lotus Sutra. The phrase "two fires" has two meanings. It indicates the fire that consumed both Gokuraku-ji and the palace—the centers of religion and government. And it means that Ryokan's slander not only has brought about conflagration—one of the seven disasters—in this world, but also will cause him and his followers to fall into "fire," or the state of hell, in the next.

Notes

1. Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra lists seven disasters from which one can be saved by the power of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds: (1) fire, (2) flood, (3) rakshasa demons, (4) attack by swords and staves, (5) attack by yaksha and other demons, (6) imprisonment, and (7) attack by bandits.

2. Reference is to Ryokan, chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple. In a play on words, the Daishonin changes the name Ryokan-bo (Priest Ryokan) to Ryoka-bo, which means Priest Two Fires.

3. T'ien-t'ai's doctrine that all of the three thousand realms theoretically exist in all beings.

4. The Daishonin's prediction of foreign invasion made in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, which he submitted to Hojo Tokiyori in 1260. This prophecy materialized with the attack of the Mongol forces on the southern part of Japan in 1274 and their continued threats of another invasion.

5. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

Reply to the Lay Priest of Ko



I HAVE received two paper bags of sea laver, ten bundles of seaweed, one paper bag of algae, and one bunch of mushrooms.

The human mind is inconstant; it is ever-changing and unfixd. I thought it wondrous that you pledged faith in my teachings while I was in the province of Sado, and your sincerity in sending your husband all the way here is even more remarkable. The provinces we live in are far apart, and months and years have passed, so I was concerned that you might slacken in your resolve. However, you are increasingly demonstrating the depth of your faith and accumulating good deeds. Surely this is not a result of practice over just one or two previous lifetimes.

Because the Lotus Sutra is difficult to believe, the Buddha assumes various forms, such as that of one's child, parent, or wife, to enable one to take faith in it. However, you have no children and live alone as husband and wife.

The sutra states, "The living beings in it [the threefold world] are all my children."¹ If this is so, then Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, must be a compassionate father to both of you. I, Nichiren, must be your child, but, wishing to save the people of Japan, I am residing for the time being in the central part of the country. The meritorious deeds you have accumulated in previous existences are indeed precious.

When the Mongols come pouring into Japan, please make your way here. And since you have no sons, please consider coming here to live with me in your old age. No place is secure. Be convinced that Buddhahood is the final abode.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twelfth day of the fourth month
Reply to the lay priest of Ko



Background

This letter is thought to have been written at Minobu in the twelfth year of Bun'ei (1275). There are only two extant letters addressed to the lay priest

of Ko and his wife—this letter and *Letter to the Lay Nun of Ko*—and very few clues remain about them.

Because they lived in the town

where the government of Sado Province was located, the husband was known as the lay priest of Ko—the lay priest who lives in the seat of the provincial government (*ko*). Although this letter was written to both of them, the contents—in particular, Nichiren Daishonin’s praise of the fact that the lay nun had sent her husband such a long way to visit him—suggest that it was directed toward her.

During the Daishonin’s exile on Sado Island, the lay priest and his wife protected him and presented him with offerings, even though by doing so they were putting themselves at risk with the local authorities. And after the Daishonin had gone to live in Minobu, the lay priest made the demanding and perilous journey from Sado to visit him there.

Note

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

Letter to the Brothers



THE Lotus Sutra is the heart of the eighty thousand teachings and the core of the twelve divisions of the scriptures. The Buddhas throughout the three existences attain enlightenment because they take this sutra as their teacher. The Buddhas of the ten directions guide living beings with the teaching of the one vehicle as their eyes.

Entering the sutra repository and examining the complete collection contained therein, I find that two versions exist of the sutras and treatises brought to China between the Yung-p'ing era of the Later Han and the end of the T'ang dynasty.¹ There are 5,048 volumes of the older translations² and 7,399 of the newer translations. Each sutra claims by virtue of its contents to be the highest teaching of all. Comparison reveals, however, that the Lotus Sutra is as superior to all the other sutras as heaven is to the earth. It rises above them like a cloud above the mud on the ground. If other sutras are compared to stars, the Lotus Sutra is like the moon; if they are as bright as torches, bonfires, stars, or the moon, the Lotus Sutra is then as bright as the sun. This is a general comparison.

More specifically, the Lotus Sutra contains twenty outstanding principles. The two most important are the teachings of major world system dust par-

ticle kalpas ago and numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. The former is explained in the "Parable of the Phantom City" chapter in the third volume. Suppose someone grinds a major world system into dust. He then takes this dust with him and goes one thousand major world systems toward the east, where he drops one particle. He proceeds another thousand major world systems eastward and drops the second particle. He continues on in this manner, dropping another particle and then another until he has exhausted all the dust particles of the entire major world system. Then he gathers up all the major world systems along the route he has taken, whether they have received a particle or not, and reduces them all to dust. He places these dust particles in a row, allowing one entire kalpa to pass for the placement of each. When the first kalpa has passed, he places the second particle, and then the third, until as many kalpas have passed as there are particles of dust. The total length of time represented by the passage of all these kalpas is referred to as a period of major world system dust particle kalpas.

It was this long ago—in the remote past indicated by a span of major world system dust particle kalpas—that the three groups of voice-hearers, including Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Ananda,

and Rahula, learned the Lotus Sutra from a bodhisattva who was the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence. Deluded by evil influences, however, they eventually abandoned the Lotus Sutra. They fell back into the Flower Garland, Wisdom, Great Collection, or Nirvana Sutra, or further down to the Mahavairochana, Profound Secrets, or Meditation Sutra, or even backslid to the Hinayana teachings of the Agama sutras. Continuing this descent, they fell back through the practice of goodness in the human and heavenly worlds and finally into the paths of evil. During this period of major world system dust particle kalpas they were most often born in the hell of incessant suffering. Sometimes they were born in the seven great hells, or less frequently in the more than one hundred hells.³ On very rare occasions they were born into the world of hungry spirits, animals, or asuras, and only after kalpas as many as dust particles were they able to be born again in the human or heavenly world.

The second volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "He will constantly dwell in hell, strolling in it as though it were a garden, and the other evil paths of existence he will look on as his own home."⁴ Those who commit the ten evil acts fall into the hell of repeated rebirth for torture or the hell of black cords,⁵ where they must spend five hundred lifetimes or one thousand hell-years. Those who commit the five cardinal sins fall into the hell of incessant suffering and are born again in this world after remaining there for one medium kalpa.

Why is it, then, that those who abandon the Lotus Sutra fall into the hell of incessant suffering and have to stay there for such an unimaginably great number of kalpas? The offense of discarding one's faith in the sutra must at the time seem nowhere near as terrible as killing one's parents. Neverthe-

less, even if one killed one's parents in one, two, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million, or even a hundred million lifetimes, one would not have to remain in hell for a period of major world system dust particle kalpas. Even if one were to kill one, two, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or as many as a hundred million Buddhas, would one have to dwell in hell for a span of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas? The three groups of voice-hearers, however, had to suffer through a period of major world system dust particle kalpas, and the great bodhisattvas, through a period of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas, because of the offense they committed by discarding the Lotus Sutra. This shows what an unimaginably terrible offense it is.

To put this simply, when one strikes at air, one's fist will not hurt, but when one hits a rock, one feels pain. The offense of killing an evil person is minor compared with the offense of killing a good person, which is grave. If one kills someone who is not one's kin, it is like striking mud with one's fist, but if one kills one's own parents, it is like hitting a rock. A dog may bark at a deer without having its skull broken, but if it barks at a lion, its bowels will rot. An asura who tried to swallow the sun and moon had his head shattered into seven pieces. Because Devadatta harmed the Buddha, the earth split open and swallowed him alive. The seriousness of an offense depends on the person one harms.

The Lotus Sutra is the eye of all the Buddhas. It is the original teacher of Shakyamuni Buddha himself, the lord of teachings. If one discards one word or even one brushstroke of the sutra, the offense is graver than that of one who kills one's parents ten million times over, or even of one who sheds the blood of all the Buddhas in the ten

directions. This is why those who forsook the Lotus Sutra had to suffer for a period of major world system dust particle kalpas or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to meet a person who expounds this sutra exactly as the sutra directs. It is even more difficult than for a one-eyed turtle to find a piece of floating sandalwood, or for someone to hang Mount Sumeru from the sky with the fiber from a lotus stem.

The Great Teacher Tz'u-en was the disciple of the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the teacher of Emperor T'ai-tsung. He was a sage who not only was well versed in the Sanskrit and Chinese scriptures, but also had memorized all of the Buddha's sutras. The Buddha's ashes fell from the tip of his writing brush, and light shone forth from his teeth.⁶ His contemporaries respected him as though he were the sun and moon, and people in later ages earnestly sought out his teachings as guides for living. Even so, the Great Teacher Dengyo denounced him, stating that though he praises the Lotus Sutra he destroys its heart.⁷ This statement means that, though he intended to praise the Lotus Sutra, in the end, he destroyed it.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei was once the king of Udyana in India. He abdicated the throne, became a monk, and in the course of his Buddhist practice, journeyed through more than fifty countries in India, finally mastering all the esoteric and exoteric teachings of Buddhism. Later he went to China and became the teacher of Emperor Hsüan-tsung. Every True Word priest in both China and Japan has since become his follower. In spite of his having been such a noble person, he died suddenly, tormented by Yama, the lord of hell, though no one knows why.

I, Nichiren, believe that this happened because, though Shan-wu-wei

was first a votary of the Lotus Sutra, when he read the Mahavairocana Sutra, he declared it superior to the Lotus Sutra. Similarly, it was not because they had committed the ten evil acts or five cardinal sins that Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the like were doomed to wander through the evil paths of existence for the period of major world system dust particle kalpas or numberless major world system dust particle kalpas. Nor was it because they had perpetrated rebellion or any other of the eight offenses.⁸ It was because they had met someone who was an evil influence and discarded the Lotus Sutra to take faith in the provisional sutras.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai commented, "If they encounter an evil friend, they will lose their true mind."⁹ "True mind" means the mind that believes in the Lotus Sutra, while "lose" means to betray one's faith in the Lotus Sutra and transfer one's allegiance to other sutras. The sutra reads, "... but when they are given the medicine, they refuse to take it."¹⁰ T'ien-t'ai stated, "Those who have lost their minds refuse to take the good medicine, even though it is given to them. Lost in the sufferings of birth and death, they run away to another land."¹¹

Since this is so, believers in the Lotus Sutra should fear those who attempt to obstruct their practice more than they fear bandits, burglars, night raiders, tigers, wolves, or lions—even more than invasion now by the Mongols. This world is the domain of the devil king of the sixth heaven. All of its people have been under the rule of this devil king since time without beginning. Not only has he built the prison of the twenty-five realms of existence¹² within the six paths and confined all humankind within it, but also he has made wives and children into shackles, and parents and sovereigns into nets that block off the skies. To deceive the true mind of the Buddha nature, he

causes the people to drink the wine of greed, anger, and foolishness, and feeds them nothing but dishes of evil that leave them prostrate on the ground of the three evil paths. When he happens on persons who have turned their hearts to goodness, he acts to obstruct them. He is determined to make believers in the Lotus Sutra fall into evil, but if he is unsuccessful, he tries to deceive them gradually by luring them toward the Flower Garland Sutra, which resembles the Lotus Sutra.

This was done by Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch'eng-kuan.¹³ Then Chia-hsiang and Seng-ch'üan were the evil companions who craftily deceived believers in the Lotus Sutra into falling back to the Wisdom sutras. Similarly, Hsüan-tsang and Tz'u-en led them toward the Profound Secrets Sutra, while Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho deceived them into following the Mahavairochana Sutra. Bodhidharma and Hui-k'o caused them to stray into the Zen school, while Shan-tao and Honen tricked them into believing the Meditation Sutra. In each case, the devil king of the sixth heaven possessed these men of wisdom in order to deceive good people. This is what the Lotus Sutra means when it says in its fifth volume, "Evil demons will take possession of others."¹⁴

The great demon of fundamental darkness can even enter the bodies of bodhisattvas who have reached near-perfect enlightenment and prevent them from attaining the Lotus Sutra's blessing of perfect enlightenment. How easily can he then obstruct those in any lower stage of practice! The devil king of the sixth heaven takes possession of the bodies of wives and children, and causes them to lead their husbands or parents astray. He also possesses the sovereign in order to threaten the votary of the Lotus Sutra, or possesses fathers and mothers, and makes them

reproach their filially devoted children.

Prince Siddhartha sought to renounce his title, but his son, Rahula, had already been conceived. His father, King Shuddhodana, therefore admonished him to put off leaving to become a monk until after the child was born. The devil took advantage of the situation and delayed the childbirth for six years.

Shariputra began his bodhisattva practice in the distant past, in the latter age after the passing of Zentara Buddha. He had already practiced for sixty kalpas when the devil king of the sixth heaven became worried that in another forty kalpas Shariputra would complete his practice. The devil disguised himself as a Brahman and begged Shariputra for his eye. In response, Shariputra gave him one of his eyes, but from that moment, he lost his will to practice and then gave up, thereby falling into the hell of incessant suffering for countless kalpas.¹⁵ Six hundred and eighty million lay believers in the age after the passing of Great Adornment Buddha were deceived by the monk Shore of Suffering and three other monks so that they denounced the monk Universal Practice, and as a result fell into the same hell for as many kalpas as there are the dust particles of the land. The men and women in the latter age after the passing of Lion Sound King Buddha followed the monk Superior Intent who observed the precepts, but mocked the monk Root of Joy, and so fell into hell, where they remained for countless kalpas.

It is the same with Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters. The Lotus Sutra reads, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹⁶ It also reads, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁷ The Nirvana Sutra states, "By suffering an untimely death,

rebuke, curses or humiliation, beatings with a whip or rod, imprisonment, starvation, adversity, or other minor hardships in this lifetime, one can avoid falling into hell.” The Parinirvana Sutra says: “They may be poorly clad and poorly fed, seek wealth in vain, be born to an impoverished and lowly family or one with erroneous views, or be persecuted by their sovereign. They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions. It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution.”

These passages mean that we, who now believe in the correct teaching, in the past once committed the offense of persecuting its practitioners, and therefore are destined to fall into a terrible hell in the future. The blessings gained by practicing the correct teaching, however, are so great that by meeting minor sufferings in this life we can change the karma that destines us to suffer terribly in the future. As the sutra says, one’s past slander may cause one to suffer various retributions, such as being born into a poor family or a family with erroneous views or being persecuted by one’s sovereign. A “family with erroneous views” means one that slanders the correct teaching, and “persecution by one’s sovereign” means to live under the reign of an evil ruler. These are the two sufferings confronting you now. In order to expiate the sin of your past slanders, you are opposed by your parents, who hold mistaken views, and must live in the age of a ruler who persecutes the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra makes this absolutely clear. Never doubt that you slandered the correct teaching in the past. If you have doubt about this, you will be unable to withstand the minor sufferings of this life. Then you may give in to your father’s opposition and desert the Lotus Sutra against your will. Remember that, if this happens,

not only will you fall into hell, but also your precious parents will fall into the great Avichi hell, causing all of you indescribable grief. The essential thing is a great resolve to attain the way.

Both of you have continued believing in the Lotus Sutra; thus you are now ridding yourselves of your grave offenses from the past. For example, the flaws in iron come to the surface when it is forged. Put into flames, a rock simply turns to ashes, but gold becomes pure gold. This trial, more than anything else, will prove your faith genuine, and the ten demon daughters of the Lotus Sutra will surely protect you. The demon who appeared to test the boy Snow Mountains was actually Shakra. The dove saved by King Shibi was the heavenly king Vaishravana.¹⁸ It is even possible that the ten demon daughters have possessed your parents and are tormenting you in order to test your faith. Any weakness in faith will be a cause for regret. The cart that overturns on the road ahead is a warning to the one behind.

In an age like this no one can help but thirst for the way. You may hate this world, but you cannot escape it. The people of Japan are certain to meet with terrible misfortune in the immediate future. The revolt¹⁹ that broke out on the eleventh day of the second month in the ninth year of Bun’ei (1272) was like blossoms being lashed by a gale, or like bolts of silk burning in an inferno. Who can help but abhor a world like ours?

In the tenth month of the eleventh year of Bun’ei, the people on Iki and Tsushima islands²⁰ were slaughtered at one stroke. How can we say that this is no concern of ours? The soldiers who went off to confront the invaders—how forlorn they must be! They had to leave behind their aged parents, small children, young wives, and cherished homes to go out and defend a sea to

no avail. If they see clouds on the horizon, they imagine them to be the enemy's banners. If they see fishing boats, they think them Mongol warships and are paralyzed with fear. Once or twice a day they climb the hills to look out over the sea. Three or four times in the middle of the night they saddle and unsaddle their horses. Though still alive, they feel as if they were in the world of asuras. All this and the hardships you have suffered as well can ultimately be blamed on the fact that this country's ruler has become an enemy of the Lotus Sutra. His opposition was instigated by the slanderers of the correct teaching, particularly the observers of the precepts and the Nembutsu and True Word priests. You must persevere through this trial and see for yourselves the blessings of the Lotus Sutra. I, Nichiren, will also emphatically call on the heavenly gods. Now more than ever, you must neither show nor feel any fear.

Women are fainthearted, and your wives have probably given up their belief. Yet you must grit your teeth and never slacken in your faith. Be as fearless as Nichiren when he acted and spoke out before Hei no Saemon-no-jo. Although theirs was not the path to Buddhahood, the sons of Lord Wada and of the governor of Wakasa,²¹ as well as the warriors under Masakado and Sadato, fought to the death to preserve their honor. Death comes to all, even should nothing untoward ever happen. Therefore, you must never be cowardly, or you will become the object of ridicule.

I am deeply concerned about you both. Therefore, I will relate a story that is important for you. Two princes named Po I and Shu Ch'i were the sons of the ruler of Ku-chu in China. Their father had willed his title to the younger brother, Shu Ch'i, yet after he passed away, Shu Ch'i refused to ascend the throne. Po I urged Shu Ch'i to

assume the title, but Shu Ch'i insisted that Po I, the elder brother, should do so instead. Po I persisted, asking how the younger brother could contradict their father's will. Shu Ch'i agreed that their father's will clearly named him, yet he still refused the throne, claiming that he could not bear to push his elder brother aside.

Both brothers then abandoned their parents' state and traveled to another where they entered the service of King Wen of Chou. Shortly thereafter, the state was attacked; King Wen was killed by King Chou of the Yin dynasty. Less than a hundred days after King Wen's death, his son, King Wu, was preparing to do battle with King Chou, but Po I and Shu Ch'i, holding fast to the reins of his horse, strove to dissuade him, saying, "You should be in mourning for three years after your father's death. If you start a war now, can this conduct be called filial?" King Wu grew furious at this and was about to kill them both, but T'ai-kung Wang, the king's counselor, restrained him.

The two were so loath to have anything more to do with this king that they went off to seclude themselves in Mount Shou-yang, where they lived solely on ferns. One day a person named Ma Tzu passed by and asked, "Why have you hidden yourselves in a place like this?" They told Ma Tzu the whole story, and he replied, "If that is so, don't these ferns also belong to the king?" Thus reproached, they immediately stopped eating the plants.

It is not the way of heaven to forsake worthy men. Therefore, a god appeared to them as a white deer and provided them with milk. After the deer had gone, Shu Ch'i said, "Since the white deer's milk is so sweet to drink, its meat must taste even better!" Po I tried to silence him, but heaven had already heard his words, and the brothers were abandoned at once. Thus they eventually starved to death. Even

though one acts virtuously throughout one's life, a single word can ruin one. Not knowing what thoughts you have in your hearts, I worry about you a great deal.

When the Thus Come One Shakyamuni was a prince, his father, King Shuddhodana, could not bear losing his only heir and so would not allow him to renounce his royal station. The king kept two thousand soldiers posted at the palace's four gates to prevent him from leaving. Nevertheless, the prince eventually left the palace against his father's will. In all worldly affairs, it is the son's duty to obey his parents, yet on the path to Buddhahood, disobeying one's parents ultimately constitutes filial piety. The Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra explains the essence of filial piety: "By renouncing one's obligations and entering the Buddhist life one can truly repay those obligations in full."²² That is, in order to enter the true way, one leaves one's home against one's parents' wishes and attains Buddhahood. Then one can truly repay one's debt of gratitude to them.

In worldly affairs as well, if one's parents foment a rebellion, it is one's filial duty not to follow them. This is mentioned in *The Classic of Filial Piety*. When the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai engaged in meditation on the Lotus Sutra, he saw his deceased parents seated on his lap to obstruct his practice of Buddhism. This was the work of the heavenly devil, who took the form of his father and mother in order to oppose him.

I have just cited the story of Po I and Shu Ch'i. There is one more lesson you should learn from history. Emperor Ojin, who is now Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, was the sixteenth sovereign of Japan. Emperor Ojin had two sons: the first was Prince Nintoku, and the second, Prince Uji. The emperor transferred his throne to the younger brother,

Uji. After their father passed away, Uji asked his elder brother to take the throne, but the elder brother reproached him, saying, "How can you refuse to comply with our father's will?"

They argued back and forth, and for three full years no one claimed the throne. As a result, the people suffered indescribable grief. It was like a curse on the nation, and Prince Uji finally thought, "As long as I am alive, my brother will not assume the throne." So he committed suicide. At this Prince Nintoku was racked with sorrow and fell into despair. Seeing this, Prince Uji came back to life in order to give words of encouragement to his brother; then he passed away again. It is recorded that, when Nintoku at last ascended the throne, the nation became peaceful and received eighty boatloads of tribute yearly from the three Korean kingdoms of Silla, Paekche, and Koguryō.²³

Other cases exist where the relationship between the sons of worthy rulers was not harmonious. What bonds have enabled you two brothers to continue on such good terms? Could you be princes Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye reborn, or the embodiments of the bodhisattvas Medicine King and Medicine Superior?²⁴ When your father disowned Tayu no Sakan, I expected that Hyoe no Sakan would refuse to side with his brother, thereby making it even more difficult to clear up your father's doubt and have him rescind his disownment. If what the boy Tsuruo told me is true, you two were alike in your resolve. So overjoyed was I at this unbelievable news that I wrote another letter. Could there ever be a more wonderful story than your own?

The Record of the Western Regions tells about a hermit who lived in Deer Park at Varanasi, India, in the hopes that he could master occult powers. He learned to turn tiles and pebbles into jewels and change the forms of humans

and animals, but he could not yet ride on winds and clouds or travel to the Palace of the Immortals. In order to accomplish these goals, he took as his assistant a man of integrity. Giving him a long sword, the hermit instructed him to stand in one corner of a practice platform, and told him to hold his breath and utter not a word. If the man remained silent through the whole night until dawn, the hermit was certain to master the occult. Determined, the hermit sat in the center of the platform with another long sword in hand and chanted incantations. Making his assistant take a vow, he said, "Even at the cost of your life, say nothing!" The man answered, "Though I die, not a word will leave these lips."

In this manner they passed the night until, just as dawn was about to break, the man cried out suddenly, and the hermit immediately failed in his attempt. He reproached the man, saying, "How could you have broken your vow? This is deplorable!" Repenting deeply, the man said: "I dozed off for a little while, and in a dream, my previous master appeared and rebuked me. Yet I endured this, not uttering a word, for my debt of gratitude to you is much greater. My former master grew furious and threatened to behead me, but I still said nothing. Finally I was beheaded, and when I saw my own corpse proceeding on its journey from death to the next life, my sorrow was indescribable. Still, I did not speak. Eventually I was reborn in a Brahman family in southern India. The pain I felt on entering and leaving the womb was unbearable, yet I held my breath without crying. I grew up to be a young man and took a wife. My parents died; my child was born; I felt sorrow and joy, but said not a word. Living on like this, I reached my sixty-fifth year. Then my wife said to me, 'If you still refuse to say anything, I will kill your beloved child.' The thought

flashed through my mind that I was already in the last years of my life, and that if my child were killed I could not beget another. Feeling that I must shout . . . I suddenly awoke."

The hermit said, "We were not strong enough. You and I have been deceived by a devil. Our task has ended in failure." Lamenting, the man of integrity said, "Because I was so weak-willed, you have failed to master the occult." The hermit regretfully replied, "It is my fault for not having admonished you enough beforehand." Nonetheless, as the record states, the man was so grieved he could not fulfill his obligation to the hermit that he brooded over it and died miserably.

In China the occult evolved from Confucianism, and in India it is found among the non-Buddhist teachings. Yet it does not even approach the Hinayana teachings of the Agama sutras, much less the connecting teaching, the specific teaching, or the perfect teaching. Therefore, how could it measure up to the Lotus Sutra? The four devils fiercely oppose the mastery of even such a shallow art as the occult. How much greater, then, are the tribulations that will confront the disciples and lay supporters of the person who is the first to embrace and the first to propagate in Japan the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the ultimate principle of the Lotus Sutra. It is impossible to imagine, let alone describe in words.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight* is the essence of his lifetime teachings and the heart of the whole spectrum of the Buddha's sacred teachings. During the more than five hundred years after Buddhism was introduced to China, ten teachers appeared—seven in the north, three in the south. Their wisdom was as brilliant as the sun and moon, and their virtue was extolled throughout the country, yet they were confused as to

which sutras were shallow or deep, inferior or superior, and as to the order in which they had been taught. It was the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che who not only clarified the Buddha's teachings, but also brought forth the wish-granting jewel of a single moment of life comprising three thousand realms from the repository of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo and bestowed it on all people in the three countries.²⁵ This teaching originated in China. Not even the scholars of India could put forward such a concept. So the Great Teacher Chang-an commented, "There has never been anything to compare to the brightness and serenity of concentration and insight,"²⁶ and "Even the great scholars of India were not in a class with him."²⁷

The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life revealed in the fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* is especially profound. If you propagate it, devils will arise without fail. If they did not, there would be no way of knowing that this is the correct teaching. One passage from the same volume reads: "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere. . . . One should be neither influenced nor frightened by them. If one falls under their influence, one will be led into the paths of evil. If one is frightened by them, one will be prevented from practicing the correct teaching." This statement not only applies to me, but also is a guide for my followers. Reverently make this teaching your own, and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations.

The three obstacles in this passage are the obstacle of earthly desires, the obstacle of karma, and the obstacle of retribution. The obstacle of earthly desires is the impediments to one's practice that arise from greed, anger, foolishness, and the like; the obstacle of karma is the

hindrances presented by one's wife or children; and the obstacle of retribution is the hindrances caused by one's sovereign or parents. Of the four devils, the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven are of this last kind.

In Japan today, many people claim they have mastered the practice of concentration and insight. But is there anyone who has actually encountered the three obstacles and four devils? The statement "If one falls under their influence, one will be led into the paths of evil" indicates not only the three evil paths but also the worlds of human and heavenly beings, and in general, all of the nine worlds. Therefore, with the exception of the Lotus Sutra, all of the sutras—those of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, and the Nirvana and Mahavairochana sutras—will lead people toward the paths of evil. Also, with the exception of the Tendai school, the adherents of the seven other schools²⁸ are in reality wardens of hell who drive others toward the evil paths. Even in the Tendai school are found those who profess faith in the Lotus Sutra, yet actually lead others toward the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. They, too, are wardens of hell who cause people to fall into the evil paths.

Now you two brothers are like the hermit and the man of integrity. If either of you gives up halfway, you will both fail to achieve Buddhahood. You are like the two wings of a bird, or the two eyes of a person. And your wives are your support. Women support others and thereby cause others to support them. When a husband is happy, his wife will be fulfilled. If a husband is a thief, his wife will become one, too. This is not a matter of this life alone. A husband and wife are as close as a form and shadow, flowers and fruit, or roots and leaves, in every existence of life. Insects eat the trees they live in, and fish drink the water in which they

swim. If grasses wither, orchids grieve; if pine trees flourish, cypresses rejoice.²⁹ Even trees and plants are so closely related. The *hiyoku* is a bird with one body and two heads. Both of its mouths nourish the same body. *Himoku* are fish with only one eye each, so the male and female remain together for life. A husband and wife should be like them.

You two wives should have no regrets even if your husbands do you harm because of your faith in this teaching. If both of you unite in encouraging your husbands' faith, you will follow the path of the dragon king's daughter and become a model for women attaining Buddhahood in the evil latter age. Insofar as you can act this way, no matter what may happen, Nichiren will tell the two sages, the two heavenly kings,³⁰ the ten demon daughters, Shakyamuni, and Many Treasures to make you Buddhas in every future existence. A passage in the Six Paramitas Sutra says to become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you.

Whatever trouble occurs, regard it as no more than a dream, and think only

of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren's teaching was especially difficult to believe at first, but now that my prophecies have been fulfilled, those who slandered without reason have come to repent. Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart. Among those who believed at first, many later discarded their faith, fearing that society would reject them. Among these are some who oppose me more furiously than those who slandered from the beginning.

In Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime, the monk Sunakshatra believed the Buddha at first, then later not only backslid, but also slandered so viciously that even the Buddha could not save him from falling into the hell of incessant suffering. This letter was written particularly for Hyoe no Sakan. It should also be read to his wife and to Tayu no Sakan's. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the fourth month in the twelfth year of Bun'ei (1275)



Background

The two brothers to whom this letter is addressed were the sons of Ikegami Saemon no Tayu Yasumitsu, who held an important post in Kamakura in the government's Office of Construction and Repairs. The older brother, Munenaka (Ikegami Uemon no Tayu Munenaka; d. 1293), was probably converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1256, and the younger brother, Munenaga (Ikegami Hyoe no Sakan Munenaga; d. 1283), shortly thereafter.

The father, Yasumitsu, was a loyal follower of Ryokan, chief priest of

Gokuraku-ji temple of the True Word Precepts school, and vehemently opposed the beliefs of his two sons for over twenty years. In fact, he went so far as to disown his elder son on two occasions, in 1275 and 1277. Primogeniture, the right of the eldest son to succeed to the wealth and social prestige of the family, was a vitally important aspect of Japanese society. The individual scarcely existed outside a family context, and centuries of intra-family rivalry, feuding, and even murder attested to the importance of being first

in line for inheritance. Virtually insurmountable social and economic sanctions existed against disowned persons.

By disowning Munenaka, their father in effect was provoking rivalry between the two sons by tempting Munenaga to trade his beliefs for the right to his father's estate. The Daishonin sent letters of encouragement to the two brothers and their wives, urging them all to unite and maintain their faith. In 1278 the brothers finally succeeded in converting their father to the Daishonin's teachings.

When the Daishonin's health began to fail in 1282, at the urging of his disciples he set out for the hot springs of Hitachi. Sensing that death was immi-

nent, however, he shunned the hot springs in favor of a trip to Munenaka's residence in Ikegami in what is present-day Tokyo. There, after having taken measures to ensure the perpetuity of his teachings, he passed away on the thirteenth day of the tenth month, 1282.

Letter to the Brothers mentions three ways in which obstacles should be viewed in the light of Buddhism: (1) as an opportunity to use strong faith to purge oneself of bad karma from the past; (2) as an instance of evil friends attempting to obstruct one's practice; and (3) as an example of the negative function of the devil king of the sixth heaven possessing one's parents or others in order to destroy one's faith.

Notes

1. The Yung-p'ing era began in C.E. 58. The T'ang dynasty ended in C.E. 907.

2. "The older translations" refers to the sutras translated into Chinese primarily by Kumarajiva (344-413) and Paramartha (499-569), who emphasized conveying the true meaning. "The newer translations" refers to those made by Hsüan-tsang (602-664) and by later translators, who placed greater stress on literal translation.

3. In his *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai delineates 136 kinds of hell—eight great hells, each with sixteen subsidiary hells. The last and worst of the eight great hells is the hell of incessant suffering. The point is that one's suffering differs in accord with the nature and degree of one's offense.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

5. The hell of repeated rebirth for torture is the first of the eight great hells, where victims are slashed with swords and pounded with iron staves, but their bodies immediately regenerate, and they undergo the same torment again and again. The hell of black cords is the second of the eight great hells, where the denizens are either sawed in half or cut apart by red-hot axes. Suffering here is said to be ten times greater than in the hell of repeated rebirth for torture.

6. Based on a passage in *The Sung Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests*.

7. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

8. Crimes as defined by the Taiho code (effective 702) and the Yoro code (757). They are: (1) rebellion against the emperor, (2) damage to imperial tombs or palaces, (3) treason against the nation, (4) killing of one's relatives, (5) killing of one's wife or more than three people belonging to another family, (6) theft or damage of imperial or religious property, (7) unfilial conduct toward one's parents or senior relatives, and (8) killing of one's teacher or other superior.

9. *Profound Meaning*.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.

11. *Profound Meaning*.

12. Subdivisions of the threefold world—fourteen realms in the world of desire, seven in the world of form, and four in the world of formlessness. All twenty-five fall into the category of the six paths or lower worlds.

13. Tu-shun (557-640), Chih-yen (602-668), Fa-tsang (643-712), and Ch'eng-kuan (738-839) were the founder and successive patriarchs of the Flower Garland school. Chia-hsiang (549-623), who is referred to in the next sentence, is sometimes regarded as the founder of the Three Treatises school, and Seng-ch'üan was an early practitioner of the same school.

14. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

15. This story is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. Once when Shariputra was practicing the bodhisattva way, a Brahman begged him for his eye. Shariputra gave it to him, but the Brahman was so revolted by its smell that he dropped and crushed it. Seeing this, Shariputra discontinued his bodhisattva practice, fell back to the Hinayana practice, and therefore was unable to attain Buddhahood.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

18. According to *Great Perfection of Wisdom* and *The Garland of Birth Stories*, the dove saved by King Shibi was the god Vishvakarman. For Shibi, see Glossary.

19. This refers to fighting that broke out in Kamakura and Kyoto as a result of a power struggle within the ruling Hojo family.

20. Reference is to the invasion of Iki and Tsushima, islands off Kyushu, by Mongol troops.

21. Lord Wada is Wada Yoshimori (1147–1213), a military official of the Kamakura regime, who was tricked into fighting against the Hojo clan and whose entire family was wiped out. The governor of Wakasa is Miura Yasumura (d. 1247), who was related to the Hojo by marriage, but was accused of treason; he and his entire family lost their lives in battle.

22. This passage is not found in the *Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra*, but it is cited in *The Forest of Gems in*

the Garden of the Law as a passage from the *Salvation by Men of Pure Faith Sutra*. “The Buddhist life” in the sutra’s context means a monastic life, but here the Daishonin interprets it as a life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

23. This story appears in *The Chronicles of Japan* in the section on Emperor Nintoku.

24. Bodhisattvas who cure physical and mental diseases. According to the “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in a previous life they were the brothers Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, who converted their father, the king Wonderful Adornment, to the correct teaching.

25. India, China, and Japan.

26. Introduction to *Great Concentration and Insight*.

27. *Profound Meaning*, T’ien-t’ai’s major work, recorded by Chang-an.

28. The seven other schools are the three Hinayana schools of Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts, and the four Mahayana schools of Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, and True Word.

29. This passage alludes to the “Lamentation on Passing Away” by Lu Chi (261–303), contained in *Literary Anthology*.

30. The two sages are the bodhisattvas Medicine King and Brave Donor, and the two heavenly kings are Vaishravana and Upholder of the Nation.

Letter to Horen



THE “Teacher of the Law” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “If there should be an evil person who, his mind destitute of goodness, should for the space of a kalpa appear in the presence of the Buddha and constantly curse and revile the Buddha, that person’s offense would still be rather light. But if there were a person who spoke only one evil word to curse or defame the lay persons or monks or nuns who read and recite the Lotus Sutra, then his offense would be very grave.”

The Great Teacher Miao-lo commented on this: “The benefits conferred by this sutra are lofty, and its principles are the highest. Therefore, this statement is made with regard to it. Nothing like this is said about any other sutra.”¹

With regard to the meaning of this sutra passage, the definition of a kalpa is as follows. Suppose that the span of human life is eighty thousand years, and that it decreases one year every hundred years, or ten years every thousand years. Let us suppose that it decreases at this rate until the life span has reached ten years.

At this point, a person ten years old would be like an eighty-year-old man of today. Then the process would reverse, and after a hundred years, the life span would increase to eleven years,

and after another hundred years, to twelve years. After a thousand years it would have increased to twenty years, and this would continue until it once more reached eighty thousand years. The time required to complete this combined process of decrease and increase is called a kalpa. There are various other definitions of a kalpa, but for the time being I will use the word kalpa in the sense defined above.

There are persons who, throughout this period of a kalpa, manifest hatred toward the Buddha by carrying out various activities in the three categories of body, mouth, and mind. Such a person was Devadatta.

The Buddha was the son and heir of King Shuddhodana, and Devadatta was a son of King Dronodana. These two kings were brothers, so Devadatta was a cousin of the Buddha.

In the present as in the past, among sages as among ordinary men, trouble arising over a woman has been one of the prime causes of enmity. When Shakyamuni Thus Come One was still known as Prince Siddhartha, and Devadatta had been designated prince and heir to his father, it happened that a high minister named Yasha had a daughter named Yashodhara. She was the most beautiful woman in all of the five regions of India, a veritable goddess whose fame was known throughout the four seas.

Siddhartha and Devadatta vied with each other to win her hand in marriage; hence discord arose between them.

Later, Siddhartha left his family and became a Buddha, and Devadatta, taking the monk Sudaya as his teacher, left his family to become a monk.

The Buddha observed the two hundred and fifty precepts and abided by the three thousand rules of conduct, so that all heavenly and human beings looked up to him with admiration, and the four kinds of believers honored and revered him. Devadatta, however, did not command such respect from others, so he began to consider whether there was not some way he could gain worldly fame that would surpass that of the Buddha. He came across five criteria by which he might surpass the Buddha and gain recognition from society. As noted in *The Fourfold Rules of Discipline*, they were: (1) to wear robes of rags; (2) to seek food only by begging; (3) to eat only one meal a day; (4) to sit out always in the open; and (5) to take neither salt nor the five flavors.² The Buddha would accept robes given to him by others, but Devadatta wore only robes made of rags. The Buddha would accept meals that were served to him, but Devadatta lived on alms alone. The Buddha would eat once, twice, or three times a day, but Devadatta would eat only once. The Buddha would take shelter in graveyards or under trees, but Devadatta sat out in the open all day long. The Buddha would on occasion consent to take salt or the five flavors, but Devadatta accepted none of them. And because Devadatta observed these rules, people came to believe that he was far superior to the Buddha, and that they were as far apart as clouds and mud.

In this way Devadatta sought to deprive the Buddha of his standing. The Buddha was supported by the lay believer King Bimbisara. Every day the king supplied five hundred cartloads of

alms to the Buddha as well as to his disciples, doing so over a period of years without missing a single day. Devadatta, jealous of such devotion and hoping to secure it for himself, won Prince Enemy Before Birth³ over to his side and persuaded him to kill his father, King Bimbisara.

He himself set out to kill the Buddha, hurling a rock and striking the Buddha with it; such was the deed he carried out with his body. In addition, he slandered and cursed the Buddha, calling him a liar and a deceiver; such was the deed he committed with his mouth. And, in his heart, he thought of the Buddha as a foe from his previous lifetime; such was the deed he engaged in with his mind. The great evil of these three interacting deeds has never been surpassed.

Suppose that a terribly evil man like Devadatta were to engage in these three types of deeds, and for an entire medium kalpa, curse and revile Shakyamuni Buddha, striking him with staves and behaving toward him with jealousy and envy. The enormous guilt he would incur would be weighty indeed.

This great earth of ours is 168,000 yojanas thick, and therefore it is capable of supporting the waters of the four great seas, the dirt and stones of the nine mountains, every kind of plant and tree, and all living beings, without ever collapsing, tipping, or breaking apart. And yet, when Devadatta, a human being whose body measured five feet, committed no more than three cardinal sins, the great earth broke open and he fell into hell; the hole through which he fell still exists in India. The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang stated in the text known as *The Record of the Western Regions* that when he journeyed from China to India for the sake of his practice he saw it there.

However, it is said that if one neither at heart thinks ill of the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age nor in

one's bearing shows envy toward him, but merely reviles him in a joking manner, then the consequences will be even worse than those brought about by Devadatta when, by committing the three types of deeds, he cursed and reviled the Buddha for an entire medium kalpa. How much worse, then, would the consequences be if the people of the present age were to set about conducting themselves like Devadatta, carrying out these three types of deeds with truly evil hearts over a period of many years—cursing and reviling the votary of the Lotus Sutra, subjecting him to defamation and insult, envying and feeling jealous of him, beating and striking him, putting him to death under false charges and murdering him.

Question: When someone displays animosity toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra in this latter age, what hell will that person fall into?

Answer: The second volume of the Lotus Sutra states: "If this person [should slander a sutra such as this], or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell, be confined there for a whole kalpa, and when the kalpa ends, die there again. He will keep repeating this cycle for a countless number of kalpas."⁴

Five hundred yojanas beneath the surface of the earth is the palace of King Yama. And fifteen hundred yojanas beneath the palace of King Yama are the eight great hells and the rest of the 136 hells. Of these 136 hells, 128 are for the consignment of persons who have committed minor offenses; the eight great hells are for those who have committed grave offenses. Of the eight great hells, seven are for people who have committed the ten evil acts. The eighth hell—the hell of incessant suffering—is for the consignment of three types of persons: those who have com-

mitted the five cardinal sins, those who have been unfilial,⁵ and those who have slandered the Law. The passage I have just quoted makes it clear that people who curse, revile, or slander the votary of the Lotus Sutra in this latter age, even if they do so merely in jest, will fall into this hell.

The "Teacher of the Law" chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: "If there is someone who seeks the Buddha way and for the space of a kalpa [presses palms together in my presence and recites numberless verses of praise, because of these praises of the Buddha he will gain immeasurable blessings]. And if one lauds and extols those who uphold this sutra, one's good fortune will be even greater."

The Great Teacher Miao-lo remarked: "Those who vex or trouble [the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra] will have their heads split into seven pieces, but those who give alms to them will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles."⁶

Among human beings, the foremost is the ruler known as a wheel-turning king. When a wheel-turning king is about to appear in the world, an omen precedes him, a huge tree known as an udumbara growing up in the midst of the ocean, bearing flowers and fruit.

When a gold-wheel-turning king appears, the mountains and seas of the four continents become level, the great earth becomes soft as cotton, the seas become sweet as amrita, the mountains become mountains of gold, and the plants and trees turn into the seven kinds of treasures.

The wheel-turning king can travel throughout the entirety of the four continents in an instant; therefore, the heavenly gods guard and protect him, the spirits gather about and serve him, and the dragon kings cause rain to fall at the proper time. If ordinary people of inferior capacity follow such a ruler, then they, too, can travel throughout

the four continents in an instant. All of these things come about solely because the wheel-turning king abides by the ten good precepts; these are the rewards that result from that observance.

Incomparably superior to the wheel-turning kings are Vaishravana and the rest of the four heavenly kings. These are the great kings who preside freely over the four continents.

Shakra is the lord of the heaven of the thirty-three gods. The devil king of the sixth heaven dwells at the summit of the world of desire and rules over the threefold world. These beings were able to obtain their positions because they observed the highest class of the ten good precepts and carried out the highly virtuous act of making impartial offerings.

The great heavenly king Brahma is the most highly honored among the heavenly beings in the threefold world. He dwells at the summit of the world of form, is attended by the devil king of the sixth heaven and Shakra, and holds a major world system in his hand. In addition to having practiced the kind of meditation that is still accompanied by illusions, he has cultivated the four infinite virtues—pity, compassion, joy, and impartiality.

The voice-hearer is one like Shari-putra or Mahakashyapa who, in addition to observing the two hundred and fifty precepts and practicing meditation without illusions, has concentrated his attention on the concepts of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. He has cut off all the illusions of thought and desire arising in the threefold world and can move entirely at liberty through water or fire. For these reasons, he has Brahma and Shakra as his attendants.

The cause-awakened one is one who is incomparably superior to the voice-hearer, one whose advent in the world rivals that of a Buddha. Long ago there was a hunter who lived in an age of

famine. At that time he gave a bowl of food consisting of millet as an offering to a pratyekabuddha named Rida. As a result, this hunter was reborn as a rich man in the human and heavenly realms for a period of ninety-one kalpas. In our present world, he was called Aniruddha, and was known as the foremost in divine insight among the Buddha's disciples.⁷

The Great Teacher Miao-lo commented on this as follows: "A meal of millet is a trifling thing. But because the donor gave all that he possessed, and because the recipient was a superior being, the donor was able to obtain marvelous recompense."⁸

The meaning of this passage of commentary is that, though a meal of millet may be insignificant, because it was given as an offering to a pratyekabuddha, a person of great worth, the donor was reborn again and again with wonderful rewards.

Next are those known as bodhisattvas, represented by Manjushri and Maitreya. These great bodhisattvas are remarkable beings who are incomparably superior to the pratyekabuddhas. Buddhas are beings who have completely dispelled the darkness associated with the forty-two levels of ignorance and have attained the stage of perfect enlightenment; they are like the full moon on the fifteenth night of the eighth month. These bodhisattvas have dispelled the darkness of forty-one levels of ignorance, thus reaching the mountain summit of near-perfect enlightenment, the next to the last stage; they are like the moon on the fourteenth night.

The Buddha is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times superior to the various beings described above. A Buddha is invariably distinguished by thirty-two features. Among these features are a pure and far-reaching voice, an unseen crown of the head, a knot of flesh on the head like a topknot, a tuft

of white hair between the eyebrows, and markings of the thousand-spoked wheel on the sole of each foot. Of these thirty-two features, each one was acquired as the result of a hundred blessings.

What do we mean by a hundred blessings? Let us suppose that all the people in Japan, in China, and in the sixteen great states, the five hundred middle-sized states, and the ten thousand small states that make up the five regions of India are blind, indeed, that all living beings throughout the continent of Jambudvīpa, the four continents, the six heavens of the world of desire, and throughout the entire major world system become blind. And let us suppose that there is a great physician who is capable of bestowing a splendid benefit by restoring sight to, in one instant, the eyes of all these beings. That act would count as the bestowal of a single blessing. When a hundred such blessings are accumulated, it leads to the appearance of one of the thirty-two features.

From this it is apparent that the benefits represented by merely one of these features are greater in number than all the plants and trees within a major world system, or all the drops of rain that fall upon the four continents.

In the time of the kalpa of decline, a great wind known as samghata arises, uprooting Mount Sumeru, lifting it to the highest heaven in the world of form,⁹ and then reducing it to particles of dust. But despite all that, not a single hair on the body of the Buddha so much as stirs.

In the breast of the Buddha is a great fire, made up of the great wisdom of equality, the shining light of great knowledge, and the fire pit of meditation.¹⁰ When the Buddha enters nirvana, this great fire blazes forth from his breast and consumes his body. Though the heavenly deities and the dragons and other beings of the six

heavens of the world of desire and the four seas, distressed at the thought of losing the Buddha, gather round and cause torrential rains to fall, until the earth of the entire major world system is under water and Mount Sumeru is about to be washed away, still they cannot put out this huge fire.

The Buddha is thus a person of great virtue. But King Ajatashatru, gathering together evil men from the sixteen great states of India, plotting with non-Buddhists from all around, and acknowledging Devadatta as his teacher, turned numberless hordes of evil people loose, causing them to curse, attack, and kill the Buddha's disciples. Not only that, but he turned against his father, a worthy ruler who was guilty of no fault, pinning him down in seven places with foot-long spikes. He also approached the queen consort—the mother who gave him birth—snatched away her jeweled hairpins, and held a sword to her head. Because of these terrible crimes, his body broke out in virulent sores in seven places.

It was fated that, when twenty-one days had passed, on the seventh day of the third month, the earth would break open, and he would fall into the hell of incessant suffering, to remain there for an entire kalpa. But because he sought out the Buddha, not only did his sores heal, but he was able to escape from the pains of the hell of incessant suffering and to live forty years longer.

The high minister Jivaka was an emissary of the Buddha, and as a result he was able to step into the flames and rescue the son of the rich man of Champa.¹¹ From this it would appear that once one has made offerings and paid homage to the Buddha, regardless of whether one is an evildoer or a woman, one will be able without fail to attain Buddhahood and achieve the way.

Devadatta had thirty of the distinctive features, but lacked the tuft of

white hair and the markings of the thousand-spoked wheel. Because he lacked two of the features that distinguish the Buddha, he was afraid that his disciples would belittle him. So he gathered fireflies and stuck them between his eyebrows to resemble the tuft of white hair. And for the markings of the thousand-spoked wheel, he had a blacksmith make pieces of iron in the shape of chrysanthemum blossoms and tried to brand them on the soles of his feet, but he succeeded only in burning his feet. As he walked on them, the injury grew worse until he was at the point of death, when he confessed to the Buddha what he had done. The Buddha then stroked the burns with his hand, and all the pain went away.

One might suppose that Devadatta would then repent and reform his ways, but instead he went about telling people that Gautama practiced petty healing tricks and that he resorted to magic.

And yet the Buddha harbored no grudges even against such enemies. How, then, could he ever cast aside anyone who had even once put faith in him?

This is how great the Buddha was. Therefore, when he was depicted in wooden statues or in paintings, his image walked about like the wooden statue carved by King Udayana, or preached the various sutras like the painted image fashioned by Matanga.

So venerable is this personage known as Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. And yet the blessings to be obtained by honoring him not for an hour or two, not for a day or two, but for the entire space of a kalpa—pressing one's palms together, raising one's eyes to the face of the Buddha, bowing one's head, abandoning all other concerns, going about it as though attempting to put out the fire in one's own head, as though thirsty and seeking water, as though hungry and seeking a meal—

the blessings to be obtained by incessantly making offerings and paying homage to the Buddha in this way cannot match those to be obtained by praising and making offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra in this latter age, even though it be only one word spoken in jest, the sort of unenthusiastic praise a stepmother might offer to her stepchild.

The blessings to be obtained from the latter act, it is stated, are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than those to be obtained by conducting oneself with a believing heart in the three categories of body, mouth, and mind, and offering alms to the living body of the Buddha for an entire kalpa. This is what the Great Teacher Miao-lo meant when he wrote that one would "enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles."

The ten honorable titles are ten epithets that are applied to the Buddha. Miao-lo is saying that the blessings to be obtained by making offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age are greater than those to be obtained by making offerings to the Buddha of the ten honorable titles. This is one of the twenty ways¹² cited by the Great Teacher Miao-lo in which the Lotus Sutra surpasses all other sutras.

The two doctrines¹³ outlined above were preached by the Buddha himself, and yet they may be difficult to believe. How, you may ask, could one possibly acquire greater blessings by making offerings to an ordinary person than by making offerings to a Buddha?

However, if you declare that these doctrines are mere lies, then you call into doubt the golden words spoken by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni himself, you make light of the testimony to their truth given by Many Treasures Buddha, and you disregard the sign manifested by the Buddhas of the ten directions when they extended their tongues.¹⁴ And if you do these things, you will fall into the Avichi hell alive.

You will be as nervous and uneasy at heart as a person who tries to ride an unruly horse over a rocky slope.

On the other hand, if you believe these doctrines, you will become a Buddha of perfect enlightenment. How, then, are you to go about nurturing faith in the Lotus Sutra? For if you try to practice the teachings of the sutra without faith, it would be like trying to enter a jeweled mountain without hands [to pick up its treasures], or like trying to make a thousand-mile journey without feet. The answer is simply to examine the proof that is close at hand, and thus to take hold of faith that is far off.

On the first day of the first month of the Buddha's eightieth year, when he had finished preaching the Lotus Sutra, he made this announcement: "Ananda, Maitreya, Mahakashyapa—I came into the world in order to preach the Lotus Sutra. I have accomplished my original intention, and now there is no further reason for me to remain in the world. Three months from now, on the fifteenth day of the second month, I will enter nirvana."¹⁵

Everyone, both those among the Buddha's followers and outsiders, doubted this pronouncement. But since the Buddha's words are never spoken in vain, when the fifteenth day of the second month at last came, he did in fact enter nirvana. As a result, people recognized that the golden words of the Buddha were true, and they began to have a certain amount of faith in his words.

The Buddha made another prediction, saying: "A hundred years after I pass away, a ruler named Ashoka the Great will appear. He will rule over one-third of the continent of Jambudvīpa, and will erect eighty-four thousand stupas and pay honor to my relics." People doubted this statement as well, but just as the Buddha had predicted, the king appeared; and from

this time onward, people believed.

The Buddha also said, "Four hundred years after I pass away, there will be a great ruler named King Kanishka. He will gather together a group of five hundred arhats, and they will compile the work known as *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma*." This prediction also came about just as the Buddha had stated.

As a result of these proofs, people came to believe the predictions of the Buddha. If, therefore, the two doctrines I cited earlier are nothing but lies, then everything that is in the Lotus Sutra must be a lie.

In the "Life Span" chapter the Buddha says that he became a Buddha numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past. We are ordinary human beings; we can hardly remember what has happened to us since our birth in this present existence, much less what happened one or two lifetimes back. How, then, can we be expected to have faith in what happened numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago?

Moreover, the Buddha made a prediction to Shariputra, saying, "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."¹⁶ He also made a prediction concerning Mahakashyapa, saying, "In future existences . . . And in his final incarnation he will be able to become a Buddha named Light Bright Thus Come One."¹⁷

But these passages in the sutra concern events in the distant future, and so it is difficult to expect ordinary people like ourselves to have faith in them. It is thus difficult for ordinary people, who have no knowledge of the distant past or future, to have faith in this sutra. That being the case, even if we were to carry out its practice, what meaning could it have for us?

In light of all this, it would seem that, when one who is able to show clearly visible proof in the present expounds the Lotus Sutra, there also will be persons who will believe.

In the declaration concerning sutra readings that you, the Honorable Horen, have sent to me, you state, "To mark the thirteenth year of the departure of my late beloved father I have performed a five-time recitation of the one vehicle sutra, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law."

Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, is known by the title World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment. The character that signifies "honored" can be interpreted as "lofty," and the character for "lofty" can be interpreted as "filial piety." Shakyamuni Buddha is honored with the title World-Honored One because, among all the persons noted for their filial devotion, he is the most outstanding.

The body of Shakyamuni Thus Come One was golden-hued and endowed with thirty-two features. Among these thirty-two was an unseen crown of the head, which means that, although the Buddha was sixteen feet tall, the Brahman of the Bamboo Staff school was unable to measure his height,¹⁸ and the deity Brahma was unable to see the top of his head. Hence the name "an unseen crown of the head." And he gained this characteristic because he was a great man who was foremost in filial devotion.

There are two classics on filial piety. One is a non-Buddhist work *The Classic of Filial Piety* by the sage known as Confucius. The other is a Buddhist text, the work known now as the Lotus Sutra. Though one text is Buddhist and the other not, with regard to this point, their import is the same.

What inspired Shakyamuni to devote himself to religious practice over kalpas equal in number to dust particles in an effort to attain Buddhahood? It was

nothing other than the ideal of filial devotion. All the living beings of the six paths and the four forms of birth are our fathers and mothers. Therefore, as long as Shakyamuni was unable to treat them all with filial devotion, he refrained from becoming a Buddha.

The Lotus Sutra offers a secret means for leading all living beings to Buddhahood. It leads one person in the realm of hell, one person in the realm of hungry spirits, and thus one person in each of the nine realms of existence to Buddhahood, and thereby the way is opened for all living beings to attain Buddhahood. The situation is like the joints in a piece of bamboo: if one joint is ruptured, then all the joints will split. Or it is like the move known as *shicho*¹⁹ in the game of go: if one stone is declared "dead," then many stones will "die." The Lotus Sutra also is like these.

Metal has the power to cut down trees and plants, and water has the power to extinguish any kind of fire. In like manner, the Lotus Sutra has the power to bring all living beings to the state of Buddhahood.

Among the living beings of the six paths and the four forms of birth there are both men and women. And these men and women all were our parents at some point in our past existences. Therefore, as long as even one of these fails to attain Buddhahood, then we ourselves cannot become Buddhas.

Hence people of the two vehicles are referred to as those who do not know how to repay their debt of gratitude, and it is taught that they will never be able to attain Buddhahood. This is because they do not universally manifest their sense of filial devotion.

The Buddha became enlightened to the Lotus Sutra, and as a result of the filial devotion that he showed to the mothers and fathers of the six paths and the four forms of birth, his person was endowed with blessings.

And these blessings enjoyed by the Buddha can be transferred by him to people who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra. It is like the food eaten by a loving mother, which turns into milk for the nourishment of her baby. For the Buddha has said, "Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children."²⁰

Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, takes these blessings and, in the form of the words that make up the Lotus Sutra, brings them to the mouths of all living beings for them to taste. A baby does not know the difference between water and fire, and cannot distinguish medicine from poison. But when the baby sucks milk, its life is nourished and sustained. Although one may not be versed in the Agama sutras the way Shariputra was, although one does not have the understanding of the Flower Garland Sutra that Bodhisattva Moon of Deliverance had, and although one has not committed to memory all the sacred teachings set forth by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime, as had Bodhisattva Manjushri, if one listens to even one character or one phrase of the Lotus Sutra, one cannot fail to attain Buddhahood.

The five thousand people²¹ of overweening pride lacked faith, having listened to the Lotus Sutra but failed to understand it. But because they did not slander it, after three months had passed, they were able to attain Buddhahood. These are the people referred to when the Nirvana Sutra says, "Whether they have faith or do not have faith, all shall be reborn in the immovable land of Buddhahood."

In the case of the Lotus Sutra, even though people may not have faith in it, so long as they do not slander it, then once they have heard it, they will attain Buddhahood, strange as it may seem. It is like a person bitten by the reptile known as the seven-step snake. He may go one step, or as many as seven steps,

but by that time the poison will have had its mysterious effect upon him, and he will be unable to take an eighth step.²² Or it is like the seven-day embryo in the womb. Within seven days' time, the embryo will invariably change shape. It will never retain the same shape for eight days.

And you, the Honorable Horen, are at present in a similar situation. The blessings of Shakyamuni Buddha have already been transferred to your person. And your person is a continuation of the face and form of your departed father.

It is like a seed that puts forth sprouts, or a flower that produces fruit. Though the flower falls, the fruit remains; though the seed is hidden from sight, the sprout is visible to us.

Thus the blessings that you yourself enjoy are in fact treasures belonging to your late father. When the pine flourishes, the cypress will rejoice; when the grasses wither, the orchids weep. And if even feelingless beings such as plants and trees can behave in this way, then how much more so those who have feelings, let alone those who are bound together as father and son?

In your declaration regarding sutra readings, you state: "From the morning when my compassionate father closed his eyes to the thirteenth anniversary of his passing, I have recited the verse section of the 'Life Span' chapter before Shakyamuni Thus Come One and have transferred the merits to the departed."

At present it would appear that the people of Japan put faith in the teachings of the Buddha. But in ancient times, before the Buddhist teachings were introduced to this country, people knew nothing about either the Buddha or his teachings. It was only after the battle between Moriya and Prince Jōgu that some people took faith in Buddhism, though others did not.

The situation was similar in China.

After Matanga had introduced Buddhism to China, he held a debate with the Taoists. When the Taoists were defeated in debate, then for the first time there were people who put their faith in Buddhism, though there were many more who did not.

In China there was a man named Wu-lung who was highly skilled at calligraphy and was often requested to write things for other people. But regardless of where the request came from, he absolutely refused to write out any passages from the Buddhist sutras. When he was on his deathbed, he summoned his son I-lung to his side and said: "You have been born into our family and have inherited talent in the art of calligraphy. Out of filial devotion to me, you must never transcribe the Buddhist sutras. In particular, do not transcribe the Lotus Sutra! Lao Tzu, whom I honor as my teacher, bears the title Honorable One of Heaven. Heaven cannot have two suns in it; and yet, in the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares that 'I am the only person [who can rescue and protect others].'²³ I find such a claim suspicious in the extreme. If you fail to heed my dying words and transcribe any of the Buddhist texts, I will instantly change into an evil spirit and put an end to your life."

After he said this, his tongue split into eight pieces, his head broke into seven parts, blood spouted from his five sense organs, and his life came to an end. But his son, unable to judge good from bad, was unaware that his father had manifested these evil signs and had fallen into the Avichi hell because he had slandered the correct teaching. Therefore, the son abided by the dying words of his father, never transcribing Buddhist sutras, much less allowing himself to recite such texts.

And so he continued awhile in this manner. The ruler of that time was called Ssu-ma. This ruler, wishing to have some sutra texts transcribed in

connection with a Buddhist celebration, inquired as to who was the most skilled calligrapher in all of China, and was informed that it was I-lung. He summoned I-lung and explained his wishes, but I-lung repeatedly refused the work. The ruler, unable to prevail upon him, resigned himself to employing someone else to write out the sutra text, but he was dissatisfied with the results. Summoning I-lung once more, he said: "You inform me that it is out of respect for your father's dying wishes that you refuse to undertake the sutra transcriptions I have requested. Though I hardly regard that as a valid excuse, I will accept it for the time being. I therefore ask only that you write out the title of the sutra."

Three times the ruler issued his command, but I-lung continued to decline. The ruler, his countenance clouded over with anger, said: "All of heaven and earth are within the jurisdiction of the ruler! And if that is so, then your late father, too, is a subject of mine, is he not? You have no right to slight an official undertaking simply because of private reasons. You must transcribe at least the title of the sutra. If you refuse, even though the place may be the site of a Buddhist celebration, I will have you beheaded at once!"

Therefore, I-lung transcribed just the title of the sutra. He wrote "Myohorenge-kyo, Volume One," and so on for each volume, down to Volume Eight.

When evening came, he returned to his home and said to himself with a sigh: "I have violated my father's dying words and, because the ruler's command left me no choice, have transcribed a Buddhist sutra and behaved in an unfilial way. The gods of heaven and the deities of earth must surely be looking upon me with anger and regarding me as an unfilial son."

So saying, he retired for the night. In

that night's dream a brilliant light appeared, shining like the morning sun, and a heavenly being stood in his courtyard, accompanied by countless followers. In the air above the head of the heavenly being there were sixty-four Buddhas. I-lung pressed his palms together and said, "Who may this heavenly being be?"

The being replied: "I am your father, Wu-lung. Because I slandered the teachings of the Buddha, my tongue split into eight pieces, blood spurted from my five sense organs, my head broke into seven parts, and I fell into the hell of incessant suffering. The terrible torments I endured at the time of my death were hardly bearable, but the sufferings that followed while I was in the hell of incessant suffering were a hundred, thousand, million times worse. The pains a person would feel in the human realm if he were to have his fingernails pried off with a dull knife or his head cut off with a saw, if he were forced to walk over live coals or were confined in a cage of thorns, would be as nothing compared with my pains. I longed for some way to tell you of my plight but could think of none. How inexpressible was my regret at the fact that, at the time of my death, I warned you never to transcribe the words of the Buddhist sutras, and that I left that as my last instruction. But it was too late for regrets, and no matter how I despised myself for what I had done, or cursed my tongue, it was to no avail.

"Then yesterday morning the single character *myo*, which begins the title of the Lotus Sutra, came flying through the air above the cauldron that is the hell of incessant suffering, and there changed into a golden-hued Shakyamuni Buddha. This Buddha possessed the thirty-two features, and his face was like the full moon. He spoke in a thunderous voice, saying, 'Even those who have destroyed enough good

causes to fill the entire realm of phenomena, if they hear the Lotus Sutra just once, will never fail to attain enlightenment.'

"Then from this one character *myo* a heavy rain began to fall that extinguished the flames of the hell of incessant suffering. King Yama tipped his crown in a gesture of respect, the wardens of hell put aside their staffs and stood at attention, and all the transgressors in hell looked around in astonishment and asked what had happened.

"Then the character *ho* appeared in the air and underwent the same kind of transformation, followed by the character *ren*, the character *ge*, and the character *kyo*. In this way sixty-four characters²⁴ appeared and became sixty-four Buddhas. Sixty-four Buddhas appearing in the hell of incessant suffering were like sixty-four suns and moons coming out in the sky. Amrita, or sweet dew, then descended from the sky and fell upon the transgressors.

"The transgressors asked the Buddhas why these wonderful things were happening. The sixty-four Buddhas answered, saying: 'Our golden-hued bodies do not come either from sandalwood or from jeweled mountains. They come from the eight times eight characters, the sixty-four characters that make up the titles of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, which were transcribed by I-lung, the son of Wu-lung, who is here in the hell of incessant suffering. The hand of I-lung is part of the body fathered by Wu-lung, and the characters written by that hand are as though written by Wu-lung himself.'

"When the Buddhas had spoken in this way, the transgressors in the hell of incessant suffering said: 'When we were in the saha world, we, too, had sons and wives and followers. We have wondered why none of them performed religious acts for our repose, and thought that perhaps, although they were performing acts of goodness,

the effect was too weak to reach us here. We sighed and sighed, but to no purpose. One day, two days, one year, two years, half a kalpa, a whole kalpa went by, and then at last we met with a good friend who was able to save us.’

“So all of us have become followers and are about to ascend to the heaven of the thirty-three gods. I have come to pay my respects to you before we go.” Thus spoke the heavenly being.

In his dream I-lung was filled with joy. After he and his father had parted, he had wondered in what world he would see him again. But now he could see the figure of his father and encounter the Buddhas as well. The sixty-four Buddhas then announced: “We are serving no particular master. You shall be our patron. From today on, we will guard and protect you as though you were our parent. You must continue to be diligent. When your life ends, we will without fail come and lead you to the inner court of the Tushita heaven.” Such was the promise they made.

I-lung, filled with awe, swore an oath, saying, “From this day forth, I will never transcribe so much as a single character of the non-Buddhist scriptures.” It was similar to the oath taken when Bodhisattva Vasubandhu vowed never again to recite Hinayana sutras, or when Nichiren pledged that he would never recite the name of Amida Buddha.

After I-lung awakened from his dream, he reported to the ruler what had happened. The ruler then issued a proclamation, saying, “The Buddhist ceremony that I undertook is hereby completed. You will write a prayer describing the events that have taken place.” I-lung did as he was instructed. As a result, people in China and Japan came to take faith in the Lotus Sutra. These events are described in the Chinese work entitled *The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions*.

What I have said here pertains to the blessings that derive from transcribing the sutra. For those who carry out one or another of the five practices, the act of transcribing the sutra produces the lowest grade of blessings. How much more immeasurable, then, are the blessings to be won by reading or reciting the sutra.

As to the blessings derived by you, who as chief mourner have recited the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter every morning for a period of thirteen years, they “can only be understood and shared between Buddhas.”²⁵

The Lotus Sutra represents the bone and marrow of all the sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime, and the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter represents the soul of the twenty-eight chapters of the sutra. The various Buddhas of the three existences look upon the “Life Span” chapter as their very life, and the bodhisattvas of the ten directions likewise regard the chapter’s verse section as their eye.

But it is not for me to describe the blessings deriving from the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter. Rather I refer to the subsequent “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter, which elaborates on them. It says that those people who became Buddhas after hearing the above verse section are equal in number to the particles of dust in a minor world system or a major world system. Moreover, those who attained enlightenment by listening to the six chapters from the “Medicine King” chapter on are merely those who had remained unenlightened after gaining blessings from the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter. And in the forty volumes of the Nirvana Sutra the Buddha once more explained the blessings to be derived from the verse section to the fifty-two types of beings who were gathered there.

So it becomes clear that the great

bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, and others, numerous as the dust particles of the lands of the ten directions, who gathered together like clouds on the occasion of the Buddha's preaching [of the Flower Garland Sutra] at the place of enlightenment; the various sages who attended on the occasion of his preaching of the Great Collection and Larger Wisdom sutras; and the twelve hundred and more honored ones who listened to the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Diamond Crown Sutra—it becomes clear that at some time in the past these people listened to the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. But because their faith was weak, they failed to attain enlightenment, even though incalculably long periods—major world system dust particle kalpas and numberless major world system dust particle kalpas—passed by. However, when they encountered Shakyamuni Buddha, the blessings of the Lotus Sutra began to work for them, so that they were able to gain enlightenment through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, and did not have to wait until the assembly at Eagle Peak to do so.

Consequently, the Buddhas throughout the ten directions looked up to the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter as their teacher and attained Buddhahood. This verse section is like a father and a mother to the people of the world.

A person who embraces the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra is sustaining the life of the Buddhas. Would any Buddha, then, abandon a person who embraces the very sutra through which that Buddha attained enlightenment? If any Buddha should abandon such a person, it would be as though he were abandoning himself.

Suppose there was a woman who had given birth to three thousand outstanding warriors of the caliber of Tamura or Toshihito.²⁶ Would one

choose to make an enemy of such a woman? To do so would be like handing three thousand generals over to the side of one's opponent, would it not? In the same way, anyone who would treat a person who embraces the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter as an enemy would be making an enemy of all the Buddhas of the three existences.

All the characters in which the Lotus Sutra is written represent living Buddhas. But because we have the eyes of common mortals, we see them as characters. It is like the example of the Ganges River. Hungry spirits see the waters of the river as fire, human beings see them as water, and heavenly beings see them as amrita. The waters are the same in all cases, but each type of being sees them differently, according to the effects of its karma.

As for the characters of the Lotus Sutra, a blind person cannot see them at all. A person with the eyes of a common mortal sees them as black in color. Persons of the two vehicles see them as the void. Bodhisattvas see various different colors in them, while a person whose seeds of Buddhahood have reached full maturity sees them as Buddhas. So the sutra states, “If one can uphold this [sutra], one will be upholding the Buddha's body.”²⁷ And T'ien-t'ai said: “The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, before which I bow my head, in its single case, with its eight scrolls, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters, is in each and every one of its characters the true Buddha who preaches the Law for the benefit of living beings.”²⁸

In light of all this, we can say that each morning [when he recites the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter] the priest Horen is sending forth golden-hued characters from his mouth. These characters are 510 in number, and each character changes into a sun, and each sun changes into

a Thus Come One Shakyamuni. They emit great beams of light that penetrate the earth and shine upon the three evil paths and the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. They also shine toward the east, west, north, and south, and upward, ascending to the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought.²⁹ They visit the realm where your departed father is dwelling, wherever it may be, and there hold discourse with him.

“Who do you think we are?” they say. “We are the characters of the verse section of the ‘Life Span’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra that your son Horen recites each morning. These characters will be your eyes, your ears, your feet, your hands!” Thus do they earnestly converse with him.

And at that time your departed father will say, “Horen is not my son. Rather he is a good friend to me.” And he will turn and pay respects in the direction of the saha world. For what you are doing is an act of true filial devotion.

We speak of upholding the Lotus Sutra. But although there is only one sutra, the manner in which we uphold it may vary from one period to the next. There may be times when a person literally rends his flesh and offers it to his teacher, and in this way attains Buddhahood. Or at other times a person may offer his body as a couch to his teacher, or as so much firewood. At yet other times a person may bear the blows of sticks and staves for the sake of the sutra, or may practice religious austerities or observe various precepts. And there may be times when, even though a person does the things described above, he still does not attain Buddhahood. It depends upon the time and is not something fixed.

Therefore, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai declared, “The method chosen should be that which accords with the time.”³⁰ And the Great Teacher Chang-

an said, “You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other.”³¹

Question: At what times should one offer one’s body, and at what times should one observe the precepts?

Answer: A person of wisdom is one who, understanding the time, spreads the teachings of the Lotus Sutra accordingly; this is his most important task. If a person’s throat is dry, what he needs is water; he has no use for bows and arrows, weapons and sticks. If a person is naked, he wants a suit of clothes but has no need for water. From one or two examples you can guess the principle that applies in general.

Suppose there is a great demon who is working to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In such a case one should offer one’s own body as alms to the demon; there is no need to offer any other food or clothing.

Or suppose there is an evil ruler who is bent upon destroying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In such a case, even at the cost of one’s life one must not obey him. And if there should be eminent priests who keep the precepts and practice religious austerities, and who appear to be spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra but are, in fact, subverting them, you should perceive the truth of the matter and reprimand them.

The Lotus Sutra says, “We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.”³² And the Nirvana Sutra states, “It is like a royal envoy who . . . would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler.” The Great Teacher Chang-an commented on this: “[A royal envoy . . . would rather], even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler’ means that one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should

give one's life in order to propagate the Law."³³

Judging from outward appearances, at present I, Nichiren, am the most perverse man in all of Japan. Among a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million people of the four categories of believers in the sixty-six provinces and two outlying islands³⁴ of our country, I am detested by the entire populace of both high and low station. In the seven hundred or more years since the teachings of the Buddha were first introduced to Japan, there has never been anyone who was hated to such a degree because of the Lotus Sutra. I have never heard that such persons existed in India or China, nor do I believe that they could have existed. Thus, I am the most perverse man in the entire land of Jambudvīpa.

Because of this, even my own kindred dare not visit me, to say nothing of those who are not related to me. They fear the authority of the government officials and regard with apprehension the sneers of the populace. Persons who have been helped by me, not only in religious matters but in secular affairs as well, fearful of the eyes of others and hoping thereby to put an end to talk, make a show of condemning me, though I do not think they do so in their hearts.

Several times I have met with difficulties, and twice I have incurred the wrath of the government authorities. Not only have I myself suffered punishment, but some of those who are associated with me have had to suffer official punishment, have had their lands confiscated, have been dismissed from service by their lords, or have been abandoned by their parents and brothers. As a result of all this, I have been cast aside by those who followed me in the past, and at present am without followers.

In particular, in the case of the most recent instance of punishment from the

government, it was certain that I would be executed, but instead, for some unknown reason, the government authorities banished me to the island province of Sado. Among those sent to Sado, most die; few live. And after I had finally managed to reach my place of exile, I was looked upon as someone who had committed a crime worse than murder or treason.

After leaving Kamakura for Sado, each day I seemed to face growing numbers of powerful enemies. The people I encountered were all advocates of the Nembutsu, and as I made my way through the fields and over the mountains, the sound of the grasses and trees by the wayside rustling in the wind I supposed to be the attacks of my enemies.

At last I reached the province of Sado. There, true to the nature of that northern land, I found the wind particularly strong in winter, the snows deep, the clothing thin, and the food scarce. I well understood then how the mandarin orange tree, uprooted and transplanted to a different locale, can quite naturally turn into a triple-leaved orange tree.³⁵

My dwelling was a dilapidated grass-roof hut in the midst of a field thick with eulalia and pampas grass where corpses were buried. Rain leaked in, and the walls did not keep out the wind. Day and night the only sound reaching my ears was the sighing of the wind by my pillow; each morning the sight that met my eyes was the snow that buried the roads far and near. I felt as though I had passed through the realm of hungry spirits and fallen alive into one of the cold hells.³⁶ I experienced the same thing as Su Wu, who was detained for nineteen years in the land of the northern barbarians and ate snow to keep himself alive, or Li Ling, who dwelled for six years in a rocky cave, clothed in a coat of straw.

Now, as it happens, the sentence of

exile has been lifted. But I found that there was no safety for me in Kama-kura, nor could I remain there for any length of time. And so, beneath the pines and among these mountain rocks, I have hidden my body and set my mind at peace. But except for having the earth itself to eat and the grass and trees to wear, I am cut off from all provisions of food and clothing. What feelings prompted you, I wonder, to come pushing through the wilderness to visit me in such a place?

Have my departed father and mother perhaps taken possession of you? Or is this some blessing brought about by the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment? I cannot hold back my tears.

Question: You pointed to the great earthquake of the Shoka era and the great comet of the Bun'ei era,³⁷ and said that our country would face danger from revolt within and invasion from abroad because it failed to heed the Lotus Sutra. May I ask your reasons?

Answer: Heavenly calamities and strange occurrences on earth such as these two are not to be found anywhere in the three thousand or more volumes of non-Buddhist writings. The major comets or major earthquakes described in the *Three Records*, *Five Canons*, and *Records of the Historian* are comets with tails one or two feet in length, ten or twenty feet, or perhaps fifty or sixty feet, but not one with a tail that stretches across the whole sky. The same applies for the magnitude of the earthquakes described therein. And if we examine the Buddhist scriptures, we find that during the entire period since the Buddha passed away no such major portents as these have ever appeared.

Even in India, when King Pushyamiitra wiped out the teachings of Buddhism in the five regions of India, burned the temples and stupas in the sixteen great states, and cut off the

heads of monks and nuns, no such portents as these appeared. Likewise in China, when the emperor of the Hui-ch'ang era³⁸ abolished over forty-six hundred temples and monasteries and forced 260,500 monks and nuns to return to secular life, there were no manifestations of this kind. In our own country, when the Buddhist teachings were introduced during the reign of Emperor Kimmei, Moriya showed enmity toward Buddhism, and later Priest Kiyomori burned the seven major temples of Nara, and the priests of Mount Hiei burned and destroyed Onjo-ji temple, but even then no such comet of such great size appeared.

It seemed to me that it was essential for people to know that an even more portentous event was about to occur in this world of Jambudvīpa. Therefore, I composed a work entitled *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* and presented it to His Lordship, the lay priest of Saimyo-ji. In that document I stated (and here I summarize): "This great portent [great earthquake] is a sign that our country is about to be destroyed by some other country. This will happen because the priests of the Zen, Nembutsu, and other schools are attempting to destroy the Lotus Sutra. Unless the heads of these priests are cut off and cast away at Yui Beach in Kamakura,³⁹ the nation will surely be destroyed."

Later, when the great comet of the Bun'ei era appeared, I had the proof of disaster in my very hand, and I became more convinced than ever of what was about to take place.

On the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of the Bun'ei era (1271), when I incurred the wrath of the authorities, I repeated my warning, saying, "I am the pillar of Japan. If you lose me, you lose the country!" I knew that my advice was unlikely to be heeded at that time, but I wanted to give it anyway for future reference.

Again, on the eighth day of the fourth month of last year (1274), when I had a meeting with Hei no Saemon-no-jo, he asked when the Mongol forces would invade Japan. I replied that the sutra texts gave no clear indication of the month and day, but that, since the eyes of heaven were so filled with anger these days, it would surely be no later than the present year.

People may wonder how I happen to know such things. I am a person of little worth, but I am working to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. When the ruler and the ministers and the common people of a country show animosity toward the votary who propagates the Lotus Sutra, then the gods of earth and the gods of heaven, who were present when the Lotus Sutra was preached and who took a vow to protect its votary, will respectively begin to tremble with anger and emit beams of light as a threat to the nation. And if, in spite of all remonstrance, the ruler and his ministers fail to heed the warnings, then in the end the gods will take possession of human beings and will cause revolt within the nation and attack from abroad.

Question: What proof can you offer for these assertions?

Answer: A sutra says, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, the stars and constellations, along with the winds and rains, all fail to move in their proper seasons."⁴⁰

In effect, heaven and earth are a mirror of the nation. In our state now there are heavenly calamities and strange occurrences on earth. One should realize that the ruler of the state must be committing some error. The situation is revealed as though in a mirror, so there is no disputing it. If the ruler is guilty of minor errors only, then only minor calamities will be revealed in the heavenly mirror. But the fact that we are now witnessing major calamities must mean

that the ruler is committing major errors.

The Benevolent Kings Sutra speaks of innumerable types of minor disasters, twenty-nine types of medium disasters, and seven types of major disasters. One name for this sutra is Benevolent Kings, but another name is the Mirror of Heaven and Earth. And this sutra can be used as a "mirror of heaven and earth" in which to catch a clear reflection of the nation's ruler. Moreover, the sutra states, "Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise."

One should understand from this that there is a great sage in this country of ours. And one should also understand that the ruler of the nation does not put faith in the sage.

Question: In earlier times, when Buddhist temples were destroyed, why were there no omens such as we see at present?

Answer: Omens are large or small depending upon whether the errors that cause them are grave or minor. The omens that have appeared this time are greatly to be wondered at. They have appeared not just once or twice, not on merely one or two occasions. Rather they have become more and more frequent with the passing of time. From this you should understand that the errors being committed by the ruler of the nation are more serious than those committed by rulers in earlier times, and that it is a graver error for a ruler to persecute a sage than it is for him to kill many common people, or to kill many of his ministers, or to kill his parents.

In Japan at present, the ruler, his ministers, and the common people are committing major offenses such as have not been known in India, China, or anywhere in all of Jambudvipa in the 2,220 years or more since the passing of the Buddha. It is as though all the people throughout the worlds of the ten

directions who are guilty of committing any of the five cardinal sins were to be gathered together in a single spot.

The priests of this country have all become possessed by the spirits of Devadatta and Kokalika; the ruler of the nation has become a reincarnation of King Ajatashatru or King Virudhaka. And in the case of the ministers and the common people, it is as though someone gathered together evil people like the ministers Varshakara and Chandrakirti, or like Sunakshatra and Girika, and had them constitute the people of Japan.

In ancient times, when there were two or three persons guilty of any of the five cardinal sins or of unfilial conduct, the ground where those people were standing split apart, and they were swallowed up. But now the whole country is filled with such people. Therefore, the entire earth under Japan would have to split apart in one instant and the whole country fall into the hell of incessant suffering. There would be no point in its simply opening up to swallow one or two persons.

It is like the case of an aging person who pulls out a white hair here and there. When he becomes truly old, his whole head turns white, and it is no longer any use trying to pull out the hairs one by one. The only thing to do then is to shave off all the hair in one stroke.

Question: Your argument is that, though you are a votary of the Lotus Sutra, your advice is not heeded, and therefore these heavenly calamities and strange occurrences on earth arise. But the eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "Their heads will split into seven pieces."⁴¹ And the fifth volume states, "If people speak ill of and revile him, their mouths will be closed and stopped up."⁴² Why is it that though you have been cursed and treated with

animosity for many years now these latter things have not occurred?

Answer: By way of answer, let me ask in turn if the people who cursed and reviled and beat Bodhisattva Never Disparaging had their mouths stopped or their heads split apart?

Question: [They did not.] But in that case, the text of the sutra is not consistent with itself, is it?

Answer: There are two types of people who show animosity toward the Lotus Sutra. The first are people who cultivated the roots of goodness in former existences, who in their present existence are searching for some connection with Buddhism, who conceive a desire for enlightenment and are capable of attaining Buddhahood. It is these people whose mouths are stopped or whose heads split apart.

The other type are people who have slandered the correct teaching in their previous existences, slander it in their present existence, and for existence after existence go on creating karma that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering. These people, even though they may curse, will not have their mouths stopped. They are like men who have already been sentenced to execution and are awaiting their turn in prison. While they are in prison, regardless of what evil acts they may commit, they will receive no further punishment other than the death sentence already passed upon them. However, with regard to people who are eventually to be released, if they commit evil acts in prison, then they will receive warnings.

Question: Since this is a very important point, may I ask you to explain it in detail?

Answer: It is explained in the Nirvana Sutra and in the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren

Background

Soya Kyoshin, to whom this letter was addressed, lived in Soya Village in Katsushika District of Shimosa Province. Sometime around 1260 he converted to the Daishonin's teachings. Then, around 1271, he became a lay priest, whereupon Nichiren Daishonin bestowed upon him the Buddhist name Horen (Law Lotus). At the time he received this letter, Kyoshin had been practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism as one of the leading believers in the area for about fifteen years.

This somewhat lengthy letter was written at Minobu in the fourth month of the first year of Kenji (1275), when the Daishonin was fifty-four years old. It is one among nine extant writings that the Daishonin sent to Kyoshin, two of which were written in classical Chinese, their contents clearly indicating that he was highly educated.

The Daishonin had just received from Kyoshin a written declaration of the sort commonly read aloud at a memorial service, in which he explained that he had recited the Lotus Sutra to commemorate the thirteenth anniversary of his father's death. In addition, Kyoshin mentioned that he had been performing a recitation of the verse section of the sutra's "Life Span" chapter daily since the time of his father's passing. In response, the Daishonin tells him that his devotion to the sutra is the truest form of filial piety, since only the Lotus Sutra can lead one's parents, and all other living beings, to Buddhahood.

Here the Daishonin introduces the ancient Chinese story of the calligrapher Wu-lung and his son I-lung in order to illustrate how immeasurable the merit is that Kyoshin has been transferring to his deceased father through his continued recitation of the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter.

In the story, the calligrapher I-lung

transcribes the title of each volume of the Lotus Sutra. As a result, he is able to save his father from his terrible distress in the hell of incessant suffering. But even such benefits as these, the Daishonin encourages Kyoshin, cannot compare to the benefits to be obtained from reciting the sutra. The Daishonin tells him that the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter represents the very heart of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, and that the benefits to be gained from reciting it can only be calculated and expressed by a Buddha.

The Daishonin also gives his disciple instructions in various other teachings. He discusses the wonderful rewards to be gained by one who praises and makes offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law. He also discusses the great gravity of the offense incurred by one who slanders the votary.

With regard to specific details about the practice of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin points out that the way to practice its teachings will necessarily vary with the times, and that a person of wisdom is one who perceives the times correctly and spreads the teachings accordingly. And he declares that practice in the Latter Day means spreading the Lotus Sutra without begrudging one's life. Because he himself has carried out precisely this sort of practice, the Daishonin says, he has been persecuted by the authorities and is detested by all the people of Japan. And, he notes, he was earlier forced to live under bitter conditions at a bleak and desolate location in exile on Sado Island and is now dwelling where there are no provisions at all, in an isolated mountain valley called Minobu. The Daishonin mentions how moved he is that Kyoshin has come all the way to see him in such a forsaken place.

Commenting upon his three remon-

strations with the Kamakura authorities, the Daishonin proclaims that it is their disregard for his warnings and persecution of him that have brought down upon the country a string of major calamities.

And at the very end of this letter, the Daishonin explains why some people who slander the Lotus Sutra seem not to receive any punishment at all. Those who slander the correct teach-

ing in existence after existence, he says, are condemned to the hell of incessant suffering and will receive no further warnings in this lifetime for their slanderous deeds.

For further details regarding this matter, the Daishonin asks Horen to refer to the Lotus Sutra and the Nirvana Sutra. It is also discussed in *The Opening of the Eyes* (pp. 279–80).

Notes

1. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

2. Sour, bitter, sweet, pungent, and salty.

3. Prince Enemy Before Birth refers to Ajatashatru, king of the state of Magadha in India. According to the Nirvana Sutra, King Bimbisara, who was impatient for the birth of an heir, ordered that the hermit who was destined to be reborn as his son be killed. It was subsequently foretold that the child would grow up to be the king's enemy. Hence the child was called Prince Enemy Before Birth.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3. In this quotation, the Daishonin paraphrases the sutra passage "be born there again" as "die there again."

5. According to the Meditation on the Buddha Sutra and the Causality of Past and Present Sutra, those who are unfilial will, after their death, fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

6. On *"The Words and Phrases."* The ten honorable titles are epithets applied to the Buddha expressing his virtue, wisdom, and compassion.

7. This story, which appears in the Storehouse of Various Treasures Sutra, is related in greater detail in *Reply to Tokimitsu* (p. 925).

8. On *"The Words and Phrases."*

9. "The highest heaven in the world of form" refers to the Akanishtha heaven, or Summit of Being heaven, where living beings are said to possess pure bodies free from all suffering and illness.

10. These virtues represent the state and nature of Buddhahood: The great wisdom of equality indicates the Buddha wisdom that benefits all beings impartially; the shining light of great knowledge refers to the

Buddha wisdom that shines universally and eliminates the darkness of illusions; and the fire pit of meditation describes a state of concentration that is free of delusions.

11. This story appears in the Nirvana Sutra. The rich man's wife died during pregnancy, but Shakyamuni nevertheless assured him that he would receive a male child. When his wife was cremated, a baby boy emerged from her body and sat up in the flames. At the Buddha's command, Jivaka entered the fire and bore the child to safety.

12. The twenty outstanding points enumerated in *On "The Words and Phrases."* One of them, for example, is the revelation in the "Life Span" chapter that Shakyamuni in fact attained Buddhahood in the remote past.

13. The two doctrines refer to the doctrines explaining the offense incurred by those who oppose the votaries of the Lotus Sutra and the blessings obtained by those who support them.

14. In the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Many Treasures Buddha appears to bear witness to the truth of the sutra. In the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, the Buddhas of the ten directions, testifying to the truth of the sutra, extend their long broad tongues until they reach the Brahma heaven.

15. In the Universal Worthy Sutra, the epilogue to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha says, "Three months from now I will enter nirvana." He makes the same announcement in a Pali scripture called the *Mahaparinnibbana-suttanta* (Sutra of the Great Nirvana). The Daishonin may have added the information about the date of the Buddha's passing because Buddhist tradition re-

lated that the Buddha passed away on this particular day.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. 6. In this passage the expression “final incarnation” indicates the existence in which one frees oneself from illusions, thus liberating oneself from the sufferings of birth and death.

18. When a Brahman attempted to measure Shakyamuni’s height with his bamboo staff, he discovered that his staff was too short to take the measurement.

19. A move in the game of go. It occurs when a particular stone and all the stones that have been set in place to protect it are rendered immobile by the move of one’s opponent. At this point, the stones are said to be “dead.”

20. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

21. As described in the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, those who left the assembly, thinking that they had understood what they had not.

22. This story of the seven-step snake appears in *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma*.

23. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

24. Sixty-four represents the total number of characters that I-lung transcribed, eight for each of the sutra’s eight volumes. “Myoho-renge-kyo” comprises five characters, and the volume number, three characters.

25. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

26. Tamura is Sakanoue no Tamuramaro (758–811), a military leader who was designated “Great General Who Subdues the Barbarians” for his successful campaign against the Ezo people of northern Japan, through which he established the authority of the imperial court in that region. Toshihito is Fujiwara no Toshihito (n.d.), a distinguished Fujiwara warrior who lived during the Heian period (794–1185). In 915 he became the chief of the military headquarters in northern Japan.

27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

28. Source unknown.

29. The world of formlessness being divided into four realms, this refers to the uppermost. See also threefold world in Glossary.

30. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

31. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

32. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

33. *Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

34. The two outlying islands refer to Iki and Tsushima, islands off the coast of Kyushu.

35. This saying appears in several Chinese classics such as *The Records of Yen Tzu*. According to these, a mandarin orange tree south of the Yangtze River becomes a triple-leaved orange tree if it is transplanted to the north of the Huai River. It symbolizes the changes people can undergo in response to their environment.

36. The cold hells refer to the eight cold hells said to lie under the continent of Jambudvīpa.

37. Reference is to the major earthquake that devastated the Kamakura area in the eighth month of 1257 and the great comet that appeared in the seventh month of 1264.

38. The emperor of the Hui-ch’ang era refers to Wu-tsung (814–846), the fifteenth emperor of the T’ang dynasty, who was an adherent of Taoism. In 845 he initiated a nationwide drive to destroy Buddhism.

39. Similar statements from the Nirvana Sutra, suggesting that slanderers of the Law should be put to death, are cited in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. In that treatise the Daishonin makes it plain that such statements are not meant to be taken literally; the slander itself, rather than the person who commits it, is what must be eradicated.

40. Sovereign Kings Sutra.

41. Lotus Sutra, chap. 26.

42. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

Letter to the Lay Priest Ichinosawa



IN the first year of the Kocho era (1261), cyclical sign *kanoto-tori*, on the twelfth day of the fifth month, I incurred the wrath of the government authorities and was exiled to the village of Ito in the province of Izu. It is the place where Hyoe-no-suke Yoritomo¹ was banished. Before long, however, in the third year of the Kocho era, cyclical sign *mizunoto-i*, on the twenty-second day of the second month, I was pardoned and allowed to return to Kamakura.

Then, in the eighth year of the Bun'ei era (1271), cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, on the twelfth day of the ninth month, I once more incurred the wrath of the government and was on the point of having my head cut off. But because of certain circumstances, the execution was postponed. Instead, I was placed in the custody of the former governor of Musashi,² who held the island province of Sado in the north as part of his feudal domain. I was sent to that island under the escort of his retainers.

The inhabitants of the island are a wild and barbarous lot, with no understanding of the law of cause and effect. Their treatment of me was indescribably rough. Nevertheless, I did not harbor the slightest resentment against them. The reason is this: Even the ruler of the country of Japan, the lord

of Sagami, whom one would expect to have at least some understanding of principles, failed to investigate the circumstances of my case, though I was in fact attempting to aid the nation. Instead, contrary to all reason and justice, he had me condemned to death. Therefore, even the good men among his subjects were not to be counted upon, and so there was surely no point in hating the bad ones.

Since the time I began declaring this teaching, I have resolved to dedicate my life to the Lotus Sutra and to spread my name in the pure lands of the Buddhas in the ten directions. Hung Yen took the liver of his dead lord, Duke Yi of Wei, cut open his own stomach, and inserted the liver before he died. Yü Jang, because his lord, Chih Po, had suffered disgrace, fell on his sword to avenge the wrong. These men went to such lengths to repay what was no more than a worldly debt of gratitude. The reason why people continue to transmigrate through the six paths for countless kalpas without ever being able to attain Buddhahood is because they begrudge their bodies and do not lay down their lives for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

The bodhisattva called Gladly Seen for a period of twelve hundred years burned his own body as an offering to the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright

Virtue, and for seventy-two thousand years he burned his arms as an offering to the Lotus Sutra, after which he was reborn as Bodhisattva Medicine King. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging suffered abuse and ridicule and was attacked with sticks of wood or tiles and stones over a period of many kalpas, all for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. But was he not reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha? Thus we can see that the path to Buddhahood requires different forms of practice depending upon the age.

In our present day, the Lotus Sutra is of course supreme, as it was in the past. And yet, because the way of practicing it differs from age to age, in this era, even if one were to retire to the mountain forests and read and recite it, or live in the villages and expound its doctrines, or observe all the various precepts, or even burn one's arms as an offering, that person would nevertheless fail to attain Buddhahood.

It would seem as though the teachings of Buddhism are now flourishing in Japan. And yet there is something strange about these teachings, though people are unaware of it. They are like insects that unwittingly fly into a flame, or birds that enter the mouth of a serpent.

The teachers of the True Word school and the adherents of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Zen, Pure Land, and Precepts schools all believe that they have grasped the Law and freed themselves from the sufferings of birth and death. But the founders of these schools failed to discern the true meaning of the sutras upon which they based their teachings. They proceeded only in a shallow manner, employing the sutras in a way that fitted with their own ideas. In doing so, they went against the Lotus Sutra, which means that their teachings were not in accord with the true intention of the Buddha. They were unaware of this, however,

and as they proceeded to propagate their doctrines, both the rulers of the nation and the common people came to believe in them. In addition, these doctrines spread to other countries, and many years have since passed. As a result, the scholars of this latter age, unaware that the founders of these schools were in error, look up to those who practice and propagate their teachings as persons of wisdom.

If the source is muddy, the stream will not flow clear; if the body is bent, the shadow will not be straight. Shan-wu-wei and the others who founded the True Word school were already destined for hell. Perhaps among them some repented in time and hence managed to avoid falling into hell. Or perhaps some merely propagated the teachings of their own sutras and neither praised [nor attacked] the Lotus Sutra, and thus, though unable to free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death, could nevertheless avoid falling into the evil paths. But the people of this latter age are not aware of these matters, and instead all alike put their faith in these teachings. They are like people who board a damaged ship and set out upon the great sea, or like those who, drunk with sake, lie down to sleep in the midst of a fire.

When I perceived this state of affairs, I immediately aroused the aspiration for enlightenment [in order to save them] and began to declare my teaching. I was aware from the beginning that, no matter how I addressed them, the people of the time would probably not believe me, and that I would likely on the contrary be sentenced to exile or execution.

The nation of Japan today has turned its back on the Lotus Sutra and cast aside Shakyamuni Buddha. For that reason, not only are its people bound to fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering in their next existence, but they will surely

encounter great troubles in their present existence as well. That is to say, invaders will come from a foreign land, and everyone, from the ruler on down to the common people, will lament with a single voice.

To illustrate, if a thousand brothers join together to slay their parent, the burden of guilt will not be divided among them in a thousand portions. Rather each and every one of the brothers must [receive the full karmic retribution, and all alike will] fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering, to remain there for the space of a kalpa. And the same is true of the people of this country.

Since numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, this saha world has been the domain of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Of the vast earth, the skies, the mountains and seas, the plants and trees, there is not a single portion that belongs to any other Buddha. And all the living beings within it are likewise the children of Shakyamuni Buddha.

For example, it is said that at the beginning of a kalpa of formation one of the Brahma kings descended from the heavens and gave birth to the various beings who inhabit the six paths.³ Just as Brahma is then the parent of all those beings, in the same way Shakyamuni Buddha is parent to all living beings in this world. Shakyamuni is the enlightened teacher for all the living beings in this country of ours as well. It is thanks to our teacher that we can know who our parents are; it is owing to Shakyamuni Buddha that we can distinguish black from white.

Yet, following the words of men like Shan-tao and Honen, who have been possessed by the heavenly devil, people proceed to build Amida halls throughout the country. They build Amida halls in each district, each village, and each hamlet. Ordinary citizens build Amida halls in their own houses, and

people make painted or wooden images of Amida Buddha to put up in their homes and dwellings. The name of Amida is on everyone's lips, some chanting it in a loud voice, some chanting it ten thousand times, some chanting it sixty thousand times a day. And persons with a degree of wisdom make haste to encourage others in these practices. This is like adding dried grass to a fire, or loosing winds to blow upon and stir up the waters.

Of the inhabitants of this country, there is not one who is not a disciple and subject of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. If a person does not paint or carve a single image of Amida or of any Buddha other than Shakyamuni, or does not chant Amida's name, then, although he may be an evil person, he still has not clearly shown that he has rejected Shakyamuni Buddha. But all those people who worship Amida Buddha exclusively have already clearly shown that they have rejected Shakyamuni Buddha. Those who chant the futile formula of the Nembutsu—they are the truly evil ones.

They treat this Buddha who is neither father nor mother, neither sovereign nor teacher to them with the kind of tenderness one might show to a beloved wife. At the same time, they cast aside Shakyamuni Buddha, our real sovereign, parent, and enlightened teacher, and fail to open their mouths to recite the Lotus Sutra, which is like a wet nurse to us all. How can they be called anything but unfilial?

These unfilial persons number not just one or two, a hundred or a thousand; they include not just the inhabitants of one or two provinces. From the ruler on down to the common people, everyone in the entire land of Japan, without a single exception, is guilty of committing the three cardinal sins!⁴

As a result, the sun and moon change color and glare down on them,

the earth shakes and heaves in anger, great comets fill the sky, and huge fires break out all over the land. Yet these persons fail to perceive their error and instead praise themselves, saying, "We unceasingly recite the Nembutsu, and in addition we build Amida halls and pay honor to Amida Buddha!"

Such actions may seem wise, but in fact they are worthless. Suppose there is a young couple. The husband is so in love with his wife, and the wife thinks so tenderly of her husband, that they completely forget about their parents. As a result, the parents go about in thin clothing, while the bedroom of the young couple is warm and snug. The parents have nothing to eat, while the young couple's stomachs are full. Such young people are committing the worst kind of unfilial conduct, and yet they fail to see that they are doing wrong. A wife who would deliberately turn her back on her own mother and a husband who would go against his own father—are they not guilty of an even graver offense?

Amida Buddha dwells in a land that is located a hundred thousand million worlds away and has not the slightest connection with this saha world. However one may claim [that such a connection exists], there is no basis for it. It is like trying to mate a horse with an ox, or a monkey with a dog.

I, Nichiren, am the only person who is aware of this. If I should begrudge my life and thus refrain from speaking out, not only would I be failing to repay the debt of gratitude I owe to my country, but I would also be acting as an enemy of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. On the other hand, I knew from the outset that, if I set aside my fears and declared things exactly as they are, I would be sentenced to death. And even if I should escape the death penalty, I would surely be condemned to exile. So great is the debt of gratitude I owe

the Buddha, however, that I have not let others intimidate me, but have spoken out.

Just as I anticipated, I was exiled no less than twice. During the second of these sentences, in the summer of the ninth year of the Bun'ei era (1272), I was sent to a place called Ichinosawa in Ishida Village in the province of Sado. The headman and his men in the region to which I had been assigned, in both official and unofficial matters, treated me with greater malice than if I had been a lifelong enemy of their parents or a foe from some previous existence. But the lay priest of the lodgings⁵ where I was put up, as well as his wife and servants, though they seemed fearful at first, privately came to look on me with pity, perhaps because of some bond formed between us in a previous existence.

The rations of food that I received from the headman were very scanty. And since I had a number of disciples with me, we often had no more than two or three mouthfuls of rice to a person. Sometimes we portioned out the food on square trays made of bark, and sometimes we simply received it in the palms of our hands and ate it then and there. The master of the house in private treated us with compassion. Though outwardly he appeared to be fearful of the authorities, at heart he had great pity for us, something that I will never forget in any future lifetime. At that time, he meant more to me than the very parents who gave me birth. However great the obligations I incurred to him, I must endeavor to repay them. Even more, I must not fail to do what I had promised him.

The lay priest felt deeply concerned about the life to come and had for a long time devoted himself to chanting the Nembutsu. Moreover, he had constructed an Amida hall and dedicated his lands in offering to Amida Buddha. He was also afraid of how the steward

of the area⁶ might react, and so he did not come forward and take faith in the Lotus Sutra. From his point of view, this was probably the most reasonable course to take. But at the same time, he will without doubt fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. I had thought, for example, that, even if I were to send him a copy of the Lotus Sutra, he would not be willing to abandon the practice of the Nembutsu out of his fear of worldly opinion, and so it would be like combining water with fire. There was no doubt that the flood of his slander of the Law would extinguish the small flame of his faith in the Lotus Sutra. And if he were to fall into hell, I, Nichiren, would in turn be to blame. Thus, while asking myself anxiously again and again what ought to be done, I have so far not sent him a copy of the Lotus Sutra.

In the midst of all this, I received word that the copy of the Lotus Sutra that I had earlier intended to send him had been destroyed in a fire in Kamakura. More than ever it seemed as though the lay priest had no connection with the Lotus Sutra, and I wondered at myself for ever having promised to send him a copy.

Moreover, when the nun of Kamakura⁷ was leaving Sado to return home, she found herself in difficulty for money to cover her journey. I reluctantly asked the lay priest to provide for her expenses, though I regret having made such a request. I could of course simply return the sum of money to him along with interest. But my disciples point out that I would still be failing to keep my original promise. I am faced with difficulties any way I turn, and yet I am afraid that people may think I am given to irresponsible and deceitful behavior. Therefore, I feel I have no choice but to send a copy of the entire Lotus Sutra in ten volumes. Since the lay priest's grandmother seems at heart to

be more deeply drawn to the sutra than does the lay priest himself, I entrust it to you for her sake.

The things I say sound like the words of a fool, and so no one heeds them. Nevertheless, I must note that in the tenth month of the eleventh year of the Bun'ei era (1274), cyclical sign *kinoe-inu*, when the kingdom of the Mongols launched an attack on Tsukushi, the defenders of the island of Tsushima held fast, but So Soma-no-jo,⁸ the deputy constable of Tsushima, fled. As a result, the Mongols were able to attack the commoners, killing or taking prisoners among the men, and herding the women together and passing ropes through holes in their hands to tie them to their ships or taking them prisoner. Not a single person escaped.

In the attack on the island of Iki the same thing happened. When the Mongol ships pressed on [to Tsukushi], the lay-priest magistrate⁹ who was in charge of the area, the former governor of Buzen, fled in defeat. Several hundred of the Maturato men¹⁰ were struck down or taken prisoner, and the population of one coastal village after another suffered the same fate as the people of Iki and Tsushima.

When the Mongols attack the next time, what will it be like? When thousands and millions of fighting men from their country come swarming and pressing upon Japan, what will happen?

Their forces in the north will first of all attack the island of Sado. In no time at all, they will kill the stewards and constable of the area. When the common people attempt to flee to the northern mountains, they will be killed or taken prisoner or will perish in the mountains.

We must stop to consider why such terrible things should occur. The reason, as I stated earlier, is that every single person in this country has committed the three cardinal sins. Therefore, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun

and moon, and the four heavenly kings have entered into the body of the Mongol ruler and are causing him to chastise our nation.

I may be a fool, but, having declared myself to be the envoy of Shakyamuni Buddha and the votary of the Lotus Sutra, it is nothing short of amazing that my words go unheeded. Because of this failure, the nation now faces ruin. Not only are my words not heeded, but I have been driven out of province after province, been dragged about, attacked and beaten, and sent into exile, and my disciples have been killed or had their fiefs taken away from them.

If someone were to mete out such treatment to an actual messenger of his parents, could that person's actions possibly be condoned? Yet I, Nichiren, am father and mother to all the people of Japan, I am their sovereign, I am their enlightened teacher! Should they turn against one like me? It is absolutely certain that those who chant the Nembutsu are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. You may depend on my words!

When the Mongols come to make their assault, what will you do? Even if you should put this copy of the Lotus Sutra on your head or hang it around your neck and flee to the northern

mountains, the fact remains that over a period of many years you have given support to the Nembutsu priests and have recited the Nembutsu yourself, and in doing so, have made yourself an enemy of Shakyamuni Buddha and of the Lotus Sutra.

If at that time you should lose your life, you must bear no resentment toward the Lotus Sutra. When you are brought before King Yama in his palace, what will you say? At that time, though you may feel foolish in doing so, you will probably declare that you are a lay supporter of Nichiren.

But enough of that. As for this copy of the Lotus Sutra that I am sending, you should ask Gakujo-bo¹¹ to read it for you regularly. But whatever anyone may say, you must not allow any of the Nembutsu priests, True Word teachers, or observers of the precepts to look at it. Though people may claim to be disciples of Nichiren, if they do not possess some proof of that fact from my hand, you must not trust them.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eighth day of the fifth month

To the wife of the lay priest Ichinosawa



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the fifth month of the first year of Kenji (1275) and addressed to the wife of the lay priest Ichinosawa who lived at Ichinosawa on Sado Island. Though written to his wife, it was titled *Letter to the Lay Priest Ichinosawa* in a later age, for the letter contains advice relevant to her husband. Perhaps Nichiren Daishonin wrote to the wife, expecting that the lay priest would read the letter,

though he was afraid of being criticized by people for his connection with the Daishonin.

During his exile on Sado, in the fourth month of 1272, the Daishonin was moved to the lay priest's residence at Ichinosawa from the dilapidated hut at Tsukahara where he had lived for five months since his arrival on the first day of the eleventh month of the previous year. The Daishonin's life at

Ichinosawa was more comfortable, and, thanks to the support of the lay priest and his wife, he was able to feed several disciples.

The lay priest seemingly respected the Daishonin, but was unable to discard his faith in the Pure Land school

in fear of what the local people would say about him. Yet the Daishonin tries to awaken the couple to faith in the Lotus Sutra, encouraging them to sever their attachment to the Pure Land teachings for the sake of their next life.

Notes

1. Hyoe-no-suke Yoritomo is another name for Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), founder of the Kamakura shogunate, the first warrior government in Japan.

2. The former governor of Musashi refers to Hojo Nobutoki, who held the post of the governor of Musashi from 1267 to 1273 and was also the constable of Sado Province.

3. This tradition probably stems from the ancient Indian belief in Brahma as the creator deity.

4. The three cardinal sins refer here to the three offenses of turning against one's sovereign, parent, and teacher, or in other words, betrayal of Shakyamuni Buddha, who is endowed with these three virtues.

5. The lay priest of the lodgings refers to the lay priest Ichinosawa, to whose wife this letter was addressed.

6. The steward of the area refers to Homma Rokuro Saemon, who was a retainer of Hojo Nobutoki and deputy constable of Sado Province.

7. The identity of the nun of Kamakura is uncertain.

8. So Soma-no-jo is another name for

So no Sukekuni (1207–1274), a warrior descendant of the Taira clan. He was the deputy constable of the island province of Tsushima.

9. The lay-priest magistrate refers to Shoni Sukeyoshi (1198–1281), the constable of Iki, Tsushima, Chikuzen, Buzen, and Hizen provinces. He concurrently held the post of magistrate and was therefore responsible for overseeing the judiciary, temples and shrines, civil engineering projects, and so forth in the Kyushu area. After the Mongol attack in 1274, he became a lay priest, assuming the name Kakue.

10. The Maturato men were members of a league of warriors who controlled the Matsura region in Hizen Province (now Nagasaki and Saga prefectures) from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries.

11. Gakujo-bo (d. 1301) was a disciple of the Daishonin who is said to have lived at Ichinosawa on Sado Island. Originally a believer of the True Word school, he converted to the Daishonin's teaching. He propagated it, establishing a temple called Jisso-ji on the island.

The Offering of an Unlined Robe



A WOMAN is like water, which takes on the shape of its container. A woman is like an arrow, which is fitted to the bow. A woman is like a ship, which is dependent on its rudder. Therefore, if her husband is a thief, a woman will become a thief, and if her husband is a king, she will become the consort. If he is a man of goodness, she will become a Buddha. Not only this life but also the life to come depends on her husband.

At the same time, Hyoe no Saemon¹ is a votary of the Lotus Sutra. No matter what may happen, because you are Saemon's wife, the Buddha must acknowledge you as a woman of the Lotus Sutra. And, moreover, you have aroused faith of your own accord and have sent me an unlined robe² for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

There are two kinds of votaries of the Lotus Sutra: sages and ordinary people. The sage peels off his skin and uses it to copy the sutra passages.³ If ordinary persons offer their only robe to the votary of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha will acknowledge it as an offering equal to peeling off their skin.

Since your unlined robe has been offered to the Buddhas of the 69,384 characters that make up the Lotus Sutra, it is 69,384 robes. And since every one of these 69,384 Buddhas is made up of the 69,384 sutra characters, it is as though you had offered that many robes to each of them. To illustrate, if a spark as small as a bean is set to a single blade of grass in a spring field of a thousand square *ri* thick with grass, it becomes in an instant an immeasurable, boundless blaze. Such is also the case with this robe. Though only one robe, it has been offered to the Buddhas of all the characters of the Lotus Sutra.

Be firmly convinced that the benefits from this will extend to your parents, your grandparents, nay, even to countless living beings, not to mention your own husband, whom you hold most dear.

Nichiren

The twenty-fifth day of the fifth month

Reply to the lady of Sajiki



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the fifth month of the first year of Kenji (1275) and addressed to a woman who was a follower of Nichiren Daishonin living at Sajiki in Kamakura. She is said to have been the wife of Indo Saburo Saemon Sukenobu, or related to Nissho, one of the Daishonin's six senior disciples. Very little exists in the way of reliable data about her.

The recipient of this letter had kindly made a robe for the Daishonin to wear in summer. At this time he was living in a small dwelling at the foot of Mount Minobu, and enduring many privations. In this letter, after express-

ing his gratitude for the robe, Nichiren Daishonin explains the significance and benefit of the offering and praises his follower's faith.

The opening paragraph reflects the society of feudal Japan, when women had little independence and their fortunes were largely determined by their husband. Since the lady of Sajiki's husband was a believer in the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Daishonin says she has thus formed a connection with the Lotus Sutra and will be able to attain Buddhahood. What he praises, however, is the self-motivated faith that prompted her to make and offer him a robe.

Notes

1. Hyoe no Saemon probably refers to Indo Saburo Saemon Sukenobu, a follower of the Daishonin, who is thought to have been the husband of this letter's recipient.

2. An unlined robe for summer use, made of hemp cloth or crinkled silk.

3. Reference is to the story of the ascetic Aspiration for the Law (*see* Glossary).

Winter Always Turns to Spring



To the lay nun Myoichi:

IF the sun and moon were not in the heavens, how could plants and trees grow? Human beings have both a father and a mother. It is hard for children to grow up when even one parent is missing. Your husband had to leave behind a daughter, a son who is ill, and you, their mother, who suffer from a poor constitution. To whom could he have entrusted his family before leaving this world?

At the time of his extinction, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment lamented, “Now I am about to enter nirvana. The only thing that worries me is King Ajatashatru.” Bodhisattva Kashyapa then asked him, “Since the Buddha’s mercy is impartial, your regret in dying should stem from compassion for all living beings. Why do you single out only King Ajatashatru?” The Buddha replied, “Suppose that a couple has seven children, one of whom falls ill. Though the parents love all their children equally, they worry most about the sick child.”¹ T’ien-t’ai, commenting on this sutra passage in his *Great Concentration and Insight*, said, “Even if the parents of seven children are never partial, they are still particularly concerned about the sick one.” In essence, the sutra is saying that, even if there are many children, the parents’ hearts are with the

child who is ill. To the Buddha, all living beings are his children. Among them, the sinful man who slays his own parents and becomes an enemy of the Buddha and the sutras is like the sick child.

King Ajatashatru was the ruler of Magadha. He murdered his father, King Bimbisara, a powerful patron of Shakyamuni Buddha, and became an enemy of the Buddha. In consequence, the heavenly gods forsook him, the sun and moon rose out of rhythm, and the earth shook violently to cast him off. All his subjects defied the Buddha’s teachings, and other kingdoms began to attack Magadha. All this happened because King Ajatashatru took the wicked Devadatta for his teacher. As a result, one day virulent sores broke out all over his body, and it was foretold that on the seventh day of the third month he would die and fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Saddened by this, the Buddha was reluctant to enter nirvana. He lamented, “If I can save King Ajatashatru, I can save all offenders in the same way.”

Your late husband had an ailing son and a daughter. I cannot help thinking that he may have grieved that, if he were to abandon them and leave this world, his aged wife, as feeble as a withered tree, would be left alone, and would probably feel very sorry for these chil-

dren. In addition, he may also have worried about Nichiren. Since the Buddha's words are in no way false, the Lotus Sutra is sure to spread widely. In that regard, perhaps your husband felt that certainly something would happen and this priest would become highly respected. When I was exiled contrary to his expectations, he must have wondered how the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters could possibly have allowed it to happen. Were he still living, how delighted he would be to see Nichiren pardoned! How glad he would be to see that my prediction has been fulfilled, now that the Mongol empire has attacked Japan and the country is in a crisis. These are the feelings of ordinary people.

Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring. Never, from ancient times on, has anyone heard or seen of winter turning back to autumn. Nor have we ever heard of a believer in the Lotus Sutra who turned into an ordinary person. The sutra reads, "If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."²

Your husband gave his life for the Lotus Sutra. His entire livelihood depended on a small fief, and that was confiscated because of his faith in the Lotus Sutra. Surely that equals giving his life for the Lotus Sutra. The boy Snow Mountains was able to give his body for half a verse of a Buddhist teaching, and Bodhisattva Medicine King was able to burn his arms as an offering to the Buddha because both

were sages, and it was like pouring water on fire. But your husband was an ordinary person, so it was like putting paper in fire. Therefore, he must certainly have received blessings as great as theirs.

He is probably watching his wife and children in the heavenly mirrors of the sun and moon every moment of the day and night. Since you and your children are ordinary persons, you cannot see or hear him; neither can the deaf hear thunder nor the blind see the sun. But never doubt that he is protecting you. Moreover, he may be close at hand.

Just when I was thinking that, if at all possible, I must somehow come and see you, you had a robe sent here to me. This was a totally unexpected circumstance. Since the Lotus Sutra is the noblest of all sutras, I may yet gain influence in this lifetime. If so, rest assured that I will look after your children whether you are still living or are watching from under the sod. While I was in the province of Sado and during my stay here [at Minobu], you sent your servant to help me. In what lifetime could I ever forget what you have done for me? I will repay this debt of gratitude by serving you in the next lifetime. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifth month

To the lay nun Myoichi



Background

This letter, written in the fifth month of the first year of Kenji (1275), is one of several that Nichiren Daishonin wrote to the lay nun Myoichi, who

lived in Kamakura and was related to Nissho, one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples. Myoichi was an educated woman who had lost her hus-

band and was struggling with the difficulties of raising her children alone. Nichiren Daishonin wrote to encourage her, explaining that believers of the Lotus Sutra are as if in the midst of winter, but that winter unfailingly turns to spring.

This letter reveals that the lay nun's husband was a strong believer, since he continued to follow the Daishonin even when his estate was confiscated because of his faith. He died worrying about the Daishonin, who was then

in exile, and about his wife, whose constitution was frail, and who would have to support their two children. But the Daishonin assures Myoichi that her husband has received the same benefits as sages such as the boy Snow Mountains and Bodhisattva Medicine King, and that he is protecting his bereaved family. One theory maintains that the lay nun is the same person as a believer named Myoichi-nyo who received the letter *The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form*.

Notes

1. Nirvana Sutra.
2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

The Selection of the Time

Nichiren, disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha



WHEN it comes to studying the teachings of Buddhism, one must first learn to understand the time. In the past, when the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence appeared in the world, he remained for a period of ten small kalpas without preaching a single sutra. Thus the Lotus Sutra says, “Having taken his seat, ten small kalpas pass.”¹ And later, “The Buddha knew that the time had not yet come, and though they entreated, he sat in silence.”²

Likewise Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings in the present world, spent the first forty and more years of his preaching life without expounding the Lotus Sutra, because, as the sutra says, “the time to preach so had not yet come.”³

Lao Tzu remained in his mother’s womb for eighty years, waiting to be born,⁴ and Bodhisattva Maitreya abides in the inner court of the Tushita heaven for a period of 5,670 million years, awaiting the time for his advent in the world. The cuckoo sings when spring is waning, the cock waits until the break of day to crow. If even these lowly creatures have such an understanding of time, then how can a person who wishes to practice the teachings of Buddhism fail to make certain what time it is?

When Shakyamuni Buddha prepared

to preach at the place where he had gained enlightenment, the various Buddhas made their appearance in the ten directions, and all the great bodhisattvas gathered around. Brahma, Shakra, and the four heavenly kings came with their robes fluttering. The dragon deities and the eight kinds of nonhuman beings pressed their palms together, the ordinary people of superior capacity bent their ears to listen, and the bodhisattvas who in their present bodies have attained the stage where they perceive the non-birth and non-extinction of the phenomenal world, along with Bodhisattva Moon of Deliverance, all begged the Buddha to preach. But the World-Honored One did not reveal a single word concerning the doctrines that hold that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, or that he himself had attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past, nor did he set forth the most vital teachings of all, those concerning a single moment of life encompassing the three thousand realms and the fact that one can attain Buddhahood in one’s present form. There was only one reason for this: the fact that, although his listeners possessed the capacity to understand such doctrines, the proper time had not yet come. Or, as the Lotus Sutra says, “[The reason . . . was that] the time to preach so had not yet come.”⁵

But when Shakyamuni Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra to the gathering on Eagle Peak, the great king Ajatashatru, who had been the most unfilial person in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, was allowed to sit among the listeners. Devadatta, who had spent his whole life slandering the Law, was told that in the future he would become the Thus Come One Heavenly King, and the dragon king's daughter, though impeded by the five obstacles, became a Buddha without changing her reptilian form. Those predestined for the realms of voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones were told that they would in fact become Buddhas, like scorched seeds that unexpectedly sprout and put forth flowers and fruit. The Buddha revealed that he had attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past, which puzzled his listeners as greatly as if he had asserted that an old man of a hundred was the son of a man of twenty-five.⁶ And he also expounded the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, explaining that the nine worlds have the potential for Buddhahood and that Buddhahood retains the nine worlds.

Thus a single word of this Lotus Sutra is as precious as a wish-granting jewel, and a single phrase is the seed of all Buddhas. We may leave aside the question of whether Shakyamuni's listeners at that point possessed the capacity to understand such doctrines or not. The fact is that the time had come for him to preach them. As the sutra says, "Now is the very time when I must decisively preach the great vehicle."⁷

Question: If one preaches the great Law to people who do not have the capacity to understand it, then the foolish ones among them will surely slander it and will fall into the evil paths of existence. Is the person who does the preaching not to blame for this?

Answer: If a man builds a road for

others and someone loses his way on it, is that the fault of the road-builder? If a skilled physician gives medicine to a sick person but the sick person, repelled by the medicine, refuses to take it and dies, should one blame the physician?

Question: The second volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom."⁸ The fourth volume says, "It must not be distributed or recklessly transmitted to others."⁹ And the fifth volume states, "This Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place. Through the long night I have guarded and protected it and have never recklessly propagated it."¹⁰ These passages from the sutra would seem to indicate that one should not expound the Law to those who do not have the capacity to understand it.

Answer: I refer you to the passage in the "Never Disparaging" chapter that states, "He would say to people, 'I have profound reverence for you.' . . . Among the four kinds of believers there were those who gave way to anger, their minds lacking in purity, and they spoke ill of him and cursed him, saying, 'This ignorant monk.'" The chapter also says, "Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him." And in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter it says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves." These passages imply that one should preach the Law even though one may be reviled and cursed and even beaten for it. Since the sutra so teaches, is the one who preaches to blame?

Question: Now these two views appear to be as incompatible as fire and water. May I ask how one is to resolve this dilemma?

Answer: T'ien-t'ai says, "The method chosen should be that which accords with the time."¹¹ Chang-an says, "You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other."¹² What these remarks mean is that, at times, the Buddha's teaching will be met with slander and one therefore refrains from expounding it for the present, and that, at other times, even though one encounters slander, one nevertheless makes a point of preaching anyway. There are times when, although a few persons may have the capacity to believe, the great majority will only slander the Buddha's teaching, and one therefore refrains from expounding it for the present. And there are other times when, although the great majority of people are bound to slander the Buddha's teaching, one nevertheless makes a point of preaching anyway.

When Shakyamuni Buddha first attained enlightenment and prepared to preach, the great bodhisattvas Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, Diamond Storehouse, Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Maitreya, and Moon of Deliverance, as well as the heavenly lords Brahma and Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and countless numbers of ordinary people of superior capacity, came to hear him.¹³ When he preached at Deer Park, Ajnata Kaundinya and the others of the five ascetics, along with Mahakashyapa and his two hundred fifty followers, Shariputra and his two hundred fifty followers, and eighty thousand heavenly beings all gathered to listen.¹⁴

At the ceremony of the great assembly for the Correct and Equal sutras, the World-Honored One's father, King Shuddhodana, displayed a sincere desire for the Buddha's teachings, and the Buddha therefore entered the palace and preached the Meditation on the Buddha Sutra for him. And for the sake of his deceased mother, Lady

Maya, he secluded himself in the heaven of the thirty-three gods for a period of ninety days and there preached the Maya Sutra. Where his father and mother were concerned, one would think he could not possibly withhold even the most secret teaching of the Law. And yet he did not preach the Lotus Sutra for them. In the final analysis, the Buddha's preaching of the Lotus Sutra has nothing to do with the capacities of his listeners. As long as the proper time had not yet come, he would on no account expound it.

Question: When is the time for the preaching of the Hinayana sutras and the provisional sutras, and when is the time for the preaching of the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: Even bodhisattvas, from those at the ten stages of faith to great bodhisattvas on the level of near-perfect enlightenment, find it difficult to judge matters concerning time and capacity. How then can ordinary beings such as ourselves be able to judge such matters?

Question: Is there no way to determine them?

Answer: Let us borrow the eye of the Buddha¹⁵ to consider this question of time and capacity. Let us use the sun of the Buddha¹⁶ to illuminate the nation.

Question: What do you mean by that?

Answer: In the Great Collection Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, addresses Bodhisattva Moon Storehouse and predicts the future. Thus he says that the first five hundred years after his passing will be the age of attaining liberation,¹⁷ and the next five hundred years, the age of meditation¹⁸ (making one thousand years). The next five hundred years will be the age of reading, reciting, and listening,¹⁹ and the next five hundred years, the age of building temples and stupas²⁰ (making two thousand

years). In the next five hundred years,²¹ “quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost.”

These five five-hundred-year periods, which total twenty-five hundred years, are delineated in different ways by different people. The Meditation Master Tao-ch’o of China declares that during the first four of the five five-hundred-year periods, which constitute the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the pure Law of the Hinayana and Mahayana teachings will flourish, but that after the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law these teachings will all perish. At that time, only those who practice the Pure Land teaching, the pure Law of the Nembutsu, will be able to escape the sufferings of birth and death.²²

The Japanese priest Honen defines the situation in this way.²³ According to him, the Lotus, Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, and various Hinayana sutras that have spread in Japan, along with the teachings of the Tendai, True Word, Precepts, and other schools, constitute the pure Law of the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law referred to in the passage from the Great Collection Sutra cited above. But once the world enters the Latter Day of the Law, all these teachings will be completely obliterated. Even though people should continue to practice such teachings, not a single one of them will succeed in escaping from the sufferings of birth and death. Thus *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra* and the priest T’an-luan refer to such teachings as the “difficult-to-practice way”; Tao-ch’o declares that “not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood”²⁴ through them; and Shan-tao says that “not even one person in a thousand”²⁵ can be saved by them. After the pure Law of these teachings has become obscured and lost, then

the great pure Law—namely, the three Pure Land sutras and the single practice of calling upon the name of Amida Buddha—will make its appearance, and when people devote themselves to this practice, even though they may be evil or ignorant, “ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land.”²⁶ This is the meaning of the passage: “Only this doctrine of the Pure Land offers a road by which one can gain admittance.”²⁷

Honen therefore declares that, if people desire happiness in the next life, they should withdraw their support from Mount Hiei, To-ji, Onjo-ji, and the seven major temples of Nara, as well as from all the various temples and monasteries throughout the land of Japan, and should seize all the fields and landholdings that have been donated to these temples and devote these resources to the building of Nembutsu halls. If they do so, they will be certain to be reborn in the Pure Land. Thus he urges them to recite the words *Namu Amida Butsu*.

It has now been more than fifty years since these teachings spread throughout our country. My refutation of these evil doctrines is now a thing of the past. There is no doubt that our present age corresponds to the fifth five-hundred-year period described in the Great Collection Sutra, when “the pure Law will become obscured and lost.” But after the pure Law is obscured and lost, the great pure Law of *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra, will surely spread and be widely declared throughout the land of Jambudvipa—with its eighty thousand kingdoms, their eighty thousand rulers, and the ministers and people in the domain of each ruler—just as the name of Amida is now chanted by the mouths of the priests, nuns, laymen, and laywomen in Japan.

Question: What passages can you cite to prove this?

Answer: The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."²⁸ This indicates that to "spread it abroad widely" will be accomplished in the time after "the pure Law becomes obscured and lost," as the Great Collection Sutra puts it.

Again, the sixth volume states, "In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra . . ."²⁹ The fifth volume states, "In the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish . . ."³⁰ The fourth volume states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"³¹ The fifth volume says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."³² And the seventh volume, speaking of the fifth five-hundred-year period, which is the age of quarrels and disputes, says that evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, and kumbhanda demons will seize the advantage.³³

The Great Collection Sutra says, "Quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings." The fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra similarly says, "In that evil age there will be monks," "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks," and "Evil demons will take possession of others."³⁴

These passages describe the following situation. During the fifth five-hundred-year period, eminent priests who are possessed by evil demons will be found everywhere throughout the country. At that time, a single wise man will appear. The eminent priests who are possessed by evil demons will deceive the ruler, his ministers, and the common people into slandering and

abusing this man, attacking him with sticks, staves, shards, and rubble, and condemning him to exile or death. At that time, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will speak to the great bodhisattvas who sprang up from the earth, and the great bodhisattvas will in turn report to Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings. As a result, strange occurrences and unusual disturbances will appear in abundance in the heavens and on earth.

If there are countries whose rulers fail to heed this warning, then the Buddhas and the great bodhisattvas will order neighboring countries to attack the evil rulers and evil priests of those countries. Then great struggles and disputes such as have never been known in the past will break out in Jambudvīpa.

At that time, all the people living in the land illuminated by the sun and moon, fearing the destruction of their nation or the loss of their lives, will pray to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas for help. And if there is no sign that their prayers will be answered, they will put their faith in this single humble priest whom they earlier hated. Then all the countless eminent priests, the great rulers of the eighty thousand countries, and the numberless common people will all bow their heads to the ground, press their palms together, and in one voice will chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo. It will be like that occasion during the Buddha's demonstration of his ten supernatural powers, described in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, when all the beings in the worlds of the ten directions, without a single exception, turned toward the saha world and cried out together in a loud voice, "Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha! Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha! Nam-myohorenge-kyo, Nam-myohorenge-kyo!"³⁵

Question: The sutra passages you have cited clearly prove your point. But are there any prophecies in the writings of T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, or Dengyo that would support your argument?

Answer: Your process of questioning is backwards. If I had cited passages from the commentaries of men such as T'ien-t'ai and the others and you had then asked whether there were passages from the sutras and treatises to support them, that I could understand. But since I have already cited sutra passages that clearly prove the argument, it is hardly necessary to ask if there are similar passages in the commentaries. If by chance you found that the sutras and the commentaries disagreed, would you then discard the sutras and follow the commentaries?

Question: What you say is perfectly true. Nevertheless, we ordinary people have only a very remote idea of what the sutras mean, while the commentaries are more accessible and easier to understand. If there are clear passages of proof in such relatively understandable commentaries, then citing them might help us have greater faith in your argument.

Answer: I can see that you are very sincere and earnest in your questioning, so I will cite a few passages from the commentaries. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, "In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."³⁶ The Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "The beginning of the Latter Day of the Law will not be without inconspicuous benefit."³⁷

The Great Teacher Dengyo declares: "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people. How do we know this is true? Because the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter of the Lotus Su-

tra states, 'In the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, [accept and embrace the Lotus Sutra].'³⁸ And Dengyo further states: "Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu."³⁹ As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, 'Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?' There is good reason for this statement."⁴⁰

Shakyamuni Buddha was born in the kalpa of continuance, in the ninth period of decrease, when the span of human life was diminishing and measured a hundred years. The period when the span of human life diminishes from a hundred years to ten years accordingly falls within the period represented by the fifty years of the Buddha's preaching life, the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law that follow his passing, and the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law that follow that. During this period, the Lotus Sutra was destined to be propagated and spread widely on two occasions. The first was the last eight years of the Buddha's life [when he preached the Lotus Sutra], and the second is the five hundred years at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo were not born early enough to be present when the Buddha was in the world and preached the Lotus Sutra, nor were they born late enough to be present in the Latter Day of the Law. To their regret, they were born in the interval between these two times, and it is clear from their writings that they

looked forward with longing to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

Theirs was like the case of the seer Asita who, when he viewed the newborn Prince Siddhartha [the future Shakyamuni Buddha], remarked in sorrow: "I am already over ninety, so I will not live to see this prince attain enlightenment. After my death, I will be reborn in the world of formlessness, so I cannot be present during the fifty years when he preaches his teachings, nor can I be reborn in this world during the Former, Middle, or Latter Day of the Law!"⁴¹ Such was his lament.

All those who are determined to attain the way should take note of these examples and rejoice. Those concerned about their next life would do better to be common people in this, the Latter Day of the Law, than be mighty rulers during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law. Why won't people believe this? Rather than be the chief priest of the Tendai school, it is better to be a leper who chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo! As Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty said in his vow,⁴² "I would rather be Devadatta and sink into the hell of incessant suffering than be the non-Buddhist sage Udraka Ramaputra."

Question: Do the scholars Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu say anything about this principle [of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo]?

Answer: Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu knew about it in their hearts, but they did not expound it in words.

Question: Why did they not expound it?

Answer: There are many reasons. For one, the people of their day did not have the capacity to understand it. Second, it was not the proper time. Third, these men were bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha in his transient status and hence had not been entrusted with the task of expounding it.

Question: Could you explain the matter in greater detail?

Answer: The Former Day of the Law began on the sixteenth day of the second month, the day after the Buddha's passing. The Venerable Mahakashyapa received the transmission of the Buddha's teachings and propagated them for the first twenty years. For the next twenty years, this task fell to the Venerable Ananda, for the next twenty years to Shanavasa, for the next twenty years to Upagupta, and for the next twenty years to Dhritaka. By that time a hundred years had passed. But the only teachings that were spread widely during this period were those of the Hinayana sutras. Even the titles of the Mahayana sutras failed to receive mention, so the Lotus Sutra, needless to say, was not propagated at this time.

Men such as Mikkaka, Buddhanda, Buddhimitra, Parshva, and Punyayasha then inherited the teachings, and during the remainder of the first five hundred years after the Buddha's passing, the doctrines of the Mahayana sutras began little by little to come to light, although no particular effort was made to propagate them. Attention was concentrated on the Hinayana sutras alone. All this transpired during the period mentioned in the Great Collection Sutra as the first five hundred years, which constitute the age of attaining liberation.

During the latter part of the Former Day of the Law, six hundred to a thousand years after the Buddha's passing, there appeared such men as Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, the Venerable Kapimalla, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, Bodhisattva Aryadeva, the Venerable Rahulata, Samghanandi, Samghayashas, Kumara, Jayata, Vasubandhu, Manorhita, Haklenayashas, and Arayasimha.⁴³ These more than ten teachers started out as adherents of non-Buddhist doctrines. Following that, they made a thorough study of the Hinayana sutras, and still

later they turned to the Mahayana sutras and used them to disprove and demolish the doctrines of the Hinayana sutras.

But although these great men used the Mahayana sutras to refute the Hinayana, they did not fully clarify the superiority of the Lotus Sutra in comparison to the other Mahayana sutras. Even though they did touch somewhat on this question, they did not make clear such vitally important doctrines as the ten mystic principles of the theoretical teaching and of the essential teaching, the fact that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, the fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past, the fact that the Lotus Sutra is the foremost in all the sutras preached in the past, present, or future, or the doctrines of the hundred worlds and thousand factors and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

They did no more than point a finger at the moon, as it were, or touch on some parts of the Lotus Sutra. But they said nothing at all about whether or not the process of instruction is revealed from beginning to end, whether or not the original relationship between teacher and disciple is clarified, or which teachings would lead to enlightenment and which would not.⁴⁴ Such, then, were the developments in the latter five hundred years of the Former Day of the Law, the time noted in the Great Collection Sutra as the age of meditation.

By some time after the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, Buddhist teachings had spread throughout the entire land of India. But in many cases, Hinayana doctrines prevailed over those of the Mahayana, or provisional sutras were permitted to overshadow and efface the sutra of the true teaching. In a number of respects, Buddhism was in a chaotic condition. Gradually, the number of persons attaining enlightenment declined, while

countless others, though adhering to Buddhist doctrines, fell into the evil paths.

Fifteen years after the beginning of the Middle Day of the Law,⁴⁵ which followed the thousand years of the Former Day, Buddhism spread eastward and was introduced into the land of China. During the first hundred years or more of the first half of the Middle Day of the Law, the Buddhist doctrines introduced from India were vigorously disputed by the Taoist teachers of China, and neither side could win a clear victory. Though it appeared at times as though the issue had been decided, those who embraced Buddhism were as yet lacking in deep faith. Therefore, if it had become apparent that the sacred teachings of Buddhism were not a unified doctrine but were divided into Hinayana and Mahayana, provisional and true, and exoteric and esoteric teachings,⁴⁶ then some of the believers might have had doubts and turned instead to the non-Buddhist teachings. It was perhaps because the Buddhist monks Kashyapa Matanga and Chu Fa-lan feared such a result that they made no mention of such divisions as Mahayana and Hinayana or provisional and true teachings when they brought Buddhism to China, though they were perfectly aware of them.

During the five dynasties that followed, the Wei, Chin, Sung, Ch'i, and Liang, disputes took place within Buddhism over the differences between the Mahayana and Hinayana, provisional and true, and exoteric and esoteric teachings, and it was impossible to determine which was correct. As a result, from the ruler on down to the common people, there were many who had doubts about the doctrine.

Buddhism thus became split into ten different schools: the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north. In the south there were the schools that divided the Buddha's teachings into

three periods, into four periods, and into five periods, while in the north there were the five period school, the school that recognized incomplete word and complete word teachings, the four doctrine school, five doctrine school, six doctrine school, the two Mahayana doctrine school, and the one voice school.⁴⁷

Each of these schools clung fiercely to its own doctrines and clashed with the others like fire encountering water. Yet in general they shared a common view. Namely, among the various sutras preached during the Buddha's lifetime, they put the Flower Garland Sutra in first place, the Nirvana Sutra in second place, and the Lotus Sutra in third place. They admitted that, in comparison to such sutras as the Agama, Wisdom, Vimalakirti, and Brahma Excellent Thought, the Lotus Sutra represents the truth, and that it is a complete and final sutra, and sets forth correct views. But they held that, in comparison to the Nirvana Sutra, it represents a doctrine of non-eternity, a sutra that is neither complete nor final, and a sutra that puts forth erroneous views.

From the end of the fourth through the beginning of the fifth hundred years following the introduction of Buddhism in the Later Han dynasty, in the time of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties, there lived a humble priest named Chih-i, the man who would later be known as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che. He refuted the mistaken doctrines of the northern and southern schools and declared that among the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime the Lotus Sutra ranks first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Flower Garland Sutra third. This is what occurred in the first five hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law, the period corresponding to that described in the Great Collection Sutra as the age of reading, reciting, and listening.

During the latter five hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law, in the reign of Emperor T'ai-tsung at the beginning of the T'ang dynasty, the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang journeyed to India, spending nineteen years visiting temples and stupas in the 130 states of India and meeting with numerous Buddhist scholars. He investigated all the profound doctrines contained in the twelve divisions of the scriptures and the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Buddhism and encountered therein the two schools of the Dharma Characteristics and the Three Treatises.

Of these two, the Mahayana Dharma Characteristics doctrine was said to have been taught long ago by Maitreya and Asanga and in more recent times by the Scholar Shilabhadra. Shilabhadra transmitted it to Hsüan-tsang, who brought it to China and taught it to Emperor T'ai-tsung.

The heart of the Dharma Characteristics doctrine lies in its assertion that Buddhist teachings should accord with the capacities of the listeners. If people have the capacity to understand the doctrine of the one vehicle, then the doctrine of the three vehicles can be no more than an expedient to instruct them, and the doctrine of the one vehicle, the only true way of enlightening them. For people such as these, the Lotus Sutra should be taught. On the other hand, if they have the capacity to understand the three vehicles, then the one vehicle can be no more than an expedient to instruct them, and the three vehicles, the only true way of enlightening them. For people such as these, the Profound Secrets and Shrimala sutras should be taught. This, say the proponents of the Dharma Characteristics school, is a principle that T'ien-t'ai Chih-che failed to understand.

Emperor T'ai-tsung was a worthy ruler whose name was known throughout the world and who was said to

have surpassed in virtue the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of antiquity. He not only reigned over the entire land of China, but also extended his influence to more than eighteen hundred foreign countries ranging from Kao-ch'ang⁴⁸ in the west to Koguryō in the east. He was regarded as a ruler who had mastered both Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings. And since Hsüan-tsang was first in the favor and devotion of this worthy ruler, there was none among the leaders of the T'ien-t'ai school who ventured to risk losing his head by challenging him, and the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra were neglected and forgotten throughout the country.

During the reigns of T'ai-tsung's heir, Emperor Kao-tsung, and Kao-tsung's stepmother, Empress Wu, there lived a priest called Fa-tsang. He observed that the T'ien-t'ai school was under attack from the Dharma Characteristics school and took this opportunity to champion the Flower Garland Sutra, which T'ien-t'ai had relegated to a lower place, declaring that the Flower Garland Sutra should rank first, the Lotus Sutra second, and the Nirvana Sutra third among the sutras preached during the Buddha's lifetime.

In the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the fourth ruler following T'ai-tsung, in the fourth year of the K'ai-yüan era (716), the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei came to China from the western land of India, and in the eighth year of the same era, the Tripitaka masters Chin-kang-chih and Pu-k'ung also came to China from India. These men brought with them the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras and founded the True Word school. This school declares that there are two types of Buddhist teachings: the exoteric teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, which are expounded in the Flower Garland, Lotus, and similar sutras, and the esoteric teachings of Mahavairochana Buddha, which are expounded in

the Mahavairochana and similar sutras. The Lotus Sutra holds first place among the exoteric teachings. But although its fundamental principles somewhat resemble those of the esoteric teachings expounded by Mahavairochana Buddha, it contains no description whatsoever of the mudras and mantras to be used in religious rituals. It fails to include any reference to the three mysteries of body, mouth, and mind, and hence is to be regarded as a sutra that is neither complete nor final.

Thus all of these three schools mentioned above, the Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and True Word, attacked the T'ien-t'ai school, which was based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Perhaps because none of the members of the T'ien-t'ai school could measure up to the stature of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, though they were aware of the falsity of these other teachings, they did not attempt to speak out against them in public as T'ien-t'ai had. As a result, everyone throughout the country, from the ruler and high ministers on down to the common people, was led astray from the true teachings of Buddhism, and no one any longer came to gain the Buddha way. Such were the events of the first two hundred or more years of the latter five-hundred-year period of the Middle Day of the Law.

Some four hundred years after the beginning of the Middle Day of the Law,⁴⁹ the sacred scriptures of Buddhism were brought to Japan from the kingdom of Paekche, along with a wooden statue of the Buddha Shakyamuni, and also priests and nuns. At this time the Liang dynasty in China was coming to an end, to be replaced by the Ch'en dynasty, while in Japan, Emperor Kimmei, the thirtieth sovereign⁵⁰ since Emperor Jimmu, was on the throne.

Kimmei's son, Emperor Yomei, had a son named Prince Jogu who not only

worked to spread the teachings of Buddhism but also designated the Lotus Sutra, Vimalakirti Sutra, and Shrimala Sutra as texts that would insure the protection of the nation.

Later, in the time of the thirty-seventh sovereign, Emperor Kotoku (r. 645–654), the teachings of the Three Treatises and Establishment of Truth schools were introduced to Japan by the Administrator of Priests Kanroku from Paekche. During the same period, the priest Dosho, who had been to China, introduced the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics and Dharma Analysis Treasury schools.

In the reign of Empress Gensho (r. 715–724), the forty-fourth sovereign, a monk from India called the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei brought the Mahavairochana Sutra to Japan, but he returned to China, where he had been residing, without spreading its teachings abroad in Japan.⁵¹

In the reign of Emperor Shomu (r. 724–749), the forty-fifth sovereign, the Flower Garland school was introduced from the kingdom of Silla by a priest of that state called the Preceptor Shinjo. The Administrator of Priests Roben inherited its teachings and in turn introduced them to Emperor Shomu. He also helped construct the great image of the Buddha at Todai-ji.

During the time of the same emperor, the Reverend Ganjin came from China, bringing with him the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai and Precepts schools. But although he spread the Precepts teachings and built a Hinayana ordination platform at Todai-ji, he died without even so much as mentioning the name of the Lotus school.

Eight hundred years after the beginning of the Middle Day of the Law, in the reign of the fiftieth sovereign, Emperor Kammu (r. 781–806), there appeared a young priest without reputation named Saicho, who was later to be known as the Great Teacher Dengyo.

At first he studied the doctrines of the six schools—Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts—as well as the Zen teaching, under the Administrator of Priests Gyohyo and others. Later he founded a temple called Kokusho-ji, which in time came to be known as Mount Hiei. There he pored over the sutras and treatises of the six schools, as well as the commentaries written by their leaders. But he found that these commentaries often contradicted the sutras and treatises upon which these schools relied and were replete with one-sided opinions. It became apparent to him that if people were to accept such teachings they would all fall into the evil paths of existence. In addition, though the leaders of each of the different schools proclaimed that they had understood the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra and praised their own particular interpretation, none of them had in fact understood its teachings correctly. Saicho felt that if he were to state this opinion openly it would surely lead to quarrels and disputes. But if he remained silent, he would be going against the spirit of the Buddha's vow.⁵² He agonized over what course to take, but in the end, fearful of violating the Buddha's admonition, made known his views to Emperor Kammu.

Emperor Kammu, startled at his declaration, summoned the leading authorities of the six schools to engage in debate.⁵³ At first these scholars in their pride were similar to banners raised aloft like mountains, and their evil minds worked like poisonous snakes, but in the end they were forced to bow in defeat in the presence of the ruler, and each and every person of the six schools and the seven major temples of Nara acknowledged himself a disciple of Saicho.

It was like that earlier occasion when the Buddhist scholars of northern and southern China gathered in the palace

of the Ch'en dynasty and, having been bested in debate by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, became his disciples. But [of the three types of learning] T'ien-t'ai had employed only perfect meditation and perfect wisdom.⁵⁴ The Great Teacher Dengyo, by contrast, attacked the Hinayana specific ordination for administering the precepts, which T'ien-t'ai had failed to controvert, and administered the Mahayana specific ordination⁵⁵ described in the Brahma Net Sutra to eight eminent priests of the six schools. In addition, he established on Mount Hiei a specific ordination platform for administering the precepts of the perfect and immediate enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra. Thus the specific ordination in the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment at Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei was not only the foremost ordination ceremony in Japan, but a great ordination in the precepts of Eagle Peak such as had never been known either in India or China or anywhere else in Jambudvīpa during the eighteen hundred or more years since the Buddha's passing. This ceremony of ordination had its beginning in Japan.

If we examine the merit achieved by the Great Teacher Dengyo, we would have to say that he is a sage who surpasses Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu and who excels both T'ien-t'ai and Miaolo. If so, then what priest in Japan today could turn his back on the perfect precepts of the Great Teacher Dengyo, whether he belongs to To-ji, Onjo-ji, or the seven major temples of Nara, or whether he is a follower of one of the eight schools or of the Pure Land, Zen, or Precepts school in whatever corner of the land? The priests of the nine regions of China became the disciples of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai with respect to the perfect meditation and perfect wisdom that he taught. But since no ordination platform for universally administering the precepts of perfect and immediate en-

lightenment was ever established in China, some of them might not have become his disciples with regard to the precepts. In Japan, however, [because Dengyo in fact established such an ordination platform] any priests who fail to become disciples of the Great Teacher Dengyo can only be regarded as non-Buddhists and men of evil.

As to the question of which of the two newer schools brought from China is superior, the Tendai or the True Word, the Great Teacher Dengyo was perfectly clear in his mind. But he did not demonstrate which was superior in public debate, as he had done previously with regard to the relative merit of the Tendai school in comparison to the six older schools. Perhaps on that account, after the passing of the Great Teacher Dengyo, To-ji, the seven major temples of Nara, Onjo-ji, and other temples throughout the provinces of Japan all began proclaiming that the True Word school is superior to the Tendai school, until everyone from the ruler on down to the common people believed that such was the case.

Thus the true spirit of the Tendai Lotus school really flourished only during the lifetime of the Great Teacher Dengyo. Dengyo lived at the end of the Middle Day of the Law, during the period described in the Great Collection Sutra as the age of building temples and stupas. The time had not yet arrived when, as the Great Collection Sutra says, "Quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost."

Now more than two hundred years have passed since we entered the Latter Day of the Law, a time of which, as the Great Collection Sutra records, the Buddha predicted that "quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost." If these words of the Buddha are true, it is a

time when the whole land of Jambudvīpa will without doubt be embroiled in quarrels and disputes.

Reports reaching us say that the entire land of China, with its 360 states and 260 or more provinces, has already been conquered by the kingdom of the Mongols. The Chinese capital was conquered some time ago, and the two rulers Emperor Hui-tsung and Emperor Ch'in-tsung⁵⁶ were taken captive by the northern barbarians and ended their days in the region of Tartary. Meanwhile, Hui-tsung's grandson, Emperor Kao-tsung,⁵⁷ driven out of the capital K'ai-feng, established his residence in the countryside at the temporary palace at Lin-an, and for many years he did not see the capital.

In addition, the six hundred or more states of Koryō and the states of Silla and Paekche have all been conquered by the great kingdom of the Mongols, and in like manner the Mongols have even attacked the Japanese territories of Iki, Tsushima, and Kyushu.⁵⁸ Thus the Buddha's prediction concerning the occurrence of quarrels and disputes has proved anything but false. It is like the tides of the ocean that never fail to come when the time arrives.

In view of the accuracy of his prediction, can there be any doubt that, after this period described in the Great Collection Sutra when "the pure Law will become obscured and lost," the great pure Law of the Lotus Sutra will be spread far and wide throughout Japan and all the other countries of Jambudvīpa?

Among the Buddha's various teachings, the Great Collection Sutra represents no more than an exposition of provisional Mahayana doctrine. In terms of teaching the way to escape from the sufferings of birth and death, it belongs to the period when the Buddha had "not yet revealed the truth,"⁵⁹ and so cannot lead to enlightenment those who have not yet formed any

connection with the Lotus Sutra. And yet in what it states concerning the six paths, the four forms of birth, and the three existences of life, it does not display the slightest error.

How, then, could there be any error in the Lotus Sutra, of which Shakyamuni Buddha said that he "now must reveal the truth"?⁶⁰ Many Treasures Buddha likewise testified to its truth, and the Buddhas of the ten directions put forth their long broad tongues until they reached the Brahma heaven as a sign of testimony. Shakyamuni Buddha also extended his tongue, which is incapable of telling falsehoods, until it reached the highest heaven in the world of form, saying that in the last five-hundred-year period after his passing, when the entire body of Buddhist doctrine would be about to disappear, Bodhisattva Superior Practices would come forward with the five characters of Myōhō-enge-kyō and administer them as good medicine to those afflicted with white leprosy—that is, persons of incorrigible disbelief and those who slander the Law. And he charged Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the dragon deities to act as that bodhisattva's protectors. How could these golden words of his be false? Even if the great earth were to turn upside down, a high mountain crumble and fall, summer not follow spring, the sun move eastward, or the moon fall to earth, this prediction could never fail to come true!

If that is so, then, in this time of "quarrels and disputes," how can the ruler, the ministers, and the common people of Japan hope to escape harm when they vilify and abuse the envoy of the Buddha who is attempting to spread the Law of Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō, send him into exile, and attack and beat him, or inflict all kinds of trouble upon his disciples and followers? Ignorant people must surely think when I

say this that I am merely calling down curses upon the people.

A person who spreads the Lotus Sutra is father and mother to all the living beings in Japan. For, as the Great Teacher Chang-an says, "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."⁶¹ If so, then I, Nichiren, am the father and mother of the present emperor of Japan, and the teacher and lord of the Nembutsu believers, the Zen followers, and the True Word priests.

And yet, from the ruler on down to the common people, all treat me with enmity. How, then, can the gods of the sun and moon go on shining down on their heads, and how can the gods of the earth continue to support their feet? When Devadatta attacked the Buddha, the earth shook and trembled, and flames shot out of it. When King Dammira cut off the head of the Venerable Aryasimha, his own right arm that held the sword dropped off and fell to the ground.⁶² Emperor Hui-tsung branded the face of the priest Fa-tao and exiled him south of the Yangtze, but before half a year had passed, the emperor was taken prisoner and carried off by the barbarians.⁶³ And these attacks of the Mongols on Japan are occurring for the same reason. Though one were to gather together as many soldiers as there are in the five regions of India and surround this country with the Iron Encircling Mountains,⁶⁴ it will do no good. The people of Japan are certain to encounter the calamity of war.

From this situation one should understand that I am in fact the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, stated that, if anyone should abuse or curse someone who is spreading the Lotus Sutra in the evil world of the latter age, that person would be guilty of an offense that is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than if he had been

an enemy of the Buddha for the space of an entire kalpa. And yet nowadays the ruler and the people of Japan, following their personal whims, seem to hate me even more intensely than they would an enemy of their own parents or one who had been a foe from their previous lifetime, or upbraid me even more severely than they would a traitor or a murderer. I wonder that the earth does not open up and swallow them alive, or that thunder does not come down from heaven and tear them apart!

Or am I perhaps not the votary of the Lotus Sutra after all? If not, then I am wretched indeed! What a miserable fate, in this present life to be hounded by everyone and never know so much as a moment of peace, and in the next life to fall into the evil paths of existence! If in fact I am not the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then who will uphold the one vehicle, the teaching of the Lotus Sutra?

Honen urged people to discard the Lotus Sutra, Shan-tao said that "not even one person in a thousand" can reach enlightenment through its teachings, and Tao-ch'ö said that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood" through that sutra. Are these men, then, the votaries of the Lotus Sutra? The Great Teacher Kobo said that one who practices the Lotus Sutra is following "a childish theory."⁶⁵ Is he perhaps the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

The Lotus Sutra speaks of a person who "can uphold this sutra"⁶⁶ or who "can preach this sutra."⁶⁷ What does it mean when it speaks of someone who "can preach" this sutra? Does it not mean someone who will proclaim, in the words of the Lotus Sutra itself, that "among the sutras, it holds the highest place,"⁶⁸ and who will maintain its superiority over the Mahavairochana, Flower Garland, Nirvana, Wisdom, and other sutras? Is this not the kind of person the sutra means when it speaks of the votary of the Lotus Sutra? If

these passages from the sutra are to be believed, then in the seven hundred and more years since Buddhism was introduced to Japan, there has never been a single votary of the Lotus Sutra other than the Great Teacher Dengyo and I, Nichiren.

Again and again I wonder that the persons who attack me do not, as the Lotus Sutra says, suffer the punishment of having their "heads split into seven pieces"⁶⁹ or their "mouths closed and stopped up,"⁷⁰ but I realize there are reasons. Such punishments are no more than trivial penalties fit to be inflicted where there are only one or two offenders. But I, Nichiren, am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in the entire land of Jambudvīpa. Therefore, people who ally themselves with those who slander me or treat me with malice deserve to meet with the greatest difficulties in Jambudvīpa, such as the immense earthquake that rocked Japan in the Shoka era, or the huge comet that appeared as a punishment upon the entire land in the Bun'ei era.⁷¹ Just look at these happenings! Though in the centuries since the Buddha's passing there have been other practitioners of Buddhism who were treated with malice, great disasters such as these have never been known before. That is because there has never before been anyone who taught the people at large to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo! With respect to this virtue, is there anyone in the whole world who dares to face me and say he is my equal, anyone within the four seas who dares to claim he can stand side by side with me?

Question: During the Former Day of the Law, the capacities of the people may have been somewhat inferior to those of the people who lived when the Buddha was in the world. And yet they were surely much superior to those of the people in the Middle and Latter Days of the Law. How then can you say that in the early years of the

Former Day of the Law the Lotus Sutra was ignored? It was during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law that such men as Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Asanga appeared. Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, who is known as the scholar of a thousand works, wrote *The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, in which he declared that the Lotus is first among all the sutras. The Tripitaka Master Paramartha, in describing the transmission of the Lotus Sutra, says that in India there were more than fifty scholars who spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and that Vasubandhu was one of them. Such was the situation in the Former Day of the Law.

Turning to the Middle Day of the Law that followed, we find that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai appeared in China around the middle of the period and completed *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight* in thirty volumes, in which he explored all the depths of meaning in the Lotus Sutra. At the end of the Middle Day of the Law, the Great Teacher Dengyo appeared in Japan. He not only transmitted to our country the two doctrines of perfect wisdom and perfect meditation expounded by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, but also established a great ordination platform of the perfect and immediate enlightenment on Mount Hiei. Thus the perfect precepts were acknowledged throughout Japan, and everyone from the ruler on down to the common people looked up to Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei as their guide and teacher. How then can you say that in the Middle Day of the Law the teachings of the Lotus Sutra were not widely disseminated and spread abroad?

Answer: It is a commonly accepted assertion among the scholars of our times that the Thus Come One invariably preached his teachings in accor-

dance with the capacities of his listeners. But in fact this is not how the Buddha truly taught. If it were true that the greatest doctrines were always preached for the persons with the most superior capacities and understanding, then why, when the Buddha first achieved enlightenment, did he not preach the Lotus Sutra? Why, during the first five hundred years of the Former Day of the Law, were the teachings of the Mahayana sutras not spread abroad? And if it were true that the finest doctrines are revealed to those who have a particular connection with the Buddha, then why did Shakyamuni Buddha preach the Meditation on the Buddha Sutra for his father, King Shuddhodana, and the Maya Sutra for his mother, Lady Maya, [rather than the Lotus Sutra]? And if the reverse were true, namely, that secret doctrines should never be revealed to evil people having no connection with the Buddha or to slanderers of Buddhism, then why did the monk Realization of Virtue teach the Nirvana Sutra to all the countless monks who were guilty of breaking the precepts? Or why did Bodhisattva Never Disparaging address the four kinds of believers, who were slanderers of the Law, and propagate to them the teachings of the Lotus Sutra?

Thus we can see that it is a great mistake to assert that the teachings are invariably expounded according to the listeners' capacities.

Question: Do you mean to say that Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and the others did not teach the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: That is correct. They did not teach it.

Question: Then what doctrines did they teach?

Answer: They taught the doctrines of provisional Mahayana, the various esoteric and esoteric teachings such as the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana sutras,

but they did not teach the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: How do you know that this is so?

Answer: The treatises written by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna run to some three hundred thousand verses. Not all of them have been transmitted to China and Japan, so it is difficult to make statements about their true nature. However, examining the ones that have been transmitted to China such as *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*, *The Treatise on the Middle Way*, and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, we may surmise that the treatises remaining in India are of a similar nature.

Question: Among the treatises remaining in India, are there any that are superior to the ones transmitted to China?

Answer: There is no need for me to make pronouncements of my own on the subject of Bodhisattva Nagarjuna. For the Buddha himself predicted that after he had passed away a man called Bodhisattva Nagarjuna would appear in southern India, and that his most important teachings would be found in a work called *Treatise on the Middle Way*.⁷²

Such was the Buddha's prediction. Accordingly, we find that there were seventy scholars in India who followed in the wake of Nagarjuna, all of them major scholars. And all of these seventy scholars took *Treatise on the Middle Way* as the basis of their teachings. *Treatise on the Middle Way* is a work in four volumes and twenty-seven chapters, and the core of its teachings is expressed in a four-phrase verse⁷³ that describes the nature of phenomena arising from dependent origination. This four-phrase verse sums up the four teachings and three truths contained in the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and other sutras. It does not express the three truths as revealed and unified in the Lotus Sutra.

Question: Is there anyone else who thinks the way you do in this matter?

Answer: T'ien-t'ai says, "Do not presume to compare *Treatise on the Middle Way* [to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra]." ⁷⁴ And elsewhere he says, "Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they employed the provisional Mahayana teachings, which were suited to the times." ⁷⁵ Miao-lo remarks, "For demolishing false opinions and establishing the truth, nothing can compare to the Lotus Sutra." ⁷⁶ And Ts'ung-i states, "Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu cannot compare with T'ien-t'ai." ⁷⁷

Question: In the latter part of the T'ang dynasty, the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung introduced to China a treatise in one volume entitled *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*, whose authorship he ascribed to Bodhisattva Nagarjuna. The Great Teacher Kobo says of it, "This treatise represents the heart and core of all the thousand treatises of Nagarjuna." ⁷⁸ What is your opinion on this?

Answer: This treatise consists of seven leaves. There are numerous places in it that could not be the words of Nagarjuna. Therefore, in the catalog of Buddhist texts it is sometimes listed as a work of Nagarjuna and sometimes as a work of Pu-k'ung. The matter of its authorship has never been resolved. In addition, it is not a summation of the lifetime teachings of the Buddha and contains many loose statements. To begin with, a vital passage, the one asserting that "only in the True Word teachings [can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form]," is in error, since it denies the fact that the Lotus Sutra enables one to attain Buddhahood in one's present form, a fact well attested by both scriptural passages and actual events. ⁷⁹ Instead it asserts that the True Word sutras enable one to attain Buddhahood in one's present form, an assertion for which there is not the slightest proof in scriptural passages or

actual events. That one word "only" in the assertion that "only in the True Word teachings [can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form]" is the greatest error of all.

In view of the facts, it seems likely that the work was written by Pu-k'ung himself who, in order to ensure that the people of the time would regard it with sufficient gravity, attributed it to Nagarjuna.

Pu-k'ung makes a number of other errors as well. Thus, in his translation *The Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra*, which deals with the Lotus Sutra, he defines the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter as the Buddha Amida, an obvious and glaring mistake. He also claims that the "Dharani" chapter of the Lotus Sutra should follow immediately after the "Supernatural Powers" chapter and that the "Entrustment" chapter should come at the very end, views that are not even worth discussing.

That is not all. He stole the Mahayana precepts from the T'ien-t'ai school and, obtaining support in the form of a command from Emperor Tai-tsung, established them in the five temples on Mount Wu-t'ai. And he decreed that the classification of doctrinal tenets used by the T'ien-t'ai school should be adopted for the True Word school as well. On the whole, he did many things to confuse and mislead the world. It is acceptable to use translations of sacred texts by other persons, but translations of sutras or treatises from the hand of Pu-k'ung are not to be trusted.

When both old and new translations ⁸⁰ are taken into consideration, we find that there are 186 persons who have brought sutras and treatises from India and introduced them to China in translation. With the exception of one man, the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva, all of these translators have made errors of some kind. But among them, Pu-

k'ung is remarkable for the large number of his errors. It is clear that he deliberately set out to confuse and mislead others.

Question: How do you know that the translators other than Kumarajiva made errors? Do you mean not only to destroy the Zen, Nembutsu, True Word, and the others of the seven major schools, but to discredit all the works of the translators that have been introduced to China and Japan?

Answer: This is a highly confidential matter, and I should discuss it in detail only when I am face to face with the inquirer. However, I will make a few comments here. Kumarajiva himself said: "When I examine the various sutras in use in China, I find that all of them differ from the Sanskrit originals. How can I make people understand this? I have only one great wish. My body is unclean, for I have taken a wife. But my tongue alone is pure and could never speak false words concerning the teachings of Buddhism. After I die, make certain that I am cremated. If at that time my tongue is consumed by the flames, then you may discard all the sutras that I have translated." Such were the words that he spoke again and again from his lecture platform. As a result, everyone from the ruler on down to the common people hoped they would not die before Kumarajiva [so that they might see what happened].

Eventually Kumarajiva died and was cremated, and his impure body was completely reduced to ashes. Only his tongue remained, resting atop a blue lotus that had sprung up in the midst of the flames. It sent out shining rays of five-colored light that made the night as bright as day and in the daytime outshone the rays of the sun. This, then, is why the sutras translated by all the other scholars came to be held in little esteem, while those translated by Kumarajiva, particularly his translation

of the Lotus Sutra, spread rapidly throughout China.⁸¹

Question: That tells us about the translators who lived at the time of Kumarajiva or before. But what about later translators such as Shan-wu-wei or Pu-k'ung?

Answer: Even in the case of translators who lived after Kumarajiva, if their tongues burned up when they were cremated, it means that there are errors in their work. The Dharma Characteristics school in earlier times enjoyed a great popularity in Japan. But the Great Teacher Dengyo attacked it, pointing out that, though the tongue of Kumarajiva was not consumed by the flames, those of Hsüan-tsang and Tz'u-en burned along with their bodies. Emperor Kammu, impressed by his argument, transferred his allegiance to the Tendai Lotus school.

In the third and ninth volumes of the Nirvana Sutra, we find the Buddha predicting that when his teachings are transmitted from India to other countries many errors will be introduced into them, and the chances for people to gain enlightenment through them will be reduced. Therefore, the Great Teacher Miao-lo remarks: "Whether or not the teachings are grasped correctly depends upon the persons who transmit them. It is not determined by the sage's original pronouncements."⁸²

He is saying that no matter how the people of today may follow the teachings of the sutras in hopes of a better life in the hereafter, if the sutras they follow are in error, then they can never attain enlightenment. But that is not to be attributed to any fault of the Buddha.

In studying the teachings of Buddhism, apart from the distinctions between Hinayana and Mahayana, provisional and true, and esoteric and esoteric teachings, this question of the reliability of the sutra translation is the most important of all.

Question: You say that during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law scholars knew in their hearts that the truth of the Lotus Sutra far surpassed the teachings of the other exoteric and esoteric sutras, but that they did not proclaim this fact to others, merely teaching the doctrines of the provisional Mahayana. This may be the case, though I find it difficult to agree.

Around the middle of the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che appeared. In the ten volumes or thousand leaves of his *Profound Meaning*, he discussed in detail the meaning of the five characters composing the title of the Lotus Sutra, Myoho-rence-kyo. In the ten volumes of his *Words and Phrases*, he discussed each word and phrase of the sutra, from the opening words, "This is what I heard," through the very last words, "they bowed in obeisance and departed." He interpreted them in the light of four guidelines, namely, causes and conditions, correlated teachings, the theoretical and essential teachings, and the observation of the mind,⁸³ once more devoting a thousand leaves to the discussion.

In the twenty volumes composing these two works, *Profound Meaning* and *Words and Phrases*, he likened the teachings of all the other sutras to streams and rivers, and the Lotus Sutra to the great ocean. He demonstrated that the waters that make up the Buddhist teachings of all the worlds of the ten directions flow, without the loss of a single drop, into that great ocean of the Lotus Sutra. In addition, he examined all the doctrines of the great scholars of India, not overlooking a single point, as well as the doctrines of the ten teachers of northern and southern China, refuting those that deserved to be refuted and adopting those that were worthy of acceptance. In addition to the works just mentioned, he also expounded *Great Concentration and Insight* in ten

volumes, in which he summed up the Buddha's lifetime teachings on meditation in the concept of a single moment of life, and encompassed all the living beings and their environments of the Ten Worlds in the concept of three thousand realms.

The pronouncements found in these works of T'ien-t'ai surpass those of all the scholars who lived in India during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, and are superior to the commentaries of the teachers who lived in China during the five hundred years preceding T'ien-t'ai. Therefore, the Great Teacher Chi-tsang of the Three Treatises school wrote a letter urging a hundred or more of the leaders and elders of the schools of northern and southern China to attend the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's lectures on the sutras. "What happens only once in a thousand years, what takes place only once in five hundred years,⁸⁴ has happened today," he wrote. "Nan-yüeh with his superior sageness, T'ien-t'ai with his clear wisdom—long ago they received and upheld the Lotus Sutra with body, mouth, and mind, and now they have appeared once again as these two honored teachers. Not only have they caused the sweet dew of amrita to fall in the land of China, but indeed, they have made the drums of the Law thunder even as far away as India. They possess the wonderful enlightenment that comes with inborn understanding, and their expositions of the sacred texts truly are unparalleled since the time of the Wei and Chin dynasties. Therefore, I wish to go with a hundred or more priests of the meditative practice and beg to receive the lectures of the Great Teacher Chih-che."⁸⁵

The Discipline Master Tao-hsüan of Mount Chung-nan praised the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai by saying: "His thorough understanding of the Lotus Sutra is like the noonday sun shining down into the darkest valley; his ex-

position of the Mahayana teachings is like a powerful wind roaring at will through the great sky. Though the teachers of words and phrases might gather by the thousands and attempt to inquire into his wondrous arguments, they could never understand them all. . . . His teachings are as clear as a finger pointing at the moon . . . and their essence returns to the ultimate truth."⁸⁶

The Great Teacher Fa-tsang of the Flower Garland school praised T'ien-t'ai in these words: "Men like Nan-yüeh and [T'ien-t'ai] Chih-che can understand the truth through intuition, and in practice have already ascended to the first stage of security. They recall the teachings of the Law as they heard them on Eagle Peak and present them that way today."⁸⁷

There is an account of how the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung of the True Word school and his disciple Han-kuang both abandoned the True Word school and became followers of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. *The Biographies of Eminent Priests* states: "When I [Han-kuang] was traveling in India together with the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung, a monk said to him, 'In the land of China there are the teachings of T'ien-t'ai, which are most suitable in helping distinguish correct from incorrect doctrines and illuminating what is partial and what is perfect. Would it not be well to translate these writings and bring them here to this country?'"⁸⁸

This story was related by Han-kuang to the Great Teacher Miao-lo. When he heard the story, Miao-lo exclaimed: "Does this not mean that Buddhism has been lost in India, the country of its origin, and must now be sought in the surrounding regions? But even in China there are few people who recognize the greatness of T'ien-t'ai's teachings. They are like the people of Lu."⁸⁹

Now if there had been any major

treatises in India that could compare to these three works in thirty volumes by T'ien-t'ai, then why would the Indian monk have asked that T'ien-t'ai's commentaries be brought from China? In view of all this, how can you deny that during the Middle Day of the Law the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra was made clear, and that the widespread proclamation and propagation of its teachings was accomplished throughout the southern continent of Jambudvīpa?

Answer: The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai preached and spread throughout China a perfect meditation and perfect wisdom surpassing the lifetime teachings of the Buddha that had never been preached previously by any of the scholars in the fourteen hundred or more years since the Buddha's passing, that is, in the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law and the first four hundred years of the Middle Day. His fame even reached as far as India. This would seem to resemble the widespread proclaiming and propagating of the Lotus Sutra. But at this time an ordination platform of the perfect and immediate enlightenment had not yet been established. Instead, T'ien-t'ai's disciples followed the Hinayana precepts, which were grafted onto the perfect wisdom and perfect meditation—a rather ineffectual combination. It was like the sun in eclipse or the moon when it is less than full.

Whatever you may say, the time of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai corresponds to the period described in the Great Collection Sutra as the age of reading, reciting, and listening. The time had not yet come for broadly proclaiming and propagating the Lotus Sutra.

Question: The Great Teacher Dengyo was born in Japan in the time of Emperor Kammu. He refuted the mistaken beliefs that had held sway in Japan for the more than two hundred years since the time of Emperor Kim-

mei and declared his support for the perfect wisdom and perfect meditation taught by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. In addition, he repudiated as invalid the ordination platforms that had been established at three places in Japan⁹⁰ to confer the Hinayana precepts brought over by the Reverend Ganjin, and instead set up a Mahayana specific ordination platform of the perfect and immediate enlightenment on Mount Hiei. This was the most momentous event that had ever taken place in India, China, Japan, or anywhere else in Jambudvīpa during the eighteen hundred years following the Buddha's passing.

I do not know whether the Great Teacher Dengyo's inner enlightenment was inferior or equal to that of Nagarjuna and T'ien-t'ai, but I am convinced that, in calling upon all Buddhist believers to adhere to a single doctrine, he showed himself to be superior to Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu and to surpass even Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai.

In general, we may say that during the eighteen hundred years following the passing of the Buddha these two men, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, were the true votaries of the Lotus Sutra. Thus Dengyo writes in his work *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*: "The sutra says, 'If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed!'"⁹¹ In commenting on this passage, I have this to say: Shakyamuni taught that the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai trusted and obeyed Shakyamuni and worked to uphold the Lotus school, spreading its teachings throughout China. We of Mount Hiei inherited the doctrine from T'ien-

t'ai and work to uphold the Lotus school and to disseminate its teachings throughout Japan."

The meaning of this passage is as follows: From the time of the Buddha's advent in the Wise Kalpa in the ninth period of decrease, when the human life span measured a hundred years, through the fifty years of his preaching life as well as during the eighteen hundred or more years after his passing, there might actually have been a small person only five feet in height who could nevertheless lift a gold mountain 168,000 yojanas or 6,620,000 *ri* in height and hurl it over the Iron Encircling Mountains faster than a sparrow flies, just as he might take a one- or two-inch stone and toss it a distance of one or two *cho*. But even if there should have been such a person, it would be rarer still for someone to appear in the Latter Day of the Law who could expound the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha did. Yet the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai and the Great Teacher Dengyo were just such persons, able to teach it in a manner similar to the Buddha.

In India the scholars never went as far as to propagate the Lotus Sutra. In China the teachers before T'ien-t'ai either passed over it or fell short of it. As for later men such as Tz'u-en, Fatsang, or Shan-wu-wei, they were the kind who say that east is west or declare that heaven is earth. And these are not opinions that the Great Teacher Dengyo put forward merely to enhance his own worth.

On the nineteenth day of the first month in the twenty-first year of the Enryaku era (802), Emperor Kammu paid a visit to the temple at Mount Takao. He summoned more than ten eminent priests from the six schools and seven major temples of Nara, including Zengi, Shoyu, Hoki, Chonin, Kengyoku, Ampuku, Gonso, Shuen, Jiko, Gen'yo, Saiko, Doshō, Kosho, and

Kambin, to come to the temple to debate with the Dharma Teacher Saicho. But they became tongue-tied after their first words and could not speak a second or third time. Instead, all bowed their heads as one and pressed their palms together in a gesture of awe. The Three Treatises teachings concerning the two storehouses of teachings, the teachings of the three periods and the thrice turned wheel of the Law; the Dharma Characteristics doctrines concerning the teachings of the three periods and the five natures; and the Flower Garland doctrines of the four teachings, the five teachings,⁹² the root teaching and the branch teachings, the six forms, and the ten mysteries—all their frameworks were utterly refuted. It was as though the beams and rafters of a great edifice had broken and collapsed. The proud banners of the ten and more eminent priests had also been toppled.

At that time the emperor was greatly amazed at the proceedings, and on the twenty-ninth day of the same month he dispatched [Wake no] Hiroyo and [Otomo no] Kunimichi as imperial envoys to question the men of the seven temples and six schools at greater length. All of them in turn submitted a memorial acknowledging that they had been defeated in the debate and won over by Dengyo's arguments. "When we privately examine *Profound Meaning* and other commentaries by T'ien-t'ai, we find that they sum up all the teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha in his lifetime. The full purport of the Buddha's doctrines is made clear, without a single point being left unexplained. The Tendai school surpasses all other schools, and is unique in pointing out the single way for all to follow. The doctrines that it expounds represent the most profound mystic truth and are something that we, students of the seven major temples and six schools, have never before heard of, and

never before seen. Now at last the dispute that has continued so long between the Three Treatises and Dharma Characteristics schools has been resolved as dramatically as though ice had melted. The truth has been made abundantly clear, as though clouds and mist had parted to reveal the light of the sun, moon, and stars. In the two hundred or more years since Prince Shotoku spread the Buddhist teachings in this country, a great many sutras and treatises have been lectured upon, and their principles have been widely argued, but until now, many doubts still remained to be settled. Moreover, the lofty and perfect doctrine of the Lotus Sutra had not yet been properly explained and made known. Was it that the people who lived during this period were not yet qualified to taste its perfect flavor?

"In our humble view, the ruler⁹³ of our sacred dynasty has received the charge given long ago by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and has undergone profound instruction in the pure and perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra, so that the doctrines of the unique and wonderful truth that it expounds have for the first time been explained and made clear. Thus we, the scholars of the six schools, have for the first time understood the ultimate truth. From now on, all the beings in this world who are endowed with life will be able to embark on the ship of the wonderful and perfect truth and quickly reach the opposite shore. Zengi and the others of our group have met with great good fortune because of karmic bonds and have been privileged to hear these extraordinary words. Were it not for some profound karmic tie, how could we have been born in this sacred age?"

In China in past times, Chia-hsiang assembled some hundred other priests and, together with them, acknowledged the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai to be a true sage. And later in Japan, the

more than two hundred priests of the seven temples of Nara proclaimed the Great Teacher Dengyo to be worthy of the title of sage. Thus, during the two thousand and more years after the passing of the Buddha, these two sages appeared in the two countries of China and Japan respectively. In addition, the Great Teacher Dengyo established on Mount Hiei an ordination platform for conferring the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment, precepts that even the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had never propagated. How then can you deny that in the latter part of the Middle Day of the Law the wide proclamation and propagation of the Lotus Sutra was achieved?

Answer: As I have explained in my earlier discussion, a great truth that was not spread widely by Mahakashyapa or Ananda was in time propagated by Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Vasubandhu. As I have also explained in my discussion, there was a great truth that was not fully made known by Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and the others, but was propagated by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. And, as I have further explained, it remained for the Great Teacher Dengyo to establish an ordination platform of the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment that were not spread widely by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che.

And, unbelievable as it may seem, there clearly appears in the text of the Lotus Sutra a correct Law that is supremely profound and secret,⁹⁴ one that, though expounded in full by the Buddha, in the time since his passing has never yet been propagated by Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, or Vasubandhu, nor even by T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo. The most difficult and perplexing question is whether or not this profound Law can be broadly proclaimed and propagated throughout the entire land of Jambudvīpa now at the beginning of

the Latter Day of the Law, the fifth of the five five-hundred-year periods following the Buddha's passing.

Question: What is this secret Law? First, tell me its name, and then I want to hear its meaning. If what you say is true, then perhaps Shakyamuni Buddha will appear in the world once more, or Bodhisattva Superior Practices will once again emerge from the earth. Speak quickly, for pity's sake!

They say that the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang, after dying and being re-born six times,⁹⁵ was finally able to reach India, where he spent nineteen years. But he claimed that the one vehicle doctrine of the Lotus Sutra was a mere expedient teaching, and that the Agama sutras of Hinayana Buddhism represented the true doctrine. And the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung, when he paid a return visit to India, his homeland, announced that the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra was Amida! This is like saying that east is west or calling the sun the moon. They drove their bodies in vain and exerted their minds to no avail.

But fortunately, because we were born in the Latter Day of the Law, without taking a single step, we can complete [the bodhisattva practice] that requires three asamkhya kalpas, and without feeding our head to a tigress, we can obtain the unseen crown of the Buddha's head.⁹⁶

Answer: This Law is revealed in the text of the Lotus Sutra, so it is an easy matter for me to explain it to you. But first, before clarifying this Law, there are three important concerns⁹⁷ that I must mention. It is said that, no matter how vast the ocean, it will not hold within it the body of a dead person,⁹⁸ and no matter how thick the crust of the earth, it will not support one who is undutiful to one's parents.⁹⁹ According to the Buddhist teaching, however, even those who commit the five cardinal sins may be saved, and even those

who are unfilial may gain salvation. It is only the icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, those who slander the Law, and those who pretend to be foremost in observing the precepts who cannot be forgiven.

The three sources of difficulty mentioned above are the Nembutsu school, the Zen school, and the True Word school. The first, the Nembutsu school, has spread throughout Japan, and the Nembutsu is on the lips of the four categories of Buddhists. The second, the Zen school, has produced arrogant priests who talk of their three robes and one begging bowl, and who fill the area within the four seas, regarding themselves as the enlightened leaders of the whole world. The third, the True Word school, is in a class by itself. It receives support from Mount Hiei, To-ji, the seven temples of Nara, and Onjo-ji, as well as from the high priestly officials including the chief priest of Mount Hiei, the prelate of Omuro,¹⁰⁰ the chief official of Onjo-ji, and supervisors of the various temples and shrines.¹⁰¹ Since the sacred mirror kept in the lady officials' quarters of the imperial palace was destroyed by fire,¹⁰² the precious mudra of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana has been regarded as a mirror of the Buddha to take its place; and since the precious sword was lost in the western sea,¹⁰³ the five honored ones of the True Word school¹⁰⁴ have been looked upon as capable of cutting down the enemies of the Japanese nation. So firmly entrenched are these beliefs that, though the stone that marks the duration of a kalpa might be worn completely away,¹⁰⁵ it would seem that they would never be overthrown, and though the great earth itself might turn upside down, people would never question them.

When the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai defeated in debate the leaders of the other schools of northern and southern

China, the True Word school's teachings had not yet been introduced to that country, and when the Great Teacher Dengyo won victory over the six schools of Japan, the True Word doctrines escaped refutation. On several occasions they have managed to evade their powerful opponents, and on the contrary, have succeeded in overshadowing and imperiling the great teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In addition, the Great Teacher Jikaku, who was a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyo, went so far as to adopt the doctrines of the True Word school, obscure the Tendai doctrines of Mount Hiei, and turn the entire school into a sphere of the True Word school. But who could effectively oppose such a person of authority as Jikaku?

Thus, helped on by prejudiced views, the false doctrines of the Great Teacher Kobo continued to escape condemnation. It is true that the Reverend Annen did voice a certain opposition to Kobo. But all he did was to demote the Flower Garland Sutra from second place and substitute the Lotus Sutra for it; he still ranked the Lotus Sutra as inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. He was nothing more than an arranger of worldly compromises.

Question: In what way are these three schools in error?

Answer: Let us first consider the Pure Land school. In China in the time of the Ch'i dynasty, there was a priest named T'an-luan. He was originally a follower of the Three Treatises school, but when he read the treatise by Nagarjuna entitled *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*, he espoused the two categories of the difficult-to-practice way and the easy-to-practice way. Later there was a man called the Meditation Master Tao-ch'o, who lived during the T'ang dynasty. Originally he had given lectures on the Nirvana Sutra, but when he read T'an-luan's account of his conversion to faith in the Pure Land teachings,

Tao-ch'o abandoned the Nirvana Sutra and likewise changed over to the Pure Land faith, establishing the two categories of the Sacred Way teachings and the Pure Land teachings. In addition, Tao-ch'o had a disciple named Shan-tao who posited two types of religious practice that he called sundry practices and correct practices.

In Japan some two hundred years after the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, in the time of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, there lived a man named Honen. Addressing his words to all priests and lay believers, he stated: "Buddhist teachings are based upon the capacities of the people of the period. The Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, the doctrines of the eight or nine schools including the Tendai and True Word, the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime—the Mahayana and Hinayana, the exoteric and esoteric, provisional and true teachings—as well as the schools based on them, were all intended for people of superior capacities and superior wisdom who lived during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law. Now that we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, no matter how diligently one may practice such teachings, they will bring no benefit. Moreover, if one mixes such practices with the practice of the Nembutsu addressed to the Buddha Amida, then the Nembutsu will be rendered ineffective and will not lead the believer to rebirth in the Pure Land.

"This is not something that I have taken it upon myself to declare. Bodhisattva Nagarjuna and the Dharma Teacher T'an-luan both designate such practices as the difficult-to-practice way. Tao-ch'o says that not a single person ever attained enlightenment through them, and Shan-tao affirms that not even one person in a thousand can be saved by them.

"These persons whom I have quoted were all leaders of the Pure Land

school, and so you may be inclined to question their words. But there is the sage of former times Eshin, unsurpassed by any wise priests of the Tendai or True Word school in the latter age. He stated in his work entitled *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* that the doctrines of exoteric and esoteric Buddhism are not the kind of teaching that can free us from the sufferings of birth and death. Moreover, the work entitled *The Ten Conditions for Rebirth in the Pure Land* by Yokan of the Three Treatises school states the same opinion. Therefore, if people will abandon the Lotus Sutra, True Word, and other teachings and devote themselves entirely to the Nembutsu, then ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land."

These pronouncements of Honen precipitated debates and disputes with the priests of Mount Hiei, To-ji, Onjo-ji, and the seven major temples of Nara. But Eshin's words in the preface to his *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* appeared to be so compelling that in the end Kenshin,¹⁰⁶ the chief priest of Mount Hiei, surrendered to the Nembutsu doctrine and became a disciple of Honen.

In addition to that, even people who were not disciples of Honen began to recite the Nembutsu to Amida Buddha far more often than they paid reverence to any other Buddha, their mouths continually murmuring it, their minds constantly occupied with it, until it seemed that everyone throughout the country of Japan had become a follower of Honen.

In the past fifty years, every person within the four quarters of the nation has become a follower of Honen. And if everyone has become a follower of Honen, then every person in the country of Japan is a slanderer of the Law. Now, if a thousand sons or daughters should band together to murder one

parent, then all one thousand of them would be guilty of committing the five cardinal sins. And if one of them as a result should fall into the Avichi hell, then how could the others escape the same fate?

In the end, it would seem as though Honen, angry at having been condemned to exile,¹⁰⁷ turned into an evil spirit and took possession of the sovereign and the priests of Mount Hiei and Onjo-ji who had earlier persecuted him and his disciples, causing these persons to plot rebellion or to commit other evil acts. As a result, they were almost all destroyed by the Kamakura authorities in eastern Japan. The few priests of Mount Hiei or To-ji who managed to survive are treated with contempt by lay men and women. They are like performing monkeys that are laughed at by the crowd, or subjugated barbarians who are despised even by children.

The men of the Zen school, taking advantage of this situation, pronounced themselves observers of the precepts, deceiving the eyes of the people and putting on such lofty airs that, no matter what false doctrines they presumed in their madness to put forward, these doctrines were not recognized as erroneous.

This school called Zen claims to represent a "separate transmission outside the sutras," which was not revealed by Shakyamuni Buddha in the numerous sutras preached during his lifetime but was whispered in secret to the Venerable Mahakashyapa. Thus the proponents of this school maintain that, if one studies the various sutras without understanding the teachings of the Zen school, one will be like a dog trying to bite at a clap of thunder or a monkey grasping at the moon's reflection in the water.

Zen is a false doctrine that appeals to the kind of people in Japan who have been abandoned by their fathers and

mothers because of their lack of filial devotion or dismissed from service by their lords because of their outrageous conduct, to young priests who are too lazy to apply themselves to their studies, and to the disreputable nature of courtesans. Even though its followers have all embraced the precepts, they are no more than swarming locusts feeding upon the people of the nation. That is why heaven glares down in anger and the gods of the earth shudder.

The True Word school is a far greater source of trouble than the other two schools I have discussed above, a major form of error, and I would therefore like to discuss it in outline here.

In the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tung of the T'ang dynasty, the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chinkang-chih, and Pu-k'ung brought the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras from India and introduced them to China. The teachings of these three sutras are very clearly set forth. If we look for the basic principle, we find that it consists in unifying the two vehicles of voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones in the one vehicle of bodhisattvas and repudiating the two vehicles to reveal the one vehicle. As far as practices go, the school employs mudras and mantras.

Such a doctrine cannot compare even with the one vehicle of Buddhism that is taught in contrast to the three vehicles [of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas] in the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras, nor is it even as profound as the specific teaching or the perfect teaching that preceded the Lotus Sutra, as clarified by the T'ien-t'ai school. In its basic meaning at least, it corresponds merely to the two lower types of teachings: the Tripitaka teaching and the connecting teaching.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei no doubt realized that, if he were to expound the teachings set forth in

these sutras [he brought from India], he would be ridiculed by the men of the Flower Garland and Dharma Characteristics schools and laughed at by those of the T'ien-t'ai school. And yet, since he had gone to all the trouble of bringing these works from India, probably he did not feel inclined simply to remain silent on the matter.

At this time there was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school called the Meditation Master I-hsing, a perverse man. Shan-wu-wei went to him and questioned him on the Buddhist doctrines taught in China. Acharya I-hsing, deceived as to his motives, not only revealed to Shan-wu-wei the main principles of the Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, and Flower Garland doctrines, but even explained the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school to him.

Shan-wu-wei realized that the T'ien-t'ai teachings were even finer than he had supposed when he had heard of them in India, and that the doctrines of the three sutras he had brought could never compete with them. But he set about to deceive I-hsing, saying: "My good priest, you are one of the cleverest men of China, and the T'ien-t'ai school has a truly profound and wonderful teaching. But the True Word school whose teachings I have brought to China excels it in the fact that it employs mudras and mantras."

I-hsing appeared to find this reasonable, and the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei then said to him: "Just as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai wrote commentaries on the Lotus Sutra, so I would like to compose a commentary on the Mahavairochana Sutra in order to propagate the True Word teachings. Could you write it down for me?" I-hsing replied, "That would be easy enough."

"But in what way should I write?" I-hsing asked, saying: "The T'ien-t'ai school is unassailable, and though each

of the other schools of Buddhism has competed in trying to refute its doctrines, none has gained the slightest success because of a single point. That point is the fact that in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, an introductory teaching to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares that in the various sutras that he has preached during the previous forty and more years he has not yet revealed the truth, thus invalidating the doctrines based upon those various sutras. And in the 'Teacher of the Law' and 'Supernatural Powers' chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha states that no sutras that will be preached in later times can ever equal the Lotus Sutra. In the passage of the 'Teacher of the Law' chapter concerning the comparison of the Lotus Sutra and others preached at the same time, he also makes clear the superiority of the Lotus Sutra. To which of these three categories—the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, those preached contemporaneously with it, or those preached later—should the Mahavairochana Sutra be assigned?"

At that point, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei hit upon an exceedingly cunning idea. "The Mahavairochana Sutra," he explained to I-hsing, "begins with a chapter called the 'Stage of the Mind.' Just as in the case of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which refutes all the sutras that had been preached in the previous forty and more years, this 'Stage of the Mind' chapter invalidates all other sutras. The remaining chapters of the Mahavairochana Sutra, from the 'Entering the Mandala' chapter through the end, became known in China in two versions, the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, though in India they constituted a single sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha, addressing Shariputra and Maitreya, preached the Mahavairochana Sutra, which he called the Lotus Sutra, but he omitted the explanations

of the mudras and mantras and expounded only the doctrines. This is the work that the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva introduced to China and that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai employed. At the same time, however, the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, addressing Vajrasattva, preached the Lotus Sutra, which he called the Mahavairochana Sutra. This is the work now called the Mahavairochana Sutra, a work that I often saw when I was in India. Therefore, I want you to explain that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are to be savored as works that are essentially the same in flavor, like water and milk. If you do so, then the Mahavairochana Sutra can stand superior to all the other sutras preached in the past, present, and future in the same way that the Lotus Sutra does.

"As to the mudras and mantras, if they are used to adorn the doctrine of the mind, which is expressed in the term a single moment of life comprising three thousand realms, this will constitute a secret teaching in which the three mysteries are provided. And with this doctrine containing the three mysteries, the True Word will prove superior to the T'ien-t'ai school, which speaks only of the mystery of the mind. The True Word school is like a general of the first rank who dons armor, slings his bow and arrows over his shoulder, and fastens a sword at his waist. But the T'ien-t'ai school, with nothing but the mystery of the mind, is like a general of the first rank who is stark naked."

Acharya I-hsing wrote all this down just as Shan-wu-wei dictated it.

Throughout the 360 states of China, there was no one who knew about this ruse. At first there were some disputes over the relative merits of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word teachings. But Shan-wu-wei was the kind of person who was able to command a great deal of respect, whereas the men of the T'ien-

t'ai school were regarded lightly. Moreover, at this time there were no men of wisdom such as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had been. Thus day by day the T'ien-t'ai school lost more ground to the True Word school, and finally all debate ceased.

As more and more years have gone by, these fraudulent beginnings of the True Word school have become completely obscured and forgotten. When the Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan went to China and returned with the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school, he also brought back the True Word teachings. The T'ien-t'ai doctrine he recommended to the emperor of Japan, but the True Word teachings he turned over to the eminent priests of the six schools to study. Dengyo had already established the superiority of the T'ien-t'ai teachings over those of the six schools before he went to China. After he came back from China, he attempted to establish an ordination platform for conferring the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment, but this involved him in a great deal of controversy.¹⁰⁸ He had many enemies and probably felt that establishing the ordination platform would be difficult enough to accomplish even if he devoted all his efforts to it. Or perhaps he felt that the refutation of the True Word teachings should be left until the Latter Day of the Law. In any event, he did not discuss the True Word teachings in the presence of the emperor, or make any clear pronouncement on the matter to his disciples. However, he did leave a one-volume secret work entitled *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine*, in which he describes how various priests of the seven schools were won over to T'ien-t'ai's teachings. In the preface to that work, he mentions the fraudulence of the True Word teachings.

The Great Teacher Kobo went to T'ang China during the Enryaku era, when the Great Teacher Dengyo

went.¹⁰⁹ There he studied the teachings of the True Word school under Hui-kuo of the temple called Ch'ing-lung-ssu. After returning to Japan, he pronounced judgment on the relative merits of the doctrines preached by Shakyamuni in the course of his life, declaring that the True Word teachings ranked first, the Flower Garland second, and those of the Lotus Sutra third.

The Great Teacher Kobo enjoys a quite unusual amount of respect among the people of our time. However, although I hesitate to touch on such matters, in questions of the Buddhist teaching, he committed a rather unusual number of errors. If we stop to consider the matter in general, it would appear that when he went to China he merely learned the ritual mudras and mantras that are used by the True Word school and introduced these to Japan. But he does not seem to have delved into the doctrines of the school to any great extent. After he returned to Japan and observed the situation at the time, he saw that the Tendai school was flourishing to an unusual degree, and he concluded that it would be difficult to propagate the True Word doctrines that he himself adhered to. Therefore, he adopted the viewpoint of the Flower Garland school, whose doctrines he had studied earlier in Japan, declaring that the Flower Garland Sutra was superior to the Lotus Sutra. But he realized that, if he simply asserted the superiority of the Flower Garland Sutra over the Lotus Sutra in the same manner as the Flower Garland school, people would not be likely to pay much heed to his words. He consequently gave a new twist to the Flower Garland doctrine,¹¹⁰ declaring that his argument represented the true intent of the Mahavairochana Sutra, *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, and Shan-wu-wei, thus bolstering his position with absurd falsehoods. And yet the followers of

the Tendai school failed to speak out strongly against him.

Question: In his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, and *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*, the Great Teacher Kobo makes such statements as: "Each vehicle that is put forward is claimed to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but when examined from a later stage, they are all seen to be mere childish theory";¹¹¹ "[Shakyamuni Buddha] is in the region of darkness, not in the position of enlightenment";¹¹² "[The various exoteric Mahayana sutras such as the Lotus Sutra] are comparable to the fourth flavor, that of butter";¹¹³ and "The Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee [or True Word] and claim that it is the possession of their own school."¹¹⁴ What are we to make of such statements put forth in these commentaries?

Answer: I have been greatly astonished at the statements in these commentaries and have accordingly searched through the various sutras, including the three attributed to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. But I do not find a single word or phrase in the sutras to indicate that, in comparison to the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras, the Lotus Sutra is mere "childish theory," that with regard to the Six Paramitas Sutra T'ien-t'ai acted as a thief, or that the Protection Sutra describes Shakyamuni Buddha as being "in the region of darkness." These are all utterly ridiculous assertions. And yet for the past three hundred or four hundred years, a sufficiently large number of intelligent persons in Japan accepted them, so that they have now come to be looked upon as perfectly reasonable and well founded. I would like for a moment, therefore, to discuss some of the more patently false opinions put forth by Kobo and point out other absurdities in his thinking.

It was during the period of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai likened the Lotus Sutra to ghee, the finest flavor. It was [some two hundred years] later, in the middle years of the T'ang dynasty, that the Tripitaka Master Prajna¹¹⁵ translated the Six Paramitas Sutra and introduced it to China. Only if the Six Paramitas Sutra—which compares the dharani teachings to ghee—had existed in China during the Ch'en and Sui dynasties would it make any sense to claim that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai “stole the ghee of the True Word teachings.”

A similar example exists in the case of the priest Tokuitsu of Japan. He bitterly criticized the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai for rejecting the doctrine of the teachings of the three periods that is set forth in the Profound Secrets Sutra, declaring that T'ien-t'ai had used his three-inch tongue to destroy the Buddha's five-foot body.¹¹⁶ The Great Teacher Dengyo in turn attacked Tokuitsu, pointing out that the Profound Secrets Sutra was first introduced to China by Hsüan-tsang in the early decades of the T'ang dynasty. In other words, it was brought to the country a number of years after T'ien-t'ai Chih-che, who lived during the Ch'en and Sui, had already passed away. How then could he have rejected a doctrine that was not introduced to China until the period after his passing? Faced with such an argument, not only was Tokuitsu reduced to silence, but his tongue broke into eight pieces, and he died.

But this is nothing compared to the evil accusations made by Kobo. In his writings he labels as thieves Fa-tsang of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises, Hsüan-tsang of the Dharma Characteristics, and T'ien-t'ai, as well as other various Buddhist leaders of northern and southern China, and in fact all the

Tripitaka masters and Buddhist teachers who have lived since the time when Buddhism was first introduced to China in the Later Han.

In addition, it should be noted that likening the Lotus Sutra to ghee was by no means a comparison invented by T'ien-t'ai on his own initiative. The Buddha himself said in the Nirvana Sutra that the Lotus Sutra is like ghee, and later Bodhisattva Vasubandhu wrote that the Lotus Sutra and the Nirvana Sutra are comparable to ghee.¹¹⁷ And Bodhisattva Nagarjuna terms the Lotus Sutra a “wonderful medicine.”¹¹⁸ So if one who compares the Lotus Sutra to ghee is a thief, then are not Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, the Buddhas of the ten directions, Nagarjuna, and Vasubandhu thieves?

Though Kobo's disciples and the True Word priests of To-ji temple in Japan may be so poor-sighted that they cannot distinguish black from white with their own eyes, they should trust the sight of others¹¹⁹ and recognize the misfortunes invited by their own faults. Moreover, where are the precise passages in the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras that refer to the Lotus Sutra as a “childish theory”? Let them produce them! Even if these sutras should perhaps refer to the Lotus Sutra in those terms, it may quite possibly be an error in translation. Such matters should be examined with great care and attention before they are put forward.

We are told that Confucius thought nine times before saying one word, and that Tan, the Duke of Chou, would bind up his hair three times in the course of washing it and spit out his food three times in the course of a meal [in order not to keep callers waiting].¹²⁰ Thus we see that, even among the men depicted in the non-Buddhist writings who studied ephemeral, worldly affairs, those who were wise proceeded with great caution. How then

can men like Kobo be so careless and shallow in judgment in matters pertaining to the Law?

Such erroneous views of Kobo's were handed down until they reached Shokaku-bo,¹²¹ the founder of a temple called Dembo-in, who stated in his *Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics*: "The figure worthy of true respect is the Buddha of the Nondual Mahayana. The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha is not even fit to draw his carriage. The truly profound doctrines are the teachings of the twofold mandala. The teachers of the four doctrines of the exoteric vehicles are not worthy even to tend the sandals of those who teach the mandala!"¹²²

The "teachers of the four doctrines of the exoteric vehicles" means the priests who teach the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, and Lotus doctrines, and the "three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha" means the four Buddhas, the lords of the teachings of the Lotus, Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Profound Secrets sutras. It is saying that these Buddhas and priests are not even worthy to act as ox-drivers or sandal-tenders for such True Word teachers as Kobo or Shokaku-bo.

There was a man in India known as the Great Arrogant Brahman who was born with innate wisdom and was widely read.¹²³ Both the exoteric and the esoteric teachings of Buddhism were stored up in his breast, and he had both the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist writings in the palm of his hand. Even the king and his ministers bowed their heads before him, and the common people looked up to him as a teacher and guide. But in the excess of his arrogance, he went so far as to make himself a dais supported by four legs representing the deities Maheshvara, Vishnu, and Narayana, along with the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, four sages whom the

world holds in great honor, seating himself on it when he expounded his doctrines. He was like the True Word priests of our time when they spread their mandala with its representations of Shakyamuni and the other various Buddhas and perform their ceremony of anointment,¹²⁴ or like the Zen priests when they declare that the teachings of their school represent a great Law that steps upon the head of the Buddha.¹²⁵

At this time there was a humble monk called the Scholar Bhadraruchi who declared that the Brahman should be corrected, but neither the ruler and high ministers nor the common people would listen to such a suggestion. In the end, the Brahman charged his disciples and lay supporters to go about spreading countless falsehoods and abusing and beating Bhadraruchi. But Bhadraruchi, disregarding the danger to his life, continued to denounce the Brahman until the ruler, coming to hate Bhadraruchi, arranged for him to debate with the Brahman in hopes of silencing him. Contrary to his expectations, however, the Brahman was the one defeated in the debate.

The king looked up to heaven, then threw himself upon the ground lamenting, and said, "I have been privileged to hear your words on this matter firsthand and to free myself from my erroneous views. But my father, the former king, was completely deceived by this man and by now has probably fallen into the Avichi hell!" So saying, he clung to the knees of the Scholar Bhadraruchi and wept in sorrow.

At Bhadraruchi's suggestion, the Brahman was placed on the back of a donkey so that he might be led in disgrace throughout India and shown to all. But the evil in his heart only grew stronger than ever, and in his living form he fell into the hell of incessant suffering. Was he any different from the followers of the True Word

and Zen schools in the world today?

The Chinese Meditation Master San-chieh¹²⁶ stated that the Lotus Sutra, which represents the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni, is a doctrine suited for the first and second stages of Buddhism, which correspond to the Former and Middle Days of the Law. For the Latter Day of the Law, however, he asserted that one should adopt the "universal teaching" that he himself had set forth. He declared that, if one should try to practice the Lotus Sutra in these present times, one would surely fall into the great Avichi hells of the ten directions because its teachings do not accord with the nature and capabilities of the people of the latter age.

He carried out prostrations and penances at the proper hours six times each day and observed the four daily meditation periods, conducting himself like a living Buddha. Many people paid him honor, and his disciples numbered more than ten thousand. But one young woman dared to recite the Lotus Sutra and to censure him for his doctrines. As a result, he lost his voice on the spot and was reborn as a huge snake that devoured a number of his disciples and lay supporters, as well as girls and young women. And now Shan-tao and Honen, with their pernicious doctrine that not even one person in a thousand can be saved by the Lotus Sutra, are just like this man San-chieh.

Many years have passed now since these great sources of trouble, the Nembutsu, Zen, and True Word teachings, came into existence, and one should not underestimate their influence. But I feel that, if I speak out against them in this way, there will perhaps be those who will heed my words.

And yet there is something that is more evil than these three teachings, so evil that it is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more difficult to believe. Though the Great Teacher

Jikaku was the third disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyo, everyone from the ruler on down to the common people believed him to be a more outstanding person than the Great Teacher Dengyo himself. He made an exhaustive study of the teachings of the True Word school and of the Lotus school, and stated in his writings that the True Word teachings are superior to those of the Lotus Sutra. As a result, the community of priests on Mount Hiei, which numbered three thousand, as well as the Buddhist scholars in every province throughout Japan, all came to accept his opinion on this matter.

The followers of Kobo had thought that, although he was their teacher, he had perhaps gone too far when he declared the Lotus Sutra inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra. But when they saw that the Great Teacher Jikaku put forth a similar opinion in his exegetical writings, they took it as an accepted fact that the True Word teachings were indeed superior to the Lotus Sutra.

Mount Hiei ought to have been the staunchest opponent to this opinion established in Japan that the True Word teachings are superior to the Lotus Sutra. Yet Jikaku silenced the mouths of the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei and prevented them from speaking out, and as a result, the True Word school was able to have its way. In effect, the Great Teacher Jikaku was the foremost ally of To-ji, the leading temple of the True Word school.

Though the Pure Land and Zen schools may have flourished in other countries, they would never have been able to spread throughout Japan in countless kalpas if Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei had not given its assent. But the Reverend Annen, known as the first worthy of Mount Hiei, wrote a work called *Different Views on the Teaching and the Time*, in which he ranked the nine schools of Buddhism in the order of their superiority, plac-

ing the True Word school in the first place, the Zen school in the second, the Tendai Lotus school in the third, the Flower Garland school in the fourth, and so forth.¹²⁷ Because of this egregious error in interpretation, the Zen school has been able to spread its teachings throughout Japan, bringing the country to the brink of ruin. And Honen was able to propagate the teachings of the Nembutsu school, similarly causing the nation to be imperiled as a result of the opinions first put forth by Eshin in the preface to his *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*. The Buddha tells us that only the worms born from the body of the lion itself feed on the lion. How true are those words!

The Great Teacher Dengyo spent a period of fifteen years in Japan studying the Tendai and True Word doctrines on his own. He was endowed by nature with a wonderful degree of understanding, and without the aid of a teacher realized the truth. But in order to dispel the doubts of the world, he journeyed to China, where he received instruction in the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools. The scholars in China held various opinions, but Dengyo believed in his heart that the Lotus Sutra was superior to the True Word teachings. Therefore, he did not use the word "school" when referring to the True Word school, but simply spoke of the "concentration and insight" and "True Word" practices of the Tendai school. He decreed that two priests should be ordained each year and should spend a period of twelve years in study on Mount Hiei. In addition, he received an imperial edict designating the Lotus, Golden Light, and Benevolent Kings sutras as the three scriptures for the protection of the nation and decreeing that they be read and recited in Shikan-in.¹²⁸ It went on to liken these three sutras to the three treasures of the imperial house-

hold, the eternal and foremost treasures of the Japanese nation, which are the sacred jewel, the sacred sword, and the sacred mirror. After Dengyo's passing, the first chief priest of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei, the Reverend Gishin, and the second chief priest, the Great Teacher Encho, carried on Dengyo's intentions without any deviation.

The third chief priest, the Great Teacher Jikaku, also went to T'ang China, where he spent ten years studying the relative merits of the exoteric and esoteric teachings under eight distinguished priests.¹²⁹ He also studied under priests of the T'ien-t'ai school such as Kuang-hsiu and Wei-chüan.¹³⁰ But in his heart he believed that the True Word school was superior to the T'ien-t'ai school. He felt that his teacher, the Great Teacher Dengyo, had not gone into the matter in sufficient detail, that he had not remained for an extended period in China and hence had acquired only a rough understanding of the True Word doctrines.

After Jikaku returned to Japan, he founded a great lecture hall called Soji-in west of Shikan-in in the Toto area¹³¹ on Mount Hiei, in which he established the Thus Come One Mahavairocana of the Diamond Realm as an object of devotion. In front of this image, he composed, on the basis of Shan-wu-wei's commentary on the Mahavairocana Sutra, a seven-volume commentary on the Diamond Crown Sutra and a seven-volume commentary on the Susiddhikara Sutra, making a total of fourteen volumes.

The essence of these commentaries is as follows: "There are two types of teachings. One is called the exoteric, which corresponds to the doctrine of the three vehicles; in this, worldly truth and the superior truth of Buddhism are not completely fused. The other is called the esoteric, which corresponds

to the doctrine of the one vehicle; in this, worldly truth and the superior truth of Buddhism are fused together into a single entity. In turn, there are two types of esoteric teachings. One is called the esoteric teachings of theory; these are the doctrines found in works such as the Flower Garland, Wisdom, Vimalakirti, Lotus, and Nirvana sutras. But these, though they teach the nondualism of worldly truth and the superior truth, say nothing about mantras and mudras. The second is called the esoteric teachings of both theory and practice; these are the doctrines found in the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. These teach the nondualism of worldly truth and the superior truth, and also explain mantras and mudras."

This essentially means that, in regard to the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the three True Word sutras just mentioned, they agree in principle, both teaching the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, but mudras and mantras are not mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra thus represents the esoteric teachings of theory, while the three True Word sutras represent the esoteric teachings of both theory and practice. They are hence as far apart as heaven and earth, or clouds and mud, say the commentaries. Moreover, Jikaku insists that this is no private interpretation of his own, but represents the essential view put forward by the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei in his commentary on the Mahavairochana Sutra.

But perhaps he felt that the relative worth of the Tendai and True Word schools was still a matter of doubt, or perhaps he hoped to dispel the misgivings of others. In any event, the biography of the Great Teacher Jikaku states as follows: "After the great teacher had completed writing his commentaries on the two sutras and thus accomplished his aim, he wondered to him-

self whether or not his commentaries conformed to the will of the Buddha, for he believed that if they did not conform to the Buddha's will they should never be widely circulated in the world. He therefore placed the commentaries before the image of the Buddha and determined to spend seven days and seven nights earnestly praying and endeavoring to make clear the validity of his purpose. On the fifth day, early in the morning at the time of the fifth watch, he dreamed that it was high noon and the sun was shining in the sky. Looking up, he took a bow and shot an arrow at it. The arrow struck the sun, which immediately began to roll over and over. After he woke from his dream, he realized that his views were profoundly in accord with the will of the Buddha, and he determined to transmit his commentaries to future ages."

While the Great Teacher Jikaku was in Japan, he made a thorough study of the teachings of both Dengyo and Kobo, and he spent a period of ten years in China studying under the eight distinguished priests, including the Tripitaka Master Pao-yüeh of southern India, learning all the loftiest and most secret doctrines. On this basis, he completed his commentaries on the two sutras. In addition, he prayed to the image of the Buddha, and awoke from dreaming that he had seen the arrow of wisdom strike the sun of the Middle Way. So great was his joy that he requested Emperor Nimmyo to issue an edict acknowledging Mount Hiei as a center of the True Word practice.

Though he was the chief priest of the Tendai school, he virtually became a True Word prelate, declaring that the three True Word sutras were the works that would ensure peace and protection of the nation. It has now been more than four hundred years since he spread these doctrines. The eminent leaders who have accepted them are as numer-

ous as rice and hemp seedlings, and the fervent believers who have embraced them are as plentiful as bamboo plants and rushes.

As a result, of all the temples established throughout Japan by Emperor Kammu and the Great Teacher Dengyo, there is not one that has not become a propagator of the True Word doctrine. Both courtiers and warriors alike invite True Word priests to attend to their religious needs, look up to them as their teachers, confer offices upon them, and place them in charge of temples. And in the eye-opening ceremony carried out at the consecration of wooden and painted Buddhist images, the priests of all the eight schools of Buddhism now use the mudras and mantras of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana and the honored one Buddha Eye!

Question: When it comes to those who maintain that the Lotus Sutra is superior to the True Word teachings, should they try to make use of these commentaries by Jikaku, or should they reject them?

Answer: Shakyamuni Buddha laid down a rule for future conduct when he said that we should “rely on the Law and not upon persons.”¹³² Bodhisattva Nagarjuna says that one should rely on treatises that are faithful to the sutras, but not rely on those that distort the sutras.¹³³ T’ien-t’ai states, “That which accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so.”¹³⁴ And the Great Teacher Dengyo says, “Depend upon the preachings of the Buddha, and do not put faith in traditions handed down orally.”¹³⁵

If one attends to such statements in the sutras, treatises, and commentaries, then one should not make dreams a basis for evaluating the Buddhist teachings. Rather, one should pay particular attention to those sutras and treatises

that make clear the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra.

As for the assertion that the eye-opening ceremony for wooden and painted images cannot be carried out without the use of True Word mudras and mantras, this is the sheerest nonsense! Are we to suppose that, before the True Word school appeared on the scene, wooden and painted Buddhist images could not be consecrated? In the period before the appearance of the True Word school, there were wooden and painted images in India, China, and Japan that walked about or preached the teachings or spoke aloud.¹³⁶ It would rather appear that, since people have begun to use True Word mudras and mantras in consecrating the Buddha images, the effectiveness of the ceremony has been completely lost.

This is a generally acknowledged point. I would merely like to say that when it comes to determining the truth of the Great Teacher Jikaku’s assertions there is no need for me, Nichiren, to cite any outside evidence to refute them. We have only to examine Jikaku’s own interpretations to understand the truth of the matter.

Question: How do we come to understand it?

Answer: We understand it when we realize that the source of Jikaku’s delusion was the dream that he had after he had written his commentaries asserting that the True Word teachings are superior to the Lotus Sutra. If his dream had been an auspicious one, then we would have to conclude that Jikaku was correct in claiming that the True Word teachings are superior. But can a dream of shooting the sun be called auspicious? Just try to find, anywhere in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of Buddhist scriptures or in the three thousand and more volumes of non-Buddhist literature, any evidence suggesting that to dream of

shooting the sun is an auspicious occurrence!

Let us look at a few pieces of evidence. King Ajatashatru dreamed that the moon was falling out of the sky. When he consulted his high minister Jivaka, the latter said, "This is a sign of the Buddha's passing." And when Subhadra¹³⁷ also dreamed that the sun was falling from the sky, he said to himself, "This is a sign of the Buddha's passing!" When the asuras fought with the lord Shakra, they first of all shot arrows at the sun and moon. The evil rulers King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and King Chou of the Yin dynasty in ancient China are both said to have repeatedly shot arrows at the sun, and both destroyed themselves and brought an end to their dynasties.

Lady Maya dreamed that she conceived the sun and thereafter gave birth to Prince Siddhartha, [who in time became the Buddha Shakyamuni]. For this reason, the Buddha's name as a child was Sun Seed.¹³⁸ Japan or Nihon [meaning "source of the sun"] is so called because it is the land of the Sun Goddess. In light of these examples, Jikaku's dream must mean that he used his two commentaries as arrows to shoot at the Sun Goddess, the Great Teacher Dengyo, Shakyamuni Buddha, and the Lotus Sutra. I, Nichiren, am an ignorant man, and I know nothing about the sutras and treatises. But I do know this much: anyone who would conclude from such a dream that the True Word teachings are superior to the Lotus Sutra will surely in this present life destroy his nation and ruin his family, and after his death will fall into the Avichi hell.

We in fact have a piece of evidence to settle the matter. If, when Japan and the Mongol forces engaged in combat,¹³⁹ the prayers of the True Word priests had proved effective and Japan had won victory on that account, then we might be persuaded that the True

Word school is worthy of respect. But at the time of the Jokyu Disturbance, though a considerable number of True Word priests prayed for the victory of the imperial forces and invoked curses on the forces of the Kamakura shogunate, the leader of the latter, the acting administrator [Hojo Yoshitoki], emerged victorious. As a result, the Retired Emperor Gotoba was exiled to the province of Oki, and his sons were exiled to the island of Sado and to another province.¹⁴⁰ Such was the effect of the True Word prayers for victory. In the end, the True Word prayers were like the cries of the fox that give him away, and the curses, as the Lotus Sutra says, "rebound upon the originator."¹⁴¹ The three thousand priests of Mount Hiei were also attacked by the Kamakura troops and forced to submit.¹⁴²

Now the Kamakura government is at the height of power. Therefore, the True Word priests of To-ji, Mount Hiei, Onjo-ji, and the seven major temples of Nara, along with those priests of the Lotus school who have forgotten the teachings of their own school and instead slander the Law, have all made their way east to the Kanto region, where they bow their heads, bend their knees, and seek in various ways to win over the hearts of the warriors. They are in turn assigned positions as superintendents or chief officials of various temples and mountain monasteries, where they proceed to follow the same evil doctrines that earlier brought about the downfall of the imperial forces, using them to pray for the peace and safety of the nation!

The shogun and his family, along with the samurai who are in their service, very likely believe that as a result of such prayers the nation will actually become peaceful and secure. But so long as they employ the services of priests who invite grave disaster by ignoring the Lotus Sutra, the nation will in fact face certain destruction.

When I think how pitiful it would be if the nation were to be destroyed, and how lamentable would be the loss of life involved, I feel that I must risk my own life in order to make the truth of the situation clear. If the ruler desires the security of the nation, he should question the manner in which things are proceeding and try to discern the truth. But instead, all he does is listen to the calumnies of others and in one way or another treat me with animosity.

In past ages, when there were those who slandered the Law, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the deities of the earth, all of whom have sworn to defend the Lotus Sutra, would look on with disapproval. But because there was no one to proclaim the matter aloud, they would be forgiving, as one would be with an only child who misbehaves, at times pretending not to notice such slander, at times administering a mild reproof. Now that I am present to make clear the matter, however, I can only be amazed that the ruler should continue to listen to persons who slander the Law. Yet he does so, and on the contrary, even goes so far as to persecute the rare individual who attempts to enlighten him and rescue him from error. Not for just one or two days, one or two months, or even one or two years, but for a number of years on end now, I have met with greater difficulties than the sticks and staves that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was obliged to face, and have encountered more fearful opposition than the murderous attacks inflicted on the monk Realization of Virtue.

During this period, the two great kings Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the gods of stars, and the deities of the earth have manifested their anger in various ways and again and again have delivered reprimands.¹⁴³ And yet

the attacks on me have only worsened. Finally, heaven in its wisdom has made the situation known to the sages of neighboring countries, enlisting them to add to the reprimands,¹⁴⁴ and has caused the great evil spirits to enter the nation and deceive the people's hearts, inciting them to rebel against their own rulers.¹⁴⁵

It is only reasonable to assume that, whether good or evil, the greater the portents, the greater will be the occurrences to follow. Now we have seen huge comets of a magnitude never known before in the 2,230 or more years since the Buddha's passing, and have experienced earthquakes such as were never encountered before during that time. In China and Japan in the past, sages of outstanding wisdom and ability have from time to time appeared. But none, as an ally of the Lotus Sutra, has faced such powerful enemies within his country as have I, Nichiren. From the facts present before your very eyes, it should be apparent that Nichiren is the foremost person in the entire land of Jambudvīpa.

In the seven hundred and more years since Buddhism was first introduced to Japan, there have been five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras read, and eight or ten schools¹⁴⁶ propounded. The people of wisdom who have appeared have been as numerous as rice and hemp seedlings, and those who have spread the teachings widely have been as plentiful as bamboo plants and rushes. And yet of all the various Buddhas, there is none more highly revered, and none whose name is more widely called upon, than the Buddha Amida.

This practice of invoking the name of the Buddha Amida was advocated by Eshin in his work *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*, and as a result, one-third of the people of Japan became believers in the Nembutsu, the calling on the name of Amida. When Yokan

wrote *Ten Conditions for Rebirth in the Pure Land* and *The Rituals of the Assembly for Rebirth in the Pure Land*, two-thirds of all the people of this country became followers of the Nembutsu. And when Honen wrote *The Nembutsu Chosen above All*, then everyone alike in this nation became a Nembutsu devotee. Thus those people who chant the name of the Buddha Amida these days are by no means disciples of only one person.

This thing called the Nembutsu is a daimoku or chant based on the Two-Volumed, Meditation, and Amida sutras, which are provisional Mahayana sutras. If the daimoku of provisional Mahayana sutras is widely propagated and spread abroad, it must be a prelude to the propagation of the daimoku of the true Mahayana sutra, must it not? People who have a mind for such concerns should consider this matter carefully. If the provisional sutras are spread abroad, then the true sutra will surely be spread abroad. If the daimoku of the provisional sutras is spread abroad, then the daimoku of the true sutra will also surely be spread abroad.

In all the seven hundred and more years from the time of Emperor Kimmei to the present emperor [Go'uda], such a thing has never been seen or heard of, namely, a wise man who urges others to chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo and who chants it himself.

When the sun rises, the stars go into hiding. When a worthy king appears, foolish kings perish. When the true sutra is spread widely, the provisional sutras will cease to circulate, and when a man of wisdom chants Nam-myohorenge-kyo, those ignorant of it will follow after him as shadows follow a form and echoes follow a sound.

There can be no room to doubt that I, Nichiren, am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in all of Japan. Indeed, from this we may assume that, even in China and India and throughout Jam-

budvipa, there is no one who can stand side by side with me.

Question: The great earthquake of the Shoka era, the huge comet of the Bun'ei era—what caused these to appear?

Answer: T'ien-t'ai says, "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."¹⁴⁷

Question: What do you mean by this statement?

Answer: When Bodhisattva Superior Practices appeared from beneath the earth, the other bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, Manjushri, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and Medicine King, though they had severed themselves from the first forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance, had not yet severed themselves from the last one, or fundamental darkness. Hence they were in effect ignorant persons, and consequently failed to understand that this bodhisattva, Superior Practices, had been summoned so that he might widely propagate Nam-myohorenge-kyo of the "Life Span" chapter in the Latter Day of the Law.

Question: Is there anyone in Japan, China, or India who understands this matter?

Answer: Even the great bodhisattvas who have eradicated the illusions of thought and desire and severed themselves from the forty-one levels of ignorance cannot understand such a thing. How then could persons who have not rid themselves of even one iota of illusion be expected to do so?

Question: But if there is no wise person who understands why these calamities have arisen, then how can proper steps be taken to deal with them? If one does not understand the origin of an illness, though one may try to treat the sick person, the treatment will surely fail and the patient will die. Now, if the people resort to prayers without understanding the basic cause of these disasters, can there be any

doubt that the nation will in time face ruin? Ah, how dreadful to think of it!

Answer: They say that snakes know seven days in advance when a heavy rain is going to occur, and that crows know what lucky or unlucky events are going to take place in the course of a whole year. This must be because snakes are followers of the great dragons who make the rains fall, and crows have for a long time studied such matters of divination. Now I am only an ordinary person, and therefore have no understanding of the cause of these disasters. Nevertheless, I believe I can generally instruct you concerning this matter.

In the time of King P'ing of the Chou dynasty, persons appeared who let their hair hang down and went about naked. A court official named Hsin Yu divined on the basis of this and said, "Within a hundred years this dynasty will come to an end." In the time of King Yu of the Chou, the mountains and rivers collapsed and were destroyed and the earth shook. A courtier named Po Yang, observing this, said, "Within twelve years our great ruler will meet with some dire happening."

Now the great earthquake and the huge comet that have appeared are calamities brought about by heaven, which is enraged because the ruler of our country hates Nichiren and sides with the Zen, Nembutsu, and True Word priests who preach doctrines that will destroy the nation!

Question: How can I believe that?

Answer: The Sovereign Kings Sutra says, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, the stars and constellations, along with the winds and rains, all fail to move in their proper seasons."

If this passage from the sutra is correct, then there can be no doubt that evil people exist in this country, and

that the ruler and his ministers put their trust in such people. Moreover, there can be no doubt that a wise person exists in this country, and that the ruler of the nation hates and treats him as an enemy.

The same sutra also says, "The deities of the heaven of the thirty-three gods will all feel rage in their hearts, . . . and strange and unusual shooting stars will fall to earth, two suns will come out at the same time, marauders will appear from other regions, and the people of the country will meet with death and disorder."

Already in this country we have had unusual disturbances in the heavens as well as strange occurrences on earth, and the men of a foreign country have come to attack us. Can there be any doubt that the thirty-three heavenly gods are angry?

The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: "Evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit, in many cases appear before the ruler, the crown prince, or the other princes, and take it upon themselves to preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, listens to and puts faith in such doctrines."

The same work also refers to a time "when the sun and moon depart from their regular courses, when the seasons come in the wrong order, when a red sun or a black sun appears, when two, three, four, or five suns appear at the same time, when the sun is eclipsed and loses its light, or when one, two, three, four, or five coronas appear around the sun."

These passages mean that, if evil monks fill the nation and deceive the ruler, the crown prince, and the other princes, preaching doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the downfall of the nation, and if the ruler and the other high officials

allow themselves to be deceived by these monks and come to believe that such doctrines will in fact ensure the protection of the Buddhist Law and the nation, and act accordingly, then the sun and the moon will behave strangely, and great winds, rains, and fires will make their appearance. Next will come internal disorder, relatives and kin turning against one another and bringing about armed revolt. Many allies and supporters of the ruler and other high officials will be struck down, and then invaders will come from other nations to attack them, until they are forced to commit suicide or are captured alive or obliged to surrender. This will come about entirely because they heed doctrines that lead to the destruction of the Buddhist Law and cause the downfall of the nation.

The Protection Sutra says: "The teachings preached by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni cannot be in the least bit harmed by the various devils of heaven, or by the non-Buddhists, or by evil men, or by seers who have attained the five transcendental powers. And yet they can be so thoroughly destroyed by those evil monks who are monks in name and appearance only that nothing whatsoever remains of them. In this respect they are like Mount Sumeru. Though one might gather all the grass and wood from the major world system, pile them up as fuel, and burn it for a long period of time, Mount Sumeru would not suffer the least degree of injury. But when the conflagration that marks the end of the kalpa of decline breaks out and fire appears from within the mountain itself, then in an instant the whole mountain will be consumed by the flames and not even ashes will remain."

The Lotus-like Face Sutra says: "The Buddha said to Ananda: 'It is like the case of a lion who has died. No creature that lives in the air, in the soil, in water, or on land will venture to

eat the flesh of the dead lion. Only the worms that are born from the body of the lion itself will feed on the lion's flesh. In the same way, Ananda, the Buddha's teachings cannot be destroyed by outside forces. But the evil monks who exist within the body of my teachings—they are the ones who will destroy these teachings that the Buddha has labored over and worked to establish for a period of three great asamkhya kalpas.'"

What do these passages from the sutras mean? In the past, the Buddha Kashyapa described to King Kriki the Latter Day of the Law of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and revealed what sort of people would destroy Shakyamuni's teachings.¹⁴⁸ Evil men might appear such as King Mihirakula, who burned all the Buddhist halls and monasteries of India and murdered all the monks and nuns of its sixteen major states,¹⁴⁹ or Emperor Wu-tsung¹⁵⁰ of China, who destroyed more than 4,600 temples and pagodas in the nine regions of China and forced 260,500 priests and nuns to return to lay life. But such men could not destroy the teachings preached by Shakyamuni Buddha. It is the priests themselves, who wrap their bodies in the three robes permitted to them, hang a single begging bowl about their necks, store up in their minds the eighty thousand teachings, and with their mouths recite the twelve divisions of the scriptures—they are the ones who will destroy the Buddha's teachings.

It is like the case of Mount Sumeru, the golden mountain. Though one might gather all the grass and wood in the major world system, pile them up until they completely filled the heaven of the four heavenly kings as well as the others of the six heavens of the world of desire, and burn them for one year, two years, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million years, the mountain would not suffer the slightest in-

jury. But when the time comes for the great fire that ends the kalpa of decline, a tiny flame no bigger than a bean will break out at the base of the mountain, and not only will Mount Sumeru be consumed, but the entire major world system will likewise be destroyed.

If the Buddha's predictions are to be believed, then it would appear that the Buddhist priests of the ten schools or the eight schools of our country will be the ones to burn up the Mount Sumeru of the Buddha's teaching. The priests of the Hinayana schools of the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts will be the flames of anger that burn with jealous hatred of the Mahayana schools. And priests such as Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school, San-chieh of the Zen school, and Shan-tao of the Pure Land school are the worms that are born from the body of the lion that is the Buddha's teaching.

The Great Teacher Dengyo in his writings described the eminent scholars of the Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and other schools of Japanese Buddhism as six kinds of worms.¹⁵¹ I, Nichiren, would dub the founders of the True Word, Zen, and Pure Land schools the three kinds of worms, and Jikaku, Annen, and Eshin of the Tendai school the three worms who devoured the lion-body of the Lotus Sutra and the Great Teacher Dengyo.

So long as Nichiren, who is working to expose the root of these great slanders against the correct teaching, is treated with animosity, the heavenly deities will withhold their light, the gods of the earth will be angered, and disturbances and calamities will appear in great numbers. You must understand that, because I speak concerning the most important matter in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, my words are accompanied by portents of the first magnitude. How tragic, how pitiful,

that all the people of Japan should fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering! But how fortunate, how joyous, to think that with this unworthy body I have received in my heart the seeds of Buddhahood!

Just see how it will be! When tens of thousands of armed ships from the great kingdom of the Mongols come over the sea to attack Japan, everyone from the ruler on down to the multitudes of common people will turn their backs on all the Buddhist temples and all the shrines of the gods and will raise their voices in chorus, crying Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo! They will press their palms together and say, "Priest Nichiren, Priest Nichiren, save us!"

In India King Mihirakula was obliged to press his palms together in submission before King Baladitya, and in Japan Taira no Munemori was forced to pay reverence to Kajiwara Kagetoki.¹⁵² This is in accord with the principle that men of great arrogance should end by bowing before their enemies.

Those vicious and arrogant monks described in the Lotus Sutra in the beginning armed themselves with sticks and staves and used them to belabor Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. But later they pressed their palms together and repented of their error. Devadatta inflicted an injury on Shakyamuni Buddha that drew blood, but when he was on his deathbed, he cried out, "Namu (Devotion)!" If only he had been able to cry, "Namu Buddha (Devotion to the Buddha)!" he would have been spared the fate of falling into hell. But so grave were the deeds he had committed that he could only utter the word "Namu" and could not pronounce the word "Buddha" before he died.

And soon the eminent priests of Japan will no doubt be trying to cry out, "Namu Nichiren Shonin (Devotion to the Sage Nichiren)!" But most

likely they will only have time enough to utter the one word, "Namu!" How pitiful, how pitiful!

In the secular texts it says, "A sage is one who fully understands those things that have not yet made their appearance." And in the Buddhist texts it says, "A sage is one who knows the three existences of life—past, present, and future."

Three times now I have gained distinction by having such knowledge. The first time was the first year of the Bunno era (1260), cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month, when I presented my *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* to His Lordship, the lay priest of Saimyo-ji, by way of the lay priest Yadoya Mitsunori.¹⁵³ At that time, I said to the lay priest Yadoya, "Please advise His Lordship that devotion to the Zen school and the Nembutsu school should be abandoned. If this advice is not heeded, trouble will break out within the ruling clan, and the nation will be attacked by another country."

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-jo: "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.' Not only will the people of our nation be put to death by foreign invaders, but many of them will be taken prisoner. All the Nembutsu and Zen temples, such as Kencho-ji, Jufuku-ji, Gokuraku-ji, Daibutsuden, and Choraku-ji, should be burned to the ground, and their priests taken to Yui Beach to have their heads cut off. If this is not done, then Japan is certain to be destroyed!"¹⁵⁴

The third time was the eighth day of the fourth month of last year (the eleventh year of the Bun'ei era), when I said to Saemon-no-jo: "Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler's domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart. There can be no doubt that the Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering, and that the Zen school is the work of the heavenly devil. And the True Word school in particular is a great plague to this nation of ours. The task of praying for victory over the Mongols should not be entrusted to the True Word priests! If so grave a matter is entrusted to them, then the situation will only worsen rapidly and our country will face destruction."

[Hei no Saemon-no-jo] Yoritsuna then asked, "When do you think the Mongols will attack?"

I replied, "The sacred scriptures do not indicate the time. But the signs show that heaven is extremely angry. It would appear that the attack is imminent. It will probably occur before this year has ended."

Yet it was not I, Nichiren, who made these three important pronouncements. Rather it was in all cases the spirit of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni that had entered into my body. And having personally experienced this, I am beside myself with joy.

This is the all-important doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life taught in the Lotus Sutra. What does the Lotus Sutra mean when it says, "This reality [the true aspect of all phenomena] consists of the appearance . . .?"¹⁵⁵ "Appearance," the first of the ten factors of life, is the most important of them all; this is why the Buddha appeared in the world. "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."

Little streams come together to form the great ocean, and tiny particles of dust accumulate to form Mount Sume-

ru. When I, Nichiren, first took faith in the Lotus Sutra, I was like a single drop of water or a single particle of dust in all the country of Japan. But later, when two people, three people, ten people, and eventually a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a million people come to recite the Lotus Sutra and transmit it to others, then they will form a Mount Sumeru of perfect enlightenment, an ocean of great nirvana. Seek no other path by which to attain Buddhahood!

Question: At the time of your second pronouncement on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of the Bun'ei era, when you incurred the wrath of the authorities, how did you know that if harm was done to you rebellion would break out and the country would also be attacked by armies from abroad?

Answer: The fiftieth volume of the Great Collection Sutra states: "There may perhaps be various kings of the Kshatriya class who act in a way contrary to the Law, causing anguish to the voice-hearer disciples of the World-Honored One. Perhaps they may curse and revile them or beat and injure them with swords and staves, or deprive them of their robes and begging bowls and the other things they need. Or perhaps they may restrain and persecute those who give alms to the disciples. If there should be those who do such things, then we will see to it that their enemies in foreign lands rise up suddenly of their own accord and march against them, and we will cause uprisings to break out within their states. We will bring about pestilence and famine, unseasonable winds and rains, and contention, wrangling, and slander. And we will make certain that those rulers do not last for long, but that their nations are brought to destruction."

There are many passages such as this in the sutras, but I have chosen this one because it is particularly pertinent to

the times and to my own position. In this passage, the beings who are speaking are all the deities of the threefold world, including Brahma, Shakra, the devil king of the sixth heaven, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and all the dragons. These eminent beings appeared before the Buddha and took a vow, declaring that after the Buddha's passing, in the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law, if there should be monks of erroneous belief who complain to the ruler concerning one who practices the correct teaching, and if those who are close to the ruler or who are loyal to him should simply accept the word of these monks because of respect for them and, without inquiring into the truth of the matter, heap abuse and slander on this wise person, then they, the deities, would see to it that, though there may have been no reason for such an occurrence, major revolt would suddenly break out within that country, and in time the nation would also be attacked by another country, so that both the ruler and his state would be destroyed.

On the one hand, I am delighted to think that my prophecies shall come true, yet on the other hand, it pains me deeply. I have not committed any fault in my present existence. All I have done is try to repay the debt I owe to the country of my birth by endeavoring to save it from disaster. That my advice was not heeded was certainly a cause of great regret to me.

Not only was it not heeded, but I was summoned before the authorities, and the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra was snatched from the breast of my robe and I was harshly beaten with it.¹⁵⁶ In the end, I was arrested and paraded through the streets of the city. At that time, I called out: "You gods of the sun and moon up in the sky, here is Nichiren meeting with this great persecution. If you are not

ready to risk your lives to aid me, does this mean, then, that I am not the votary of the Lotus Sutra? If that is so, then I should correct my mistaken belief at once. If, on the other hand, Nichiren is the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then you should send some sign of that fact to this country at once! If you do not do so, then you, the gods of the sun and moon and all the other deities, will be no more than great liars who have deceived Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Devadatta was guilty of falsehood and deception and Kokalika was a great liar, but you deities are guilty of telling lies that are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater!"

I had no sooner uttered these words than the nation was suddenly faced with internal revolt. Since the country has fallen into grave disorder, then, although I may be a mere common mortal of no social standing, so long as I uphold the Lotus Sutra, I deserve to be called the foremost Great Man¹⁵⁷ in all Japan at this time.

Question: In the delusion that is arrogance, there are different types of arrogance such as the seven types, the nine types, and the eight types. But your arrogance is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than the greatest degree of arrogance defined in the Buddhist teachings.

The Scholar Gunaprabha refused to bow before Bodhisattva Maitreya,¹⁵⁸ and the Great Arrogant Brahman made himself a dais supported by four legs [representing the four sages Maheshvara, Vishnu, and Narayana, along with Shakyamuni Buddha]. Mahadeva, though only a common mortal, declared that he was an arhat, and the Scholar Vimalamitra proclaimed himself foremost within all the five regions of India. These men were all guilty of faults that condemned them to the Avichi hell or the hell of incessant suffering. How, then, do you dare to

claim that you are the wisest man in the entire land of Jambudvīpa? Will you not fall into hell like the others? What a frightful thing to do!

Answer: Have you really understood the meaning of the seven types of arrogance, or of the nine types or the eight types? The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment declared, "I am the foremost throughout the threefold world." All the non-Buddhist leaders predicted that heaven would surely punish him immediately, or that the earth would open up and swallow him. [But no such thing happened.]

The three hundred or more priests of the seven major temples of Nara asserted that the priest Saicho [the Great Teacher Dengyo] was an incarnation of Mahadeva or of the Iron Belly Brahman.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, heaven did not punish him, but on the contrary, protected him in various ways, and the earth did not open up and swallow him but remained as hard as a diamond. The Great Teacher Dengyo founded a temple on Mount Hiei and became the eyes of all living beings. In the end, the priests of the seven major temples acknowledged their fault and became his disciples, and the people of the various provinces throughout the country became his lay supporters. Thus, when someone who is superior declares that he is superior, it may sound like arrogance, but that person will in fact receive great benefits [because he is actually praising the Law that he embraces].

The Great Teacher Dengyo said, "The Tendai Lotus school is superior to the other schools because of the sutra that it is founded on. Therefore, in declaring its superiority, it is not simply praising itself and disparaging others."¹⁶⁰

The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "Just as among all the mountains, Mount Sumeru is foremost, so this Lotus Sutra is likewise. Among

all the sutras, it holds the highest place."¹⁶¹ The sutras that the Buddha preached earlier such as the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana sutras, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which he preached at the same time as the Lotus Sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra, which he was to preach later, altogether amounting to the five thousand or seven thousand volumes, as well as the sutras of the land of India, the dragon king's palace, the heaven of the four heavenly kings, the heaven of the thirty-three gods, and the sun and moon, and those of all the worlds in the ten directions, are lesser mountains such as the Dirt Mountains, the Black Mountains, the Small Iron Encircling Mountains, or the Great Iron Encircling Mountains in comparison to this Lotus Sutra that has been brought to Japan, for it is comparable to Mount Sumeru.

The seventh volume also says, "A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings."¹⁶²

Let us consider what this passage means. [The other sutras have their upholders.] Thus, the Flower Garland Sutra is upheld by the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Moon of Deliverance, Nagarjuna, and Ashvaghosha, the Great Teacher Fa-tsang, the Teacher of the Nation Ch'ing-liang, Empress Wu, the Preceptor Shinjo, the Administrator of Priests Roben, and Emperor Shomu. The Profound Secrets and Wisdom sutras have as their supporters Bodhisattva Superlative Truth Appearing,¹⁶³ the Venerable Subhuti, the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang, the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang, the emperors T'ai-tsung and Kao-tsung, the priests Kanroku and Dosho, and Emperor Kotoku. Upholding the Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school are Vajrasattva, the bodhisattvas Nagarjuna and Nagabodhi,¹⁶⁴ King Satavahana,¹⁶⁵ the Tripitaka masters Shan-

wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung, the emperors Hsüan-tsung and Tai-tsung, Hui-kuo, and the great teachers Kobo and Jikaku. And upholding the Nirvana Sutra are Bodhisattva Kashyapa, the fifty-two types of beings,¹⁶⁶ and the Tripitaka Master Dharmaraksha. Fa-yün of Kuang-chesu temple and the ten eminent priests, three from southern China and seven from northern China, also embraced sutras other than the Lotus Sutra.¹⁶⁷

But if, in contrast to all these, the ordinary people in the evil world of the latter age, those who do not observe a single one of the precepts and who appear to others to be *icchantikas*, firmly believe, as the sutra states, that there is no path to Buddhahood outside of the Lotus Sutra, which surpasses all other sutras preached before, at the same time, or after it—then such people, though they may not have a particle of understanding, are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times superior to those great sages who uphold the other sutras. That is what this passage from the Lotus Sutra is saying.

Among the supporters of the other sutras, there are some who encourage other people to uphold such sutras temporarily as a step toward leading them to the Lotus Sutra. There are others who continue to cling to the other sutras and never move on to the Lotus Sutra. And there are still others who not only continue to uphold the other sutras, but are so intensely attached to them that they even declare the Lotus Sutra to be inferior to such sutras.

But the votaries of the Lotus Sutra should now keep the following in mind. The Lotus Sutra says that, just as among all the rivers, streams, and other bodies of water, for example, the ocean is foremost, so a person who upholds the Lotus Sutra is likewise.¹⁶⁸ It goes on to say that, just as among all the stars

and their like, the moon, a god's son, is foremost, so a person who upholds the Lotus Sutra is likewise.¹⁶⁹ Keep these words in mind. All of the wise persons of Japan at the present time are like the host of stars, and I, Nichiren, am like the full moon.

Question: Is there anyone from times past who has spoken the way you have just done?

Answer: The Great Teacher Dengyo states: "One should understand that the sutras on which the other schools base their teachings are not foremost among the sutras, and those people who can uphold such sutras are not foremost among the multitude. But the Lotus Sutra, which is upheld by the Tendai Lotus school, is the foremost of all the sutras, and therefore those who can uphold the Lotus are foremost among living beings. This is borne out by the words of the Buddha himself. How could it be mere self-praise?"¹⁷⁰

A tick that attaches itself to the tail of a ch'i-lin can race a thousand miles in one day, and a worthless man who accompanies a wheel-turning king can circle in an instant about the four continents of the world. Who would question the truth of such matters? Dengyo's words, "How could it be mere self-praise?" should be kept in mind.

If what he says is correct, then a person who upholds the Lotus Sutra just as it teaches must be superior to the king Brahma and more worthy than the lord Shakra. If you have asuras to help you, you can lift and carry even Mount Sumeru. If you have dragons in your employ, you can drain all the water in the ocean until it runs dry.

The Great Teacher Dengyo says: "Those who praise him will receive blessings that will pile up as high as Mount Calm and Bright, while those who slander him will be committing a fault that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering."¹⁷¹ And

the Lotus Sutra states, "If this person [should slander a sutra such as this], or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them... When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."¹⁷²

If these golden words of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, are true, if the testimony to their truth given by Many Treasures Buddha is not false, and if the sign of assent given by the Buddhas of the ten directions when they extended their tongues is to be trusted, then there can be no doubt that all living beings in Japan at the present time are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

The eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "In later ages if there are those who accept, uphold, read, and recite this sutra... Their wishes will not be in vain, and in this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune."¹⁷³ It also says, "If there is anyone who offers alms to them and praises them, then in this present existence he will have manifest reward for it."¹⁷⁴

In these two passages are the words "in this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune" and "in this present existence he will have manifest reward for it." These two statements in their Chinese original each comprise eight characters. If these sixteen characters are meaningless, and if Nichiren does not receive some great reward in this present life, then these golden words of the Thus Come One will be in the same category as the empty lies of Devadatta, and the testimony of Many Treasures Buddha that guaranteed their truth will be no different from the baseless assertions of Kokalika. Then none of the people who slander the correct teaching will ever be condemned to the Avichi hell, and the Buddhas of the three existences will not exist! But could such a thing be possible?

Therefore, I say to you, my disci-

ples, try practicing as the Lotus Sutra teaches, exerting yourselves without begrudging your lives! Test the truth of Buddhism now! Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Question: In the Lotus Sutra we find this passage "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way."¹⁷⁵ And the Nirvana Sutra says: "For example, it is like a royal envoy skilled in discussion and clever with expedient means who, when sent on a mission to another land, would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler. Wise persons too do this. In the midst of ordinary people and without begrudging their lives, those who are wise should without fail proclaim the Thus Come One's prize teaching from the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle, that is, all living beings possess the Buddha nature." But under what circumstances should one be prepared to sacrifice one's life and safety? I would like you to explain the matter to me in detail.

Answer: When I first embarked upon the Buddhist practice, I supposed that the statement "We care nothing for our bodies or lives" meant receiving the imperial command and traveling to China the way men like Dengyo, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho did, or that it meant setting out from China as the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang did, traveling all the way to India, dying six times in the attempt and striving again with each rebirth. Or I thought that it meant throwing away one's life the way the boy Snow Mountains did in order to learn the second half of a verse, or burning one's arms as an offering for seventy-two thousand years the way Bodhisattva Medicine King did. But if we go by the passage of scripture that you have quoted, these are not the kind of thing that is meant.

As to this passage in the sutra, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives,"

the sutra earlier describes the three types of enemies who will vilify and attack one with swords and staves, and in all likelihood deprive one of life and body. And to understand the passage in the Nirvana Sutra that speaks of carrying out one's duty "even though it costs him his life," we should look at the passage later on in the same sutra that says, "There are icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. They pretend to be arhats, living in deserted places and speaking slanderously of the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle. When ordinary people see them, they all suppose that they are true arhats and speak of them as great bodhisattvas."

Speaking of the third of the three types of enemies, the Lotus Sutra says, "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement . . . they will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers."¹⁷⁶ And the Parinirvana Sutra says, "There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds."

These passages from the sutras speak of powerful enemies of the correct teaching. Such enemies are to be found not so much among evil rulers and evil ministers, among non-Buddhists and devil kings, or among monks who disobey the precepts. Rather they are those great slanderers of the Law who are to be found among the eminent monks who appear to be upholders of the precepts and men of wisdom.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo, speaking of such men, says, "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are."¹⁷⁷

The fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "This Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it

holds the highest place.”¹⁷⁸ In this passage we should note the words “it holds the highest place.” The phrase comprises four characters in the original. If we are to believe this passage, then we must say that the votary of the Lotus Sutra is one who proclaims the Lotus Sutra to stand supreme above all the other sutras.

Let us suppose now that there are many people who are held in great respect by the ruler, and that these people claim that there are sutras superior to the Lotus Sutra, disputing with the votary of the Lotus Sutra on this point. They enjoy the trust and support of the ruler and his ministers, while the votary of the Lotus Sutra is a person of low station and humble learning; therefore, the whole nation joins in heaping abuse on him. If at that time he conducts himself in the manner of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging or the Scholar Bhadraruchi and continues to assert the superiority of the Lotus Sutra, he will almost certainly lose his life. To practice with such resolve in the face of this threat is the most important thing of all.

Now I, Nichiren, am confronting just such a situation. Though I am a humble man, I have proclaimed that

the great teachers Kobo and Jikaku, the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chinkang-chih, and Pu-k’ung, and others of their kind are potent enemies of the Lotus Sutra, and that, if the words of the sutra are to be trusted, they have without doubt fallen into the hell of incessant suffering. To proclaim such a thing as this is a very grave step. It would be easier to walk naked into a raging fire, easier to take up Mount Sumeru in one’s hands and toss it away, easier to hoist a great stone on one’s back and walk across the ocean, than to do what I have done. To establish the correct teaching in this country of Japan is indeed a difficult thing.

If Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, of the pure land of Eagle Peak, Many Treasures Buddha of the World of Treasure Purity, the Buddhas of the ten directions who are Shakyamuni’s emanations, the bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who sprang up out of the earth, Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings do not, conspicuously or inconspicuously, give me their protection and lend me aid, then they will never know a single day or a single hour of peace and safety!



Background

This treatise, counted among Nichiren Daishonin’s five major writings, was written at Minobu in the first year of Kenji (1275) and was entrusted to a believer named Yui who lived in Nishiyama of Suruga Province. As with a number of his other important works, it is written in the form of a dialogue between the Daishonin and a hypothetical questioner.

The Daishonin had met and remonstrated with Hei no Saemon, who rep-

resented the regent Hojo Tokimune, in the fourth month of 1274, after returning from his exile to Sado. When this, his third and last admonition to the government, went unheeded, the Daishonin left to live in the forest of Mount Minobu. In the tenth month of 1274, Mongol forces launched an invasion of Japan just as the Daishonin had predicted to Hei no Saemon during their meeting. News of the invasion, the first in Japan’s history, came as a

profound shock. Though the invasion ultimately failed, people were terrified that the Mongols would seize the next opportunity to launch a second attack. It was amid this uneasy situation that the Daishonin wrote *The Selection of the Time*.

"Time" in the title, *The Selection of the Time*, refers to the Latter Day of the Law, when the "pure Law" of Shakyamuni's teaching was to become obscured and lost and the "great pure Law" of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo was to be spread.

Nichiren Daishonin set forth elsewhere five guides or criteria for the propagation of Buddhism: namely, a correct understanding of (1) the teaching, (2) the people's capacity, (3) the time, (4) the country, and (5) the sequence of propagation. *The Selection of the Time* places the greatest emphasis upon the factor of the time.

In this writing, the Daishonin refers to the five five-hundred-year periods described in the Great Collection Sutra to outline the events of Buddhism over the first twenty-five hundred years following Shakyamuni's passing. (1) In the first five hundred years of the Former Day of the Law, Mahakashyapa, Ananda, and others propagated the Hinayana teachings in India. (2) The second five hundred years of the Former Day saw the advent of Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and others, who propagated the provisional Mahayana teachings. (3) In the first five hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai appeared in China and propagated the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. (4) The second five hundred years of the Middle Day saw the Great Teacher Dengyo propagate the theoretical teaching in Japan and establish the ordination platform for administering Mahayana precepts. (5) The first five hundred years of the Latter Day is the time when, according to the Great Collection Sutra, "the pure Law

will become obscured and lost." Nichiren Daishonin proclaims that during this period the great pure Law will be spread far and wide throughout the entire world.

Nichiren Daishonin then states that one who spreads the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law is the votary of the Lotus Sutra who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent.

The Daishonin describes the Law that will spread in the Latter Day as follows: "Unbelievable as it may seem, there clearly appears in the text of the Lotus Sutra a correct Law that is supremely profound and secret, one that, though expounded in full by the Buddha, in the time since his passing has never yet been propagated by Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, or Vasubandhu, nor even by T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo" (p. 560).

The latter half of the treatise exposes the errors of the Nembutsu, Zen, and True Word schools, pointing out these mistakes as the root causes of the calamities besetting Japan at that time. In *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, the Daishonin focused his criticism on the Nembutsu doctrine as a primary source of disaster. In *The Selection of the Time*, he reveals, among others, the fallacies of the True Word school whose leading priests had by this time won the confidence of the ruling class, who in turn relied on the school to offer prayers for subduing enemies. The Daishonin points out the futility of such prayers by referring to the Mongol expeditionary force that had attacked Japan in 1274 and to the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221, when the imperial court placed its faith in the True Word prayer rituals and was nonetheless defeated by the Kamakura government.

The Daishonin points out the doctrinal error of the True Word school. True Word patriarchs incorporated

T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life into their own teaching and then asserted that it is to be found in the Mahavairochana Sutra, the basic scripture of their own school. They even went so far as to accuse T'ien-t'ai of stealing the supreme doctrine of the True Word. They asserted the superiority of the Mahavairochana Sutra over the Lotus Sutra, and of Mahavairochana Buddha, who appears in that sutra but is not an actual historical figure, over Shakyamuni Buddha.

Then he declares, "In China and Japan in the past, sages of outstanding wisdom and ability have from time to time appeared. But none, as an ally of the Lotus Sutra, has faced such powerful enemies within his country as have I, Nichiren. From the facts present before your very eyes, it should be apparent that Nichiren is the foremost person in the entire land of Jambudvīpa" (p. 574).

The Daishonin next attributes the underlying cause of calamities to failure of the nation's ruler to honor the Lotus Sutra and its votary.

The Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts say that a sage is one who knows the future. By this account, the Daishonin is a great sage, because, as he says, "Three times now I have gained distinction by having such knowledge" (p. 579). The predictions he made on the three occasions he remonstrated with the authorities all came true. In his third remonstrance, he said to Hei no Saemon, "Even if it seems that,

because I was born in the ruler's domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart" (p. 579). This can be taken as a bold expression of freedom of thought and belief, a rare statement in thirteenth-century Japan.

He further says that although he is a mere common mortal, because he is the votary of the Lotus Sutra, he deserves to be called the foremost Great Man in Japan. "Great Man" is one of the titles of a Buddha.

In response to this statement, the questioner in this writing criticizes him, saying that his arrogance is beyond measure. The Daishonin replies, in effect, that what seems like arrogance on his part is actually sublime conviction in the superiority of the Law that he embraces. Then he turns to his followers: "Therefore, I say to you, my disciples, try practicing as the Lotus Sutra teaches, exerting yourselves without begrudging your lives! Test the truth of Buddhism now" (p. 584).

In conclusion, the Daishonin declares that he himself has lived up to the passage in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way." That is, in order to reveal the correct teaching, he has struggled continually without begrudging his life in the face of persecution by the three powerful enemies—especially those of the third group, respected priests who induce secular authorities to persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 7.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.
4. The Sutra of the Conversion of Barbarians by Lao Tzu states that Lao Tzu was white-haired at birth and had the appearance of an old man.
5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

6. A reference to chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra. Seeing the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, Maitreya and others in the assembly wonder how, in the mere forty years since his enlightenment under the bodhi tree, the Buddha has contrived to teach and train so many majestic and noble bodhisattvas. It is, Maitreya says, as though a youth of twenty-

five were to point to a hundred-year-old man and say, "This is my son."

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

8. Ibid., chap. 3.

9. Ibid., chap. 10.

10. Ibid., chap. 14.

11. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

12. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

13. To these people Shakyamuni Buddha preached the teachings of the Flower Garland Sutra immediately after his enlightenment.

14. At Deer Park (Skt Mrigadava) in Varanasi, present-day Benares, Shakyamuni preached the teachings that became the Agama sutras.

15. One of the five types of vision—the physical eyes, the heavenly eye, the wisdom eye, the Dharma eye, and the Buddha eye. The "eye of the Buddha" here means the sutras that consist of Shakyamuni's teachings.

16. The Buddha is often likened to the sun because he dispels the ignorance of the people.

17. The period when people are sure to attain enlightenment by practicing the Buddha's teachings.

18. The period in which people will practice meditation in order to perceive the truth.

19. The period when people will concentrate on studying and reciting the sutras and listening to lectures on them.

20. The period when numerous temples and stupas are built.

21. This period refers to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. The last of the five five-hundred-year periods, which is called the age of conflict.

22. These remarks are found in Taich'o's *Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight*.

23. This explanation appears in Honen's work *The Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

24. *On the World of Peace and Delight*.

25. *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*.

26. Ibid.

27. *On the World of Peace and Delight*.

28. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

29. Ibid., chap. 17.

30. Ibid., chap. 14.

31. Ibid., chap. 10.

32. Ibid., chap. 14.

33. Ibid., chap. 23.

34. All three of these quotations appear

in a verse in chapter 13 of the Lotus Sutra, which details the three powerful enemies who will attack the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the evil latter age.

35. According to chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra, the heavenly beings cried out in the midst of the sky that in the saha world a Buddha named Shakyamuni was preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the sutra kept in mind by the Buddhas, encouraging all to offer obeisance and alms to Shakyamuni Buddha. Then all the various beings spoke these words, "Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha! Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha!" Because the essence of the Lotus Sutra is the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo that enabled all the Buddhas to become Buddhas, Nichiren Daishonin states that all the various beings in the worlds of the ten directions cried out, "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo."

36. *Words and Phrases*.

37. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

38. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

39. Katsu refers to an ancient kingdom extending from Manchuria to northern Korea. According to old maps, "a land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu" would indicate Japan.

40. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

41. This story appears in the Causality of Past and Present Sutra.

42. Reference is to a document in which Emperor Wu (464–549), the first ruler of the Liang dynasty, pledged not to follow the way of Taoism. It actually says that he would rather sink into the evil paths for a long period of time for going against Buddhism (yet nevertheless forming a bond with it) than be reborn in heaven by embracing the non-Buddhist teachings. This story appears in *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* Udraka Ramaputra was a hermit and master of yogic meditation, the second teacher under whom Shakyamuni practiced. He is said to have been reborn in the highest of the four realms in the world of formlessness.

43. All the men in this and the two preceding paragraphs comprise the twenty-four successors who are said to have inherited Shakyamuni's lineage.

44. This passage refers to the "three standards of comparison" enumerated by

T'ien-t'ai to assert the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over other sutras. "Whether or not the process of instruction is revealed from beginning to end" corresponds to the second standard; "whether or not the original relationship between teacher [the Buddha] and disciple is clarified" corresponds to the third standard; and "which teachings would lead to enlightenment and which would not" corresponds to the first standard.

45. That is, the year C.E. 67, the traditional date for the introduction of Buddhism to China during the reign of Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty.

46. Here, "exoteric and esoteric teachings" refers to a classification of Shakyamuni's teachings according to the manner in which they were expounded: secret and otherwise. The secret teaching is here termed "esoteric," while the others correspond to "exoteric."

47. A designation by T'ien-t'ai of the different systems of classification used by different schools during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period.

48. A kingdom located in the southern foothills of the T'ien-shan Mountains. In 640 it was conquered by Emperor T'ai-tsung.

49. The traditional date for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan is in the thirteenth year of the reign of Emperor Kimmei (552).

50. Emperor Kimmei is now regarded as the twenty-ninth emperor, because the administration of the fifteenth ruler Empress Jingu is no longer considered a formal reign. In Nichiren Daishonin's time, however, she was included in the lineage, so Emperor Kimmei was counted as the thirtieth sovereign.

51. Mention of Shan-wu-wei's stay in Japan appears in *A Brief History of Japan* by the priest Koen (twelfth century) of Mount Hiei, and *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests* by the Zen priest Kokan Shiren (1278-1346). Though no conclusive proof exists that Shan-wu-wei actually journeyed to Japan, this tradition is thought to have been widely accepted in the Daishonin's time.

52. The vow is to spread the correct teaching of Buddhism and lead the people to enlightenment.

53. This debate was held at Takaosan-ji temple in Kyoto in 802.

54. With "perfect meditation" and "perfect wisdom," the Daishonin refers to the three types of learning: precepts, meditation, and wisdom. T'ien-t'ai devoted himself to meditation and wisdom based on the Lotus Sutra, yet continued to employ the Hinayana precepts.

55. The ordination ceremony in which one receives the ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts, as set forth in the Brahma Net Sutra. This ordination ceremony was held at Takaosan-ji temple in 805 for eight priests including Doshō and Shuen.

56. Hui-tsung (1082-1135) and Ch'in-tsung (1100-1161) were the eighth and ninth emperors of the Northern Sung dynasty. The "northern barbarians" were Jurchen, a nomadic people of Manchuria, who established the Chin dynasty in northern China. They captured the Sung capital of K'ai-feng in 1126.

57. Kao-tsung (1107-1187) was the first emperor of the Southern Sung dynasty. Lin-an is the present-day city of Hangzhou.

58. This refers to the Mongol invasion of 1274.

59. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

60. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

61. *On the Nirvana Sutra*.

62. Dammira (Sanskrit unknown) was a king of Kashmir in India who destroyed the Buddhist temples and stupas in his kingdom. It is said that, when he killed the Buddhist teacher Aryasimha, he lost his right arm and died seven days later.

63. Fa-tao (1086-1147) was a priest of Sung China. When Emperor Hui-tsung, a Taoist follower, acted to suppress Buddhism, Fa-tao remonstrated with him but was branded on the face and exiled to Taochou. He was later pardoned, but Hui-tsung was captured by the invading Chin forces and taken to Manchuria, where he lived until his death in 1135.

64. The outermost of eight concentric circular mountain ranges said to surround Mount Sumeru. Here it is mentioned to suggest impregnability.

65. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*.

66. Lotus Sutra, chap. 17.

67. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

68. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

69. *Ibid.*, chap. 26.

70. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

71. The earthquake refers to that of the

twenty-third day of the eighth month in 1257, and the comet, to a comet that appeared on the fifth day of the seventh month in 1264.

72. The appearance of Nagarjuna after Shakyamuni's death is predicted in the Maya Sutra and the Lankavatara Sutra.

73. The four-phrase verse referred to is: "We speak of all things as 'empty' / which are dependent in origination. / They are no more than 'existence in name only.' / This is the Middle Way."

74. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

75. *Great Concentration and Insight.*

76. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

77. A passage to this effect appears in *The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works* by a Sung T'ien-t'ai scholar Ts'ung-i, though the exact quotation has not been found.

78. *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism.*

79. "Actual events" refers to events mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. For example, in chapter 3, the Buddha predicted that Shariputra would in the future attain enlightenment as a Buddha called Flower Glow. Chapter 12 depicts the attainment of Buddhahood by the dragon king's daughter and predicts the future enlightenment of an evil person, Devadatta.

80. The translations made before Hsüan-tsang (602-664) are called "old translations." His and subsequent translations are known as "new translations."

81. *The Liang Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests.*

82. On "The Words and Phrases." "The sage" referred to here is Vasubandhu. Miao-lo attributed an error in Vasubandhu's commentary on the Lotus Sutra, *The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, to the translator. In this context, the Daishonin employs Miao-lo's statement to indicate the Buddha. Thus, he says in the following paragraph, "that is not to be attributed to any fault of the Buddha."

83. The first guideline, "causes and conditions," is to interpret the words and phrases of the sutra in terms of the causes and conditions that prompted the Buddha to expound them; the second, "correlated teachings," to interpret the sutra's words and phrases in terms of the four teachings of doctrine and the five periods; the third,

"the theoretical and essential teachings," to interpret them in light of the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra; and the fourth, "the observation of the mind," to perceive the truth within one's own mind through the practice of meditation.

84. This passage refers to the Chinese maxim that a sage appears only once in a thousand years, and a worthy man, only once in five hundred years.

85. This statement appears in *The One Hundred Records of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai*, compiled by Chang-an, T'ien-t'ai's successor.

86. *The Biography of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che of the Sui Dynasty.* Tao-hsüan (596-667) was the founder of the Nan-shan branch of the Precepts school.

87. *The Essay on the Five Teachings of the Flower Garland School.*

88. The story of Han-kuang, Pu-k'ung, and the Indian monk appears in *The Sung Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests* under the biography of Han-kuang (n.d.), who is counted among the six major disciples of Pu-k'ung.

89. On "The Words and Phrases." The people of the state of Lu failed to recognize the greatness of Confucius. Hence those who are not aware of the greatness of T'ien-t'ai's teachings are compared to the people of Lu.

90. The ordination platforms at Todai-ji temple in Nara, Yakushi-ji in Shimotsuke Province, and Kanzeon-ji in Kyushu.

91. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.

92. Four teachings and the five teachings: Classifications of the Buddha's teachings. Both of these doctrines rank the Flower Garland Sutra and the Lotus Sutra first.

93. The ruler refers here to Emperor Kammu. This sentence indirectly praises Dengyo, who revealed and upheld the truth of the Lotus Sutra during Emperor Kammu's time.

94. This means that the Three Great Secret Laws are apparent in the passages of the Lotus Sutra when the sutra is read in light of its essential truth.

95. This indicates how difficult it was to reach India from China at that time. Hsüan-tsang is said to have died and been reborn six times on his perilous journey to India.

96. For three asamkha kalpas, bodhi-

sattvas carry out the six paramitas and ten thousand practices to benefit others and attain near-perfect enlightenment. Shakyamuni was born in a past life as Prince Sattva and gave his body to a starving tigress to save her and her cubs. He was then able to obtain "the unseen crown of the Buddha's head," one of a Buddha's eighty characteristics.

97. The "three important concerns" refers to the refutation of the Nembutsu, Zen, and True Word doctrines, which are explained subsequently.

98. This refers to one of the eight wonders of the ocean described in the Nirvana Sutra. The "body of a dead person" represents icchantikas, persons of incorrigible disbelief; monks who commit the four unpardonable offenses of killing, theft, sexual intercourse, and lying; people who commit the five cardinal sins; and those who slander the Mahayana teachings.

99. Reference is to a passage in the Flower Garland Sutra, in which the god of the earth refuses to protect three types of persons: those who cause the death of their king, those who are unfilial toward their parents, and those who deny the law of cause and effect or slander the three treasures of Buddhism.

100. Prince Dojo, a son of Emperor Gotoba who had entered the priesthood. This generally means the title of a retired emperor or prince who entered the priesthood and lived at Ninna-ji, a True Word temple in Kyoto. Omuro is another name for Ninna-ji.

101. The supervisors refer here to those of the head temple of the True Word school at Mount Koya, Kumano Shrine, and elsewhere.

102. The sacred mirror is one of the three divine symbols of the Japanese imperial throne, the others being the sword and the jewel. The mirror was lost in a fire in 960.

103. The sword was lost in 1185 at the battle of Dannoura, in which the Minamoto clan defeated the Taira.

104. The five honored ones refer to the five wisdom kings of the esoteric True Word teachings. They are Immovable; Conqueror of the Threefold World; Kundali; Great Awesome Virtue; and Diamond Yaksha. Depicted as angry figures, they are said to conquer obstacles.

105. According to *The Treatise on the*

Great Perfection of Wisdom, a kalpa is longer than the time required to wear away a cube of stone 40 *ri* (one *ri* is about 600 meters) on each side, if a heavenly nymph alights on it and brushes it with a piece of cloth once every hundred years.

106. Kenshin (1130–1192) was the sixty-first chief priest of Enryaku-ji. He converted to the Pure Land teachings while still the chief priest of a Tendai temple.

107. Honen was exiled to Tosa in 1207 by the Retired Emperor Gotoba, who was later unsuccessful in his attempt to rebel against the Kamakura shogunate, an incident known as the Jokyu Disturbance.

108. In 819 Dengyo expressed to the emperor his desire that a Mahayana ordination platform be built on Mount Hiei. His request provoked intense opposition from the priests of the six schools in Nara.

109. Kobo went to China in 804. Dengyo sailed to China in the same fleet, though on a different ship.

110. The Flower Garland school adopts a comparative classification called the "ten doctrines," ranking the Flower Garland teachings in the tenth and highest place, and the Lotus Sutra in the ninth. Kobo, imitating the "ten doctrines," formulated the "ten stages of the mind." The tenth stage is the stage of the realization of esoteric truth, that is, Buddhahood. Kobo asserted that only the True Word school's teachings correspond to this stage and relegated the Flower Garland and Tendai doctrines to the ninth and eighth stages, respectively.

111. *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*. This statement implies that each of the many schools claims to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but that their doctrines prove to be shallow when compared with the doctrine of the True Word school.

112. *Ibid.* This statement represents a comparison of Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahavairochana Buddha.

113. *Exoteric and Esoteric*. On the basis of the Six Paramitas Sutra, Kobo divided all the Buddhist teachings into five categories, which he compared to the five flavors of fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee. He likened the Mahayana sutras, including the Lotus Sutra, to the fourth flavor, butter, and the True Word teachings, to ghee, the finest flavor.

114. *Ibid.* Kobo especially slanders T'ien-t'ai, who set forth "the five periods and eight teachings" and compared the

period of the Lotus and the Nirvana sutras to the finest flavor of ghee. Kobo on this basis accused T'ien-t'ai of stealing the True Word doctrine.

115. Prajna (Chin Pan-jo) was a native of Kashmir who arrived in Canton in 781 and in Ch'ang-an in 790. He translated a large number of works, including the Six Paramitas Sutra.

116. The Dharma Characteristics priest Tokuitsu's condemnation is cited in Dengyo's *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*. Dengyo's rebuttal also appears in the same work.

117. *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*.

118. *Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

119. "Others" refers to Shakyamuni, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, and others who compared the Lotus Sutra to ghee.

120. These anecdotes are mentioned in *Records of the Historian*. Tan, the Duke of Chou, was a younger brother of Emperor Wu of the Chou dynasty. He implemented a number of reforms in state affairs and established a firm foundation for the dynasty. He was so eager to find able persons and anxious not to overlook anyone that he would receive visitors even while washing his hair or during the course of a meal. The Daishonin cites this example to explain the importance of being conscientious.

121. Shokaku-bo is another name for Kakuban (1095-1143), the precursor of the New Doctrine branch of the True Word school. Dembo-in was the temple he established on Mount Koya. After it was moved to Negoro, it became the head temple of the New Doctrine branch.

122. In this quotation, the Buddha of the Nondual Mahayana refers to Mahavairocana Buddha, who represents the essential oneness of the Womb and Diamond Realms. The three-bodied donkey- or ox-Buddha refers to Shakyamuni Buddha, who expounded the exoteric teachings. The three bodies of a Buddha are the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body. The twofold mandala refers to the Diamond Realm and Womb Realm mandalas, the objects of devotion of the esoteric teachings.

123. The following story, including the details concerning the Scholar Bhadraruchi, is based on a passage in *The Record of the Western Regions*.

124. The consecration ceremony in

which water is poured on the head of the person to be initiated.

125. Presumably a reference to *The Record of the Buddha and the Patriarchs of Various Dynasties*, which relates how, when Emperor Su-tsung of the T'ang dynasty asked the priest Hui-chung about the meditation in which there is no distinction between self and others, Hui-chung replied that the emperor should step on the head of the Buddha.

126. San-chieh, more commonly known as Hsin-hsing (540-594), was the founder of the San-chieh, or Three Stages, school that flourished during the Sui dynasty. Hsin-hsing, basing his calculations on one of the many theories concerning the matters that existed at that time, claimed that the Latter Day of the Law had arrived in 550. He also asserted that, in this degenerate world, there was no alternative other than to practice a universal teaching that did not distinguish the efficacy of various sutras. He held that the Buddha nature was inherent in all sentient beings. The school acquired enormous wealth that was eventually confiscated; it was banned in 713.

127. As for the other five schools, Annen ranked the Three Treatises school fifth, the Dharma Characteristics school sixth, the Precepts school seventh, the Establishment of Truth school eighth, and the Dharma Analysis Treasury school ninth.

128. Also called Ichijo Shikan-in. Another name for Kompon Chudo, the main temple building on Mount Hiei.

129. The True Word priests: Tsung-jui, Ch'uan-ya, Yüan-cheng, I-chen, Fach'üan, Pao-yüeh, K'an, and Wei-chin.

130. Kuang-hsiu (771-843) was the eighth patriarch in the lineage of the T'ien-t'ai school in China. He was a disciple of Tao-sui, one of the Chinese teachers of the Great Teacher Dengyo. Wei-chüan (n.d.) was Kuang-hsiu's disciple.

131. The Toto area is one of the three areas into which Mount Hiei is divided, the two others being Saito and Yokawa. The Toto, the main area, encompasses Kompon Chudo (Shikan-in), the origin of the later established Enryaku-ji, and other large buildings. Jikaku founded Soji-in in this area in 851 as a center for esoteric practice.

132. Nirvana Sutra.

133. *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*.

134. *Profound Meaning*.

135. *Outstanding Principles.*

136. Tradition has it that a five-foot image of the Buddha made by Udayana, a king of Kaushambi in India during Shakyamuni's time, walked about, and that a painting of the Buddha by Kashyapa Matanga preached the sutras. In Japan *Genko Era Biographies* relates how an image of Bodhisattva Maitreya in a temple of Yamato Province alerted a guard when it was about to be stolen, and how an image of the Buddha Medicine Master enshrined at Teiden-ji temple in Totomi Province called out to be rescued from the bottom of a river, and thus was saved.

137. Subhadra was the last disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, converted immediately before the Buddha's passing. According to *Great Perfection of Wisdom*, Subhadra had a dream in which all people were deprived of their eyesight, the sun fell from the sky, the seas ran dry, and Mount Sumeru was toppled by a great wind. He awoke, seized with fear. When Subhadra could not determine the meaning of the dream, a heavenly being appeared and told him that the Buddha would enter nirvana that night. Subhadra accordingly went to Shakyamuni to receive instruction in his teachings.

138. "Sun Seed" is another name for Shakyamuni, which appears in the Sutra of the Collected Stories of the Buddha's Deeds in Past Lives. When Shakyamuni was born, his father had a Brahman make a prophecy concerning the child's future. At that time the Brahman named the baby Sun Seed.

139. A reference to the Mongol invasion of 1274, a year before *The Selection of the Time* was written.

140. The retired emperors Juntoku and Tsuchimikado, the sons of Gotoba, were exiled to the island of Sado and to Tosa Province, respectively.

141. Lotus Sutra, chap. 25.

142. The priests of Mount Hiei had also performed esoteric prayer rituals for the defeat of the Kamakura shogunate.

143. The Daishonin refers to the natural disasters that ravaged Japan at this time. They are enumerated in his *Rationale for Writing "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land."*

144. This refers to the Mongol invasion.

145. Such rebellions are represented by the unsuccessful coup d'état staged by Hojo

Tokisuke against his younger half brother, Regent Hojo Tokimune, in 1272.

146. The eight schools (Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Tendai, and True Word), plus the Zen and Pure Land.

147. This statement appears in Miao-lo's *On "The Words and Phrases."*

148. This story appears in the Protection Sutra. King Kriki was the father of Kashyapa Buddha, the sixth of seven Buddhas of the past, the last of whom is Shakyamuni. One day, he dreamed about ten monkeys. Nine of the monkeys harassed the people of the city, robbed them of their food and drink, and went on a destructive rampage. One of the ten, however, would not join them but remained sitting in a tree. He was therefore tormented and expelled from the community of monkeys. When King Kriki asked Kashyapa Buddha about this dream, the Buddha said, "It represents the evil latter age after the death of Shakyamuni Buddha. The ten monkeys represent his ten kinds of disciples, only one of whom is a true shramana (practitioner) who renounces the world and endeavors to seek the way."

149. King Mihirakula, according to *Record of the Western Regions*, attacked Baladitya, a king of Magadha, who was a Buddhist, but was instead captured by him. Released through the intercession of Baladitya's merciful mother, Mihirakula fled to Kashmir and later killed its king. He went on to attack Gandhara where he destroyed temples and stupas. As a result, when he was about to die, the earth trembled and a storm arose, and he fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

150. Wu-tsung (814-846) was the fifteenth emperor of the T'ang dynasty. He initiated a nationwide persecution of Buddhism in 845 during the Hui-ch'ang era.

151. Dengyo's *Clarification of the Precepts* likens the scholars of the six Nara schools to six kinds of worms who devour and destroy the Buddha's teaching.

152. Taira no Munemori (1147-1185) was a leader of the Heike clan who held a high position at court. When the Heike fought with the Genji clan at Dannoura, he was captured and had to humble himself before Kajiwaru Kagetoki (d. 1200), a Genji warrior who was originally from the Heike clan.

153. Yadoya Mitsunori (n.d.) was an official of the Kamakura government. He is said to have been one of the seven individuals permitted access to the lay priest of Sainyo-ji, Hojo Tokiyori, when the latter was on his deathbed.

154. Here the Daishonin purposely mentions the burning of temples and the execution of priests in order to impress Hei no Saemon with the gravity of the offense of slandering the correct teaching. In *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, however, the Daishonin explains the meaning of the Nirvana Sutra that describes the killing of slanderous monks. He says, "According to the Buddhist teachings, prior to Shakyamuni slanderous monks would have incurred the death penalty. But since the time of Shakyamuni, the One Who Can Endure, the giving of alms to slanderous monks is forbidden in the sutra teachings" (p. 23). He admonished the acting regent to abandon the government support of the Nembutsu and Zen priests who contradicted Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching. If they did not, he said, Japan would face destruction.

155. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

156. The incident involving the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra occurred when Hei no Saemon came with his men to arrest the Daishonin at Matsubagayatsu on the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271. The fifth volume contains the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, which predicts that the votaries of the Lotus Sutra will be attacked with swords and staves and will face the three powerful enemies.

157. "Great Man" is an epithet of the Buddha.

158. This story is related in *Record of the Western Regions*. Gunaprabha first learned the Mahayana teachings but later regressed to the Hinayana teachings. When he met with Maitreya in the Tushita heaven, he

was so arrogant that he refused to receive instruction from him.

159. The Iron Belly Brahman was an arrogant Brahman in southern India who asserted that he possessed all types of wisdom within his belly. Fearful that it would burst, he tied iron sheet metal around it.

160. *Outstanding Principles*.

161. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

162. Ibid.

163. The bodhisattva to whom Shakyamuni addressed his preaching in the Pro-found Secrets Sutra.

164. Nagabodhi was the fourth of the first eight patriarchs of the True Word school. There are differing views concerning him, and some scholars even deny that he actually existed.

165. Satavahana was a king of southern India who appeared about seven centuries after Shakyamuni's passing. He was converted to Nagarjuna's teachings, and protected and supported Mahayana Buddhism.

166. Kashyapa is the bodhisattva addressed by Shakyamuni in the "Bodhisattva Kashyapa" chapter of the Nirvana Sutra. The fifty-two types of beings are those who gathered at the assembly of the Nirvana Sutra.

167. These ten eminent priests, including Fa-yün (467-529), ranked the Flower Garland Sutra first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Lotus Sutra third.

168. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

169. Ibid.

170. *Outstanding Principles*.

171. *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine*.

172. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

173. Ibid., chap. 28.

174. Ibid.

175. Ibid., chap. 13.

176. Ibid.

177. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

178. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

Letter to the Lay Nun of Ko



I HAVE received three hundred coins from the wife of Abutsu-bo. Since you two are of the same mind, have someone read this letter to you and listen to it together.

I have also received the unlined robe you sent all the way from the province of Sado to the mountain recesses of Hakiri Village in Kai Province. The “Teacher of the Law” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states: “If there is someone who seeks the Buddha way and for the space of a kalpa presses palms together in my presence and recites numberless verses of praise, because of these praises of the Buddha he will gain immeasurable blessings. And if one lauds and extols those who uphold this sutra, one’s good fortune will be even greater.” This passage means that the blessings from making offerings to a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law surpass those from earnestly making offerings with one’s words, thoughts, and deeds for the space of an entire medium kalpa to a Buddha such as Shakyamuni. Though this seems impossible, you must never doubt it, because these are the Buddha’s golden words.

In addition, a man called the Great Teacher Miao-lo further clarified this passage from the sutra, saying, “Those who slander [the practitioners of the

Lotus Sutra] will have their heads split into seven pieces, but those who give alms to them will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles.”¹ The meaning of this commentary is that the blessings from making offerings to a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age exceed even those from making offerings to a Thus Come One endowed with the ten honorable titles, while those who persecute a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the defiled age will have their heads split into seven pieces.

I, Nichiren, am the most perverse person in Japan. The reason is as follows. The seven reigns of the heavenly deities I will set aside, and the five reigns of the earthly deities are beyond my comprehension, but for the ninety reigns from the first human emperor Jimmu until the present, or during the period of more than seven hundred years since the reign of Emperor Kimmei, no one has ever been so universally hated by people in connection with either secular or Buddhist matters as Nichiren. Moriya burned down temples and pagodas, and the lay priest Kiyomori had Todai-ji and Kofuku-ji temples destroyed,² but the people of their clans did not hate them. Masakado and Sadato³ rebelled against the imperial court, and the Great Teacher Dengyo was detested by the priests of the seven major temples of Nara, but they were

still not hated by the priests, nuns, laymen, and laywomen of the entire land of Japan. In my case, however, parents, siblings, teachers, and fellow priests—every single person from the ruler on down to the common people—torment me as if I were their parents' enemy, or even more than if I were a rebel or a robber.

Thus, sometimes I have been vilified by several hundred people; other times, besieged by several thousand, I have been attacked with swords and staves. I have been driven from my dwelling and ousted from my province. Finally, I twice incurred the wrath of the country's ruler and was exiled first to the province of Izu and then to the island of Sado. And when, with neither provisions to sustain my life nor even garments made of wisteria vine to cover my body, I was banished to Sado in the northern sea, the priests and lay believers of that province hated me even more than the men and women of Sagami Province⁴ did. Abandoned in the wilderness and exposed to the snow, I sustained my life by plucking grasses.

I realized through my own experiences what it was like for Su Wu, who survived by eating snow in the land of the northern barbarians for nineteen years, and for Li Ling, who suffered in a rocky cave by the northern sea for six years. This was not because of any fault of my own, but solely because I

meant to save the country of Japan.

While I was there, however, you and your husband, the lay priest of Ko, being apprehensive of the eyes of others, brought me food in the middle of the night. Never fearing even punishment from the provincial officials, you are persons who were ready to sacrifice yourselves for me. Thus, though it was a harsh land, when I left, I felt as if the hair that had been shaved from my head were being tugged from behind and as if with each step I took I were being pulled back.

Just when I was wondering what sort of karmic bonds from the past this was due to, and when I least expected it, you sent your most precious husband as your messenger all the way here. Is it a dream or an illusion? Even though I cannot see you, I am certain that your heart is here. If you find that you miss me, always look at the sun that rises [in the morning] and the moon that rises in the evening. Whatever the time, I will be reflected in the sun and the moon. And in our next life, let us meet in the pure land of Eagle Peak. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the sixth month

To the lay nun of Ko in Sado Province



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the sixth month of the first year of Kenji (1275) to a lay nun who lived in a village that was the seat of the provincial government of Sado Island. Ko means provincial office. Hence the name “the lay nun of Ko.” While the Daishonin was in exile on Sado, she

and her husband, known as the lay priest of Ko, converted to his teachings, presented him with offerings, and helped protect him. After the Daishonin was pardoned and left Sado, her husband, like Abutsu-bo, made the long journey to Minobu to visit him.

Notes

1. A rephrasing of a passage in *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* The ten honorable titles are the ten epithets for a Buddha, which express his power, wisdom, virtue, and compassion.

2. Moriya is Mononobe no Moriya (d. 587), a powerful minister who opposed the introduction of Buddhism. Kiyomori is Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181), warrior and leader of the Heike clan. In 1177 he uncovered a plot against the Heike clan in Nara

and had Taira no Shigehira raze Todai-ji and Kofuku-ji as punishment for their support of the conspirators.

3. Masakado is Taira no Masakado (d. 940), a warrior who wielded power in eastern Japan, and Sadato is Abe no Sadato (1019–1062), the head of a powerful family in eastern Japan. They both were killed in a battle with the imperial forces.

4. The province where Kamakura, the seat of the warrior government, was located.

Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain



WHEN a tree has been transplanted, though fierce winds may blow, it will not topple if it has a firm stake to hold it up. But even a tree that has grown up in place may fall over if its roots are weak. Even a feeble person will not stumble if those supporting him are strong, but a person of considerable strength, when alone, may fall down on an uneven path.

Moreover, had the Buddha not appeared in the world, then, with the exception of the Venerable Shariputra and the Venerable Mahakashyapa, every single person in all the major world system would have sunk into the three evil paths. But through the strong bonds formed by relying upon the Buddha, large numbers of people have attained Buddhahood. Even wicked people such as King Ajatashatru or Angulimala, who one would expect could never reach enlightenment but would invariably fall into the Avichi hell, by encountering a great person, the Buddha Shakyamuni, were able to attain Buddhahood.

Therefore, the best way to attain Buddhahood is to encounter a good friend. How far can our own wisdom take us? If we have even enough wisdom to distinguish hot from cold, we should seek out a good friend.

But encountering a good friend is the hardest possible thing to do. For

this reason, the Buddha likened it to the rarity of a one-eyed turtle finding a floating log with a hollow in it the right size to hold him, or to the difficulty of trying to lower a thread from the Brahma heaven and pass it through the eye of a needle on the earth. Moreover, in this evil latter age, evil companions are more numerous than the dust particles that comprise the land, while good friends are fewer than the specks of dirt one can pile on a fingernail.

Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds of Mount Potalaka acted as a good friend to the boy Good Treasures, but though the bodhisattva taught him the two doctrines of the specific and perfect teachings, he did not reveal to him the pure and perfect teaching [of the Lotus Sutra]. Bodhisattva Ever Wailing sold himself as an offering in his quest for a good teacher, whereupon he encountered Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. But from the latter he learned only the three doctrines of the connecting, specific, and perfect teachings, and did not receive instruction in the Lotus Sutra. Shariputra acted as a good friend to a blacksmith and gave him instruction for a period of ninety days, but succeeded only in making him into an icchantika, or a person of incorrigible disbelief.¹ Purna discoursed on the Buddhist doctrine

for the space of an entire summer, but he taught Hinayana doctrines to persons who had the capacity for Mahayana doctrines, and thereby turned them into Hinayana adherents.

Thus even great sages [such as Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Dharmodgata] were not permitted to preach the Lotus Sutra, and even arhats who had obtained the fruit of emancipation [such as Shariputra and Purna] were not always able to gauge people's capacity correctly. From these examples, you may imagine how inadequate are the scholars of this latter, evil age! It is far better to be an evil person who learns nothing of Buddhism at all than to put one's faith in such men, who declare that heaven is earth, east is west, or fire is water, or assert that the stars are brighter than the moon, or an anthill higher than Mount Sumeru.

In judging the relative merit of Buddhist doctrines, I, Nichiren, believe that the best standards are those of reason and documentary proof. And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact.

In the past, around the fifth year of the Bun'ei era (1268), when the Ezo barbarians rebelled in the east and the Mongol envoys arrived from the west with their demands, I surmised that these events had come about because people did not put faith in the correct Buddhist doctrines. I guessed that prayer rituals would surely be performed to subdue the enemy, and that such rituals would be conducted by the priests of the True Word school. Of the three countries of India, China, and Japan, I will leave aside India for the moment. But I am certain that Japan, like China, will be undone by the True Word school.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei journeyed to China from India in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty. At that time there was a

great drought, and Shan-wu-wei was ordered to conduct prayers for rain. He succeeded in causing a heavy rain to fall, and as a result, everyone from the emperor on down to the common people was overcome with joy. Shortly thereafter, however, a great wind began to blow, wreaking havoc throughout the land, and the people's enthusiasm quickly palled.

During the same reign, the Tripitaka Master Chin-kang-chih came to China from India. He too prayed for rain, and within the space of seven days, a heavy rain fell and people rejoiced as they had earlier. But when a great wind of unprecedented violence arose, the ruler concluded that the True Word school was an evil and fearsome doctrine and came near to sending Chin-kang-chih back to India. The latter, however, made various excuses and contrived to remain.

Again, in the same reign, the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung prayed for rain. Within three days a heavy rain fell, producing the same kind of joy as before. But once more a great wind arose, this time even fiercer than on the two previous occasions, and raged for several weeks before subsiding.

How strange were these occurrences! There is not a single person in Japan, whether wise or ignorant, who knows about them. If there is anyone who wishes to find out, that person had better question me in detail and learn about these matters while I am still alive.

Turning to the case of Japan, in the second month of the first year of the Tencho era (824), there was a great drought. The Great Teacher Kobo was requested to pray for rain in Shinsen'en garden.² But a priest named Shubin came forward and, protesting that he had been a member of the priesthood longer and ranked higher than Kobo, asked that he be allowed to conduct the ritual. Shubin was granted permis-

sion and carried out the prayers. On the seventh day a heavy rain fell, but it fell only on the capital and not in the surrounding countryside.

Kobo was then instructed to take over the task of praying, but seven days went by without any rain falling, then another seven days, and still another seven days. Finally, the emperor himself prayed for rain and caused it to fall. But the priests of To-ji, Kobo's temple, referred to it as "our teacher's rain." One need only consult the records to learn the details.

This was one of the greatest frauds ever known in our nation. And in addition, there were the matters of the epidemic that broke out in the spring of the ninth year of the Konin era (818)³ and of the three-pronged diamond-pounder,⁴ which were also frauds of a most peculiar kind. These things had best be shared in person.

There was a major drought in China in the period of the Ch'en dynasty, but the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai recited the Lotus Sutra, and in no time at all rain began to fall. The ruler and his ministers bowed their heads, and the common people pressed their palms together in reverence. Moreover, the rain was not torrential, nor was it accompanied by wind; it was a soft shower. The Ch'en ruler sat entranced in the presence of the great teacher and forgot all about returning to his palace. At that time, he bowed three times [in acknowledgment to the great teacher].

A great drought occurred in Japan in the spring of the ninth year of the Konin era. Emperor Saga ordered Fuyutsugu⁵ to send the lower-ranking official Matsuna⁶ [to the Great Teacher Dengyo to ask him to offer prayers for rain]. The Great Teacher Dengyo prayed for rain, reciting the Lotus, Golden Light, and Benevolent Kings sutras, and on the third day thin clouds appeared and a gentle rain began to fall. The emperor was so overjoyed that he gave permis-

sion for the building of a Mahayana ordination platform,⁷ the establishment of which had been the most difficult undertaking in Japan.

Gomyo, the teacher of the Great Teacher Dengyo,⁸ was a sage and the foremost priest in Nara, the southern capital. He and forty of his disciples joined together in reciting the Benevolent Kings Sutra to pray for rain, and five days later rain began to fall. It was certainly splendid that rain fell on the fifth day, but less impressive than if it had fallen on the third day, [as in the case of the Great Teacher Dengyo]. Moreover, the rain was very violent, which made Gomyo's performance inferior. From these examples, you may judge how much more inferior were Kobo's efforts to produce rain.

Thus, the Lotus Sutra is superior, while the True Word school is inferior. And yet, as though deliberately to bring about the ruin of Japan, people these days rely exclusively on the True Word.

Considering what had happened in the case of the Retired Emperor of Oki,⁹ I believed that if the True Word practices were used to try to subdue the Mongols and the Ezo barbarians Japan would surely be brought to ruin. Therefore, I determined to disregard my own safety and speak out in warning. When I did so, my disciples tried to restrain me, but in view of the way things have turned out, they are probably pleased at my actions. I was able to perceive what not a single wise man in China or Japan had understood in more than five hundred years!

When Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung prayed for rain, rain fell, but it was accompanied by violent winds. You should consider the reason for this. There are cases of people making rain fall even through the use of non-Buddhist teachings, even those of the Taoists, which are hardly worth discussion. And of course with Bud-

dhist teachings, even if those of the Hinayana are correctly applied, then how could rain fail to fall? And how much more so if one uses a text such as the Mahavairochana Sutra, which, though inferior to the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras, is still somewhat superior to the Agama sutras [of the Hinayana]! Thus rain did indeed fall, but the fact that it was accompanied by violent winds is an indication that the doctrines being applied were contaminated by grievous errors. And the fact that the Great Teacher Kobo was unable to make rain fall although he prayed for twenty-one days, and that he misappropriated the rain that the emperor had caused to fall and called it his own, indicates that he was even more gravely in error than Shan-wu-wei and the others.

But the wildest falsehood of all is what the Great Teacher Kobo himself recorded when he wrote, "In the spring of the ninth year of the Konin era, when I was praying for an end to the epidemic, the sun came out in the middle of the night."¹⁰ This is the kind of lie this man was capable of! This matter is one of the most important secrets that is entrusted to my followers. They should quote this passage to drive their opponents to the wall. Setting aside for the moment the question of doctrinal superiority, I simply wish to stress that the matters I have written of above are of the utmost importance. They should not be discussed lightly or passed on to others. It is because you have shown yourself to be so sincere that I am calling them to your attention.

And what of these admonitions of mine? Because people regard them with suspicion and refuse to heed them, disasters such as those we now face occur. If the Mongols should attack us with great force, I am sure that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra will spread far and wide in this present life-

time. At such a time, those persons who have treated me harshly will have reason to regret.

The non-Buddhist teachings [of India] date from about eight hundred years before the time of the Buddha. At first they centered around the two deities¹¹ and the three ascetics, but eventually they split into ninety-five schools. Among the non-Buddhist leaders were many wise men and persons endowed with supernatural powers, but none of them was able to free himself from the sufferings of birth and death. Moreover, the people who gave allegiance to their teachings, whether faithful or not, all ended by falling into the three evil paths.

When the Buddha appeared in the world, these ninety-five groups of non-Buddhists conspired with the rulers, ministers, and common people of the sixteen major states of India, some of them reviling the Buddha, others attacking him or slaying his disciples and lay supporters in incalculable numbers. But the Buddha did not slacken his resolve, for, he said, were he to cease preaching the Law because of intimidation from others, then all living beings alike would surely fall into hell. He was deeply moved by pity and had no thought of desisting.

These non-Buddhist teachings came about through a mistaken reading of the various sutras of the Buddhas who preceded Shakyamuni Buddha.

The situation today is much the same. Though many different Buddhist doctrines are being taught in Japan, originally they all derive from the eight schools, the nine schools, or the ten schools.¹² Among the ten schools, I will set aside for the moment the Flower Garland and others. Because Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho were deluded as to the relative merits of the True Word and Tendai schools, the people of Japan have in this life been attacked by a foreign country, and in their next

life they will fall into the evil paths. And the downfall of China as well as the fact that its people were destined to fall into the evil paths also came about through the errors of Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung.

Moreover, since the time of Jikaku and Chisho, the priests of the Tendai school have been constrained by the false wisdom of these men and developed their school into something quite unlike what it once was.

"Is this really true?" Some of my disciples may be asking. "Does Nichiren really have an understanding superior to that of Jikaku and Chisho?" But I am only going by what the Buddha predicted in the sutras.

The Nirvana Sutra states that, in the Latter Day of the Law, those people who slander the Buddha's teaching and fall into the hell of incessant suffering as a result will be more numerous than the dust particles that comprise the land, while those who uphold the correct teaching will be fewer than the specks of dirt one can pile on a fingernail. And the Lotus Sutra says that, even though there might be someone capable of lifting up Mount Sumeru and hurling it away, it will be hard indeed to find anyone who can preach the Lotus Sutra just as it teaches in the Latter Day of the Law of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The sutras Great Collection, Golden Light, Benevolent Kings, Protection, Parinirvana, and Sovereign Kings record that, when the Latter Day of the Law begins, if a person who practices the correct teaching should appear, then those who uphold false teachings will appeal to the ruler and his ministers. The ruler and his ministers, believing their words, will revile that single per-

son who upholds the correct teaching or attack him, send him into exile, or even put him to death. At that time, the king Brahma, Shakra, and all the other innumerable gods as well as the heavenly and earthly deities will take possession of the wise rulers of neighboring countries and cause them to overthrow the nation where these things take place. Doesn't the situation we face today resemble that described in these sutras?

I wonder what good causes formed in your past lives have enabled all of you to visit me, Nichiren. But whatever you might discover in examining your past, I am sure that this time you will be able to break free from the sufferings of birth and death. Chudapanthaka was unable to memorize a teaching of fourteen characters even in the space of three years, and yet he attained Buddhahood. Devadatta, on the other hand, had committed to memory sixty thousand teachings but fell into the hell of incessant suffering. These examples exactly represent the situation in the world in this present latter age. Never suppose that they pertain only to other people and not to yourselves.

There are many other things that I would like to say, but I will stop here. I do not know how to thank you for all you have done in these troubled times, so I have here outlined for you some important points in our doctrine.

Thank you for the cowpeas and green soybeans.

Nichiren

The twenty-second day of the sixth month

Reply to Nishiyama



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the first year of Kenji (1275) and sent to the lay priest Nishiyama, who lived in Nishiyama Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province. Nishiyama appears to have been the steward of that village and a sincere believer who often visited the Daishonin at Minobu, bringing offerings and provisions.

In the opening of this letter, Nichiren Daishonin explains the importance of “good friends” who assist or encourage one in one’s Buddhist practice. Stating that good friends are rare and “evil companions”—those who hinder one’s quest for enlightenment—are too numerous to count, he goes on to point out the distortions of the True Word school, to which Nishiyama had previously belonged. He then declares that, while documentary and doctrinal evidence is important in considering the efficacy of a Buddhist teaching, far more important is “the proof of actual fact,” that is, the power of a religion to positively affect the human condition.

The “three Tripitaka masters” in this letter’s title are Shan-wu-wei, Chinkang-chih, and Pu-k’ung, three Indian monks who introduced the esoteric teachings to China in the eighth century that later in Japan became known as the True Word school. The Daishonin relates instances in which each of these three men prayed for rain at the request of the throne, in each case appearing to have produced destructive gales. He

then cites instances in which prayers based on the Lotus Sutra, such as those offered by T’ien-t’ai in China and Dengyo in Japan, brought down gentle, life-giving rain. Publicly sponsored prayer rituals to bring about rain were not uncommon in ancient China and Japan, where rice crops depended on abundant precipitation and a drought could mean widespread famine.

After citing instances in both China and Japan in which True Word rituals were known to have brought disaster, the Daishonin further criticizes the errors and deceptions of Kobo, the founder of Japan’s True Word school, and warns against relying on the prayers of this school for the nation’s safety. Japan at this time was facing an impending attack by the Mongol forces. After one attempted invasion that had been foiled by adverse weather, the Mongol emperor had again sent envoys demanding Japan’s allegiance; anxiety gripped the nation as the people prepared to defend themselves against overwhelming odds.

The Daishonin himself, in his admonitory treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, had predicted this specter of foreign invasion. Quoting various sutras, he declares that Japan finds itself in this predicament because of the people’s attachment to mistaken forms of Buddhism and their rejection and slander of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. According to the Nirvana Sutra, Shariputra attempted to instruct a blacksmith by teaching him to meditate on the vileness of the body, and a washerman, by teaching him to count his breaths in meditation. As a result, neither gained the slightest understanding of the Buddha’s teaching but fell into erroneous views. Later, Shakyamuni Buddha reversed the instruc-

tion, teaching the blacksmith to count his breaths and the washerman to meditate on the vileness of the body, after which they are both said to have quickly reached the stage of arhat.

2. A garden established on the grounds of the imperial palace in Kyoto by Emperor Kammu. It was the site of a large pond where prayers for rain were performed.

According to *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests*, a dragon lived in this pond, and when it made an appearance, rain would fall.

3. This refers to Kobo's claim, made in his *Secret Key to the Heart Sutra*, which the Daishonin cites later, that while he was praying to end an epidemic the sun came out at night. See also the text on pp. 722–24.

4. A ritual implement used in esoteric Buddhism, symbolizing the adamantite resolve to attain enlightenment, which can destroy any illusion. *The Biography of the Great Teacher Kobo* states, "On the day when he set out by ship from China . . . he faced in the direction of Japan and threw the diamond-pounder up into the air. It sailed far away and disappeared among the clouds," and "He journeyed to the foot of Mount Koya and determined to establish his place of meditation there . . . and later it was discovered that the three-pronged diamond-pounder that he had thrown out over the sea was there on the mountain."

5. Fuyutsugu is Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu (775–826), a court official of the early Heian period (794–1185), who eventually became minister of the left.

6. Matsuna is Wake no Matsuna (783–846), a son of Wake no Kiyomaro. As a court noble, he and his brother Hiroyo sponsored a lecture by the Great Teacher Dengyo at Takao-dera temple in Kyoto.

Fourteen representatives of the six schools of Nara attended the lecture.

7. Priests in Japan had been ordained exclusively in the Hinayana precepts. Dengyo had repeatedly sought imperial permission to establish a Mahayana ordination center at Mount Hiei, over the fierce objections of the Nara schools. His continued efforts in this direction, coupled with his dramatic success in the prayers for rain and with the requests of Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu and others, finally moved Emperor Saga to consent.

8. There is no source for the statement that Gomyo (750–834), a Dharma Characteristics priest, was Dengyo's teacher.

9. Reference is to the eighty-second emperor, Gotoba. In 1221, after having retired, he attempted to overthrow the Kamakura government and had a great number of priests offer esoteric True Word prayers for the victory of the imperial forces. However, the leader of the Kamakura shogunate emerged victorious.

10. *Secret Key to the Heart Sutra*.

11. Shiva and Vishnu.

12. The eight schools are the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, and True Word schools. The nine schools comprise these eight plus the Zen school, and the ten schools are those nine plus the Pure Land school.

Reply to the Lay Priest Takahashi



Reply respectfully sent to the lay priest Takahashi.

Nichiren

OUR compassionate father Shakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, made his appearance in central India at a time when the human life span measured a hundred years,¹ and set forth a lifetime of sacred teachings for the sake of all living beings. The people living at the same time as Shakyamuni Buddha had already formed profound karmic ties with him in the past; hence they were able to attain the way. Shakyamuni, however, was so concerned about how to save those who would live after his passing that he put his eighty thousand sacred teachings into written form. Then, among his lifetime of sacred teachings, he entrusted the Hinayana sutras to the Venerable Mahakashyapa, and both the Mahayana sutras and the Lotus and Nirvana sutras to Bodhisattva Manjushri.

But the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo, the heart of the eighty thousand sacred teachings and the core of the Lotus Sutra, he neither entrusted to Mahakashyapa or Ananda, nor transferred to great bodhisattvas such as Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Maitreya, Earth Repository, or Nagarjuna. Even

though these great bodhisattvas hoped that he would do so and requested it of him, the Buddha would not consent. He summoned forth a venerable old man called Bodhisattva Superior Practices from the depths of the earth,² and then, in the presence of the Buddha Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions, from within the tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni entrusted the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo to him.

The reason for this was as follows. All the beings who would live after the Buddha's passing would be the children of the Buddha, and he felt compassion for all of them equally. But, just as it is customary for a physician to prescribe medicine according to the particular ailment he is treating, so for the first five hundred years after his passing, the Buddha decreed that Mahakashyapa, Ananda, and others should give all living beings the medicine of the Hinayana sutras. For the following five-hundred-year period, he decreed that the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Maitreya, Nagarjuna, and Vasubandhu should bestow upon all living beings the medicine of Mahayana sutras such as the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, and Wisdom sutras. And for the period of the Middle Day of the Law, a thousand years after his passing, he decreed that Bodhisattva

Medicine King, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and others should bestow upon all living beings the medicine of the remaining teachings, with the exception of the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Once the Latter Day of the Law has begun, however, with regard to the Hinayana sutras, the Mahayana sutras, and the Lotus Sutra that were entrusted to Mahakashyapa, Ananda, and others; to the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Maitreya, and others; and to Medicine King, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and others, though the words of these sutras will remain, they will no longer serve as medicine for the illnesses of living beings. That is to say, the illnesses will be grave, and the medicine, weak. At that time, Bodhisattva Superior Practices will make his appearance in the world and bestow the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo upon all the living beings of Jambudvipa.

Then the people will all look upon this bodhisattva as an enemy. They will be like so many monkeys faced with a dog, or like demons eyeing human beings with spite. They will treat him as if he were Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of the past, who was not only cursed and hated by all people but was attacked with staves, rocks, and tiles, or as if he were the monk Realization of Virtue, who was nearly put to death.

At that time, Mahakashyapa and Ananda will hide on Eagle Peak³ or disappear into the Ganges River,⁴ and Maitreya and Manjushri will withdraw to the inner court of the Tushita heaven⁵ or retire to Mount Fragrant.⁶ Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds will return to the western region,⁷ and Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, to the eastern region.⁸ Although there will be persons who practice the various sutras, since no one will be there to guard or protect them, they will be unable to benefit themselves or others. Although there will be persons who chant the

names of the various Buddhas, the heavenly gods will be unable to protect them. Instead they will be as helpless as calves separated from their mothers, or pheasants sighted by hawks.

At that time, the great demons from the worlds of the ten directions will come crowding into the continent of Jambudvipa and will take possession of the four categories of Buddhists, causing them to inflict injury on their parents or to do away with their brothers and sisters. In particular, these demons will enter into the hearts of those monks and nuns throughout the nation who appear to be wise or seem to be diligent in observing the precepts, and through them will practice deception upon the ruler of the nation and his ministers.

At that time, when under the protection of Bodhisattva Superior Practices a person bestows just the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, the five characters of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, upon all the people, those four categories of Buddhists and other prominent monks will hate him as if he were their parents' enemy, a foe from a previous existence, a sworn enemy of the imperial house, or a person bent on revenge.

At that time, great changes will take place in the heavens. Eclipses of the sun and moon will occur, great comets will streak across the sky, and the earth will quiver and shake as if it were a waterwheel. After this will come the disaster of domestic rebellion, in which the ruler of the nation, his brothers, and the other great men of the nation will be attacked and killed. Next will come the disaster of invasion from abroad, in which the land will be attacked by a neighboring nation, the people will be taken prisoner or commit suicide, and all the people throughout the country, whether high or low, will suffer great tribulation.

All of this will come about solely because the person who is propagating

the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra under the protection of Bodhisattva Superior Practices is abused, struck, exiled, and threatened with execution. We read in the sutra that Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings inscribed an oath in the presence of the Buddha at the assembly where the Lotus Sutra was being preached, vowing that if anyone should show enmity toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra they would chastise that person with even greater vehemence than if he were the sworn enemy of their own father and mother.

Now when I, Nichiren, having been born in this country of Japan, hold up the bright mirror of both the Lotus Sutra and all the other sutras to the faces of all the persons in Japan, I see that matters differ not in the slightest from what the sutras predict. Just as the Buddha foretold, great changes are taking place in the heavens and disasters are occurring on earth.

For some time now I have known that this nation is destined for destruction. I knew that, if I reported this to the ruler, and if it were still possible that the nation might be preserved in peace and safety, then he would surely ask me to clarify the meaning of my words; but if the nation were indeed doomed, then the ruler would refuse to heed my advice. And if he refused to heed my advice, I knew that I would most likely be condemned to exile or execution. Yet the Buddha has warned us, "If, while understanding this matter, you still hesitate to risk your life and therefore do not declare it to the people, then you are not only my enemy but the deadly enemy of all living beings and are bound to fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell."⁹

At this point I became troubled as to how to proceed. If I spoke out with regard to this matter, there was no telling what might become of me. My own safety was of little concern, but

suppose that my parents, siblings, and perhaps even one other person out of a thousand or ten thousand should follow me. They, too, would surely be hated by both the ruler and the common people. And if they were so hated, then, not having a full understanding of the Buddhist teachings, they would find it difficult to endure the attacks of others. Though they had supposed that, by practicing the Buddha's teachings, they would gain peace and security, in fact they would find that, because they had embraced this teaching, they were beset by great hardships. In that case they would then slander this teaching as a distorted one and therefore fall into the evil paths. How pitiful that would be!

But if, on the other hand, I failed to speak out on this matter, then I would not only be going against the vow I made to the Buddha, but I would become the deadly enemy of all living beings and be condemned without fail to the great Avichi hell. Thus, though I had pondered which course of action to take, I made up my mind to speak out.

I felt that, once I had begun to speak out, it would not do to falter or desist along the way, and so I spoke out with ever increasing vigor. Then, just as the Buddha's words in the sutra predict, the ruler grew hostile and the common people began to attack me. And because they treated me with enmity, heaven grew enraged, the sun and moon displayed great changes in their behavior, and huge comets appeared. The earth shook as though it would turn over, internecine strife broke out, and they were attacked by a foreign country. All happened just as the Buddha had predicted, and there is no doubt that I, Nichiren, am the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Last year, when I left Kamakura and took refuge here, I had intended to stop and speak with you and the oth-

ers, since it was on my way, but in the end I did not do so. In addition, I also failed to reply earlier, though I certainly had no particular intention of neglect. How could I ever feel distantly toward any of you? Even in the case of the Nembutsu priests, the Zen priests, and the True Word teachers, and the ruler of the nation and other men of authority, all of whom bear me such hatred—I admonish them because I want to help them, and their hatred for me makes me pity them all the more. How could I, then, think lightly of those who, even for a day, have acted as allies and extended their sympathy to me?

Actually I am relieved when those who have wives and children to worry about keep their distance from me out of fear of the world's reaction. I have no power to save those who ally themselves with me, and in addition, they may risk having what small estates they possess taken away from them. It pains me to think how this must distress their wives and children and their followers, who have no real understanding of the situation.

In the second month of last year I was granted a pardon, and on the thirteenth day of the third month I left the province of Sado, arriving in Kamakura on the twenty-sixth day of the same month. When I met with Hei no Saemon on the eighth day of the fourth month, he questioned me about various matters and, in the course of the discussion, asked when the Mongols would launch their invasion.

"They will come this year," I replied. "And with regard to that, there is no one who can save Japan but Nichiren! If you want to save the nation, you should cut off the heads of the Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts priests in Japan and expose them to view on Yui Beach.¹⁰ But I suppose it is too late for that now.

"Everyone thinks that I am simply

intent upon speaking ill of the Nembutsu teachers and the Zen and Precepts priests. But these people are of little consequence. It is the True Word school with its evil doctrines that is putting a terrible curse upon this fair country of Japan! The Great Teacher Kobo and the Great Teacher Jikaku were misled by these teachings and have brought this country to the brink of ruin. Though a country may be destined to be destroyed in two or three years anyway, if the ruler has the True Word priests offer up prayers for its safety, it will be attacked before a year or even half a year is out!" These are the things I told him.

Being so fiercely hated merely for trying to give advice that would save the country, I suppose that, when I was pardoned from exile, I should have left Sado and hidden myself somewhere far off amidst the mountains or by the seashore. But instead I went to Kamakura, because I hoped to explain the situation one last time to Hei no Saemon, and thereby save those people who might manage to survive an attack on Japan. After offering my admonition, I knew I should remain no longer in Kamakura, and so I set off, letting my feet carry me where they would. And since you were on the way, I thought how much I would like to see all of you once more, even though it might be an imposition. But though the thought came to me a thousand times, I struggled with my own feelings, and in the end I passed you by.

The reason is this. The province of Suruga is the domain of the lord of Sagami, and the Fuji area in particular is full of those related to the widows of high-ranking officials. These people feel great rancor toward me because they look upon me as an enemy of the late lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji. I was afraid that, if they heard that I had visited you, it would bring grief to you all. Until now, I

have feared causing trouble for you, and so I did not even reply to you. I have repeatedly warned the priests to avoid under any circumstances going anywhere near the area of Kajima in Fuji, and yet still I am apprehensive about what may happen.

As to this matter of the True Word school, you may have doubts. No matter how I explain it in terms of doctrine, it will be difficult to comprehend. Simply understand from the facts before your eyes.

The Retired Emperor of Oki was the eighty-second sovereign. He reigned more than two thousand years after the time of Emperor Jimmu; he was the Sun Goddess manifested in human form. Who would venture to oppose such a ruler?

Moreover, from the time of Emperor Kimmei to that of the Retired Emperor of Oki, the various great doctrines and secret doctrines of Buddhism, introduced from China, Paekche, Silla, and Koguryō,¹¹ were revered and preserved at Mount Hiei, To-ji, Onjo-ji, the seven major temples of Nara, and elsewhere throughout Japan. All this was done to protect the nation and to guard the safety of its ruler.

The Retired Emperor of Oki, vexed that power had been seized by Kamakura, enlisted the aid of the high-ranking priests of Mount Hiei, To-ji, and other temples, and set them to performing rituals for the death of Yoshi-toki. This continued not for just a year or two, but for years on end, the priests praying and casting their spells. Yet the acting administrator [Yoshitoki] never so much as dreamed of what was happening, and did not for his part have a single prayer ritual conducted. Perhaps he thought that, even if such a ritual was to be performed, it would prove ineffective. In any event, the Son of Heaven was defeated in battle and exiled to the island province of Oki.

One who becomes the sovereign of Japan embodies the living spirit of the Sun Goddess; he becomes ruler by virtue of the power of the ten good precepts he has observed in previous existences. How then could anyone among the common people of the country possibly overthrow him? Suppose a father is at fault, and his son, who is blameless, hates his guilty father. Even if the father is guilty of some grave error, would heaven ever permit the son to punish him?

Then what grave error caused the Retired Emperor of Oki to meet with this shame? It came about solely because he allied himself with the True Word teachers of Japan, who are the deadly enemies of the Lotus Sutra.

All the True Word priests go through a secret ceremony of anointment,¹² in which pictures of Shakyamuni Buddha and others are painted on an eight-petaled lotus and the participants tread on them with their feet. And because those who took part in this bizarre ritual were revered and treated as the supervisors of various temples by the Retired Emperor of Oki, power passed into the hands of his common subjects, and he met with disgrace in this life.

Now this great evil True Word doctrine has spread to Kamakura, deceiving the members of the ruling clan and threatening to bring about the destruction of Japan. This is a matter of the gravest import, and I have not discussed it even with my disciples. Instead I have dissembled, pretending ignorance and filling their ears only with attacks upon Nembutsu and Zen. But since my admonitions continue to go unheeded, without begrudging even my life, I will also tell my disciples what the true situation is.

When I do so, they will be even more perplexed, saying that, no matter how admirable or worthy of respect Nichiren may be, he can scarcely surpass Jikaku and Kobo. I fear I will

never succeed in banishing all their doubts. How can I dispel them?

When all others hate me, the fact that you have placed even a bit of trust in me and, moreover, have come all the way here to visit me, cannot be ascribed to the karma of your present life alone. Surely we must share some bond from a previous existence!

I am much distressed to hear that your illness has become so serious. Swords exist to cut down enemies, however, and medicine exists to cure sickness. King Ajatashatru murdered his father and made himself an enemy of the Buddha. But after foul sores broke out on his body, he converted to the Buddha's teachings and embraced the Lotus Sutra, whereupon his sores healed and he prolonged his life by forty years.

Moreover, the Lotus Sutra states that it is "good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa."¹³ The people of this world of Jambudvīpa are suffering from illness, but they have the medicine of the Lotus Sutra. Now in your case, the three requirements¹⁴ are already present, so how could you fail to recover? But if you have doubts, I am powerless to help you. Nam-myōhō-*renge-kyō*, Nam-myōhō-*renge-kyō*.

Please have Kakujo-bo and Hoki-bo¹⁵ read this to you from time to time and listen well, listen well!

Nichiren

The twelfth day of the seventh month

Reply respectfully sent to the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the first year of Kenji (1275) at Minobu to the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, who lived in Kajima, in Fuji District of Suruga Province. Takahashi's wife was the aunt of Nikko Shonin, and it was through this connection that he had been converted to the Daishonin's teaching. He appears to have been a leading figure among the lay believers in the Fuji area. Another letter thought to have been written to Takahashi, *Many in Body, One in Mind*, mentions that he had served the Lotus Sutra with devotion for many years. Nevertheless, the Daishonin had for a time avoided communication with Takahashi and other followers in the same area, for fear of placing them in jeopardy. It is possible that he wrote this letter in response to news of Takahashi's illness, which he refers to in the concluding paragraphs.

The latter part of the letter contains

a harsh indictment of the teachings of the True Word school, which the Daishonin felt represented a serious distortion of Buddhist teachings. Realizing that Takahashi would perhaps not readily grasp a doctrinal explanation of its errors, the Daishonin suggests that he consider the impact of the True Word teachings on the course of recent developments in society. He refers to the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221, in which the Retired Emperor Gotoba rallied support in an attempt to overthrow the recently established military government in Kamakura. He points out that the emperor was believed to be descended from the Sun Goddess and to hold the throne by divine mandate, and that Hojo Yoshitoki, the Kamakura regent, was a mere samurai upstart; thus it seemed inconceivable to people that the imperial forces would fail to win. Nonetheless, Gotoba was defeated and exiled to the

island of Oki—a result, the Daishonin says, that came about because he placed his trust in the prayers and rituals of the fundamentally flawed True Word teaching. Around the time this letter was written, warrior leaders in Kamakura, like their imperial predecessors, were soliciting the prayers of True Word priests in an attempt to avert

the impending Mongol invasion. This course, the Daishonin warns, can only end in disaster.

The Daishonin concludes by expressing his gratitude for Takahashi's sympathy and support. He also urges him to maintain strong faith so that he can recover from his illness.

Notes

1. According to ancient Indian cosmology, once every medium kalpa (15,998,000 years), the human life span undergoes a cycle of gradual decrease and increase, declining to ten years and then increasing again to eighty thousand years. Shakyamuni is said to have been born during a period of decrease, when the natural life span was a hundred years long.

2. In chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are described as being like venerable hundred-year olds.

3. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, Mahakashyapa passed away at Eagle Peak.

4. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, Ananda passed away on the Ganges River.

5. Bodhisattva Maitreya was believed to reside in the inner court of the Tushita heaven.

6. According to one tradition, having already entered nirvana, Manjushri dwells eternally on Mount Fragrant, where he has obtained an indestructible body.

7. Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds attends Amida Buddha, whose Pure Land of Perfect Bliss is said to be located in the western quarter of the universe.

8. According to the Universal Worthy Sutra, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy was born in the eastern quarter of the universe in a land called Pure and Wonderful.

9. Perhaps a summary of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra, which states, "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that

that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer."

10. Similar statements from the Nirvana Sutra, suggesting that slanderers of the Law should be put to death, are cited in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. In that treatise the Daishonin makes it clear that such statements are not meant to be taken literally; it is the slander itself, rather than the person who commits it, that must be eradicated. Located in Kamakura facing the Bay of Sagami, Yui Beach was evidently used as an execution ground.

11. Three ancient kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula.

12. Here, a ceremony of initiation into the esoteric teachings. The Daishonin refers to the use of horizontal mandalas depicting the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, which were spread out on a platform and used as the focus of the ritual.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

14. The three requirements refer to the elements necessary for the fulfillment of one's prayer, namely, the sutra, the Buddha, and the practitioner. Here the practitioner is the votary of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin.

15. Kakujo-bo was a priest-disciple of Nichiren Daishonin who lived near the area of Kajima in Fuji. One view identifies him with the priest Gakujo-bo who lived on Sado. Hoki-bo was the name Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's closest disciple and successor, had received from the Daishonin on becoming his disciple at age thirteen.

The Supremacy of the Law



WHEN Buddhism had not yet been introduced in China, the writings of such sages as the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and the Three Kings, T'ai-kung Wang, Tan the Duke of Chou, Lao Tzu, and Confucius were called the canons or classics. Through these teachings, the people learned propriety and came to understand the debt of gratitude they owed their parents, and a clear distinction was drawn between the ruler and the ruled, so that the country was governed wisely. The people obeyed the leaders who followed these teachings, and heaven answered their prayers. A child who failed to obey them was labeled as unfilial, and a subject who violated them was punished as a traitor.

When the Buddhist scriptures were first brought to China from India, some people said that they should be accepted, while others said they should be rejected. A conflict arose, and the ruler summoned the two groups to meet and debate the issue. The adherents of non-Buddhist teachings were defeated by the supporters of Buddhism. After that, whenever the two groups engaged in polemics, the devotees of non-Buddhist scriptures were defeated by the Buddhists as easily as ice melts in the sun, or as fire is extinguished by water. Eventually they

ceased to offer any effective opposition to Buddhism.

As more Buddhist sutras were brought to China, it became apparent that some were superior in content or more profound than others. They belonged to different categories such as Hinayana and Mahayana, exoteric and esoteric, provisional and true. To illustrate, all stones are invariably inferior to gold, but gold itself is divided into several grades. No gold found in the human world can match the gold mined from the Jambu River.¹ But the gold from the Jambu River is in turn far less valuable than the gold stored in the Brahma heaven. In the same way, all the Buddhist sutras are like gold, but some are finer and more profound than others.

Those sutras that are called Hinayana are like small boats. They can carry two or three passengers, but not a hundred or a thousand. Even with only two or three persons aboard, they must remain close to this shore and cannot cross over to the other shore. They can be loaded with a small amount of cargo, but not with a large amount. In contrast, the Mahayana sutras are like those huge vessels that, carrying ten or twenty people and loaded with large quantities of cargo, can sail from Kamakura as far as Tsukushi or Mutsu Province.

But the ship of the true Mahayana sutra is incomparably greater than those huge ships that are the other Mahayana sutras. Loaded with a hoard of rare treasures and carrying a hundred or a thousand passengers, it can sail all the way to the land of Korea. The sutra called the Lotus Sutra of the one vehicle is like this. Devadatta was the most evil man in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, but the Lotus Sutra predicted that he would become the Thus Come One Heavenly King. Although Ajatashatru was a wicked king who killed his own father, he was among those present when the Lotus Sutra was preached, and after hearing only a verse or a phrase, formed a connection with the sutra [that would enable him to attain enlightenment in the future]. The dragon king's daughter, a woman with a reptile's body, attained Buddhahood by listening to Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī preach the Lotus Sutra. Furthermore, the Buddha designated the evil era of the Latter Day of the Law as the very time for the Lotus Sutra to be propagated, and bequeathed it to the men and women of that impure age. The Lotus Sutra, the teaching of the one vehicle, is then a sutra as great and as powerful as the ships of the China trade.

Thus all the Buddhist sutras are to the non-Buddhist scriptures as gold is to stones. And all the various Mahayana sutras, such as the Flower Garland, Mahāvairocana, Meditation, Amida, and Wisdom sutras, are to the Lotus Sutra as fireflies are to the sun or moon, or anthills to Mount Hua.² Moreover, there is superiority and inferiority not only among the sutras, but also among their adherents. The various teachers of the True Word school, who believe in the Mahāvairocana Sutra, are like fire being put out by water, or dew being blown away by the wind when confronted in debate by the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If a dog barks at a lion, its bowels will rot. The asura demon who

shot an arrow at the sun had his head split into seven pieces. The True Word teachers are like the dog or the asura, while the votary of the Lotus Sutra is like the sun or the lion.

Before the sun rises, ice is as hard as metal. Fire, when untouched by water, is as hot as molten iron. But even the hardest ice easily melts away in the summer sun, and even the hottest fire is easily extinguished by water. The various True Word teachers appear to be most dignified and wise, but they are like one who, forgetful of the sun, expects ice to remain hard forever, or who, not taking water into account, thinks that fire will burn indefinitely.

As you know, before the Mongol attack, the arrogance of the people of our day knew no bounds. Since the tenth month of last year, however, none of them has dared to assume a haughty attitude, for as you have heard, Nichiren alone predicted this foreign invasion. If the Mongols attack our country again, none of the people will have the courage to face them. They will be like a monkey terrified by a dog, or a frog cowering before a snake. This is solely because it is a country that, by allowing the votary of the Lotus Sutra, who is an emissary of Shakyamuni Buddha, to be hated by all the priests of the True Word, Nembutsu, Precepts, and other schools, has harmed itself and incurred the particular wrath of the heavenly gods. Thus all its people have become cowards. They are like fire fearful of water, a tree dreading the ax, a pheasant frightened out of its wits at the sight of a hawk, or a mouse threatened by a cat. Not one of them will be saved. At such a time, what will they do? In battles soldiers regard the general as their soul. If the general were to lose heart, his soldiers would become cowards.

Women regard their husband as their soul. Without their husband, they lack a soul. Nowadays, even married wom-

en find it difficult to get along in the world. Though you have lost your soul, you lead your life more courageously than those who have one. Furthermore, because you maintain your faith in the gods and you revere the Buddha, you are indeed a woman who surpasses others.

Setting aside the adherents of the Nembutsu and other schools, while I was in Kamakura, I had no way of determining whether the faith of individual believers in the Lotus Sutra was deep or shallow. This I came to know only after I had incurred the wrath of the authorities and had been exiled to the island of Sado. Though no one else came to visit me, you, a woman, not only sent me various offerings, but personally made the journey to see me. It was almost too amazing to be true. In addition, you have now called on me here in Minobu. I know of no words with which to thank you. Certainly the heavenly gods will protect you, and the ten demon daughters will have compassion on you. The Buddha promised in the Lotus Sutra that, for women, the sutra will serve as a lantern in the darkness, as a ship when they cross the sea, and as a protector when they travel through dangerous places.³

When the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva was carrying the Lotus Sutra to China, the heavenly king Vaishravana dispatched a vast number of troops to escort him safely over the Pamirs.⁴ When the Dharma Teacher Dosho read the Lotus Sutra in the midst of a field, innumerable tigers gathered to protect him.⁵ There is no reason why you should not be protected in the same way. The thirty-six deities on earth and the gods of the twenty-eight constellations in the heavens⁶ will lend you protection. Furthermore, human beings have two heavenly gods who always accompany them, just as a shadow follows the body. One is named

Same Birth and the other Same Name. Perched on one's left and right shoulders, they protect one [by reporting all of one's deeds to heaven]. Therefore, heaven never punishes those who have committed no error, let alone people of merit.

That is why the Great Teacher Miaolo stated, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods."⁷ So long as one maintains firm faith, one is certain to receive the great protection of the gods. I say this for your sake. I know your faith has always been admirable, but now you must strengthen it more than ever. Only then will the ten demon daughters lend you even greater protection. You need not seek far for an example. Everyone in Japan, from the sovereign on down to the common people, without exception has tried to do me harm, but I have survived until this day. You should realize that this is because, although I am alone, I have firm faith.

If a boat is handled by an unskilled steersman, it may capsize and drown everyone aboard. Likewise, though someone may have great physical strength, if he lacks a resolute spirit, even his many abilities will be of no use. In this country, there may be many wise people, but they cannot utilize their wisdom because they are governed by foolish leaders.

In the last Mongol invasion, tens of thousands of soldiers as well as civilians, both male and female, in Iki, Tsushima, and the nine provinces [Kyushu] were killed, captured, drowned in the sea, or fell from cliffs to their death. If the Mongols attack again, this time they will wreak incomparably greater havoc. Kyoto and Kamakura will meet the same fate as Iki and Tsushima. Prepare in advance and flee to some other place. At that time, those who declared they would not see or listen to me will join their palms together and take faith in the Lotus Sutra. Even the adherents

of the Nembutsu and Zen schools will chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

The Lotus Sutra states that if there are men and women who have firm faith in this sutra the Buddha will support them on his shoulders and carry them on his back.⁸ The Tripitaka Master Kumarayana was carried by a wooden statue of Shakyamuni.⁹ When I was about to be beheaded, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment took my place. It is the same in the present as it was in the past. All of you are my lay supporters, so how can you fail to attain Buddhahood?

No matter whom you may marry, if he is an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, you must not follow him. Strengthen your resolve more than ever. Ice is made of water, but it is colder than water. Blue dye comes from indigo, but when something is repeatedly dyed in it, the color is better than that of the indigo plant.¹⁰ The Lotus Sutra remains the same, but if you repeatedly strengthen your resolve, your color will be better than that of others, and you will receive more blessings than they do.

Wood is vulnerable to fire, but sandalwood cannot be burned. Fire is extinguished by water, but the fire that cremated the Buddha's remains could not be quenched. Although flowers are scattered by the wind, those that bloom in the heavens of purity do not wither. Water evaporates in a time of great drought, but not if it enters the Yellow River. The wicked king named Dammira did not incur punishment even when he cut off the heads of Indian monks. But when he beheaded the Venerable Aryasimha, his sword fell to the ground and his arm with it. When King Pushyamitra burned Kukkutarama Monastery to ashes, his head was split by the staves of the twelve gods.¹¹

Likewise the people of Japan, by becoming enemies of the Lotus Sutra, have brought ruin on themselves and

their country. And because I proclaim this, I am called arrogant by those of little understanding. But I do not speak out of arrogance. It is simply that if I did not speak out I would not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, when my words prove later to be true, people will be able to believe all the more readily. And because I write this down now, the people of the future will recognize my wisdom.

[*The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* states,] "One's body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one's life in order to propagate the Law." Because my body is insignificant, I am struck and hated, but because the Law is supreme, it will spread without fail. If the Lotus Sutra spreads, my mortal remains will be respected, and if my remains are respected, they will benefit the people. Then I will come to be revered as highly as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman is now. You should understand that, at that time, the men and women who supported me will be honored as greatly as Takenouchi and Wakamiya.¹²

The benefits that come from opening the eyes of even one blind person are beyond description. How then is it possible to describe the benefits that derive from opening the blind eyes of all the Japanese people, and from giving the gift of sight to all human beings throughout Jambudvīpa and the other three continents?¹³ In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra it reads, "If after the Buddha has passed into extinction one can understand the meaning of this sutra, one will be the eyes of the world for heavenly and human beings."¹⁴ Those who uphold the Lotus Sutra will be the eyes for all of the heavenly and human beings in the world. Therefore, those Japanese who are hostile to me are in effect gouging out the eyes of all the heavenly and human beings in the world. As a result, heaven is enraged and strange events

occur in the skies day after day, while earth is infuriated and calamities strike in a series month after month.

Shakra was a heavenly lord, yet he greatly respected the fox who taught him the Law.¹⁵ As a result, he was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. The boy Snow Mountains honored a demon as his teacher and became the lord of the threefold world. Great sages and honorable priests of old did not reject the Law, no matter what the appearance of its teachers. I may be a foolish man, but I am surely not inferior to a fox or a demon. The noblest people in the present age are in no way superior to Shakra or the boy Snow Mountains, yet because of my low social position, they have rejected my

wise words. That is why the country is now on the brink of ruin. How lamentable! And what I find even sadder is that I will be unable to save those disciples of mine who have pitied my sufferings.

If anything at all happens, please come over here. I will welcome you. Let us die of starvation together among the mountains. And I would imagine that your daughter, Oto, has become a fine, intelligent girl. I will write you again.

Nichiren

The fourth day of the eighth month

To Oto



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the eighth month of the first year of Kenji (1275). It was addressed to Oto, the daughter of Nichimyo, an earnest believer living in Kamakura. This letter, though addressed to Oto, was obviously meant for her mother, whom the Daishonin had called the Sage Nichimyo in a letter dated the fifth month of 1272.

Virtually nothing is known about Nichimyo other than that she visited the Daishonin, with her daughter, while he was in exile on Sado Island. The journey to Sado was a dangerous one, and the Daishonin was greatly impressed by the strength of faith she demonstrated.

In this letter, the Daishonin says, "Ice is made of water, but it is colder than water. Blue dye comes from indi-

go, but when something is repeatedly dyed in it, the color is better than that of the indigo plant." With this paraphrase of a passage in the well-known Chinese classic, *Hsün Tzu*, he encourages Nichimyo to strengthen her faith still more so she can gain even greater vitality and good fortune.

The title for this letter derives from a passage in *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* that reads, "One's body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one's life in order to propagate the Law." The Daishonin declares that however much people hate and persecute him, because the Law is supreme, it will spread without fail. Then, after his death, his remains, he adds, will be respected, as will those who have aided him.

Notes

1. In ancient India, the “gold mined from the Jambu River” was imaginary reddish-yellow gold of the highest quality, said to have been mined from the mythological Jambu River that was said to run through groves of jambu trees on Jambudvīpa.

2. One of the five sacred mountains in China.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

4. The story of Vaiśhravana, one of the four heavenly kings, dispatching troops to escort Kumārajīva when he introduced the Lotus Sutra to China from central India appears in *The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions*.

5. Dōshō (629–700) was the founder of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan. The story of tigers gathering to protect him appears in *Miraculous Stories of Japan*.

6. The thirty-six deities on earth are the benevolent deities appearing in the Beneficent Power Sutra, whose role is to protect those who embrace the three treasures: the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist Order. The gods of the twenty-eight constellations in the heavens are the gods of the twenty-eight celestial houses, or lunar mansions. According to tradition, the heavens are divided into four houses of seven major heavenly bodies, each corresponding to the four directions and four seasons: east, or spring; south, summer; west, autumn; and north, winter.

7. *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”*

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

9. According to legend, when Kumārajīva, the father of Kumārajīva, left India, he brought with him a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is said that by day he carried the statue and by night the statue carried him.

This story appears in *A Collection of Treasures*.

10. This expression is based on a passage in the classical Chinese work *Hsün Tzu*. *Great Concentration and Insight* reads, “From the indigo, an even deeper blue.”

11. The twelve gods generally refer to the twelve heavenly gods that protect the world, but here they appear to refer to the two guardian deities of Kukkutarama Monastery, a major center of Buddhism built by Ashoka. According to *The Story of King Ashoka* and other sources, these two deities killed Pushyamitra and his troops when they destroyed the monastery.

12. Takenouchi is a legendary figure who was said to have played an active part in Empress Jingu’s expedition to Korea and later served her son, Emperor Ōjin. Ōjin was deified after death and referred to as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. Wakamiya refers to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman of Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura.

13. According to the ancient Indian cosmology, the world consists of four continents including Jambudvīpa.

14. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

15. This story is found in *On “Great Concentration and Insight.”* When a fox on Mount Shita, a place in India, was chased by a lion, it accidentally fell into a dry well and remained there for three days. On the brink of starvation, it resolved to dedicate itself to the Buddhist Law and recited a verse expressing its desire to expiate its past offenses. When the fox’s voice reached the god Shakra on the summit of Mount Sumeru, Shakra rescued it and asked it to preach the Law to him and the other heavenly deities.

Many in Body, One in Mind



I RECEIVED the white quilted robe and the thick-quilted cotton one, as well as one thousand coins, through the good offices of Hoki-bo.¹ Hoki-bo and Sado-bo, and the believers in Atsuhara, have proved the strength of their resolve.

If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable. The more than three thousand volumes of Confucian and Taoist literature are filled with examples. King Chou of Yin led seven hundred thousand soldiers into battle against King Wu of Chou and his eight hundred men.² Yet King Chou's army lost because of disunity while King Wu's men defeated him because of perfect unity. Even an individual at cross purposes with himself is certain to end in failure. Yet a hundred or even a thousand people can definitely attain their goal, if they are of one mind. Though numerous, the Japanese will find it difficult to accomplish anything, because they are divided in spirit. In contrast, although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra. Though evils may be numerous, they

cannot prevail over a single great truth, just as many raging fires are quenched by a single shower of rain. This principle also holds true with Nichiren and his followers.

You have served the Lotus Sutra with devotion for many years, and in addition, you demonstrated remarkable resolve during the recent incidents [at Atsuhara]. Many people have mentioned this, and Hoki-bo and Sado-bo have also said so. I have listened carefully and reported everything to the god of the sun and to the Sun Goddess.

I should have replied to you earlier, but there was no one who could bring this letter to you. Acharya Ben³ left here so quickly that I had no time to finish writing before his departure.

All of you have been wondering whether the Mongols will really attack again, but I believe that invasion is now imminent. Though the fall of our country would be deplorable, if the invasion does not take place, the Japanese people will slander the Lotus Sutra more than ever, and all of them will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. The nation may be devastated by the superior strength of the Mongols, but the slander of the correct teaching will cease almost entirely. Defeat would be like moxa cautery, which cures disease, or like acupuncture, which re-

lieves pain. Both are painful at the moment, but bring happiness later.

Nichiren is the emissary of the Lotus Sutra; the Japanese are like King Mihirakula, who eliminated Buddhism throughout Jambudvīpa. The Mongol empire may be like King Himatala, a messenger from heaven sent to punish those hostile to the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If the Japanese repent in their present existence, they will be like King Ajatashatru, who became a fol-

lower of the Buddha, cured his white leprosy, and prolonged his life by forty years; though lacking the roots of faith, he reached the first stage of security, and in his present life gained the realization that phenomena neither are born nor perish.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixth day of the eighth month



Background

This letter is generally thought to have been presented to the lay priest Takahashi, whose wife was an aunt of Nikko Shonin. Hoki-bo, better known as Nikko Shonin, led the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings in Fuji District of Suruga. Takahashi was a leading figure among the lay believers there, and his residence was used as a headquarters when the persecutions of lay believers occurred in Atsuhara Village in the Fuji area.

This letter is dated the sixth day of the eighth month, but no year is given.

Notes

1. Hoki-bo was the Buddhist name given to Nikko Shonin when he became the Daishonin's disciple in 1258. Sado-bo, the other name mentioned in the next sentence, refers to Niko (1253–1314), another of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.

It is believed, however, to have been written between 1275, when persecutions began in Atsuhara due to the increasing number of new believers there, and 1280, the year before the second Mongol invasion, when the Atsuhara persecutions were resolved.

This letter stresses the importance of unity in the face of the numerous evils arrayed against the Daishonin's followers, and speaks of the imminence of a second Mongol invasion that may ultimately serve to excise slander against the correct teaching of Buddhism.

2. This story appears in *Records of the Historian*.

3. Ben is another name for Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.

The Problem to Be Pondered Night and Day



THE second volume of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law states: “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra . . . or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell . . . He will keep repeating this cycle for a countless number of kalpas.”¹ The seventh volume reads, “For a thousand kalpas [they underwent great suffering] in the Avichi hell.”² The third volume mentions [those who wandered in the evil paths for] major world system dust particle kalpas, and the sixth volume refers to [those who were submerged in the realm of suffering for] numberless major world system dust particle kalpas. The Nirvana Sutra states, “Even if you are killed by a mad elephant, you will not fall into the three evil paths. But if you are killed by an evil friend, you are certain to fall into them.”

The Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood by Bodhisattva Saramati reads: “Those who are ignorant and unable to believe in the correct teaching, who hold false views and are arrogant, suffer such hindrances in retribution for the slanders of their past lives. They cling to incomplete doctrines and are attached to receiving alms and being treated with deference; they recognize

only false doctrines, distance themselves from good friends, approach with familiarity such slanderers who delight in attachment to the teachings of the lesser vehicle, and do not believe in the great vehicle. Therefore they slander the Law of the Buddhas.

“A person of wisdom should not fear enemy households, snakes, the poison of fire, the god Indra, the roll of thunder, attacks by swords and staves, or wild beasts such as tigers, wolves, and lions. For these can only destroy one’s life, but cannot cause one to fall into the Avichi hell, which is truly terrifying. What one should fear is slander of the profound teaching as well as companions who are slanderers, for these will surely cause one to fall into the frightful Avichi hell. Even if one befriends evil companions and with evil intent spills the Buddha’s blood, kills one’s own father and mother, takes the lives of many sages, disrupts the unity of the Buddhist Order, and destroys all one’s roots of goodness, if one fixes one’s mind on the correct teaching, one can free oneself from that place. But if there is someone who slanders the inconceivably profound teaching, that person will for immeasurable kalpas be unable to obtain emancipation. However, if there is one who can cause others to awaken to and take faith in a teaching such as this, then that person

is their father and mother, and also their good friend. This is a person of wisdom. After the Thus Come One's passing, that person corrects false views and perverse thoughts, and causes people to enter the true way. For that reason, he has pure faith in the three treasures, and his virtuous actions lead others to enlightenment."

Bodhisattva Nagarjuna states in his *Treatise on the Discipline for Attaining Enlightenment*: "The World-Honored One expounded five causes³ leading to the hell of incessant suffering. . . . But if, with respect to the profound teaching that one has yet to comprehend, one were to remain attached [to lesser teachings and declare that this is not the Buddha's teaching], then the accumulated sins of all the above-mentioned five acts would not amount to even a hundredth part of this offense."

A wise person, while dwelling in security, anticipates danger; a perverse one, while dwelling amid danger, takes security for granted. A great fire fears even a small quantity of water, and a large tree may have its branches broken by even a small bird. What a wise person fears is slander of the great vehicle. It was on this account that Bodhisattva Vasubandhu declared that he would cut out his tongue,⁴ Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha implored that his own head be cut off,⁵ and the Great Teacher Chitsang made a bridge of his own body.⁶ The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang traveled to the sacred land of India to discern [which teaching represents the truth], the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung likewise returned to India to resolve his doubts,⁷ and the Great Teacher Dengyo sought confirmation in China. Did not these men act this way in order to protect the true meaning of the sutras and treatises?

In Japan today, among the four kinds of believers of the eight schools as well as of the Pure Land and Zen schools, from the emperor and the retired em-

peror on down to their vassals and the common people, there is not a single person who is not a latter-day disciple or lay supporter of one of the three great teachers: Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho. Ennin, also known as the Great Teacher Jikaku, stated, "[Even though the Flower Garland and other sutras are termed 'esoteric,' they do not fully expound the secret teaching of the Thus Come One]; therefore, they differ [from the True Word teachings]."⁸ Enchin, also known as the Great Teacher Chisho, said, "When compared with the Mahavairochana Sutra, the Flower Garland and Lotus are mere childish theory."⁹ Kukai, the Great Teacher Kobo, remarked, "[Each vehicle that is put forward is claimed to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but] when examined from a later stage, they are all seen to be mere childish theory."¹⁰

Thus all three of these great teachers held that, though the Lotus Sutra is foremost among all the sutras that Shakyamuni Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach," when compared with the Mahavairochana Sutra¹¹ it is a doctrine of childish theory. Should any thinking person give credence to this assertion? A hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more than mad elephants, vicious horses, fierce bulls, savage dogs, poisonous snakes, poisonous thorns, treacherous bluffs, steep cliffs, floods, evil men, evil countries, evil towns, evil dwellings, evil wives, wicked children, and malicious retainers, the people of Japan today should fear those high-ranking priests who keep the precepts and yet hold distorted views!

Question: Are you suggesting that the three great teachers mentioned above were slanderers of the Law? Encho, the Great Teacher Jakko, the second chief priest of Mount Hiei; the Great Teacher Kojo, superintendent of the temple; An'ne, the Great Teacher Daigyō; the Reverend Eryō;¹² the

Reverend Annen; the Supervisor of Priests Jokan;¹³ the Administrator of Priests Danna; the sage of former times Eshin and several hundred others [of the Tendai school], as well as several hundred of Kobo's disciples including Jitsue, Shinzei, and Shinga;¹⁴ and also the other great teachers and sages of former times of the eight schools and ten schools—all these men were like so many suns, moons, and stars appearing in succession. During the passage of four hundred years and more, not a single person among them has ever questioned this assertion [of the three great teachers]. In the light of what sort of wisdom do you criticize this?

In the light of the above points, this shows, my followers, that you had better cut short your sleep by night and curtail your leisure by day, and ponder this! You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the eighth month

To Toki

I have received one string of coins. I hope all those who are serious in their resolve will gather in one place and listen to this letter.



Background

This letter was written to Toki Jonin, a learned and dedicated disciple who lived in Shimosa Province. In it Nichiren Daishonin stresses the extreme seriousness of the offense of slander and also the importance of embracing the supreme Buddhist teaching. The letter is dated simply the twenty-third day of the eighth month, and though it is generally thought to have been written in the first year of Kenji (1275) at Minobu, no firm conclusion has been reached in this regard. Other opinions are that the Daishonin wrote it in 1276 or even in 1273 while he was still on Sado Island.

In the Daishonin's teaching, rather than adherence to a specific code of conduct, one's fundamental posture toward the Mystic Law, or ultimate reality, determines one's happiness or unhappiness in life. A person who seeks and awakens to the ultimate truth within will attain enlightenment, while one

who remains in ignorance of it or even slanders it will continue to be bound by suffering. Hence the Daishonin's emphasis on exclusive commitment to the Lotus Sutra, which teaches the direct attainment of Buddhahood for all people.

In the last part of this letter, the Daishonin raises a question that had crossed many people's minds: on the basis of what sort of insight does he dare to criticize such eminent teachers of the past as Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho? However, instead of answering this question directly, he simply says, "You had better cut short your sleep by night and curtail your leisure by day, and ponder this!" This passage, from which the letter takes its name, suggests that the most important task of our human existence is to seek out and uphold the correct teaching leading to enlightenment.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, chap. 20. This refers to the karmic retribution suffered by those who persecuted Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.
3. The five causes are the five cardinal sins of killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, injuring a Buddha, and causing dissension in the Buddhist Order.
4. According to *The Biography of Vasubandhu*, when Vasubandhu, originally a Hinayana scholar, was awakened to the greatness of the Mahayana by his brother Asanga, he wanted to cut out his tongue to expiate the slander he felt he had committed in preaching the Hinayana teachings and criticizing those of the Mahayana. However, Asanga persuaded him that he could better eradicate his offense by using the same tongue to praise the Mahayana.
5. No mention of this incident appears in the biography of Ashvaghosha. Possibly, after his conversion to Mahayana by Parshva, he felt regret similar to that of Vasubandhu for having previously condemned the Buddhist teachings.
6. Chi-tsang (549–623) was a priest of the Three Treatises school in China, sometimes regarded as the founder of the school. According to *The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"*, he took T'ien-t'ai as his master and personally served him in reparation for his previously shallow understanding. "Made a bridge of his own body" means that he lifted T'ien-t'ai on his back whenever the latter mounted the elevated lecture platform.
7. According to his biography in *The Sung Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests*, Pu-k'ung returned to India to obtain a copy of the Diamond Crown Sutra in order to resolve doubts he had about the Diamond Realm mandala.
8. *A Brief Commentary on the Susiddhikara Sutra*.
9. The precise source for this quotation is not certain. However, *A Personal Commentary on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra"* by Shoshin, a priest living between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, quotes Chisho to this effect.
10. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*. This statement means that each of the many schools claims to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but that their doctrines prove to be shallow when compared with the doctrine of the True Word school.
11. The True Word school argued that the Mahavairocana Sutra, its basic sutra, was expounded by Mahavairocana Buddha.
12. Eryo (801–859) was a priest of the Tendai school. He studied under Encho and Jikaku, the second and third chief priests of Enryaku-ji, and learned both exoteric and esoteric doctrines. He was supervisor of a temple on Mount Hiei called Hodo-in.
13. Jokan (843–927), also known as Zomyo, was initiated into the esoteric teachings by Chisho and in 906 became chief priest of Enryaku-ji. He was named supervisor of priests and later appointed administrator of priests in 923 after his prayers had allegedly cured the emperor of illness.
14. Jitsue (786–847) was originally a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school who became Kobo's disciple after the latter returned from China in 806. Jitsue helped Kobo establish Kongobu-ji temple on Mount Koya. Shinzei (800–860) was a disciple of Kobo who lived at Jingo-ji temple on Mount Takao. In 856, he was appointed administrator of priests, the first True Word priest to receive this title. Shinga (801–879) was a disciple and younger brother of Kobo. He served as chief priest of both Todai-ji and To-ji temples, and was appointed administrator of priests in 864.

On Upholding Faith in the Gohonzon



I HAVE received the various articles that you so kindly sent.

I am entrusting you with a Gohonzon for the protection of your young child. This Gohonzon is the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all the scriptures. It is like the sun and the moon in the heavens, a great ruler on earth, the heart in a human being, the wish-granting jewel among treasures, and the pillar of a house.

When we have this mandala with us, it is a rule that all the Buddhas and gods will gather round and watch over

us, protecting us like a shadow day and night, just as warriors guard their ruler, as parents love their children, as fish rely on water, as trees and grasses crave rain, and as birds depend on trees. You must trust in it with all your heart.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fifth day of the eighth month

Reply to the lay nun Myoshin



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eighth month of the first year of Kenji (1275) to the lay nun Myoshin, a believer who lived in Nishiyama in Fuji District of Suruga Province. It explains that the Gohonzon is “the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all the scriptures.” The Gohonzon, or mandala, embodies the reality of the

three thousand realms in a single moment of life implicit in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, the Gohonzon is the “essence of the Lotus Sutra.” And the Lotus Sutra is the eye of all the teachings of Shakyamuni. Therefore, the Gohonzon, the “essence of the Lotus Sutra,” is also the “eye of all the scriptures.”

The Embankments of Faith



IN your letter you asked how the retribution varies according to the degree of slander against the correct teaching. To begin with, the Lotus Sutra was taught to lead all living beings to the Buddha way. Only those who have faith in it, however, attain Buddhahood. Those who slander it fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. As the sutra states, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.”¹

There are many degrees of slander: shallow and profound, slight and heavy. Even among those who embrace the Lotus Sutra, very few uphold it steadfastly both in mind and in deed. Few are the practitioners who are able to uphold this sutra. But those who do will not suffer serious retribution even if they have committed minor offenses against the sutra. Their strong faith expiates their offenses as surely as a flood extinguishes tiny fires.

The Nirvana Sutra states: “If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha’s teaching. But if he

ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer.”

This admonition urged me on, and I spoke out against slander in spite of the various persecutions I faced, because I would have become an enemy of the Buddha’s teaching if I had not.

Slander can be either minor or serious, however, and sometimes we should overlook it rather than attack it. The True Word and Tendai schools slander the Lotus Sutra and should be severely rebuked. But without great wisdom it is hard to differentiate correctly between their doctrines and the teachings that Nichiren spreads. Therefore, at times we refrain from attacking them, just as I did in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.²

Whether or not we speak out, it will be difficult for those who have committed the grave offense of slander to avoid retribution. Our seeing, hearing, and making no attempt to stop slander that, if we spoke out, could be avoided, destroys our gifts of sight and hearing, and is utterly merciless.

Chang-an writes, “If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy.”³ The consequences of a grave offense are extremely difficult to erase. The most important thing is to continually strengthen our wish to benefit others.

When a person's offense is minor, admonishment is sometimes called for, but at other times it may be unnecessary, for there are those who may correct themselves without being told. Reprove a person for slander when necessary, so that you can forestall for both of you the consequences of an offense. Then, you should forgive that person. The point is that even minor slanders may lead to serious ones, and then the effects one must suffer would be far worse. This is [what Chang-an means when he writes], "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."⁴

Many such examples of slander are also found among Nichiren's disciples and lay believers. I am sure that you have heard about the lay priest Ichinosawa. Privately he is considered one of Nichiren's followers, but publicly he still remains in the Nembutsu school. What should be done about his next life? Nevertheless, I have presented him with the ten volumes of the Lotus Sutra.⁵

Strengthen your faith now more than ever. Anyone who teaches the principles of Buddhism to others is bound to incur hatred from men and women, priests and nuns. Let them say what they will. Entrust yourself to the golden teachings of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, T'ien-t'ai, Miaolo, Dengyo, and Chang-an. This is what is signified by the expression, "practicing according to the Buddha's teachings." The Lotus Sutra reads, "If in that fearful age one can preach this sutra for even a moment, [one will deserve to receive alms from all heavenly and human beings]."⁶ This passage explains that in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law, when evil persons stained by the three poisons prevail, anyone who believes in and upholds the correct

teaching, for even a short time, will receive offerings from heavenly and human beings.

Now you should make a great vow and pray for your next life. If you are disbelieving or slander the correct teaching even in the slightest, you will certainly fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. Suppose there is a ship that sails on the open sea. Though the ship is stoutly built, if it is flooded by a leak, those on the ship are sure to drown together. Though the embankment between rice fields is firm, if there is an ant hole in it, then surely, in the long run, it will not remain full of water. Bail the seawater of slander and disbelief out of the ship of your life, and solidify the embankments of your faith. If a believer's offense is slight, overlook it, and lead that person to obtain benefits. If it is serious, encourage him to strengthen his faith so that he can expiate the sin.

You are indeed an unusual woman since you asked me to explain the effects of various degrees of slander. You are every bit as praiseworthy as the dragon king's daughter when she said, "I unfold the doctrines of the great vehicle to rescue living beings from suffering."⁷ The Lotus Sutra reads, "If one can ask about its meaning, that will be difficult indeed!"⁸ There are very few people who inquire about the meaning of the Lotus Sutra. Always be determined to denounce slander against the correct teaching to the best of your ability. It is indeed wonderful that you should be helping me reveal my teachings.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The third day of the ninth month
Reply to the lay nun and wife of
Abutsu-bo

Background

This letter is dated the third day of the ninth month, with no year indicated, though it is believed to be 1275, a year and a half after the Daishonin's return from exile on Sado Island. It is addressed to the lay nun Sennichi, the wife of Abutsu-bo.

The letter is a reply to a question the lay nun has asked about the effects of different degrees of slander against the correct teaching. The Daishonin says, "If a believer's offense is slight, over-

look it, and lead that person to obtain benefits. If it is serious, encourage him to strengthen his faith so that he can expiate the sin." But attention should be paid to his warning, "Even minor slanders may lead to serious ones, and then the effects one must suffer would be far worse." The Daishonin praises the lay nun Sennichi for asking a question about slandering the correct teaching.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. This work attacks chiefly the doctrines of the Pure Land school.
3. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.
4. *Ibid.*
5. The ten volumes of the Lotus Sutra consist of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra proper and two related sutras, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the Universal Worthy Sutra. Ichinosawa (d. 1278) was a lay priest of the Pure Land school. In the fourth month of 1272, while still in exile on Sado, the Daishonin was trans-

ferred from Tsukahara to the relative comfort of Ichinosawa's estate. In another letter, written to the wife of the lay priest Ichinosawa, the Daishonin expresses misgivings at entrusting a person such as Ichinosawa, whose commitment to faith is unclear, with a copy of the Lotus Sutra, but says that he feels bound to do so by an earlier promise.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, chap. 12.
8. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

The Mongol Envoys



I CAN hardly express my joy at learning of your safe return from Kamakura. And I have received your news about the beheading of the Mongol envoys. It is indeed a pity that, while the priests of the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools, who are the enemies of our country, did not have their heads cut off, the innocent Mongol envoys have been beheaded.¹ Those who are unaware of the particulars of the matter will no doubt think that I say this out of conceit because my prophecy has been fulfilled.² Yet during this period of more than twenty years, this is what I have been privately lamenting about day and night to my disciples, and what I have publicly declared time and again.

Among all grave matters, the ruin of the nation is gravest. The Sovereign Kings Sutra states, "Among all disasters, nothing surpasses the extreme gravity of losing the nation's sovereign status." This passage means that, among all evils, the worst is to become ruler, govern wrongfully, and have one's nation defeated by a foreign land. The Golden Light Sutra also states, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, marauders will appear from other regions, and the people of the country will meet with death and disorder." This passage means that, when

a person becomes the ruler of a state, and values evil people while attaching blame to good ones, that country will surely be defeated by another land. The fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "They will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers."³ While explaining the appearance of the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, this passage is saying that the ruler of the country will reverence those who firmly uphold the two hundred and fifty precepts, and who appear to be like Mahakashyapa and Shariputra, and will attempt to destroy the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Now what is known as a teaching of importance is nothing special. One who can, in accordance with the time, discern without the slightest error what is important both for oneself and for the country is a person of wisdom. The Buddha is called worthy of respect because he ponders the past and knows the future. Nothing surpasses the wisdom of knowing the three existences. Although they were not Buddhas, because sages and worthies such as Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo, though not nearly to the same degree as the Buddha, generally understood the affairs of the three existences, their names have been passed on into the future.

Ultimately, all phenomena are contained within one's life, down to the last particle of dust. The nine mountains and the eight seas are encompassed in one's body, and the sun, moon, and myriad stars are found in one's life. We, however, are like a blind person who is incapable of seeing the images reflected in a mirror, or like an infant who has no fear of water or fire. The teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures all partially explain the phenomena inherent in one's life. They do not explain them as the Lotus Sutra does. Thus, among the sutras, there are both superior and inferior, and among people also, sages and worthies may be distinguished. Since there is too much to go into concerning the teaching, I will stop here.

I deeply appreciate your sending a messenger so quickly after your return from Kamakura. And in addition, you sent me various offerings, which I am very glad to have received. While all the people in Japan lament, I, Nichiren, and my followers rejoice amid the grieving. Since we live in this country,

we cannot possibly escape an attack from the Mongol forces, but because the heavenly gods know that we have been persecuted for the sake of our country, we can rejoice that we will surely be saved in our next life. Moreover, you have become indebted to the Mongol empire in your present life. Had this situation not arisen, as this year marks the thirteenth anniversary of the death of the lay priest of Saimyo-ji, the commemorative hunt would no doubt have been held on your estate. And you would be in Tsukushi like Lord Hojo Rokuro.⁴ This runs contrary to the wishes of you and your clan. You are not being punished by others. From another point of view, could it not be that you have been saved due to the protection of the Lotus Sutra? Yours is a serious misunderstanding. Though so joyful a thing as this has occurred, and though I would have liked to go and congratulate you in person, others would hear of it and think it strange, so I have refrained.

I responded immediately.

Nichiren

Reply to Nishiyama



Background

This letter was written in the first year of Kenji (1275) to the lay priest Nishiyama, who lived in Nishiyama Village in Suruga Province. Nishiyama had just returned from a tour of duty in Kamakura and had reported this in a letter to the Daishonin at Minobu. He had also written that five Mongol envoys who had come demanding that Japan pay tribute to the Mongol empire had

been beheaded at Tatsunokuchi. Nishiyama had also written that because of the imminent threat of a Mongol invasion a hunt scheduled to be held on his estate in honor of the late Hojo Tokiyori had been canceled, and that he had not been ordered to participate in the defense of Kyushu. The Daishonin's letter is his reply to this report by Nishiyama.

Notes

1. This statement suggests that the cause of the foreign invasion is the actions of these priests who slandered the Lotus Sutra and its votary to the rulers and misled the nation.

2. This refers to the Daishonin's prophecy in 1260, that, if Japan's rulers continued to support the followers of erroneous teachings, the nation would be invaded by a foreign power.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

4. Hojo Rokuro possibly refers to Hojo Tokisada (d. 1289), a younger brother of Hojo Tokiyori, the fifth Kamakura regent, who is referred to in the preceding sentence as the lay priest of Saimyo-ji. Tokisada was sent south to Tsukushi, the southern island of Kyushu, to aid in the defense against the Mongols and is said to have died there.

On Curing Karmic Disease



I SEE from your letter that you have been stricken with a painful affliction. On the one hand, knowing that you are in agony grieves me, but on the other, I am delighted. The Vimalakirti Sutra states: “At that time the wealthy Vimalakirti thought to himself, ‘I am ill, lying on my bed, [yet why does the World-Honored One, man of great compassion, not take pity on me]?’ . . . At that time the Buddha said to Manjushri, ‘Go visit Vimalakirti, and inquire after his illness.’” The Nirvana Sutra says, “At that time the Thus Come One . . . assumed the appearance of one who is ill in body and lay on his right side like a sick man.” The Lotus Sutra states, “[The Thus Come One is well and happy], with few ills and few worries.”¹ The eighth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states: “Vimalakirti lay on his sickbed in Vaisali, making his illness a pretext to promote the teachings . . . Through his death, the Thus Come One taught the eternity [of life], and through illness, the power [of Buddhism].” It also says: “There are six causes of illness: (1) disharmony of the four elements; (2) improper eating or drinking; (3) inappropriate practice of seated meditation; (4) attack by demons; (5) the work of devils; and (6) the effects of karma.”

The Nirvana Sutra reads: “There are three types of people whose illness is

extremely difficult to cure. The first is those who slander the great vehicle; the second, those who commit the five cardinal sins; and the third, icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. These three categories of illness are the gravest in the world.”

It also states: “One who creates evil karma in this life . . . will surely suffer in hell. . . . But by making offerings to the three treasures, one avoids falling into hell and receives the retribution in this life, in the form of afflictions of the head, eye, or back.” *Great Concentration and Insight* states, “Even if one has committed grave offenses . . . the retribution can be lessened in this life. Thus, illness occurs when evil karma is about to be dissipated.” In his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna says: “Question: . . . [Answer]: If that is so, then none of the sutras, from the Flower Garland to the Wisdom sutras, is a secret teaching, but the Lotus Sutra is secret. . . . [The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine.” T’ien-t’ai explained the quotation further, saying: “This can be likened to a skilled physician who can change poison into medicine. . . . That persons of the two vehicles were given the prophecy of their enlightenment in this sutra means that it can change poison into medicine. This is what *Great Perfection of Wisdom*

means when it says, "The various sutras are not secret teachings; only the Lotus Sutra is secret."² *Great Concentration and Insight* says, "The Lotus Sutra can cure them [illnesses], which is why it is called *myo*, or wonderful." Miaolo says, "Because it can cure what is thought to be incurable, it is called *myo*, or wonderful."³

The Nirvana Sutra states: "King Ajatashatru of Rajagriha was wicked by nature . . . He killed his father, and thereafter, in a fit of remorse, he developed a high fever . . . Because of the fever from remorse, boils broke out over his entire body. They were foul and evil-smelling, so that none could come near. At that time his mother, Vaidehi, tried to help by applying various medicines, but this only made the boils worse; there appeared to be no hope of recovery. The king said to his mother, 'These boils have their origin in the mind; they do not arise from the four elements. Though people say that there is a physician who can cure them, that could not possibly be . . . ' Then the World-Honored One, the compassionate and merciful teacher, entered into the moon-loving meditation⁴ for the king's sake. Upon entering meditation, he emitted a brilliant ray of light. This ray of clear coolness fell upon the body of the king, and instantly the boils were healed."

The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, which is the great wisdom of equality, says in its seventh volume: "This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa. If a person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra, then his illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age nor death."⁵

In light of the above quotations, it would seem that your illness cannot have originated in anything other than the six causes of disease. I will set aside the first five causes for the moment. Illnesses of the sixth, which result from

karma, are the most difficult to cure. They vary in severity, and one cannot make any fixed pronouncements, but we know that the gravest illnesses result from the karma created by slandering the Lotus Sutra. Even Shen Nung, Huang Ti, Hua T'o, and Pien Ch'ueh threw up their hands,⁶ and Water Holder, Water Carrier,⁷ Jivaka, and Vimalakirti likewise kept silent. Such illnesses can only be cured by the good medicine of the one Buddha Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra, as that sutra itself explains.

The Nirvana Sutra, referring to the Lotus Sutra, states: "Even the offense of slandering this correct teaching [will be eradicated] if one repents and professes faith in the correct teaching. . . . No teaching other than this correct teaching can save or protect one. For this reason one should take faith in the correct teaching." The Great Teacher Ching-hsi⁸ said, "The Nirvana Sutra is itself pointing to the Lotus Sutra and saying that it is the ultimate."⁹ He further said: "It is like the case of a person who falls to the ground, but who then pushes himself up from the ground and rises to his feet again. Thus, even though one may slander the correct teaching, one will eventually be saved from the evil paths."¹⁰

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu was originally a scholar of Hinayana Buddhism. In an effort to prevent Mahayana Buddhism from spreading throughout the five regions of India, he wrote five hundred treatises on Hinayana. Later, however, he encountered Bodhisattva Asanga and abandoned his erroneous views on the spot. Facing Asanga, he said that, in order to eradicate this offense all at once, he wanted to cut out his own tongue. Asanga stopped him, saying, "Vasubandhu, use that tongue to praise Mahayana." Vasubandhu immediately wrote five hundred Mahayana treatises in which he refuted Hinayana. He also made a vow that, as long

as he lived, he would never place the Hinayana teachings on his tongue. In this way he eradicated his past offense and was later reborn in the heaven where Bodhisattva Maitreya dwells.¹¹

Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, a native of eastern India, was thirteenth among the successors of the Buddha's teachings. At one time Ashvaghosha had been a leader of Brahmanism. When he debated with the Buddhist monk Punyayashas over the validity of their respective teachings, however, he quickly realized the superiority of Buddhist teachings. Ashvaghosha was prepared to behead himself in order to pay for his past offense, saying, "I have been my own worst enemy, leading myself to hell." But Punyayashas admonished him, saying, "Ashvaghosha, do not behead yourself! Use that head and mouth to praise Mahayana." Ashvaghosha soon thereafter wrote *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, in which he refuted Brahmanism and Hinayana. This marked the beginning of the spread of Mahayana Buddhism in India.

The Great Teacher Chi-tsang of Chia-hsiang-ssu temple was among the most outstanding scholars in China. He was the founder of the Three Treatises school, and lived on Mount Hui-chi in Wu. Believing that none could equal him in knowledge, he raised the banner of his pride to its highest. He challenged the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai to discuss the meaning of the passage that states, "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, [this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand]."¹² In the debate Chi-tsang was soundly defeated and thereupon renounced his misguided beliefs. In order to expiate his serious offense of slander of the correct teaching and of those who uphold it, he gathered more than one hundred eminent scholars and begged the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che to lecture to them. Chi-

tsang used his body as a bridge for the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai to climb [onto the preaching platform], supporting T'ien-t'ai's feet with his head. Moreover, he served T'ien-t'ai for seven years, cutting firewood and drawing water for him. He ceased giving lectures of his own, dispersed his followers, and in order to purge himself of his great conceit, refrained from reciting the Lotus Sutra. After the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's death, Chi-tsang had an audience with the emperor of the Sui dynasty to pay his respects. As he was leaving, he clutched His Majesty's knees and tearfully bade him farewell. Sometime later, Chi-tsang looked into an old mirror and, seeing his reflection, condemned himself for his past errors. All these many acts of penitence were done to eradicate his karmic disease.

The Lotus, the wonderful sutra of the single vehicle, is the golden words of the three kinds of Buddhas.¹³ Likened to a bright jewel, it ranks highest among all the sutras that "I have preached, now preach, and will preach." There are passages in the Lotus Sutra that say, "Among the sutras, it [the Lotus Sutra] holds the highest place," and "[Among those sutras] the Lotus is the foremost!"¹⁴ The Great Teacher Dengyo said that [the Lotus school is] the school founded by the Buddha himself.¹⁵

I have made a thorough study of the various True Word sutras, such as the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara, but have found nothing written in them to compare with the above passages of the Lotus Sutra. The claim [that these sutras are superior to the Lotus] appears to be no more than a prejudiced view held by Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho. From this we realize that the true intent of the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Mahavairochana lay just in the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. When the three great teachers

Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, the founders of the True Word teachings in Japan, went to China during the T'ang dynasty, they inherited from Hui-kuo and Fa-ch'üan the deceptions and delusions originally held by the three Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung. When on returning to Japan they propagated the Lotus Sutra and the True Word teachings, they hid the brilliant moon of the Lotus Sutra, the supreme vehicle that surpasses all the other sutras of the past, present, and future, and showed the firefly glimmer of the True Word mandalas of the two realms.¹⁶ Not only that, but they slandered the Lotus Sutra, saying that it was a work of "childish theory" and belonged to "the region of darkness." These comments, however, were like a dagger turned against those who made them. It is not the Lotus but the Mahavairochana Sutra that is filled with childish theory and is in the region of darkness. The founders of the True Word teachings were warped to begin with. So how could their disciples and followers be upright? Contamination at the source of a river will pollute its entire length. Because of this, the Land of the Sun has had a long, dark night, and the Sun Tree is now about to be blighted by an alien frost.¹⁷

Although you were not in the mainstream of the True Word school, you were still a retainer of a patron of that teaching. You lived for many years in a house whose family was devoted to an erroneous doctrine, and month after month your mind was infected by the teachers of error. Though huge mountains may crumble and the great seas dry up, this offense of yours will not easily pass away. However, because of the influence of karmic bonds and the compassion with which you are imbued in this lifetime, you met me, a priest of humble learning, when you least expected it, and you determined to

reform your ways. Therefore, though at the moment your offense has brought on these boils from which you suffer, in the future you will be spared worse suffering.

King Ajatashatru suffered from severe boils because he committed the five cardinal sins and slandered the correct teaching. But his boils disappeared instantly when the light produced by the Buddha's moon-loving meditation illuminated his body. And, though it had been predicted that the king had only twenty-one days left to live, his life span was extended by forty years. In deep appreciation, he earnestly requested one thousand arhats to record the golden words of the Buddha's entire lifetime,¹⁸ thus spreading the Buddha's teachings into the ages of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law.

Your boils have resulted from only one offense—slandering the correct teaching. The Mystic Law you now embrace surpasses the moon-loving meditation. How could your boils possibly not be healed and your life span not extended? If these words of mine prove untrue, you should shout: "The Buddha, the eye of the entire world, is a great liar, and the Lotus, the wonderful sutra of the single vehicle, is a scripture of clever flourishes. The World-Honored One should give me proof if he cares about his good name. All the sages and worthies should come to protect me if they do not want to be false to their vows."

A letter cannot convey all that one would like to say, and words cannot fully express what is in the heart. The rest will have to wait until the next time we meet.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The third day of the eleventh month
Reply to the lay priest Ota

Background

This letter is a reply to Ota Jomyo's report that he was suffering from a skin disease. Written in the eleventh month of the first year of Kenji (1275), it was sent from Minobu to Ota Jomyo, who lived in Shimosa Province. One of the Daishonin's most devout believers, Ota was a government official who was converted to the Daishonin's teachings by Toki Jonin. Around 1278, Ota received tonsure and was given the Buddhist name Myonichi (Wonderful Sun).

From the content of another letter sent to him by the Daishonin, it appears that he and the Daishonin were the same age.

In this letter, citing T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight*, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the six causes of illness and declares that diseases resulting from one's karma are the most difficult to cure, but that even those can be recovered from with the "good medicine of the Lotus Sutra."

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15. This is the answer to a question addressed to Shakyamuni Buddha by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth: "Is the World-Honored One comfortable, with few illnesses, few worries?"

2. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

3. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

4. Moon-loving meditation: Here the boundless compassion of the Buddha is compared to moonlight, which releases one from anxiety and brings about peace of mind.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

6. Shen Nung and Huang Ti were two of the Three Sovereigns, legendary ideal rulers of ancient China who were skilled in medical matters. Hua T'o was a physician of the Later Han dynasty, said to have been especially skillful in surgical operations. Pien Ch'üeh was a physician of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.) in China.

7. Water Holder and Water Carrier were father and son. Said to have been excellent physicians, they are described in the Golden Light Sutra.

8. Another name for Miao-lo. Ching-hsi was the name of Miao-lo's birthplace.

9. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

10. Ibid.

11. The story is detailed in Chi-tsang's *Annotations on The One-Hundred-Verse Treatise*. The heaven where Maitreya is said to live is the Tushita heaven, the fourth of the six heavens in the world of desire. Vasubandhu is said to have been reborn in this heaven and to be expounding the Law to the heavenly beings there.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

13. Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

14. The first quotation is from chapter 23; the second, from chapter 10.

15. Adapted from a passage in *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

16. The Womb Realm mandala, described in the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the Diamond Realm mandala, described in the Diamond Crown Sutra.

17. The Land of the Sun refers to Japan, and the Sun Tree is an ancient name for Japan that appears in a Chinese document.

18. Reference is to the First Buddhist Council, which began the task of compiling the Buddha's teachings. With the support of King Ajatashatru, this council was convened in the Cave of the Seven Leaves near Rajagriha in Magadha shortly after the Buddha's passing.

The Three Obstacles and Four Devils



THE two men you sent have arrived here, bringing your various offerings. I also heard that the priest Ben¹ has written about your sincerity in his letter.

In this letter I want to advise you about what is most important for you. In the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the world did not fall into decline because sages and worthies appeared frequently, and the heavenly gods protected the people. In the Latter Day of the Law, however, people have become so greedy that strife rages incessantly between sovereign and subject, parent and child, elder and younger brother, and all the more so among people who are unrelated. When such conflict occurs, the gods abandon the country, and then the three calamities and seven disasters begin, until one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven suns appear in the sky.² Plants and trees wither and die, large and small rivers dry up, the earth smolders like charcoal, and the sea becomes like boiling oil. Eventually flames fill the atmosphere, arising from the hell of incessant suffering and reaching the Brahma heaven. Such is the devastation that will occur when the world reaches its final dissolution.

Everyone, regardless of rank or status, considers it natural for children to obey their father, for subjects to be loyal to their sovereign, and for disciples

to follow their teacher. Recently, however, it appears that the people of our day, drunk with the wine of greed, anger, and foolishness, make it a rule to betray their sovereign, despise their parents, and scoff at their teachers. You should read again and again the previous letter³ in which I explained that one should of course obey one's teacher, sovereign, and parents, but should they commit wrongs, admonishing them is in fact being loyal to them.

Recently your elder brother, Uemon no Sakan, was again disowned by your father. I told your wife when she came to visit me here that he was certain to be disowned again, that I was apprehensive about how it would affect you, Hyoe no Sakan, and that she should be prepared for the worst. This time I am sure that you will give up your faith. If you do, I have not the slightest intention of reproaching you for it. Likewise, neither should you blame me, Nichiren, when you have fallen into hell. It is in no way my responsibility. It is an undeniable fact that fire can at once reduce even a thousand-year-old field of pampas grass to ashes, and that the merit one has formed over a hundred years can be destroyed with a single word.

Your father, Saemon no Tayu, now seems to have become an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, yet your brother, Uemon

no Tayu Sakan, will now become one of its votaries.⁴ You, who think only of immediate affairs, will obey your father, and deluded people will therefore praise you for your filial devotion. Munemori obeyed his father's tyrannous commands and was finally beheaded at Shinohara. Shigemori disobeyed his father and preceded him in death.⁵ Who was truly the filial son? If you obey your father who is an enemy of the Lotus Sutra and abandon your brother who is a votary of the one vehicle, are you then being filial? In the final analysis, what you should do is resolve to pursue the Buddha way single-mindedly just as your brother is doing. Your father is like King Wonderful Adornment, and you brothers are like the princes Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye. The age is different, but the principle of the Lotus Sutra remains the same. Recently the lay priest of Musashi⁶ abandoned his vast territory and his many subjects in order to retire from all worldly affairs. If you ingratiate yourself with your father for the sake of a small private estate, neglect your faith, and fall into the evil paths, you should not blame me, Nichiren. Yet despite my warnings, I feel that this time you will discard your belief.

I state this out of pity because, though you have been faithful until now, you may still fall into the evil paths. If, by one chance out of a hundred or a thousand, you should decide to follow my teaching, then confront your father and declare: "Since you are my father, I should by rights obey you, but since you have become an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, I would be unfilial if I were to do so in this matter. Therefore, I have resolved to break with you and follow my brother. If you should disown him, be aware that you are disowning me too." You should not have the slightest fear in your heart. It is lack of courage that prevents one from attaining Buddhahood, although one may have professed faith in the Lotus

Sutra many times since innumerable kalpas ago.

There is definitely something extraordinary in the ebb and flow of the tide, the rising and setting of the moon, and the way in which summer, autumn, winter, and spring give way to each other. Something uncommon also occurs when an ordinary person attains Buddhahood. At such a time, the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat. I have long been waiting to tell you this, either through my own messenger or by some other means. So I greatly appreciate your sending these messengers to me. I am sure that, if you were about to abandon your faith, you would not have sent them. Thinking it may still not be too late, I am writing this letter.

To attain Buddhahood is difficult indeed, more difficult than the feat of placing a needle atop the Mount Sumeru of this world and then casting a thread from atop the Mount Sumeru of another world directly through the eye of this needle. And the feat is even more difficult if it must be done in the face of a contrary wind. The Lotus Sutra states: "A million million ten thousand kalpas, an inconceivable time will pass, before at last one can hear this Lotus Sutra. A million million ten thousand kalpas, an inconceivable time will pass, before the Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, preach this sutra. Therefore its practitioners, after the Buddha has entered extinction, when they hear a sutra like this, should entertain no doubts or perplexities."⁷ This passage is extremely unusual even among the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. From the "Introduction" to the "Teacher of the Law" chapters, human and heavenly beings, the four kinds of believers, and the eight kinds of non-human beings—those at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment or below—were many in number, but there was

only one Buddha, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. Thus, these chapters are of great import, but may appear insignificant. The twelve chapters from “Treasure Tower” to “Entrustment” are the most important of all. This is because it is in these chapters that, in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, there appeared the treasure tower of Many Treasures. It was as if the sun had emerged in front of the moon. The Buddhas of the ten directions were seated under the trees, and it was as if the grasses and trees of the worlds in the ten directions had been set afire. It was in this setting that the above passage was expounded.

The Nirvana Sutra states: “People have been suffering since numberless, uncountable kalpas ago. The bones one leaves behind in a kalpa pile up as high as Mount Vipula near Rajagriha, and the milk one sucks is equal to the water of the four seas. The blood one sheds surpasses the quantity of water in the four seas, and so do the tears one sheds in grief over the death of parents, brothers and sisters, wives, children, and relatives. And though one used all the plants and trees growing on the earth to make four-inch tallies to count them, one could not count all the parents one has had in the past existences of life.” These are the words the Buddha uttered lying in the grove of sal trees on the final day of his life. You should pay the strictest attention to them. They mean that the number of parents who gave birth to you since innumerable kalpas ago could not be counted even with tallies made by cutting all the plants and trees growing on all the worlds of the ten directions into four-inch pieces.

Thus you have had a countless number of parents in your past existences, yet during that time you have never encountered the Lotus Sutra. From this we see that it is easy to have parents, but very difficult to encounter the Lotus Sutra. Now if you disobey the

words of a parent, one who is easy to come by, and follow a friend of the Lotus Sutra, one who can rarely be encountered, you will not only be able to attain Buddhahood, but will also be able to lead to enlightenment the parent whom you disobeyed. For example, Prince Siddhartha was the eldest son of King Shuddhodana. His father wanted him to succeed to the throne and rule the nation, and actually made him crown prince, but the prince went against his father’s wishes and escaped from the palace at night. The king was angry at him for being unfilial, but after Siddhartha had attained Buddhahood, he set about first of all to convert his parents, King Shuddhodana and Lady Maya.

No parent would ever urge his son to renounce the world in order to attain Buddhahood. But however that may be, in your case, the observers of the precepts and the priests of the Nembutsu school have egged your father on to join with them so that they may make both you and your brother abandon your faith. I am told that Priest Two Fires⁸ is persuading others to chant one million Nembutsu in an attempt to cause discord among people and destroy the seeds of the Lotus Sutra. The lay priest of Gokuraku-ji seemed to be an admirable person. But deluded by the Nembutsu priests, he treated me with enmity, and as a result, he and his entire clan have been all but ruined. Only the lord of Echigo⁹ has survived. You may think that those who believe in Priest Two Fires are prospering, but you should see what has become of the Nagoe clan,¹⁰ who paid for the building of Zenko-ji temple, Choraku-ji temple, and Dabutsu-den!¹¹ Again, the lord of Sagami¹² is the ruler of Japan, but by his conduct he has called down on himself an enemy almost as great as the land of Jambudvipa.

Even if you abandon your brother

and take his place in your father's favor, you will never prosper in a thousand or ten thousand years. There is no knowing what will become of you even in the near future. How can you be certain of lifelong prosperity? Therefore, you should resolve to give all your thought to your happiness in the next existence. Having written all this, it occurs to me that this letter may be

futile, and I tire of going on. But it may serve as a reminder to you in the future.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twentieth day of the eleventh
month

Reply to Hyoe no Sakan



Background

This letter was written to Hyoe no Sakan Munenaga, the younger of the two Ikegami brothers. Though it was originally thought to have been written in the first year of Kenji (1275), it is now apparent that it was written in 1277. Munenaga is thought to have taken faith in the Daishonin's teaching around 1256, shortly after his elder brother Munenaka. Both were officials in the Kamakura shogunate, and their father, Yasumitsu, was director of the government's Office of Construction and Repairs.

Yasumitsu was a loyal follower of the priest Ryokan of the True Word Pre-

cepts school who was highly active in political affairs. He strenuously opposed their beliefs and disowned Munenaka twice, in 1275 and again in 1277. By disowning Munenaka, Yasumitsu in effect was provoking a rift between the two sons, tempting the weaker Munenaga to trade his beliefs for the right to inherit his father's estate. Supported by the Daishonin's guidance and encouragement, however, Munenaga upheld his faith together with his brother, and in 1278, after a total of twenty-two years' practice, their united efforts finally led their father to accept faith in the Daishonin's teaching.

Notes

1. Ben is another name for Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Daishonin's six senior disciples. He devoted himself to propagation mainly in Kamakura.

2. The Benevolent Kings Sutra reads, "When two, three, four, or five suns appear at the same time, when the sun is eclipsed and loses its light . . . this is the first disaster."

3. The previous letter refers to *Letter to the Brothers* dated the sixteenth day of the fourth month, 1275.

4. This statement implies that, because the elder brother, Munenaka, will accept disinheritance and the accompanying social sanctions rather than renounce his faith, he is in effect giving his life for the Lotus Sutra.

5. Munemori (1147–1185) and Shigemori (1138–1179) were brothers and warriors belonging to the Taira clan, which took control of the Japanese court and held supreme power. Shigemori, the first son of Taira no Kiyomori, remonstrated with his father when he tried to confine the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa, while Munemori, the third son, followed his father's instructions. Shigemori died of illness, and Munemori, after the Taira forces were destroyed at Dannoura, attempted to drown himself, but was captured and eventually beheaded at Shinohara in Omi Province.

6. The lay priest of Musashi refers to Hojo Yoshimasa (1242–1281), a top official of the Kamakura government who held impor-

tant posts such as adviser to the regent and provincial governor.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.

8. Priest Two Fires (Ryoka) is a play on the name of Ryokan, the chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple of the True Word Precepts school. In the third month of 1275, a fire broke out in Gokuraku-ji where Ryokan was living and spread to the palace of the shogun. The temple burned to the ground, as did part of the palace.

9. The lord of Echigo refers to Hojo Naritoki, the fifth son of Hojo Shigetoki, the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji.

10. The clan of Hojo Tomotoki (1193-1245), the younger brother of Hojo Yasutoki, the third regent of the Kamakura

government. His clan was called the Nago clan after their place of residence in Kamakura. He and his clan are said to have been earnest believers of the Nembutsu school. All six of Tomotoki's sons met tragic ends.

11. A temple by the name of Zenko-ji no longer exists in Kamakura. Choraku-ji was a large temple of the Pure Land school. Daibutsu-den, or temple to house a great statue of Amida Buddha, is known as Kotoku-in.

12. The lord of Sagami refers to Hojo Tokimune (1251-1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government. The "enemy," which appears in this sentence, refers to the Mongols who invaded in 1274.

A Sage Perceives the Three Existences of Life



ASAGE is one who fully understands the three existences of life—past, present, and future. The Three Sovereigns, Five Emperors, and Three Sages referred to in Confucianism understood only the present; they knew neither the past nor the future. Brahmanists, however, were able to see eighty thousand kalpas into the past and future, thus in a small way resembling sages. People of the two vehicles of the Hinayana teachings were aware of the causes and effects in the past and future. Hence they were superior to the Brahmanists.

The Hinayana bodhisattvas spent three asamkhyā kalpas in the past in their practice, and the bodhisattvas of the connecting teaching spent as many kalpas as there are dust particles in the past in their practice. The bodhisattvas of the specific teaching knew myriad kotis of kalpas in the past in each of the stages of their practice.

In the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha spoke about a time major world system dust particle kalpas in the past. This teaching surpassed all the previous ones of his preaching life. Moreover, in the essential teaching of the sutra, the Buddha spoke about numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago and about all the kalpas that have ever passed, and he made proclamations

concerning matters countless kalpas in the future.

From the above it is clear that a thorough understanding of both the past and the future is intrinsic to the nature of a sage. Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, accurately predicted the near future, saying that he would enter nirvana in three months' time. Can there then be any doubt about his prediction for the distant future, that in the last five-hundred-year period after his passing, the Lotus Sutra would spread abroad widely? With such perception one can see the distant future by looking at what is close at hand. One can infer what will be from what exists in the present. This is the meaning of [the passage from the Lotus Sutra that says, "This reality consists of] the appearance . . . and their consistency from beginning to end."¹

Who should be acknowledged as the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the last five-hundred-year period? I do not yet trust my own wisdom, but because the rebellion and invasion that I predicted have occurred, I must trust it.² I do not say this just to impress others.

My disciples, know this! I am the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Since I follow in the footsteps of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, those who despise and slander me will have their heads broken into seven pieces,³ while those

who believe in me will amass good fortune as high as Mount Calm and Bright.

Question: Why is it that those who slander you have not yet had their heads broken into seven pieces?

Answer: Since ancient times, of all those who slandered sages other than the Buddha, only one or two have suffered punishment by having their heads broken. The offense of defaming Nichiren is not by any means limited to only one or two persons. The entire populace of Japan has in fact [slandered Nichiren and] had their heads broken. What else do you think caused the great earthquake of the Shoka era and the huge comet of the Bun'ei era?⁴

I, Nichiren, am the foremost sage in all Jambudvīpa. Nevertheless, from the ruler on down to the common people, all have despised and slandered me, attacked me with swords and staves,⁵ and even exiled me.⁶ That is why Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon,

and the four heavenly kings have incited a neighboring country to punish our land. This is clearly described in the Great Collection and Benevolent Kings sutras, the Nirvana Sutra, and the Lotus Sutra. Even if ten thousand prayers were to be offered, if the people fail to heed me, it is certain that this country will experience what happened on Iki and Tsushima.⁷

My disciples, you should believe what I say and watch what happens. These things do not occur because I myself am respectable, but because the power of the Lotus Sutra is supreme. If I praise myself, people will think that I am boastful, but if I humble myself, they will despise the sutra. The taller the pine tree, the longer the wisteria vine hanging from it. The deeper the source, the longer the stream. How fortunate, how joyful! In this impure land, I alone enjoy happiness and delight.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the first year of Kenji (1275) and sent it to Toki Jonin, a leading retainer of Lord Chiba, the constable of Shimosa Province, and Toki, one of the Daishonin's staunchest disciples, was a lay priest who lived in Shimosa, to the northeast of Kamakura. He received dozens of letters from the Daishonin, many of which contain significant revelations about teachings. Among these, *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind* is perhaps best known.

In the present letter, the Daishonin defines a sage as one who fully under-

stands the three existences of life—past, present, and future—and uses the term to indicate a Buddha. A Buddha's prophecy is based on the strict law of causality, which governs life throughout eternity. By observing the present with an understanding of causality, the past and the future may be known. Nichiren Daishonin declares himself to be the foremost sage in the entire world on the basis of the fulfillment of the prediction of rebellion at home and foreign invasion he made in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. "Their consistency from beginning to end" is the last of the ten factors. It implies that, by observing the beginning, or the first factor, that is, "appearance," one with the Buddha wisdom can discern the ultimate outcome, that is, the end, or "manifest effect."

2. This refers to the prophecies of internal strife and foreign invasion that were fulfilled in 1272 when Hojo Tokisuke revolted against his younger half brother, Regent Hojo Tokimune, and in 1274 when the Mongols attacked Japan.

3. Reference is to a verse in the "Dharani" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "If there are those who . . . trouble and disrupt the preachers of the Law, their heads will split into seven pieces like the

branches of the arjaka tree."

4. In 1257 a great earthquake devastated Kamakura, and in 1264 a huge comet, generally considered at that time to be an ominous sign, appeared.

5. References are to the Komatsubara Persecution in 1264, when the Daishonin and his followers were attacked by the steward Tojo Kagenobu, and to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271, when the Daishonin was struck in the face with the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra and shortly afterward was almost beheaded.

6. The exiles to the Izu Peninsula and Sado Island.

7. Iki and Tsushima are islands off the coast of Kyushu that were overrun by the Mongol invaders.

On Omens



STRANGE occurrences in the heavens astound all people, and calamities on earth disturb everyone. When the Buddha was about to preach the Lotus Sutra, he caused the five omens and the six omens to appear. Of these, the omen of the earth shaking indicates that the earth quaked and trembled in six different ways. The meaning of the six ways is explained in the third volume of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*: “[One of the six is that] the east rises and the west falls. The eastern quarter corresponds to the color blue and governs the liver, and the liver governs the eyes. The western quarter corresponds to the color white and governs the lungs, and the lungs govern the nose. Hence the east rising and the west falling indicates that the benefits of the sense of sight appear, and in response, the earthly desires of the sense of smell disappear. Similarly, when the benefits of the sense of smell appear, in response, the earthly desires of the sense of sight disappear. In like manner, the rise and fall of the other directions signifies the appearance of benefit and the disappearance of earthly desires with respect to the other sensory organs.”

Concerning this, the Great Teacher Miao-lo said: “One’s six sense organs represent the points of the compass. It

has already been established that the sense of sight and that of smell represent east and west. It follows, then, that the sense of hearing and that of taste correspond to north and south. Center¹ corresponds to the mind, and the four directions, to the body. The body is endowed with the four sense organs, and the mind is generally related to all four. Hence the mind induces rise or fall with respect to [the sensory functions of] the body.”²

The ten directions are the “environment,” and living beings are “life.” To illustrate, environment is like the shadow, and life, the body. Without the body, no shadow can exist, and without life, no environment. In the same way, life is shaped by its environment. The eyes are formed by the eastern quarter. From this we know that the tongue is formed by the southern quarter; the nose, the western; the ears, the northern; the body, all four quarters; and the mind, the center. Therefore, when the people’s five sense organs break down, the four quarters and the center will be startled and shaken, and, as signs of the consequent destruction of the land, mountains will collapse, grasses and trees will wither, and rivers will run dry. When the people’s eyes, ears, and other sense organs are startled and disturbed, changes will occur in the heavens, and when their

minds are agitated, the earth will quake.

What sutra was ever preached without the earth trembling in six different ways? This occurred each time the Buddha expounded a sutra. However, when the Buddha was about to expound the Lotus Sutra and the earth quaked in six different ways, the people were particularly astonished. Bodhisattva Maitreya asked a question about this phenomenon, and Bodhisattva Manjushri answered. All of this occurred because the omen was greater in both magnitude and duration than when the other sutras were preached, and thus the question, too, was much more difficult to resolve. That is why Miao-lo said, "Was any Mahayana sutra ever preached without multitudes of people gathering, without the Buddha emitting a ray of light from between his eyebrows, without flowers raining down from heaven, or without the earth quaking? However, none of them ever produced such great doubt."³ This comment means that, although there were omens for all the other sutras as well, none was ever as great as those that occurred when the Lotus Sutra was expounded. For that reason, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai said, "People say that, when a spider weaves its web, it means that some happy event is near, and that, if a magpie chatters, it foretells the coming of a guest. Even minor things are presaged by some sign. How then could great affairs be without omens? By means of the near, the distant is revealed."⁴ Thus when he expounded the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha manifested great portents never seen during his more than forty years of preaching.

The omens that heralded the essential teaching, however, were far greater than the omens that preceded the theoretical teaching, even more so than those had surpassed the omens that preceded the sutras expounded before the Lotus Sutra. The great quakes that

occurred when an enormous treasure tower sprang up from the earth and bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds emerged from beneath the earth⁵ seemed like gales blowing over the ocean, creating great waves the size of mountains that tossed small boats about like reed leaves, engulfing even their sails. Therefore, while Maitreya had inquired of Manjushri about the omens that appeared in the "Introduction" chapter, with regard to the great omens that occurred in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, he questioned the Buddha himself. Miao-lo explained this, saying: "The theoretical teaching concerns matters that are shallow and comparatively recent, and Manjushri could be relied on to answer. But because the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past is hard to comprehend, only the Buddha could be depended on for an explanation."⁶ Although the Buddha did not explain matters concerning the theoretical teaching, Manjushri generally understood. But he was unable to even begin to fathom matters connected with the essential teaching. And these great omens concerned events occurring in the Buddha's lifetime.

When the Buddha came to preach the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, he displayed ten supernatural powers. They were supernatural powers incomparably more wondrous than either the omens of the "Introduction" chapter or those of the "Treasure Tower" and "Emerging from the Earth" chapters. The ray of light that the Buddha emitted [from between his eyebrows] in the "Introduction" chapter illuminated eighteen thousand worlds in the eastern direction, but the great rays of light that he emitted [from all his pores] in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter illuminated all the worlds in the ten directions. While the quaking of the earth in the "Introduction" chapter was limited to the lands of a major

world system, in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter the lands of the Buddhas of the ten directions quaked severely, and all the lands trembled in six different ways. The omens that have appeared in our time are exactly like this.⁷ The great omens of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter foretold that the essence of the Lotus Sutra would spread widely after the Buddha’s demise, when the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law had passed and the Latter Day of the Law had begun. The sutra states, “Because after the Buddha has passed into extinction there will be those who can uphold this sutra, the Buddhas are all delighted and manifest immeasurable supernatural powers.”⁸ It also speaks of “the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law.”⁹

Question: Now all omens, whether good or bad, foretell something that will occur in an hour or two, a day or two, a year or two, or in seven or twelve years at the most. How could there be omens that foretell what will take place more than two thousand years later?

Answer: The event presaged by omens that appeared during the reign of King Chao of the Chou dynasty became a reality only after 1,015 years.¹⁰ King Kriki’s dream came true only after 22,000 years.¹¹ How, then, can you doubt the appearance of omens 2,000 and more years before the event?

Question: Why were the omens presaging the time after the Buddha’s passing greater than those that concerned his lifetime?

Answer: The earth moves in response to how the people’s six sense organs are affected. Depending on the extent of this influence, the six different ways in which the earth moves will vary in intensity. The sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra seem to extinguish people’s earthly desires [associated with their six sense organs], but in

reality they do not. In contrast, the Lotus Sutra conquers the fundamental darkness [from which all earthly desires originate]. Hence the earth shakes severely. Moreover, there are many more evil people in this latter age than during the Buddha’s lifetime. It was for these reasons that the Buddha taught and showed that the omens that would appear in the Latter Day of the Law would be still greater than those of his own time.

Question: What proof can you offer?

Answer: The sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?”¹² Setting aside the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities, in the more than two thousand years of the ninety reigns of human rulers, the great earthquake of the Shoka era and the extraordinary phenomenon that appeared in the heavens during the Bun’ei era¹³ were prodigies unprecedented in Japan. If the people are filled with joy, auspicious omens will appear in the heavens, and the god Shakra will shake the earth. If evil thrives in people’s minds, ominous changes will take place in the heavens and terrible calamities will occur on earth. The magnitude of the changes in the heavens varies in accordance with the degree of the people’s anger; the same is true of the disasters on earth. Japan today is filled with people, from the ruler on down to the general populace, with minds of great evil. The source of this evil has arisen in connection with me.

There is a sutra entitled the Protection Sutra, one that came after the Lotus. It relates how King Ajatashatru went to the Buddha and asked, “Every year, my country has been beset by great droughts, violent gales, floods, famine, and pestilence. Moreover, we have been attacked by another nation.

Why should all these disasters occur, when this is the very country in which the Buddha made his advent?"

The Buddha replied: "Splendid, splendid! It is admirable of you, O great king, to have asked this question. But you have committed many wrongs and evils. Among them, you killed your own father, and taking Devadatta as your teacher, you did me injury. Because these two offenses are so serious, your country is beset by innumerable disasters." The sutra goes on to quote the Buddha as saying: "After my death, in the Latter Day of the Law, when monks like Devadatta fill the land, a single monk will appear who embraces the correct teaching. Those evil monks will exile and put to death this man of the correct teaching. They will violate not only the king's consort but also the daughters of the common people, thereby filling the country with the seed of slanderers. For this reason, the nation will suffer various calamities and will later be invaded by another country."

The priests of Nembutsu today are exactly like the evil monks mentioned

in the above sutra. Moreover, the great conceit of the True Word school's teachers exceeds that of Devadatta a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times. I will briefly describe the strangeness of the True Word school. Its priests paint a picture of the nine honored ones seated on an eight-petaled lotus in the center of the Womb Realm. Then they climb onto this picture, and stepping on the faces of the Buddhas, conduct their ceremony of anointment. It is as if they were trampling on the faces of their own parents or treading on their emperor's head. Such priests as these fill the entire country and have become the teachers of both high and low. No wonder the nation faces ruin!

This is my most important teaching. I will explain it again on another occasion. I have written to you a little about it before, but do not speak of it indiscriminately to others. You have sent me expressions of your sincerity not just once or twice, but whenever an opportunity presented itself. I can find no words to express my appreciation.



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the first year of Kenji (1275), when Nichiren Daishonin was fifty-four years old. As the closing part of this letter is missing, the identity of its recipient is uncertain, but it is generally thought to have been addressed to Shijo Kingo, a samurai and one of the Daishonin's most loyal followers. Shijo Kingo was at this time facing opposition from his lord and his fellow samurai on account of his faith.

In the tenth month of 1274, the Mongols launched a massive attack against the southern part of Japan. The

next year, Khubilai Khan again sent envoys, threatening another invasion if the Japanese government did not acknowledge fealty to the Mongol empire. *On Omens* interprets the Mongol threat and other recent calamities in the light of the Daishonin's teaching.

In the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin discusses the omens that appeared when Shakyamuni Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra in terms of the principle of the oneness of life and its environment. Expanding on this principle, he explains that, when the people's six sense organs, or percep-

tive faculties, are deluded, extraordinary changes occur in the heavens and on earth. This reflects the truth that, while life and its environment may seem to be two independent phenomena, fundamentally they are one and inseparable.

Next, the Daishonin explains that the Buddha's preaching is always preceded by omens, whose magnitude reflects the depth of the teaching about to be revealed. Thus the portents heralding the preaching of the Lotus Sutra were greater than those preceding any other sutra. Moreover, the signs presaging the essential teaching (latter half) of the Lotus Sutra far surpassed those introducing the theoretical teaching (former half). The Daishonin refers to the emergence of the treasure tower and the appearance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as omens revealing the superiority of the essential teaching over the theoretical teaching. Furthermore, he says, the great portents of the "Super-

natural Powers" chapter surpass even those, and foretell that the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo indicated in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter will spread widely in the Latter Day of the Law.

The Daishonin then turns to the upheavals and strange occurrences in the Japan of his own time. All of these, he concludes, occur because people oppose the votary of the Lotus Sutra, who propagates its essence in the Latter Day. Specifically, he warns that, because of the slander perpetrated by Nembutsu and True Word priests, Japan will be destroyed by a foreign country. And, he says, the people suffer from great calamities because they are persecuting "a single monk . . . who embraces the correct teaching"—that is, the Daishonin. In this way, he reassures his follower of the correctness of his teaching and emphasizes the inevitability of persecution.

Notes

1. That is, of the compass. The point at which the four directions converge.
2. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*
5. In chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra, the tower of Many Treasures Buddha emerges from beneath the earth. T'ien-t'ai explained that the tower appeared in order to verify the truth of the theoretical teaching and pave the way for the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past as taught in the essential teaching. The emergence of the tower is therefore regarded as an omen heralding the preaching of the essential teaching. In chapter 15, the earth opens and the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth appear. They are later entrusted by the Buddha with the mission of propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day of the Law. Their appearance at this point in the sutra provides an opportunity for Shakyamuni to reveal his true identity, which he does in chapter 16, "Life Span."

6. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

7. This refers to the great earthquake that occurred in 1257, which will be referred to later in the text as the "great earthquake of the Shoka era."

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 17.

10. According to *The Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou*, in the twenty-fourth year (trad. date 1029 B.C.E.) of the reign of King Chao, the fourth ruler of the Chou dynasty in ancient China, on the night of the eighth day of the fourth month, five-colored rays of light spread across the sky, the earth shook in six different ways, and, though no rain fell, rivers, streams, wells, and ponds overflowed with water, and all the trees and grasses bloomed and bore fruit. King Chao was surprised, but the Grand Historian Su Yu performed divinations and announced, "A sage has been born in the western region. One thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country." It is said that, just as he predicted, 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing, during the reign of Em-

peror Ming in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67), the doctrines of Buddhism were introduced to China.

11. This story appears in the Protection Sutra. King Kriki was the father of Kashyapa Buddha, the sixth of the seven Buddhas of the past, the last of whom is Shakyamuni. One day he dreamed about ten monkeys. Nine of the monkeys harassed the people of the city, robbed them of their food and drink, and went on a destructive rampage. One of the ten, however, would not join the others, but remained sitting in

a tree. He was therefore tormented and expelled from the community of monkeys. When King Kriki asked Kashyapa Buddha about this dream, the Buddha said, "It represents the evil latter age after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. The ten monkeys represent his ten kinds of disciples, only one of whom is a true shramana (practitioner) who renounces the world and endeavors to seek the way."

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

13. This refers to a huge comet that appeared in 1264.

Letter to the Priests of Seicho-ji



LET us congratulate each other on the coming of the New Year! Since you paid me no visit last year, I have been worried that something unfortunate might have occurred. If you have a chance to call on me, would you borrow for me from the priest Ise-ko *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*, and the other commentaries of the True Word school? I need them in order to refute the True Word priests who have for some time been clamoring against me. Bring with you also volumes one and two of *Great Concentration and Insight*. I would also appreciate *Tung-ch'un* and *The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* if they are available. Borrow *The Collection of Tendai Documents*, which is owned by Kanchi-bo, the disciple of Enchi-bo. I have heard people say that he possesses not only that, but other relevant writings. Please borrow them as well, and tell him that I will return them as soon as possible. This year the question of which Buddhist teachings are right and which are wrong will definitely be resolved.

Tell Joken-bo, Gijo-bo, and the other priests on my behalf: "Nichiren has often been on the verge of being killed. Twice he was exiled and once almost beheaded. This is not because of any worldly wrongs on his part. [As a

youth,] he received great wisdom from the living Bodhisattva Space Treasury. He prayed to the bodhisattva to become the wisest person in Japan. The bodhisattva must have taken pity on him, for he presented him with a great jewel as brilliant as the morning star, which Nichiren tucked away in his right sleeve. Thereafter, on perusing the entire body of sutras, he was able to discern in essence the relative worth of the eight schools as well as of all the scriptures."

The True Word school, among others, attempts to destroy the Lotus Sutra. It is essential to refute the True Word teachings, so in preparation I first attacked the errors of the Zen and Nichiren schools. I have good reason for my accusations. I will reserve discussion of the rights and wrongs of Buddhist schools in India and China for some other time, but as for Japan, all the people have discarded the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra and are therefore without exception destined to fall into the evil paths. This is because, at each and every temple, the True Word school invariably exists side by side with the Lotus school, just as a shadow follows the body. Thus, to the practice of the Lotus Sutra that accords with the Law is added the eighteen paths,¹ and to the practice of repentance is added one based on the Amida Sutra. And in conferring titles upon priests of the Tendai

school, the True Word procedure predominates, while that of the Lotus Sutra is relegated to a secondary position.

In reality, the True Word sutras belong to the provisional teachings preached before the Lotus Sutra and are inferior even to the Flower Garland or the Wisdom sutras. Yet Jikaku and Kobo were confused on this point and held that the True Word sutras were equal or even superior to the Lotus Sutra. The eye-opening ceremony for a newly made image of the Buddha² is therefore conducted with the mudra of the Honored One Buddha Eye and the mantra of the Buddha Mahavairochana. As a result, all the wooden and painted images of the Buddha in Japan have been rendered soulless and sightless, and in consequence, have been possessed by the heavenly devil, bringing ruin upon their own worshipers. This is why the imperial court [in Kyoto] is about to perish. Now the evil teaching of the True Word school has made its appearance in Kamakura and threatens to destroy all of Japan.

The Zen and Pure Land schools also hold extremely perverted views. I knew that if I declared this it would certainly cost me my life. Yet I was determined to requite the favor of Bodhisattva Space Treasury. With this in mind, on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253), I pointed out the errors of the various schools for the first time to a priest called Joen-bo and to some of the people on the southern side of the image hall in Dozen-bo's quarters at Seicho-ji temple in Tojo Village of Awa Province. During the more than twenty years since then, I have spoken out with unremitting zeal, and I have been either driven from my dwelling or exiled. In former days Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was beaten with staves; now Nichiren must face the sword.

All the people in Japan, both wise and foolish, from the sovereign on

down to the common people, say that the priest Nichiren is no match for the scholars, teachers, great teachers, and eminent priests of old. I waited for the right time to dispel their distrust of me. The time finally came when a great earthquake occurred in the Shoka era, followed by the appearance of a huge comet in the Bun'ei era.³ Observing these, I made this prediction: "Our country will suffer two terrible disasters: internal strife and foreign invasion. The former will take place in Kamakura in the form of internecine strife among the descendants of the acting administrator.⁴ The latter may come from any direction, but that from the west⁵ would be the most violent. This latter will occur solely because all the Buddhist schools in Japan are incorrect, and Brahma and Shakra will therefore command other countries to attack us. So long as the country refuses to heed me, it will certainly be defeated, even if it has a hundred, a thousand, or even ten thousand generals as brave as Masakado, Sumitomo, Sadato, Toshihito, or Tamura. If these words of mine prove false, then the people are free to believe in the distorted views of the True Word, Nembutsu, and other schools." This is the prediction that I have made known far and wide.

Above all, if the priests of Mount Kiyosumi treat me with less respect than they show their own parents or the three treasures, they will become wretched beggars in this life and will fall into the hell of incessant suffering in the next. I will explain why. The villainous Tojo Saemon Kagenobu once hunted the deer and other animals kept by Seicho-ji, and tried to force the priests in the various lodging temples to become Nembutsu believers. At that time I pitted myself against Tojo and supported the lord of the manor.⁶ I composed a fervent oath that read, "If the two temples Kiyosumi and Futama⁷ should come into Tojo's pos-

session, I will discard the Lotus Sutra!" Then I tied it to the hand of the object of devotion, to which I prayed continuously. Within a year, both temples had been freed from Tojo's grasp. Certainly Bodhisattva Space Treasury will never forget this, so how can those priests who make light of me avoid being forsaken by the heavenly gods? Hearing me say this, the more foolish of you may think that I am invoking a curse upon you. But that is not so. I am warning you simply because it would be a pity if you should fall into the hell of incessant suffering after your death.

Let me say a few words about the lay nun, the wife of the lord of the manor. Being a woman and foolish, when threatened by others, she must have thought that what they were saying was true. I pity her because, having forgotten her debt of gratitude, she will fall into the evil paths in her next existence. Despite that, however, she treated my parents with kindness, so I am praying that I may somehow be able to save her from that fate.

The Lotus Sutra is none other than the scripture that reveals that Shakyamuni became a Buddha numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. It also predicts that Shariputra and the other disciples will become Buddhas in the future. Those who do not believe the sutra will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Not only did Shakyamuni himself declare all this, but Many Treasures Buddha also testified to its truth, and the Buddhas of the ten directions extended their tongues by way of verification. Furthermore, the Lotus Sutra teaches that the votary of this sutra will receive the protection of

the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, the bodhisattvas Manjushri and Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the ten demon daughters. Thus there is no other way to attain Buddhahood. It is in the true Lotus Sutra that matters of the past and future are spoken of correctly.

I have never seen Tsukushi, nor do I know anything about the barbarians [of the west]. Yet the prediction I made in light of the entire body of sutras [concerning foreign invasion] has already come true. Hence, when I say that you will all fall into the hell of incessant suffering because of your ingratitude, how can my words prove false? You may be safe for the time being, but wait and see what happens later. All of Japan will be reduced to the same miserable state in which the islands of Iki and Tsushima now find themselves. When vast numbers of Mongol hordes close in on the province of Awa, those of you priests who cling to prejudiced views will cringe in terror and finally fall into the hell of incessant suffering, saying, "Now I know that the priest Nichiren was right." What a pity! What a pity indeed!

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the first month

To the priests of Seicho-ji in the province of Awa

This letter is to be read aloud by the priest Sado and Acharya Suke⁸ before the statue of Bodhisattva Space Treasury for all the priests of Seicho-ji to hear.



Background

This letter was written in the first month of the second year of Kenji (1276), while Nichiren Daishonin was living at Minobu. As the title indicates, it was addressed to the priests of Seicho-ji on Mount Kiyosumi, the temple to which the Daishonin had been sent as a child to study.

Seicho-ji was founded in 771 by a priest named Fushigi, who enshrined there an image of Bodhisattva Space Treasury that he had carved from an oak tree. Bodhisattva Space Treasury was believed to possess wisdom and good fortune as vast as the universe.

Seicho-ji, which belonged to the Tendai school, at first became a center for the study of the Lotus Sutra. Then

it fell under the influence of the True Word school, which promoted esoteric rituals, and later adopted Pure Land teachings, which relied on Amida Buddha. Nichiren Daishonin was formally ordained at the age of sixteen and later left the temple to visit the great centers of Buddhist learning so as to further his study of Buddhism. The Daishonin says in this letter that he had obtained “a great jewel,” meaning that he attained Buddha wisdom. He then went on to deepen his understanding of the sutras and other works in the Buddhist tradition. Eventually, in 1253, twenty years after he had entered Seicho-ji, he proclaimed the teaching of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo for the first time.

Notes

1. The eighteen paths refer to the True Word school's mandala worship. The school's Womb Realm and Diamond Realm mandalas each contain nine primary objects of devotion. True Word practitioners join their fingers in eighteen different ways when they meditate on these eighteen objects of devotion.

2. This refers to the ceremony for imbuing a newly made Buddha image with spiritual properties, thus making it an object of devotion. The honored one Buddha Eye, described in the esoteric True Word teaching, represents the virtues of the five types of vision (*see* Glossary).

3. References are to the earthquake that struck Kamakura in 1257 and to the comet that appeared in 1264.

4. Reference is to Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224), the second regent of the Kamakura government, who defeated the imperial forces during the Jokyu Disturbance (1221) and established the regency's control over western Japan. “Interneine strife” refers to

the uprising in the second month of 1272, when Hojo Tokisuke staged an ill-fated rebellion against his younger half brother, the regent Hojo Tokimune.

5. Indicates the Mongol empire.

6. “The lord of the manor” refers to Hojo Tomotoki, a younger brother of Hojo Yasutoki, the third regent of the Kamakura government. His wife was called the lay nun of Nagoe, or Oama (literally, elder nun). She became a lay supporter of the Daishonin, but later abandoned her faith.

7. These were temples located in Tojo Village, Awa Province. Kiyosumi is another name for Seicho-ji, but little is known about Futama.

8. Sado is another name for Niko (1253–1314), one of the six senior disciples of the Daishonin. Acharya Suke is believed to have been a follower of the Daishonin and a confidant of the lord of Tojo Village. According to another view, he was one of the priests of Seicho-ji temple.

Good Fortune in This Life



EARLY in the New Year¹ I received your greetings from your messenger. Let us congratulate each other! And I have received your various gifts, including seventy slabs of rice cake, a bamboo container of sake, a horseload of taros, one paper bag of river laver, two bundles of radishes, and seven yams. These articles demonstrate your warmhearted sincerity.

The eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, “Their wishes will not be in vain, and in this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune.”² It also states, “In this present existence he will have manifest reward for it.”³ The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai said, “The Son of Heaven uttered not a single word in vain,” and “The words of the Dharma King contain no falsehoods.”⁴ If one is a worthy ruler, one never lies, even if it would bring about one’s ruin. How much more is this true of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who, when he was King Universal Brightness in a previous existence, returned to the palace of King Spotted Feet [to be executed] because he observed the precept against lying! When he met King Kali in another past existence, he declared that those people who speak little truth or tell great lies will fall into hell. In addition, referring to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha himself declares there, “The World-Honored

One [has long expounded his doctrines and] now must reveal the truth,”⁵ and furthermore, it was expounded at the assembly where Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions had gathered as if the sun, the moon, and countless stars were ranged side by side. If there are any falsehoods in the Lotus Sutra, what then can people believe in?

Those who offer even a flower or a stick of incense to such a sutra have offered alms to a hundred thousand million Buddhas in their previous existences. Moreover, in the Latter Day of the Law of Shakyamuni Thus Come One, when the world is in chaos, and the ruler, his ministers, and the common people all alike hate the votary of the Lotus Sutra; when this votary is like a fish living in a puddle during a drought, or like a deer surrounded by all sorts of people, those who visit this votary on their own will obtain far greater blessings than they would by making offerings with their mind, mouth, and body for the space of an entire kalpa to the living Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. The golden words of the Thus Come One are clear.

The sun is brilliant, and the moon, clear. The words of the Lotus Sutra are brilliant and clear, clear and brilliant, like the reflection of a face in a bright

mirror, or the image of the moon on clear water. Yet could the Thus Come One's pronouncement "In this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune," or his proclamation "In this present existence he will have manifest reward for it" possibly be empty only for Nanjo Shichiro Jiro? It is certain that, even if there were an age when the sun rises in the west, or a time were to come when the moon emerges from the ground, the Buddha's words would never prove false. Judging from this,

there cannot be the least doubt that your late father is now in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and that you will receive great blessings in your present existence. How wonderful, how splendid!

Nichiren

The nineteenth day of the first month in the second year of Kenji (1276)

Reply to Nanjo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu when the Daishonin was fifty-five years old. Its recipient was Nanjo Shichiro Jiro Tokimitsu, commonly known as Nanjo Tokimitsu, a staunch follower of the Daishonin and the steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province.

In the letter, citing the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin says that those who serve the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, even for

a short time, will gain incalculably greater good fortune than those who serve Shakyamuni Buddha for an entire kalpa. Since all Buddhas have attested to the truth of the Lotus and it contains not a particle of falsehood, no doubt can exist that Tokimitsu's sincerity not only will bring him great blessings in his present existence, as the sutra promises, but also will benefit his deceased father.

Notes

1. According to the traditional Chinese and Japanese calendar, the New Year is also the beginning of spring.
2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.
3. Ibid. The full passage reads, "If there is anyone who offers alms to them [those who accept, uphold, read, and recite this

sutra] and praises them, then in this present existence he will have manifest reward for it."

4. A rephrasing of two passages in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

The Bow and Arrow



I HAVE received one thousand coins and a bamboo container.

It is the power of the bow that determines the flight of the arrow, the might of the dragon that controls the movement of the clouds, and the strength of the wife that guides the actions of her husband. In the same way, it is your support that has enabled Toki to visit me here now. We know the fire by its smoke, discern the nature of the dragon by the rain, and recognize the wife by observing her husband. Thus, meeting here at this moment with Toki, I feel as if I were seeing you.

Toki has told me that, while grieved at his mother's death, he was grateful that she passed away peacefully, and that you gave her such attentive care. He said joyfully that he would never be able to forget this in any lifetime to come.

My greatest concern now is your illness. Fully convinced that you will recover your health, you should continue moxibustion treatment for three years, as regularly as if you had just begun. Even those who are free from illness cannot escape the transience of life, but you are not yet old, and because you are a votary of the Lotus Sutra, you will not meet an untimely death. Your illness is surely not due to karma, but even if it were, you could

rely on the power of the Lotus Sutra to cure it.

King Ajatashatru extended his life by forty years by embracing the Lotus Sutra. Ch'en Chen added fifteen years to his life. You also are a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, and your faith is like the waxing moon or the rising tide. Be deeply convinced, then, that your illness cannot possibly persist, and that your life cannot fail to be extended! Take care of yourself, and do not burden your mind with grief.

When sorrows arise, think of Iki and Tsushima, and of the Dazaifu office.¹ Or think of the people of Kamakura, who were enjoying the delights of the heavenly realm; but when the soldiers left for Tsukushi, their parting with their wives and children who stayed behind was like bark being ripped from a tree. They pressed their faces together and lamented while gazing into each other's eyes. Now the men gradually grow more distant, traveling through Yui Beach, Inamura, Koshigoe, Sakawa, and the Hakone pass. And so, as one day passes and then another goes by, they march farther and farther away, and rivers, mountains, and clouds are interposed between them and their families. Tears accompany them, and grief is their companion. How sorrowful they must be!

If the Mongol armies should come

and attack while they are thus lamenting, they will be taken prisoner, whether in the mountains or on the sea, and will suffer misery in ships or in Koryō [Korea]. This is entirely because of the treatment people have accorded Nichiren, the votary of the Lotus Sutra, who has committed no fault and is father and mother to all the living beings of Japan. Without reason, they revile and beat him, and parade him through the streets. Such insanity has provoked reprimands from the ten demon daughters, causing the present situation to arise. In addition, events that are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more difficult to endure will occur in the future. You will see such mysteries unfold before your eyes.

There is nothing to lament when we consider that we will surely become Buddhas. Even if one were to become an emperor's consort, of what use would it be? Even if one were to be reborn in heaven, what end would it serve? Instead, you will follow the way of the dragon king's daughter and rank with the nun Mahaprajapati. How wonderful! How wonderful! Please chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the third
month

To the lay nun Toki



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to the lay nun Toki in the third month of the second year of Kenji (1276) and entrusted its delivery to her husband, Toki Jonin, who was visiting Minobu at the time.

Toki's mother had passed away toward the end of the second month of the year. In the third month, Toki carried her ashes from his home in Wakamiya, Shimosa Province, to distant Minobu, where a memorial service was performed for her. From a letter the Daishonin sent to Toki one year earlier, in 1275, it is clear that Toki's mother was over ninety years old when she died. It is also thought that she had been extremely fond of her son.

The contents of this letter suggest that the lay nun Toki did her best to support and assist her husband. In addition, the Daishonin likens her faith to "the waxing moon or the rising

tide," suggesting that she was diligent in her practice. He also conveys Toki's feelings regarding his mother's death as well as his sense of gratitude toward the lay nun for her attentive care of her mother-in-law. Thus the Daishonin compassionately encourages the lay nun Toki during her illness, which she had been battling since the previous year.

It is possible that her illness was due at least in part to the exhausting effort of caring for her mother-in-law. The Daishonin expresses concern over her health in this letter and in another letter sent to Toki Jonin in the eleventh month of 1276, in which he writes: "I think of your wife's illness as if it were my own, and am praying to heaven day and night." Although the year of the lay nun's death is not certain, one source indicates 1303, which suggests that she was indeed able to recover and live many years longer.

Note

1. Iki and Tsushima are islands off the coast of Kyushu in southern Japan that bore the brunt of the Mongol attack in 1274. The Dazaifu office was the administrative center for Kyushu, Iki, and Tsushima, and served as a foreign affairs conduit and as a rallying point in the case of foreign in-

vasion. During the attack of 1274, it was a focal point of defense against the Mongols. Even after the attack had ended, many warriors were sent to Tsukushi, or Kyushu, from throughout the country to guard against a second attack.

Letter to Konichi-bo



IN the ninth month of the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), with the cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, I incurred the wrath of the ruler and was exiled to Sado Island in the northern sea. While I was living in Kamakura in Sagami Province, I somehow longed for Awa Province since it was my birthplace. Yet though it was my homeland, something about how the people there felt toward me made it difficult for me to be on close terms with them, so I rarely went to visit. I then incurred the ruler's wrath and was to have been put to death, but instead I was banished from Sagami Province. It seemed that, unless some extraordinary circumstance arose, I could never return to Kamakura, and therefore I would never again be able to visit my parents' grave. As I continued to think this way, I was consumed by remorse, feeling that I wanted to go there immediately. Why, I lamented, before finding myself in this predicament, had I not crossed seas and traversed mountains every day, or even once a month, to visit my parents' grave and to inquire after my teacher?¹

Su Wu² was a prisoner in the land of the northern barbarians for nineteen years. He envied the wild geese as they migrated southward. Nakamaro³ went to T'ang China as an emissary of the Japanese imperial court. Years passed, but he was not permitted to return

home. Whenever he saw the moon rise in the east, he would console himself by thinking that the same moon must be shining above Mount Mikasa in his native province, and that the people there must even at that moment be gazing at it. Just when I was overwhelmed by similar longings for home, I received from my native province the robe you had entrusted to someone journeying to Sado Island. Su Wu's life was sustained by a mere letter tied to a wild goose's leg, while I actually received such clothing! His joy could not possibly have compared to mine.

The people of this country are continually deceived by the Nembutsu priests, or by the Zen, Precepts, or True Word schools. Thus they act outwardly as though they revere the Lotus Sutra, but in their hearts they do not believe in it. Therefore, although I, Nichiren, do not think that I have done anything particularly wrong, when I assert the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra, they all resent me, just as the people in the Latter Day of the Law of Awesome Sound King Buddha detested Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. From the ruler on down to the common people, they hate even to hear my name, let alone see me. Therefore, although I was innocent of any wrongdoing, once exiled, I could not possibly be pardoned. To compound matters, I had

denounced the Nembutsu—which the people of Japan revere more deeply than their own parents and more highly than the sun and moon—as the karmic cause that leads to the hell of incessant suffering. I attacked the Zen school as the invention of the heavenly devil, and the True Word school as an evil doctrine that will ruin the nation, and insisted that the temples of the Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts priests be burned down and the Nembutsu priests and the others beheaded.⁴ I even went so far as to assert that the two deceased lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji⁵ had fallen into the Avichi hell. Such was the gravity of my offense. Having voiced such serious charges to all people both high and low, whether or not I had spoken in error, I could never again rise in the world. Even worse, I repeated such things morning and evening and discussed them day and night. I also sternly informed Hei no Saemon and several hundred officers that, no matter what punishment I might incur, I would not stop declaring these matters. Therefore, even if a boulder at the bottom of the sea that requires a thousand men to move it were to surface by itself, or if rain falling from the sky should fail to reach the ground, I, Nichiren, still could not possibly have returned to Kamakura.

Nevertheless, I encouraged myself by thinking that, if the teaching of the Lotus Sutra was indeed true and the gods of the sun and moon did not abandon me, I might yet have an opportunity to return to Kamakura and also visit my parents' grave. Climbing a high mountain, I would shout these words aloud: "What has happened to Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings? Are the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman no longer in this country? Do you intend to break the vow you made in the Buddha's

presence and forsake the votary of the Lotus Sutra? Even if you fail to protect me, Nichiren, I will have no regrets, no matter what may happen to me. Remember, however, what you each solemnly pledged in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Thus Come One Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. If you abandon me instead of protecting me now, will you not be making a great lie out of the Lotus Sutra, in which the Buddha declared that he was 'honestly discarding expedient means'?⁶ You will have deceived all the Buddhas throughout the ten directions and the three existences, an offense even graver than Devadatta's outrageous falsehoods and surpassing the Venerable Kokalika's deceptions. Now you may be respected as the great heavenly king Brahma and live atop the world of form, or be revered as the Thousand-Eyed God⁷ and dwell on the summit of Mount Sumeru. But if you discard me, Nichiren, you will become firewood to feed the flames of the Avichi hell and be forever confined to the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. If you dread committing this offense, make haste to manifest some sign to the country, so that I may be permitted to return home!"

Then in the eleventh month, shortly after my arrest on the twelfth day of the ninth month, a rebellion broke out,⁸ and on the eleventh day of the second month in the following year, several generals, mighty protectors of Japan, were killed in vain. It was clear that heaven had meted out its punishment. Apparently shaken by this incident, the authorities released my imprisoned disciples.

However, I myself had not yet been pardoned, so I continued to berate the heavenly gods all the more vehemently. Then one day, a white-headed crow flew overhead. I remembered that Prince Tan of Yen had been released

when a horned horse and a white-headed crow appeared,⁹ and recalled the Honorable Nichizo's poem:¹⁰ "Even the mountain crow's head / Has turned white. / The time for my return home / Must have come at last." I was now convinced that I would be released before long. As I had expected, the government issued a letter of pardon on the fourteenth day of the second month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274), which arrived in the province of Sado on the eighth day of the third month.

I left my dwelling on Sado on the thirteenth day of that month and reached a harbor called Maura, where I spent the night of the fourteenth. I should have arrived at the harbor of Teradomari in Echigo Province on the fifteenth, but a gale blew us off course. Fortunately, however, we reached Kashiwazaki after two days at sea, and on the following day I arrived at the provincial seat of Echigo. Thus, after traveling for twelve days,¹¹ I finally returned to Kamakura on the twenty-sixth day of the third month. On the eighth day of the fourth month, I had a meeting with Hei no Saemon. As I had expected all along, my warnings went unheeded. I now had remonstrated with the authorities three times¹² for the sole purpose of saving Japan from ruin. Mindful that one whose warnings are thrice ignored should retire to a mountain forest, I left Kamakura on the twelfth day of the fifth month.

I had thought at the time of going to my birthplace to visit my parents' grave once again. However, it is the tradition of both Buddhism and the secular world that one should return home in glory. Had I returned without any honor worthy of mention, would I not have proven myself an unfilial son? Since I had already overcome such hardships and returned to Kamakura, I thought that I might still have some

opportunity to return home in triumph, and that I would wait until such time to visit my parents' grave. Because I feel deeply about this, I have yet to travel to my birthplace. But I am so homesick that, whenever someone says that the wind is blowing from the east, I rush out from my dwelling to feel it, and if told that clouds are gathering in the eastern sky, I stand in the garden to watch them. With such emotions, my heart warms even toward those with whom I would not otherwise be friendly if they are from my native province. Imagine, then, how beside myself I was with joy at receiving your letter! I opened and read it in great haste, only to learn that you had lost your son Yashiro the year before last, on the eighth day of the sixth month. I had been delighted before I opened your letter, but then, upon reading the sad news, I wished I had not opened it in such a hurry. I felt regret such as Urashima Taro¹³ must have experienced upon opening his casket.

I never think lightly of the people from my native province, nor do I cease to care about what happens to them, even if they have caused me sorrow or treated me cruelly. Your son especially impressed me. His handsome appearance made him stand out among the others, and in his thoughtful air there seemed no trace of obstinacy. I first saw him during one of my lectures on the Lotus Sutra. Since there were many strangers present, I did not venture to address him. When my lecture ended, my listeners left, as did your son. But later he sent a messenger to convey the following.

"I am from a place called Amatsu in the province of Awa. Since my childhood, I have always greatly admired your commitment. My mother also thinks highly of you. I may be speaking with undue familiarity, but there is something about which I would like to seek your counsel in confidence. I

know that I should wait until after we have met several times and are better acquainted. However, as I am in the service of a certain warrior, I have little time to spare, and the matter is quite urgent. Therefore, while fully aware that I am being rude, I ask that you grant me an interview."

In this way he courteously asked to consult with me. Moreover, since he was from my native province, I told him he need not stand on ceremony and invited him to my residence. He talked in great detail about the past and future. Then he said, "Impermanence is the way of the world. No one knows when one may die. Moreover, I am committed to a warrior's service, and I cannot avoid a challenge to combat that I have lately received. I dread what may await me in my next life. I beg you to help me."

I gave him instruction, quoting sutra passages. Then he lamented, saying, "I can do nothing for my deceased father. But should I die before my widowed mother, I would be an unfilial son. Should anything happen to me, please ask your disciples to look after her."

In this respectful way, he made his request. Am I right in assuming that nothing untoward happened on that occasion, but that some later incident brought about his death?

No one born human, whether high or low, is free from sorrow and distress. Yet troubles vary according to the time and differ according to the person. In this respect, sorrow is like illness: no matter what malady one may suffer from, as it worsens, one will think that no illness could be more dreadful. There is the sorrow of parting from one's lord, of parting from one's parent, and of parting from one's spouse, none of which can be lightly dismissed. However, one may serve another lord or find comfort in remarrying. But the sorrow of having lost one's parent or child seems only to deepen as the days

and months pass. Yet although death is sorrowful in any case, for parents to die and their children to live on is the natural course of things. It is pitiful indeed for an aged mother to be preceded by her child in death! You may well feel resentment toward both the gods and Buddhas. Why did they not take you instead of your son? Why did they let you survive only to be tormented by such grief? It must be truly hard to bear.

Even animals of little intelligence cannot endure parting from their young. The golden pheasant at Bamboo Grove Monastery plunged into flames and died to save her eggs.¹⁴ The stag at Deer Park offered himself to the king to save a female deer's unborn fawn.¹⁵ How much greater, then, must be the love of human beings toward their children! Thus, Wang Ling's mother smashed her own skull [and died to prevent her son from becoming a traitor],¹⁶ and the consort of Emperor Shen Yao had her abdomen cut open for the sake of an unborn prince.¹⁷ When you consider these examples, I am certain you must feel that you would not hesitate to plunge into fire yourself, or to smash your own skull if, by so doing, you could see your son again. In imagining your grief, my tears do not cease.

You say in your letter, "Because my son killed others, I would like you to tell me into what kind of place he may be reborn." A needle sinks in water, and rain will not remain in the sky. Those who kill even an ant are destined for hell, and those who merely cut up dead bodies cannot avoid the evil paths. All the more must those who kill human beings suffer. However, even a large rock can float on the sea when carried aboard a boat. Does not water extinguish even a great fire? Even a small error will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. Yet even a grave offense can be

eradicated if one repents of it sincerely.

The monk who stole millet was reborn as an ox for five hundred consecutive lifetimes.¹⁸ The person who plucked water oats fell into the three evil paths.¹⁹ The more than eighty thousand kings, including Rama, Bhadrīka, Viruchin, Nahusha, Karttika, Vishakha, Moonlight, Light Bright, Sunlight, Craving, and Holder of Many People, all ascended the throne by killing their fathers. As they did not encounter good teachers, their offenses could not be eradicated, and in the end they fell into the Avichi hell.

There was a wicked man named Ajita in the city of Varanasi. Falling in love with his own mother, he killed his father and made her his wife. When the arhat who had been his father's teacher admonished him, he killed that arhat, and when his mother took another man for a husband, he killed her as well. Thus he committed three of the five cardinal sins. Shunned by his neighbors, he had no place to turn. He went to Jetavana Monastery and sought admittance to the Buddhist Order, but the monks refused. The evil in his heart grew more rampant than ever, and he burned down many of the monks' quarters. Finally, however, he met Shakyamuni Buddha and was permitted to become a monk.

There was a kingdom called Small Stones in northern India that was ruled by a king named Dragon Seal.²⁰ Dragon Seal killed his father, but later, horrified by his own act, he abandoned his country, presented himself before the Buddha, and repented of his wrongdoing; thereupon the Buddha forgave him.

King Ajatashatru was by nature given to the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness, and was forever committing one or another of the ten evil acts. Moreover, he killed his father, attempted to take his mother's life, and, accepting Devadatta as his teacher,

massacred countless disciples of the Buddha. Due to his accumulated misdeeds, on the fifteenth day of the second month, the very day on which the Buddha was to pass away, virulent boils broke out in seven areas of his royal body, a sign that he would fall into the hell of incessant suffering. The king writhed in agony; he felt as if he were being burned by a great fire or doused with boiling water. His six ministers presented themselves before him and insisted that he should summon the six non-Buddhist teachers in order to have them cure his foul sores. This was just like the people of Japan today relying on leaders of the Zen and Precepts schools or priests of the Nembutsu and True Word schools as good teachers in the belief that the prayers of these men can subdue the Mongols and help them in their next life. Moreover, Devadatta, whom Ajatashatru regarded as his primary teacher, had memorized the sixty thousand non-Buddhist and eighty thousand Buddhist teachings. His understanding of both secular and religious matters was as clear as the sun, the moon, or a burnished mirror. He was like the learned priests of the Tendai school in the world today who are well versed in both the exoteric and esoteric teachings and know all the Buddhist scriptures by heart. Because Ajatashatru was guided by such teachers and ministers, he had refused to become the Buddha's follower. And for this reason, his country, Magadha, had suffered repeated disturbances in the heavens and frequent strange occurrences on earth, being ravaged incessantly by violent winds, severe droughts, famines, and epidemics. Moreover, it had been attacked by another country. Now, in addition to all this, he was suffering from virulent boils, and his kingdom appeared to be on the verge of ruin. It was at this time that he suddenly presented himself before the Buddha and repented of his

evildoings, and his offenses were eradicated.

In any event, even though the parents may be evildoers, if the child is good, the parents' offenses will be forgiven. On the other hand, although the child may be an evildoer, if the parents are good persons, their child's faults will be pardoned. Hence, even though your late son, Yashiro, committed evil, if you, the mother who gave birth to him, grieve for him and offer prayers for him day and night in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, how could he not be saved? Moreover, because he believed in the Lotus Sutra, he may have become the one who will lead his parents to Buddhahood.

Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra should beware of and guard themselves against the sutra's enemies. You should know that the Nembutsu priests, the observers of the precepts, and the teachers of the True Word school—in fact, all those who refuse to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo—are

the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, no matter how earnestly they may read it. If you do not know your enemies, you will be deceived by them. How I wish I could see you personally and talk to you about these matters in detail! Whenever you see Sammi-bo or Sado-ko,²¹ who will visit your area from Minobu, have them read this letter to you. Place it in the custody of Myoe-bo.²² Those lacking in wisdom would no doubt mock me or criticize this letter as mere clever words on my part. Or they would compare me with others, saying, "This priest could never match the Great Teacher Kobo, or surpass the Great Teacher Jikaku!" Consider those who say such things ignorant.

Nichiren

Written in the third month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*, in the mountains of Hakiri Village in the Nambu area of Kai Province.



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the third month, 1276, to Konichi-bo, a widow who lived in Amatsu in Awa Province. Her son, Yashiro, had converted earlier to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, and through him she became a believer herself. While the Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island, she sent him robes and other articles, and continued to make offerings to him after he took up residence at Mount Minobu. She enjoyed the Daishonin's trust and received several works from him, including *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra*.

Some time after Konichi-bo's conversion, Yashiro died. This letter is the Daishonin's reply to a letter from

Konichi-bo expressing anxiety about the fact that her son, as a samurai, had killed others and asking what would happen to him in his next life. The Daishonin encouraged her by saying that Yashiro had converted her to faith in the Lotus Sutra and could be saved from the evil paths by her strong faith. Konichi-bo overcame her deep sorrow and remained a sincere believer in the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout her life.

The former part of this letter chronicles some of the events that took place from the ninth month of 1271, when Nichiren Daishonin incurred the wrath of the government and was exiled to Sado Island, to 1274, when he was

pardoned and retired to Mount Mino-bu. In the next part, the Daishonin who received the news of the death of Yashiro recounts his impressions of Yashiro and expresses his deep sympathy for Konichi-bo's sorrow. In reply to her question, the Daishonin explains the Buddhist principle of repentance, or acknowledging and striving to correct one's past misdeeds, by saying, "Even a small error will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. Yet even a grave offense can be

eradicated if one repents of it sincerely." Citing the examples of Ajita and King Ajatashatru, he assures Konichi-bo that even though her late son, Yashiro, committed evil, if she offers prayers for him day and night in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, he can be saved, and that he will surely lead his parents to Buddhahood. Finally, the Daishonin cautions her against being influenced by any enemy of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. "My teacher" refers to Dozen-bo, a priest of Seicho-ji temple in Tojo Village of Awa Province, where Nichiren Daishonin entered the priesthood.

2. Su Wu (140–60 B.C.E.) was a minister of Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty. Su Wu was imprisoned, and Wu's successor, Emperor Chao, demanded Su Wu's release, but his captors falsely reported that he had already died. Then one of Su Wu's retainers instructed the emperor's envoy to tell the barbarians that the emperor had shot down a wild goose near the capital and that tied to its leg was a letter reporting that Su Wu was still alive. Finally, the chief of the northern barbarians was compelled to return Su Wu nineteen years after his imprisonment.

3. Nakamaro is Abe no Nakamaro (698–770), who went to T'ang China as a student envoy in 717 and later served Emperor Hsüan-tsung as an official of the Chinese government. In 733 he attempted to return to Japan, but the T'ang authorities would not permit it. Later, he obtained permission to return, but his ship was wrecked and he was forced to go back to China, where he died.

4. This radical statement was made intentionally as a strict warning of the negative results arising from devotion to the provisional teachings. Nichiren Daishonin did not mean it literally, but challengingly urged the authorities to hold an open debate between him and the leading priests of the four major schools mentioned here. He insisted it was irrational for the authorities to reject his teachings and punish him without listening to both parties. Accord-

ing to his *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, beheading the priests of the provisional teachings actually means to cease making offerings to them.

5. The two deceased lay priests refer to Hojo Tokiyori, the fifth regent of the Kamakura shogunate, and Hojo Shigetoki, the cosigner to the regent Tokiyori.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

7. The Thousand-Eyed God is another name for Shakra. He is called the "Thousand-Eyed God" because, according to the Miscellaneous Agama Sutra, in a previous life as a human being, his vast wisdom had enabled him to discern and fathom a thousand meanings in a single moment.

8. Exactly what incident this refers to is uncertain. "The eleventh day of the second month in the following year" mentioned subsequently refers to a conspiracy to seize power on the part of Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune. His plot was uncovered, and two of his conspirators, Nagoe Tokiaki and Nagoe Noritoki, were put to death on that day. Tokisuke himself was beheaded on the fifteenth. In the wake of the attempted coup, five generals were beheaded for having executed as a conspirator someone who proved to have been innocent. This rift in the ruling clan bore out the Daishonin's earlier prophecy of internal strife.

9. This story appears in *Records of the Historian* and its commentaries. When Prince Tan was taken hostage in Ch'in, he begged the king there to release him. But the king said to him, "When a crow's head becomes white and a horse grows horns, I will permit you to return home." When

Tan looked up toward heaven, grieving over his misfortune, a white-headed crow appeared, and when he flung himself to the ground lamenting, a horse grew horns. As a result, the king had no choice but to let him go home as he had promised.

10. Nichizo (n.d.) was a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school who lived at Ryumon-ji temple in the province of Yamato. This poem is not actually Nichizo's but appears in the fourth imperial anthology *The Later Collection of Gleanings* as the work of the priest Zoki. It seems possible, therefore, that the Daishonin simply wrote the abbreviated form, "the Honorable Zo," in the original manuscript, which no longer exists, and this was mistakenly transcribed as "the Honorable Nichizo."

11. That is, twelve days between the day of the Daishonin's departure from Sado and the day of his arrival in Kamakura.

12. The first time was when the Daishonin submitted *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* to Hojo Tokiyori in 1260. The second was when he admonished Hei no Saemon shortly before the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271, and the third was the meeting mentioned here.

13. A figure from Japanese legend. After spending three pleasure-filled years in the sea god's palace at the bottom of the sea, Urashima returned home to find that he could not recognize anyone in his native village. In his bewilderment and distress, he opened a casket he had been given in the sea god's palace but instructed never to open. A cloud of white smoke rushed out, his hair turned completely white, and in an instant he became a withered old man. In reality, several hundred years had passed while he was away.

14. Source unknown. A similar story appears in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. According to this version, when a fire broke out near Kushinagara in India, a pheasant immersed its wing feathers in a stream and used them to extinguish the flames, sacrificing its life in order to save its relatives. Bamboo Grove Monastery was built by King Bimbisara as an offering to Shakyamuni Buddha, which was one of the major centers of Shakyamuni's preaching. It

was located in Rajagriha, India.

15. This story appears in *The Record of the Western Regions* and elsewhere. The lord of Varanasi once hunted and killed many deer on a certain tract of land. The deer king implored him to stop the unnecessary killing and promised that each day he himself would give the lord the number of deer he required. One day, he was faced with the necessity of sending a pregnant deer. Rather than sacrifice her and her unborn fawn, the deer king went to the lord to offer his own flesh instead. The lord was so moved by the deer king's compassion that he gave him the land; therefore, it came to be called Deer Park.

16. Wang Ling (d. 177 B.C.E.) was a high official of the Former Han dynasty. When Hsiang Yü of Ch'u fought with Liu Pang of Han for the rulership of China, he captured Wang Ling's mother in order to force Wang Ling to become his ally. However, the mother secretly sent a messenger to her son urging him to maintain his loyalty to Liu Pang. Then she killed herself.

17. Consort of Emperor Shen Yao was a wife of Li Yüan (565-635), the founder of the T'ang dynasty, who was later called Shen Yao. She is said to have been skilled in writing and painting and endowed with both wit and beauty.

18. This story appears in *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* Gavampati, one of Shakyamuni's disciples, stole millet in a past existence and, because of this, was reborn as an ox for five hundred consecutive lifetimes. It is said that, even after he became the Buddha's disciple, he behaved in an ox-like manner.

19. Source unknown.

20. This story appears in the Nirvana Sutra, but little is known about the country Small Stones or its king Dragon Seal.

21. Sado-ko was another name for Niko (1253-1314), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.

22. Myoe-bo was one of the Daishonin's followers who had some connection with Seicho-ji temple. Little else is known about him.

The Blessings of the Lotus Sutra



I HAVE received the five thousand blue-duck coins¹ you sent. The first of the five precepts is not to take life, and the first of the six paramitas is that of almsgiving. The ten good precepts, the two hundred and fifty precepts, the ten major precepts, and all the other rules of conduct begin with the prohibition against the taking of life.

Every being, from the highest sage on down to the smallest mosquito or gnat, holds life to be its most precious possession. To deprive a being of life is to commit the gravest kind of sin.

When the Thus Come One appeared in this world, he made compassion for living things his basis. And as an expression of compassion for life, to refrain from taking life and to provide sustenance for living beings are the most important precepts.

In providing another with sustenance, one obtains three kinds of benefit. First, one sustains one's own life. Second, one brings color to one's face. Third, one gains strength.

"To sustain one's own life" means to be born in the human or heavenly world and receive the karmic reward of long life. When one becomes a Buddha, one manifests oneself as the Thus Come One of the Dharma body, a body that is as vast as space.

Because one "gains strength," having been born in the human or heavenly

world, one becomes a person of virtue and influence, attracting many followers. When one becomes a Buddha, one manifests oneself as the Thus Come One of the reward body, dwelling on a lotus pedestal where one shines like the full moon in a clear sky on the fifteenth night of the eighth month.

And because one "brings color to one's face," having been born in the human or heavenly world, one acquires the thirty-two features and becomes as graceful and dignified as a lotus flower. When one becomes a Buddha, one displays oneself as the Thus Come One of the manifested body and comes to resemble Shakyamuni Buddha.

If we inquire into the origin of Mount Sumeru, we find that it began with a single speck of dust; and likewise, the great ocean began with a single drop of dew. One added to one becomes two, two becomes three, and so on to make ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, or an *asamkhya*. Yet "one" is the mother of all.

As for the beginning of Buddhism in the country of Japan: After the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities, the hundred reigns of human sovereigns began, the first of whom was called Emperor Jimmu. In the time of Emperor Kimmei, the thirtieth sovereign

following Jimmu, the Buddhist scriptures were introduced to Japan from the kingdom of Paekche, along with a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, priests, and nuns.

Then Prince Jogu, a son of Emperor Yomei, began to study the Buddhist writings. He had a copy of the Lotus Sutra brought from China, wrote a commentary on the text, and endeavored to propagate its teachings.

Later, in the time of Emperor Kōtoku, the thirty-seventh sovereign, the Administrator of Priests Kanroku introduced the Three Treatises and Establishment of Truth schools from the kingdom of Silla to Japan. During the same period a priest named Dosho introduced the Dharma Characteristics and Dharma Analysis Treasury schools from China, and the Preceptor Shinjo introduced the Flower Garland school.

In the reign of Empress Gensho, the forty-fourth sovereign, an honorable monk² from India introduced the Mahavairochana Sutra, and in the time of Emperor Shomu, the forty-fifth sovereign, the Reverend Ganjin came from China, introducing the Precepts school to Japan. At the same time, he brought with him copies of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, *Great Concentration and Insight*, commentaries on the Vimalakirti Sutra, and other works of the T'ien-t'ai school. But he did not propagate the teachings of the True Word and [T'ien-t'ai] Lotus schools.

In the reign of Emperor Kammu, the fiftieth sovereign, there was a young priest named Saicho, who was later to be known as the Great Teacher Dengyo. Before going to T'ang China, he spent fifteen years studying on his own the writings and commentaries of the True Word and T'ien-t'ai schools. Later, in the seventh month of the twenty-third year of the Enryaku era (804), he sailed for China. He returned to Japan in the sixth month of the fol-

lowing year, and thereafter instructed several dozen learned priests of the seven major temples of Nara in the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools.

Four hundred years have passed since then. In all, it has been more than seven hundred years since Buddhism was first introduced to Japan. During that time, there have been persons who urged the populace to call upon the name of Amida, to call upon the name of Mahavairochana, or to invoke the name of Shakyamuni. But there has never been anyone who urged them to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra.

This does not apply to Japan alone. In India, in the thousand years following the passing of the Buddha, there were great scholars such as Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Vasubandhu who worked to propagate Buddhism throughout the five regions of India. And in the first several hundred years after Buddhism was introduced to China, people such as Kashyapa Mantanga, Chu Fa-lan, the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva, Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, and Miao-lo wrote commentaries and expounded the teachings of the sutras. But none of these persons ever urged that the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra be chanted in the same manner as the name of Amida. They only chanted it themselves, or, when lecturing on the Lotus Sutra, the lecturer himself alone recited it.

The teachings of the eight schools and the nine schools³ differ from one another, yet generally speaking, we find that, in the majority of cases, the founders and leaders of these schools recited the name of Amida. Next in number were those who recited the name of Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and next those who invoked the name of Shakyamuni Buddha, followed by those who called upon the

name of Mahavairochana, Medicine Master, or others. But for some reason there were none who chanted the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, the heart and core of the Buddha's entire lifetime of teachings.

You should inquire very carefully into the reason why this was so. A skilled physician, for example, may discern the causes of all kinds of illnesses as well as the relative efficacy of various medicines, but nevertheless refrains from indiscriminately applying the most powerful medicine and instead employs other medicines, depending upon the nature of the illness. Thus perhaps it was because, during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law following the Buddha's passing, the sickness of delusion had not yet become critical, and therefore no one urged that the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the finest medicine in all the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, be applied. But now we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, and people are all suffering from grave illness. This illness can hardly be cured by such minor medicines as invocations to Amida, Mahavairochana, or Shakyamuni.

Though the moon is beautiful, the full splendor of its light can only be seen in autumn. Though the cherry blossoms are lovely, they open only in spring. All things depend on the time. Since that is so, may we not suppose that, during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the time had not yet come for the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra to spread?

Again, it is the Buddha's messengers who propagate his teachings. These disciples of the Buddha have different doctrines that they received from him. Thus, the scholars who appeared during the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law and the teachers who appeared during the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law were in most cases persons who had been en-

trusted with Hinayana or provisional Mahayana doctrines, or with the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra or other ancillary doctrines. Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who is entrusted with the daimoku, the core of the essential teaching, had not yet appeared in the world.

But now he will appear in the Latter Day of the Law and propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo to all the nations and people throughout Jambudvīpa. Surely it will spread just as the invocation of Amida's name has spread throughout Japan at the present time.

I, Nichiren, am not the founder of any school, nor am I a latter-day follower of any older school. I am a priest without precepts, neither keeping the precepts nor breaking them. I am an ordinary creature like an ox or a sheep, who is neither particularly wise nor ignorant.

Why did I first begin to chant as I do? Bodhisattva Superior Practices is the one destined to make his advent in this world to propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. But before he had even appeared, I began, as though speaking in a dream, hardly aware of what I was doing, to utter the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and so I chant them now. In the end, is this a good thing I do, or a bad thing? I do not know, nor can anyone else tell for certain.

But when I open the Lotus Sutra and reverently peruse it, I see that even the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Maitreya, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and Universal Worthy, who had reached the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, were scarcely able to uphold so much as a single phrase or verse of this sutra, because the sutra itself states that it can "only be understood and shared between Buddhas."⁴

The Flower Garland Sutra represents the first exposition of the sudden

teaching preached immediately following the Buddha's enlightenment. It is a sutra that embodies the complete and perfect teaching; yet it was entrusted to four bodhisattvas, including Dharma Wisdom, to expound.⁵ The Wisdom sutras, though not on the same level as the Flower Garland Sutra, nevertheless represent the loftiest among the other sutras that the Buddha had preached thus far. And yet Subhuti was the one entrusted with the task of expounding them.

Only the Lotus Sutra represents the wonderful teaching preached directly from the golden mouth of Shakyamuni Buddha, who is perfectly endowed with the three bodies. Therefore, even Universal Worthy and Manjushri were hardly able to expound so much as a single phrase or verse of it. How much more difficult then must it be for us, who are no more than ordinary people living in this latter age, to embrace even one or two words of this sutra!

Because the founders of the various schools read the Lotus Sutra, their respective disciples all assumed that their own teacher had grasped the sutra's heart. However, if we look carefully into the essence of the matter, we find that the Great Teacher Tz'u-en read the Lotus Sutra while making the *Profound Secrets Sutra* and *The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine* his teachers, and the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang read the Lotus Sutra while making the Wisdom sutras and *The Treatise on the Middle Way* his teachers. Men like Tu-shun and Fa-tsang read the Lotus Sutra while making the Flower Garland Sutra and *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra* their teachers. And Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung read the Lotus Sutra while making the Mahavairochana Sutra their teacher. All these men thought that they had read the Lotus Sutra. But in fact they had not read so much as a single phrase or verse of it.

In the end, it is as the Great Teacher Dengyo meant when he said, "Though he praises the Lotus Sutra, he destroys its heart."⁶ They were like non-Buddhist believers who, though they read the Buddhist sutras, interpret them to be the same as non-Buddhist teachings; or like bats that, in their blindness, mistake day for night. Or they were like a red-faced man who, looking into a clear mirror, supposes that the whole mirror has turned red, or like a round-faced man who, seeing his reflection in a narrow sword blade, thinks that his face has become long and thin.

But I am different from such persons. I firmly uphold the teaching that the Lotus Sutra is supreme among the sutras the Buddha has preached, now preaches, and will preach.⁷ Moreover, I chant the daimoku, which is the heart and core of the entire sutra, and I urge others to do likewise. Although the mugwort growing in a hemp field or wood marked for cutting with an inked line⁸ may not be straight to begin with, they will as a matter of course become so.

In the same way, one who chants the daimoku as the Lotus Sutra teaches will never have a twisted mind. For one should know that, unless the mind of the Buddha enters into our bodies, we cannot in fact chant the daimoku.

The Buddhist teachings that have been disseminated by others are in all cases those that have been learned and received from their respective teachers. It is like the case of fiefs possessed by immediate vassals of the ruling house of Kamakura, or estates administered by the stewards of the districts. Though their lands may measure no more than one or two *cho*, in all cases they received them through the favor of the late shogun.⁹ How much more indebted to him are those whose holdings measure a hundred *cho*, a thousand *cho*, a whole province, or two whole provinces!

One who carries on the doctrines of a good teacher is called a worthy. One who realizes the truth for oneself without the aid of a teacher is called a sage. In the lands of India, China, and Japan since the passing of the Buddha, there have been two sages. They were T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo. These two men deserve to be called sages.

They also deserve to be called worthies. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai carried on the doctrines of Nan-yüeh; in that sense he was a worthy. But he also realized the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood by himself at the place of meditation; in this sense he was a sage.

Similarly, the Great Teacher Dengyo received instruction in the teachings on the practice of concentration and insight and on the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment from his teachers Tao-sui and Hsing-man. In that sense he was a worthy. But even before he journeyed to China, while still in Japan, he had already understood and mastered all the doctrines of the True Word and the Concentration and Insight [T'ien-t'ai] schools without the aid of a teacher, and had come to realize that the wisdom of the T'ien-t'ai school surpassed that of the six or the seven schools. In this sense he was a sage.

So it is that one of the Confucian classics declares, "Those who are born with an understanding of this are the highest. ('Highest' indicates a sage.) Those who study and thereby reach this understanding are the next. ('Next' indicates a worthy.)"¹⁰ And one of the Buddhist sutras contains the passage, "In my religious practices, I am without the aid of a teacher."¹¹

Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, is the foremost sage of this saha world. T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo were both sages as well as worthies. Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna, Asanga and Vasubandhu, and Lao Tzu and Confucius were all both sages and worthies of either the Hinayana teachings, the provisional Ma-

hayana teachings, or the non-Buddhist teachings; however, none of them was a sage or worthy of the Lotus Sutra.

Now I am neither a sage nor a worthy man; I neither adhere to the precepts, nor am I without precepts; I neither possess wisdom nor lack it. Nevertheless, I was born some 2,220 years after the Buddha's passing, in the last five-hundred-year period, when the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is destined to spread. Before any other person of the various schools—whether here in Japan or in the far-off lands of India and China—could begin to invoke the daimoku, I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in a loud voice and have continued to do so for more than twenty years.

During that time, I have been cursed and beaten, and at times have sustained injury. Twice I have been exiled, once I was condemned to death,¹² and the other great trials that I have suffered are too numerous to mention; I have been like a soybean tossed into a large pot of boiling water, or a large fish in a tiny puddle.

The Lotus Sutra says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹³ It also states, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁴ And it says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, with rocks and tiles . . . again and again we will be banished."¹⁵

If I, Nichiren, had not been born in the land of Japan, then these passages of the sutra would have been mere words on the Buddha's part—empty of all significance. They would have been like blossoms that open but form no fruit, or like thunder that rumbles but never ushers in rain. These golden words of the Buddha would have been in vain, and the Lotus Sutra, which

speaks honestly, would have been found to be tainted with great falsehoods. When I consider all this, it seems to me that I must equal the sages T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, and that I stand above Lao Tzu and Confucius.

In this entire country of Japan, I am the only one who has been chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. I am like the single speck of dust that marks the beginning of Mount Sumeru or the single drop of dew that spells the start of the great ocean. Probably two people, three people, ten people, a hundred people will join in chanting it, until it spreads to one province, two provinces, and all the sixty-six provinces of Japan, and reaches even to the two islands of Iki and Tsushima. Those persons who have spoken slanderously of me will in time chant in the same way; and everyone from the ruler on down to the multitude of common people will, as described in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra,¹⁶ chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with a single voice. Though the trees may desire to be still, the wind will not cease to blow; though we may wish for spring to linger, it must give way to summer.

Though the people of Japan think highly of the Lotus Sutra, because of their animosity toward me, the priest Nichiren, they refuse to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. But when invaders from the great kingdom of the Mongols strike once or twice again as they did at Iki and Tsushima, attacking and killing the men and taking the women prisoner; when they battle their way as far as the capital Kyoto and the city of Kamakura, seizing the sovereign himself along with his high ministers and hundred officials, flinging them in the dirt before their oxen and horses, and violently abusing them—how then will the people of Japan be able to keep from chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo?

In the past, when I was struck several times in the face with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra,¹⁷ I felt no resentment at it. In fact, I was actually delighted. For to be attacked in the manner described in the "Never Disparaging" chapter, to suffer assault as predicted in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, is indeed a high and precious honor.

But how vexing such attacks must be to Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, who inscribed an oath in the presence of the Buddha that they would not permit evil men to strike the votary of the Lotus Sutra! It would be no small matter if those who slander me were to fail to incur punishment from the heavenly deities in their present existence. Not only will those deities [who fail to punish them] be destroyed throughout past, present, and future, but even now the Buddhas are surely taking an account of their actions. And when that happens, it will be no fault of Nichiren's. Rather, by siding with those priests who slander the correct teaching, they are summoning great disaster upon themselves.

In view of all this, your sincerity in sending a gift of five strings of blue-duck coins whenever the opportunity arises truly entitles you to be known as one who propagates the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra in Japan. As first one person, then two persons, then a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, and then all the people throughout the country come to chant the daimoku, before you know it, their blessings will accrue to you. Those blessings will be like the drops of dew that gather to form the great ocean, or the specks of dust that pile up to become Mount Sumeru.

The ten demon daughters in particular have vowed to protect those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra; it would follow that these deities

must look upon you, the Honorable Myomitsu, and your wife as a mother looks upon an only child. They will prize you as a yak cherishes its own tail, and watch over you day and night. How reassuring, how encouraging!

There is much more that I would like to say, but I do not have time to go into detail. Please explain these things carefully to your wife. I do not write these words merely to flatter.

The more gold is heated in the flames, the brighter will be its color; the more a sword is whetted, the sharper it will

become. And the more one praises the blessings of the Lotus Sutra, the more one's own blessings will increase. Bear in mind that the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra contain only a few passages elucidating the truth, but a great many words of praise.

Nichiren

The fifth day of the intercalary third month

Reply to the Honorable Kuwagayatsu Myomitsu



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the intercalary third month of the second year of Kenji (1276) and addressed to Myomitsu, a believer who lived at Kuwagayatsu in Kamakura. While detailed information about Myomitsu is not available, it appears that he and his wife frequently made offerings to the Daishonin at his small dwelling in the wilderness of Mount Minobu.

Around the time this letter was written, the number of converts was growing due to the propagation efforts led by Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's closest disciple, in Suruga and other provinces. In Kamakura as well, lay believers had become more active in propagation. However, as the number of new believers increased, so did government repression. But Myomitsu and his wife, with other followers centering around Shijo Kingo, maintained their sincere faith in the Daishonin's teachings.

In the beginning of this letter, Nichiren Daishonin stresses the Buddhist spirit of absolute reverence for life, and also the Buddhist practice of almsgiving, which sustains life. In response to the Honorable Myomitsu's sincere offering, he explains that by providing another

with sustenance one obtains three kinds of benefit. To "sustain one's own life," "bring color to one's face," and "gain strength" might be thought of as the benefits enjoyed by the recipient of such offerings. The Daishonin, however, interprets them as the blessings that accrue to the donor. He also correlates these blessings with the three bodies of a Buddha.

Next, the Daishonin briefly recounts the history of Buddhism in Japan and proclaims that, in the Latter Day of the Law, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, will without fail spread widely.

Nichiren Daishonin suggests in this letter that he is in fact fulfilling the mission of Bodhisattva Superior Practices entrusted by the Buddha, in that he has begun to chant and propagate Nam-myoho-renge-kyo before anyone else. He then declares that he alone reads the Lotus Sutra in a way that accords with the Buddha's spirit and intention. The Daishonin voices his conviction that the difficulties he has endured serve to verify the truth of the Lotus Sutra and also confirm that he is the true sage whose appearance in the

Latter Day of the Law was prophesied in the sutra.

In conclusion, the Daishonin declares that, although he alone has been chanting the daimoku, eventually the entire

nation will chant it, just as a single speck of dust gives rise to Mount Sumeru, or a single drop of water grows to form the sea.

Notes

1. At this time, coins had square holes in the center and were usually strung together in hundreds or thousands to form larger monetary units. Blue-duck coins were copper coins imported from Sung-dynasty China, with a square hole in the center that caused them to be likened to a duck's eye.

2. "An honorable monk" refers to the Indian monk Shan-wu-wei who first introduced the esoteric teachings to China. The tradition that Shan-wu-wei had visited Japan, mentioned in *A Brief History of Japan* and *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests*, is now considered apocryphal, though it may have been widely accepted in the Daishonin's time.

3. The nine schools here indicate the eight schools (Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, and True Word) plus the Zen or Pure Land school.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

5. The Flower Garland Sutra takes the form of preaching by Dharma Wisdom and other bodhisattvas.

6. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*. Dengyo made this remark specifically with respect to Tz'u-en's *Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, which praises the Lotus Sutra but interprets it in light of the doctrines of the Dharma Characteristics school.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

8. It is said that mugwort in a field of hemp grows upright because it is held up by the surrounding hemp plants. "Wood marked for cutting with an inked line" means that wood is straightened when it is planed or cut by a carpenter along an inked line.

9. The late shogun refers to Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), founder and the first shogun of the Kamakura government.

10. *Analects*.

11. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

12. The Daishonin was exiled to the Izu Peninsula and to Sado Island. "Once I was condemned to death" refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution of 1271, when the Daishonin narrowly escaped execution at Tatsunokuchi.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

15. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. The phrase "with rocks and tiles" appears not in this chapter. It is an interpolation from the "Never Comparing" chapter.

16. In the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, the heavenly gods proclaim in open space that Shakyamuni is now preaching the Lotus Sutra in the saha world. On hearing this, all the beings in the ten directions face the saha world and, joining their palms in reverence, utter the words, "Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha! Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha!"

17. On the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271, Hei no Saemon went to arrest the Daishonin at Matsubagayatsu, accompanied by his retainer Sho-bo and others. Sho-bo struck the Daishonin in the face with the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra consists of eight volumes, each of which was wound around a wooden roller. The Daishonin accordingly interpreted this assault as "attacked with staves," one of the hardships predicted in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, a chapter contained in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra.

The Story of Ohashi no Taro



I HAVE received from you one unlined robe,¹ one horseload of salt, and five *sho* of oil.

A robe serves to protect one from the cold and the heat, to hide one's nakedness, and to adorn one's body. The "Medicine King" chapter in the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra says, "... like a robe to one who is naked," meaning that one [who obtains the Lotus Sutra] will be as delighted as a naked person who obtains a robe. Among the Buddha's successors was a man named Shanavasa who was born wearing a robe.² This came about because, in a previous existence, he had donated a robe for the sake of Buddhism. And so it says in the Lotus Sutra, "Gentleness and patience are the robe."³

In the K'un-lun Mountains, there are no stones, and in the Mount Minobu area, no salt. In a place where there are no stones, stones are more valuable than gems, and in a place where there is no salt, salt is more precious than rice. The gems for the ruler of a nation are his ministers of the left and right,⁴ and these ministers of the left and right are called the "salt and vinegar"⁵ of his rule. If we have no miso or salt, it is hard for us to get along from day to day, and if the nation is without ministers of the left and right, it will be poorly governed.

As for oil, the Nirvana Sutra states,

"In the wind, there is no oil, and in oil, there is no wind."⁶ Oil is the best medicine for curing illnesses caused by the wind.

I do not know how to thank you for the sincerity you have shown in sending these articles. In the end, it must be an indication of the depth of the late Nanjo's faith⁷ in the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by the statement that a minister proclaims his ruler's sincerity, while a son proclaims his father's sincerity. The late Nanjo is probably delighted.

In Tsukushi there was a daimyo called Ohashi no Taro.⁸ Having incurred the wrath of the shogun, he was imprisoned in a cell dug into the hillside at Yui Beach in Kamakura for a period of twelve years.

When he met with the humiliation of being arrested and was leaving his domain in Tsukushi, he said to his wife: "Having taken up bow and arrow to serve my lord, I do not lament the fact that I have incurred his wrath. It is unbearably hard for me to part from you, since we have been so close to each other from the time of our childhood, but I will say no more of that either. I regret, however, that we have had no children, neither a boy nor a girl. Now you tell me that you are pregnant, and I feel very sorry that I cannot be here to see whether the

child is a girl or a boy. It also distresses me to think that when the child grows up it will have no one to call father. I wish there were something I could do about this, but I am powerless." So saying, he took his leave.

The days and months passed, and in time his wife was safely delivered of a male child. When the boy was seven years old, she entrusted him to a temple in the mountains, but the other boys who were his companions in the temple made fun of him because he had no father. He returned to his home and asked his mother to tell him about his father, but she was unable to speak and could do nothing but weep.

The boy pressed her, saying: "Without the sky, the rain does not fall, and without the earth, plants do not grow. Even if I have a mother, without a father, I cannot become an adult. Why do you hide my father's whereabouts from me?"

Confronted in this manner, his mother replied, "I did not speak of the matter because you were too young. But this is what happened."

Weeping copiously, the boy said, "Did my father leave no mementos behind when he went away?"

"There are these," said his mother, producing a written record of the Ohashi family ancestors and a letter that the father himself had written for the child who was still in his mother's womb. Seeing these, the boy longed more than ever for his father, and, unable to do anything but weep, said, "What am I to do now?"

"When your father set out from here," his mother replied, "he was accompanied by many retainers, but because he had incurred his lord's wrath, they all deserted him and went away. Now there is not even anyone to send me word whether or not he is still alive."

At this the boy flung himself face down and wept harder than ever, and would not stop even when chided.

The mother said, "The reason I sent you to the mountain temple was so that you could repay your filial obligation to your father. You must offer flowers before the Buddha, read a scroll of the sutra, and in this way fulfill your duty!"

The boy accordingly hurried back to the temple and abandoned all thought of returning home. Day and night he read the Lotus Sutra, so that in time he not only became able to read it with ease, but even committed it to memory.

When the boy turned twelve, he did not enter the priesthood, but, binding up his hair, somehow managed to run away from Tsukushi and journey to the city of Kamakura. There he went to pay his respects at Hachiman Shrine.⁹ After bowing low in reverence, he said: "Great Bodhisattva Hachiman was the sixteenth ruler of Japan, and his true identity is Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who preached the Lotus Sutra in the pure land of Eagle Peak.¹⁰ In order to grant the wishes of the people, he has manifested himself as the deity Hachiman, and I pray that he will now grant my wish as well. I wish to know whether my father is alive or dead."

At the hour of the dog (7:00-9:00 P.M.), he began reciting the Lotus Sutra, and continued reciting through the hour of the tiger (3:00-5:00 A.M.). His beautiful childlike voice echoed through the sacred hall of the shrine and struck the hearts of all those who heard it, so that those who had come to pay their respects all forgot to take their leave, but instead gathered around like a crowd at a marketplace. When they looked to see who was reciting, they discovered it was neither a priest nor a woman, but a young boy.

Just then, Lady Kyo-no-nii¹¹ arrived to visit the shrine. She had come in secret to avoid the eyes of others, but because the recitation of the sacred scripture was even more beautiful than

usual, she remained listening until the end. Then she returned home, but she was so reluctant to depart that she left an attendant behind. When she reported to the shogun what had happened, he had the boy summoned, and set him to reciting the Lotus Sutra in the image hall attached to his residence.

The following day the boy was once more ordered to recite the sutra for the shogun. Just then, some people began making a commotion at the western gate of the shogun's palace. When it was asked what was the cause, a harsh voice shouted, "Today the prisoner is to be beheaded!"

The boy, hearing this, thought to himself, "Alas, I do not suppose that my father is still alive, but when I hear this talk of cutting off someone's head, I cannot help feeling as though it were some personal sorrow of my own!" And tears sprang to his eyes.

The shogun, observing this and thinking it strange, said, "Come, boy, tell me the truth—who are you?" The boy thereupon revealed all the events of the past just as they had happened. The greater and lesser lords who were in attendance, and the ladies hidden behind their curtains of bamboo, all wet their sleeves with tears.

The shogun then summoned Kajiwara¹² and said, "Have the prisoner Ohashi no Taro brought here!" But Kajiwara replied, "He has just now been led away to Yui Beach to have his head cut off. The execution is probably taking place right now." At this the boy, though in the presence of the shogun, could not help collapsing in tears.

"Kajiwara!" said the shogun. "Go in person as fast as you can, and if the execution has not yet taken place, bring the prisoner back with you!"

Kajiwara raced off as fast as he could to Yui Beach. Even before he reached the spot, he began shouting for the execution to be stayed. He arrived just

as the executioner had drawn his sword in preparation to strike.

Kajiwara brought Ohashi no Taro, still bound with ropes, to the palace and seated him in the courtyard. The shogun ordered the prisoner to be handed over to the boy. The boy rushed down into the courtyard and untied the ropes. Ohashi no Taro, not realizing that this was his own son, could not understand why he had been spared.

The shogun summoned the boy to his side again and presented him with various gifts. He not only released Ohashi no Taro into the boy's custody, but also restored the family domains.

The shogun said: "From times past I have heard various reports regarding the power of the Lotus Sutra, and on two instances I myself have received proof of that power. The first was when my father was beheaded by the grand minister of state and lay priest.¹³ My misery was beyond expression. I did not know what god or Buddha to appeal to, but the nun Myoho¹⁴ of Mount Izu taught me to read the Lotus Sutra. When I had read it a thousand times, the priest Mongaku¹⁵ of Takao brought me the head of my late father and showed it to me. After that I was able not only to revenge myself on my father's enemies, but to become the military commander of all the warriors in Japan. All of this was due solely to the power of the Lotus Sutra.

"The second instance is this strange event today in which this boy saved his father. I personally looked upon this Ohashi no Taro as a thoroughly despicable fellow. I would have had him beheaded even if it had meant violating an imperial decree. So great was my hatred for him that I kept him shut up in a cell dug into the side of a hill for no less than twelve years. And yet this strange event has occurred. The power of the Lotus Sutra is marvelous indeed! As a commander of warriors I have

piled up a great many sins, yet I put my faith in the Lotus Sutra, and so I believe I will be spared punishment.” He spoke these words with tears in his eyes.

Now when I consider the sincere offerings that you have sent, I think that, though the late Nanjo undoubtedly loved you dearly as his son, he probably never imagined that you would in this way, through the Lotus Sutra, discharge your filial duty to him. Even if he was perhaps guilty of some offense, no matter where he may be now, your filial devotion will surely be recognized even by King Yama and the heavenly kings Brahma and Shakra. And how could Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra ever abandon him? Your devotion is no less than that of that young boy who untied his father’s bonds. I am writing this through my tears.

As to an impending Mongol attack, I have not received any word. When I mention this subject, people say that the priest Nichiren rejoices whenever he hears that the Mongols will attack our country, but this is unwarranted. Because I suggested that such a thing would happen, I have been attacked as a foe or an enemy by people everywhere. But since it is expounded in the sutras, the Mongols are sure to come.

No matter what I may say, it is beyond my power to prevent it.

I was guilty of no fault and wanted simply to save my country. And yet not only was my advice ignored, but I was struck in the face with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra.¹⁶ Brahma and Shakra witnessed what happened, and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman of Kamakura likewise looked on. But now we live in an age when advice is never heeded, and so I have retired to live here among the mountains.

Under the circumstances, I feel great pity for you and the others, but there is little I can do to help. Nevertheless, I pray day and night to the Lotus Sutra. Spare no effort in offering up prayers with firm faith. It is not that my resolve [to save you] is weak. Rather, it depends on the strength of each person’s faith.

And yet in the end I fear that all the persons of high rank in Japan will surely be taken prisoner. How pitiful, how wretched!

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fourth day of the intercalary third month

Reply to Nanjo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the intercalary third month of the second year of Kenji (1276) to Nanjo Tokimitsu, who lived in Ueno Village, in Suruga Province. Tokimitsu’s father, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, had died in 1265, when he was seven years old and his mother was pregnant with his younger brother Shichiro Goro. The death of his father and, later, of his elder

brother forced Tokimitsu to assume the duties of steward of Ueno while still in his teens. He was about eighteen years old when he received this letter from the Daishonin.

In the seventh month of 1274, immediately after the Daishonin moved to Minobu, Tokimitsu went to visit him there. Inspired by that reunion—Tokimitsu had met the Daishonin with his

parents when he was a child—Tokimitsu devoted himself to faith with renewed earnestness. In the first month of 1275, Nikko Shonin visited the grave of the late Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro on the Daishonin's behalf; from that time on, Tokimitsu looked up to Nikko Shonin and aided him in propagating the Daishonin's teachings.

About thirty letters addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu are extant, no less than eleven written during the two-year period between the Daishonin's retirement to Minobu and the date of the present letter.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin praises the sincerity of Tokimitsu's faith, expressed in his offerings of an unlined robe, salt, and oil. Such earnestness, the Daishonin says, ultimately reflects Tokimitsu's father's deep faith in the Lotus Sutra and surely must please the late Nanjo.

Next, the Daishonin recounts the tale of Ohashi no Taro and his son. According to this story, Ohashi no

Taro, a general in Kyushu and a descendant of the Taira clan, for some reason incurred the wrath of the shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo and was imprisoned in a cell in Kamakura for twelve years. When his son recited the Lotus Sutra out of his ardent desire to save his father, the power of his recitation moved Yoritomo to stay the execution of and pardon his father. With this story, the Daishonin points out that Tokimitsu's sincere attitude in faith is the highest expression of filial devotion and will surely save his late father.

In conclusion, the Daishonin addresses the rumor of an impending attack by the Mongols. He emphasizes that only firm faith in the Lotus Sutra will serve as protection against this threat, and points out that, although he himself earnestly wishes to safeguard his followers, the crucial thing is whether or not they develop their own faith.

Notes

1. An unlined robe for summer use, made of hemp cloth or crinkled silk.

2. Shanavasa was a wealthy man in Rajagriha, Magadha, who was the fourth of the twenty-four successors of Shakyamuni Buddha. This story is mentioned in *A History of the Buddha's Successors*.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10. This chapter says that those who wish to expound the Lotus Sutra after the Thus Come One's extinction should "enter the Thus Come One's room, put on the Thus Come One's robe, sit in the Thus Come One's seat. . . ." The "Thus Come One's robe," says the sutra, "is the mind that is gentle and forbearing." A gentle and forbearing mind enables one to uphold the Law while bearing insult with grace and equanimity. The sutra also says, "Gentleness and patience are the robe."

4. Officials of the imperial court, responsible for protecting the imperial family and helping the emperor administer the affairs of state.

5. The two essential ingredients whose proper balance makes a delicious soup. In China and Japan the correct balance of salt and vinegar was compared to the proper functioning of ministers in aiding the ruler to govern well.

6. The Nirvana Sutra recommends the consumption of oil for treatment of illnesses caused by "the wind's poison," that is, by foul air. Headaches, pain in the limbs, and difficulty in moving were regarded as representative of such illnesses.

7. Nanjo is Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro (d. 1265), a lay follower of Nichiren Daishonin and the father of Nanjo Tokimitsu.

8. Ohashi no Taro is not mentioned in any documents or records of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). A tradition dating from the Edo period (1600–1867) identifies him with Taira no Michisada, a general who lived toward the end of the Heian period (794–1185). Michisada was the son of Taira no Sadayoshi, governor of Higo of Kyushu and a close associate of Grand Minister of

State Taira no Kiyomori. With the ruin of the Taira clan, however, his family gradually lost its influence in the Kyushu area. Tradition has it that in 1186 Michisada incurred the wrath of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder and first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate, and was imprisoned; he was rescued, however, as a result of his son's strong faith in the Lotus Sutra. Tsukushi is an ancient name for the southern island of Kyushu.

9. A shrine to the god Hachiman built by Minamoto no Yoritomo in Kamakura in the latter part of the twelfth century.

10. Around the beginning of the Heian period (794–1185), Hachiman was given the title Great Bodhisattva by the imperial court, an early instance of the fusion of Buddhist and Shinto elements. Also during the Heian period, Hachiman became identified with the legendary Emperor Ojin, the sixteenth ruler of Japan. "His true identity is Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings" refers to the widespread belief that indigenous Japanese deities were local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The Daishonin here associates Hachiman with Shakyamuni Buddha.

11. Kyo-no-nii was a title of Fujiwara no Kenshi (1155–1229), who had served as nurse to Emperor Gotoba and later exercised influence in political affairs. Judging from the context, however, Kyo-no-nii refers not to Fujiwara no Kenshi but to Hojo Masako (1157–1225), the wife of the shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo.

12. Kajiwara Kagetoki (d. 1200), a general of the Minamoto clan who had gained the confidence of the shogun, Yoritomo.

13. The grand minister of state and lay priest refers to Taira no Kiyomori, the leader of the Taira clan. By winning two brief campaigns in 1156 and 1160, he gained absolute military power; Minamoto no Yoritomo's father, Yoshitomo, was killed fighting against Kiyomori in the first of these campaigns.

14. Myoho (n.d.) was a nun who lived at the shrine of the deity of Mount Izu in Izu Province and practiced the Lotus Sutra. *The Mirror of Eastern Japan*, a historical account of the Kamakura shogunate, mentions a nun of Mount Izu who gave religious instruction to the shogun's wife, Hojo Masako.

15. Mongaku (n.d.) was a priest of the True Word school who initiated the rebuilding of Jingo-ji temple on Mount Takao in Kyoto. In an attempt to raise funds for this purpose, he insisted that the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa provide financial assistance. His unruly requests caused him to be exiled to Izu, where he met and won the respect of Minamoto no Yoritomo. The account of Mongaku urging Yoritomo to raise an army against the Taira by showing him his deceased father's head appears in *The Tale of the Heike*.

16. On the twelfth day of the ninth month of 1271, Hei no Saemon went with his men to arrest the Daishonin at Matsubagayatsu. There Hei no Saemon's retainer Sho-bo struck the Daishonin in the face with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra. The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter that is included in this scroll speaks of ignorant people who will attack the votaries of the Lotus Sutra "with swords and staves."

Happiness in This World



THERE is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The sutra reads, "...where living beings enjoy themselves at ease."¹ How could this passage mean anything but the boundless joy of the Law? Surely you are included among the "living beings." "Where" means Jambudvīpa, and Japan lies within Jambudvīpa. Could "enjoy themselves at ease" mean anything but that both our bodies and minds, lives and environments, are entities of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and Buddhas of limitless joy?² There is no true happiness other than upholding faith in the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by "peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences."³ Though worldly troubles may

arise, never let them disturb you. No one can avoid problems, not even sages or worthies.

Drink sake only at home with your wife, and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law? Strengthen your power of faith more than ever.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the sixth month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

In the third month of 1275, about one year before this letter was written, Nichiren Daishonin warned Shijo Kingo, his loyal samurai follower who was an early convert, that as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra he must be prepared to meet further difficulties and hardships.

In the present work, the Daishonin explains the nature of true happiness. It lies, he says, in chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Suffering is unavoidable, he adds, encouraging Shijo Kingo to "regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-

myoho-rence-kyo, no matter what happens.” The Daishonin emphasizes that this is the way to experience “the

boundless joy of the Law,” or the state of Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16. The full passage reads, “This, my land, remains safe and tranquil, constantly filled with heavenly and human beings. The halls and pavilions in its gardens and groves are adorned with various kinds of gems. Jeweled trees abound in

flowers and fruit where living beings enjoy themselves at ease.”

2. “The Buddha of limitless joy” is the eternal Buddha who derives limitless joy from the Law.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

On Consecrating an Image of Shakyamuni Buddha Made by Shijo Kingo



IN your daily records you write that you have fashioned a wooden image of Shakyamuni Buddha. With regard to the eye-opening ceremony appropriate for such a statue, the Universal Worthy Sutra states, "This great vehicle sutra¹ is the treasure storehouse of the Buddhas, the eye of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences." It also says, "This correct and equal sutra² is the eye of the Buddhas. It is through this sutra that the Buddhas are able to acquire the five types of vision."

Concerning the phrase "acquire the five types of vision" in this sutra, this refers to the physical eyes, the heavenly eye, the wisdom eye, the Dharma eye, and the Buddha eye. These five types of vision are naturally acquired by one who upholds the Lotus Sutra, just as the person who becomes the ruler of a state will naturally be obeyed by all the people of that state, or as the lord of the great ocean will as a matter of course be followed by the fish who dwell there.

The Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana sutras may possess the five types of vision in name, but they do not possess them in reality. The Lotus Sutra possesses them in both name and reality. And even if it did not possess them in name, you may be certain that it would possess them in reality.

With regard to the three bodies of a Buddha, the Universal Worthy Sutra states: "A Buddha's three types of bodies are born from this correct and equal sutra, which is the great seal of the Law that assures entry into the sea of nirvana. It is from this sea that a Buddha's three types of pure bodies are born. These three types of bodies are fields of good fortune for human and heavenly beings and are highest among those worthy of alms."

The three bodies are as follows: first, the Dharma body of a Thus Come One; second, the reward body of a Thus Come One; and third, the manifested body of a Thus Come One. These three types of bodies of a Thus Come One are invariably possessed by all Buddhas. If we use the moon as an illustration, we may say that the moon itself is comparable to the Dharma body, its light to the reward body, and its reflection to the manifested body. Just as a single moon has these three different aspects, so a single Buddha possesses the virtues of these three different bodies.

These doctrines of the five types of vision and the three bodies are not expounded anywhere outside of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai has said, "The Buddha consistently possesses the three bodies throughout the three existences. But in

the various teachings, he kept this secret and did not transmit it.”⁷³ In this passage of commentary, the phrase “in the various teachings” refers not only to the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras, but to all sutras other than the Lotus Sutra. And the phrase “he kept this secret and did not transmit it” means that, throughout the entire body of scriptures outside of the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, concealed and avoided expounding it. Therefore, in performing the eye-opening ceremony for painted or wooden Buddha images, the only authority to rely on is the Lotus Sutra and the T’ien-t’ai school.

In addition, the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life arises from the concept of the three realms of existence. The three realms of existence are as follows: first, the realm of living beings; second, the realm of the five components; and third, the realm of the environment. Let us set aside the first two for now. The third, the realm of the environment, refers to the realm of plants and trees. And the realm of plants and trees includes those plants and trees from which are produced the five shades of pigment used in painting. From this pigment, painted images are created, and from trees, wooden statues are made.

It is the power of the Lotus Sutra that can infuse such paintings and statues with a “soul” or spiritual property. This was the realization of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai. In the case of living beings, this doctrine is known as attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form; in the case of painted and wooden images, it is known as the enlightenment of plants and trees. This is why [the Great Teacher Chang-an] wrote, “There has never been anything to compare to the brightness and serenity of concentration and in-

sight,”⁷⁴ and why [the Great Teacher Miao-lo] stated, “They are nevertheless shocked and harbor doubts when they hear for the first time the doctrine that insentient beings possess the Buddha nature.”⁷⁵

This doctrine [of three thousand realms in a single moment of life] was never heard of in the ages [before the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai], nor was it known in the ages that followed. And even if it did appear, one may be certain that it had been stolen from him.

However, some two hundred years after the time of T’ien-t’ai, Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung founded the so-called True Word school on the basis of the Mahavairochana Sutra. And then, although there is no mention of any such doctrine in the Mahavairochana Sutra as the Buddha expounded it, they stole the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life from the Lotus Sutra and T’ien-t’ai’s commentary, and proceeded to make it the heart and core of the True Word school. Moreover, they pretended that the doctrine had originated in India, and in this way deceived and misled the later-day scholars of China and Japan. No one knows the truth of the matter, but all alike assent to and put faith in the assertions of the True Word school. This has been going on now for more than five hundred years.

This being the case, the wooden and painted images that were made and consecrated before the time of the True Word school [when the T’ien-t’ai practices were followed] have manifested extraordinary powers, but those in temples and pagodas built after True Word [practices were adopted for the eye-opening ceremony] produce very little benefit. Since there are many instances of this, I will not go into detail.

This Buddha of yours, however, is a living Buddha. It differs in no respect

from the wooden image of the Buddha made by King Udayana,⁶ or that fashioned by King Bimbisara. Surely Brahma, Shakra, the deities of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings will attend you as a shadow accompanies a body and protect you always. (This is the first point I wish to make.)

Your daily records also indicate that each year, during the ninety-day period from the eighth day of the fourth month through the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you perform acts of devotion to the god of the sun. The god of the sun lives in a palace made of the seven kinds of treasures. This palace occupies an area of 816 *ri* or 51 *yojanas*. In the midst of it dwells the god of the sun, attended by two consorts, Victorious and Invincible. To his right and left range the seven luminaries and the nine luminaries,⁷ and in front of him stands the heavenly goddess Marichi. The god of the sun rides a chariot made of the seven treasures and drawn by eight fine horses, and in the space of one day and one night he circles about the four continents, acting as an eye to all the living beings who dwell in them.

In the case of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as well as the other deities, we hear that they bestow superb blessings, but with our dull eyes we have yet to see it. In the case of the sun deity, however, there can be no doubt, for his blessings are before our very eyes. Were it not for Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, how could such blessings as these be bestowed? And were it not for the power of the wonderful sutra of the one vehicle, how could such marvels appear before us? It is wondrous to contemplate!

In inquiring how to repay this deity for his favor, we find that, in the ages before the appearance of Buddhism, people of a discerning nature all bowed before him or presented offerings, and all of them received evidence of bless-

ings in return. At the same time, those who turned against him were all punished.

Now if we consider what the Buddhist writings have to say, we may note that the Golden Light Sutra states, "The god of the sun and the god of the moon, because they listen to this sutra, are able to obtain vitality in abundance." And the Sovereign Kings Sutra states, "Through the power of this sutra king, these luminaries are able to circle the four continents."

You should understand, therefore, that it is the power of the Buddhist Law that enables the deities of the sun and moon to make their rounds of the four continents. The Golden Light and Sovereign Kings sutras are mere expedient teachings leading to the Lotus Sutra. When compared with the Lotus Sutra, they are like milk compared with ghee, or metal compared with precious gems. And yet, inferior as these sutras are, they enable the heavenly deities to circle the four continents. How much more power can these deities gain, then, by tasting the sweet ghee of the Lotus Sutra!

Therefore, in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find the deities of the sun and moon ranged side by side with the god of the stars. And in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter, it is predicted that the deity of the sun will attain supreme perfect enlightenment and be known as the Thus Come One Fire-Sustaining.⁸

In addition to all this, your late father initiated this worship of the sun deity, and you have succeeded him in the second generation, carrying on these ceremonies over a long period of time. So how could the deity possibly abandon you?

I, Nichiren, have also put my trust in this deity, and in this manner have carried on my struggles in Japan over the past several years. Already I have the feeling that I have achieved victory.

Such clear blessings can only be attributed to this deity.

There are many other admirable points in your daily records, but I cannot go into them all in this letter.

As for the thing that I admire most: In your letters in the past, you have from time to time mentioned your concern for your parents. And when I read your present letter, I could not hold back my tears, so moved was I by pity at your sorrow over the thought that your parents might perhaps be in hell.

Among the Buddha's disciples was one called the Venerable Maudgalyayana. His father was named Kissen Shishi and his mother was named Shodai-nyo. His mother, after passing away, fell into the realm of hungry spirits. While Maudgalyayana was still an ordinary mortal, he was unaware of this fact, and so had no reason to grieve over it. But after he became a disciple of the Buddha, he achieved the status of arhat and, acquiring the heavenly eye, was able to perceive that his mother was in the realm of hungry spirits. When he became aware of this, he made offerings of food and drink to her, but these only turned into flame and increased her torment. Thereupon he rushed back to the Buddha and reported what had happened. Think how he must have felt at that time!

Now you are an ordinary person, possessing no more than the physical eyes, and so you cannot see what realm your parents now occupy and grieve at the thought that perhaps they are in hell. This in itself is an expression of filial devotion. Brahma, Shakra, the deities of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings are certain to look upon you with pity.

The Flower Garland Sutra says, "Those who do not understand their obligations will in many cases meet with an untimely death." And the Meditation on the Buddha's Ocean-like

Characteristics Sutra says, "This [failure to repay a debt of gratitude] is the cause that leads to rebirth in the Avichi hell." But now you have already manifested a sincere concern for your parents, and the heavenly gods are certain to heed your prayers. (This is the second point I wish to stress to you.)

In your letter you also mention certain things that, on thoroughly considering the heart of the matter, I believe you ought not to do. I, Nichiren, am hated by the people of Japan. This is entirely due to the fact that the lord of Sagami regards me with animosity. I grant that the government has acted quite without reason, but even before I encountered my difficulties, I foresaw that troubles of this kind would occur, and I resolved that, whatever might happen to me in the future, I must not bear any hatred toward others. This determination has perhaps acted as a prayer, for I have been able to come safely through any number of trials. And now I am faced with no such difficulties.

Whose aid was it that allowed me to escape death from hunger when I was exiled to the province of Sado, or that makes it possible for me to recite the Lotus Sutra here in the mountains as I have up until now? It is your aid alone. And if we inquire who has made it possible for you to offer this aid, we would have to say that it is your lord, the lay priest Ema. Though he himself is not aware of this fact, it has undoubtedly acted as a prayer on my behalf. And if that is so, then your lord's prayer has also become a prayer on your behalf as well.

Moreover, it is thanks to your lord that you have been able to fulfill your obligations to your parents. Regardless of what might happen, it would not be right to leave the service of someone to whom you are so indebted. If he repeatedly rejects you, then there is no help for it. But you yourself must not

abandon him, no matter how your life may be endangered.

The passage from the sutra that I quoted above says that those who do not understand their obligations may meet with an untimely death. Conversely, those who discharge their filial duties will not meet with such a death.

The bird known as the cormorant is capable of eating iron, but though its insides can digest iron, they do no harm to the unborn chicks in the body of the mother. There are fish that eat pebbles, but this does not kill the unspawned young in the fish's body. The tree called sandalwood cannot be burned by fire, and the fire in the heavens of purity cannot be quenched by water. The body of Shakyamuni Buddha could not be burned, though thirty-two strong men applied torches to it, and when fire emanated from the Buddha's body, the dragon deities of the threefold world all poured down rain in an effort to put it out, but it would not be extinguished.

Now you have aided Nichiren in his acts of merit. Therefore, it will be very difficult for evil persons to do you harm. And if by chance something should happen to you, then you may be certain that it is a retribution in this present life for the hatred that you manifested in some previous existence toward a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Retribution of that kind can never be avoided, no matter how deep one may be within the mountains or how far away at sea. That is why Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was attacked with sticks and staves, and why the Venerable Maudgalyayana was killed by a group of Brahmans of the Bamboo Staff school. Therefore, what cause have you to grieve?

To avoid unforeseen troubles, it is best to endure patiently. After you read this letter, during the hundred days that follow, you must not heedlessly go out drinking at night with your associates

or others at places besides your own home. If your lord should summon you during the daytime, then go to him with all haste. But if the summons should come at night, then plead some sudden illness for the first three times he calls you. If he persists in calling you more than three times, then inform your retainers or someone else and have them watch out for trouble at the crossroads before you set out to answer the summons.

If you conduct yourself with such circumspection, and the Mongols attack our country in the meantime, then people's feelings toward you will change from what they were before, and they will no longer think of attacking you as they would an enemy.

With regard to what you have written me, even if you should be at fault, you should not think lightly of leaving your lord's service—even less so if you are guilty of no error. In that case you must pay no heed, regardless of what others may say.

As for your desire to become a lay priest, you may do so in the future. Even then, if circumstances should arise that do not suit you in body or mind, evil influences will again seek to work upon you. These days there are women who become nuns in order to deceive others, and men who become lay priests and commit great evil. You must never become involved in such matters.

Even though you suffer from no illness, you should receive moxibustion treatment on one or two places on your body so that later you can plead illness should it become necessary. And if some kind of disturbance should occur, for the time being send someone else to observe what is going on.

It is difficult to write down all that I would like to tell you. That is why I have not gone into matters of doctrine here. As for the sutra, I will copy

it out for you when the weather gets a little cooler.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifteenth day of the seventh month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu to Shijo Kingo in 1276, when he was fifty-five. Evidently Shijo Kingo had made a wooden image of Shakyamuni Buddha for the benefit of his deceased parents and asked the Daishonin to perform the eye-opening ceremony to consecrate it. This letter is the Daishonin's reply.

In the opening section, the Daishonin says that only when the Lotus Sutra is used at the eye-opening ceremony to consecrate a Buddha image will that image become endowed with the five types of vision and the Buddha's three bodies.

Making Buddha images was a widespread practice, and, in an age when most people revered the Buddha Amida, the Daishonin was tolerant of the making of images of Shakyamuni as an act leading toward correct understanding.

A similar attitude also underlies the next section of the letter, in which the Daishonin comments on Shijo Kingo's hereditary practice of worshiping the sun deity at certain times of the year. He explains here that the power and workings of the sun deity ultimately derive from the Buddhist Law, which the Lotus Sutra expounds.

The Daishonin then praises Shijo Kingo for his filial devotion and points out that, by providing him with a livelihood, Lord Ema has enabled him to discharge his filial duties and to make offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra. It would be wrong, the Daishonin says, to lightly abandon someone to whom one is so deeply indebted. At this time Shijo Kingo was in physical danger due to the animosity of his fellow samurai, and the Daishonin warns him to be on guard.

Notes

1. "This great vehicle sutra" indicates the Lotus Sutra. The Universal Worthy Sutra is regarded as an epilogue to the Lotus Sutra.

2. "This correct and equal sutra" here refers to the Lotus Sutra.

3. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

4. *Great Concentration and Insight*, preface. "Concentration and insight" is used to refer to the system of meditation set forth by T'ien-t'ai.

5. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

6. A king of Kaushambi in India in Shak-

yamuni's time. According to the Increasing by One Agama Sutra, when Shakyamuni ascended to the heaven of the thirty-three gods to preach the Law to his mother Maya, King Udayana lamented that he could no longer worship the Buddha and fell ill. His ministers then made a five-foot wooden image of the Buddha; as a result, Udayana recovered from his illness. This is said to have been the first Buddha image ever made. The source for the Daishonin's reference to a Buddha image made by King Bimbisara of Magadha in India is not known.

7. The seven luminaries are the sun, the

moon, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn. The nine luminaries are the seven luminaries, comets, and a heavenly body called Rahu (Skt), said to cause eclipses.

8. The "Teacher of the Law" chapter itself does not mention that the god of the sun will receive the name Fire-Sustaining Thus Come One. It does, however, predict supreme enlightenment for all those who uphold even a single phrase or verse of the sutra. In commenting on this passage

in *Words and Phrases*, T'ien-t'ai cites the Awakening to True Meditation Sutra, which says that the four heavenly kings shall all become Buddhas named Fire-Sustaining. In his *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* Miao-lo in turn suggests that the gods of the heavenly bodies and others will also attain Buddhahood under this name. Nichiren Daishonin appears to have accepted Miao-lo's interpretation.

On Repaying Debts of Gratitude

Nichiren



THE old fox never forgets the hillock where he was born;¹ the white turtle repaid the kindness he had received from Mao Pao.² If even lowly creatures know enough to do this, then how much more should human beings! Thus Yü Jang, a worthy man of old, fell on his sword in order to repay the debt he owed his lord Chih Po,³ and the minister Hung Yen for similar reasons cut open his stomach and inserted the liver of his dead lord, Duke Yi of Wei.⁴ What can we say, then, of persons who are devoting themselves to Buddhism? Surely they should not forget the debts of gratitude they owe to their parents, their teachers, and their country.

But if one intends to repay these great debts of gratitude, one can hope to do so only if one learns and masters Buddhism, becoming a person of wisdom. If one does not, one will be like a man who attempts to lead a company of the blind over bridges and across rivers when he himself has sightless eyes. Can a ship steered by someone who cannot even tell the direction of the wind ever carry the traveling merchants to the mountains where treasure lies?

If one hopes to learn and master Buddhism, then one cannot do so without devoting time to the task. And if one wants to have time to spend on

the undertaking, one cannot continue to wait on one's parents, one's teachers, and one's sovereign. Until one attains the road that leads to emancipation, one should not defer to the wishes and feelings of one's parents and teachers, no matter how reasonable they may be.

Many people may think that counsel such as this runs counter to secular virtues and also fails to accord with the spirit of Buddhism. But in fact secular texts such as *The Classic of Filial Piety* make clear that there are times when one can be a loyal minister or a filial child only by refusing to obey the wishes of one's sovereign or parents. And in the sacred scriptures of Buddhism it is said, "By renouncing one's obligations and entering the Buddhist life one can truly repay those obligations in full."⁵ Pi Kan refused to go along with his sovereign's wishes and thereby came to be known as a worthy man.⁶ Prince Siddhartha disobeyed his father King Shuddhodana and yet became the most outstanding filial son in all the threefold world. These are examples of what I mean.

Once I had understood this and prepared to cease deferring to my parents and teachers and instead to delve into the truths of Buddhism, I found that there are ten clear mirrors that reflect the sacred doctrines of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings. These are the ten

schools of Buddhism known as the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, True Word, Flower Garland, Pure Land, Zen, and Tendai Lotus schools. Scholars today believe that, with these ten schools as enlightened teachers, one should understand the heart of all the sacred scriptures and claim that these ten mirrors all in an accurate manner reflect the path of the Buddha's teachings. However, we may set aside for now the three Hinayana schools [Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts]. They are like a message that is somehow sent to a foreign country by a private citizen and therefore lacks authority.

But the seven Mahayana schools are a great ship that can carry us across the vast sea of the sufferings of birth and death and take us to the shore of the pure land. By practicing and understanding them, we can save ourselves and at the same time lead others to salvation. When, with this thought in mind, I began to examine them, I found that each of the seven Mahayana schools sings its own praises, saying, "Our school, and our school alone, represents the very heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings!"

There are men such as Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch'eng-kuan⁷ of the Flower Garland school; Hsüan-tsang, Tz'u-en, Chih-chou, and Chisho⁸ of the Dharma Characteristics school; Hsing-huang and Chia-hsiang⁹ of the Three Treatises school; Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho of the True Word school; Bodhidharma, Hui-k'o, and Hui-neng¹⁰ of the Zen school; and Tao-ch'o, Shan-tao, Huai-kan, and Genku¹¹ of the Pure Land school. Basing themselves on the particular sutras and treatises favored by their respective schools, these leaders of the various schools all claim that "our school"

understands all of the myriad sutras, that "our school" has grasped the innermost meaning of the Buddha's teachings.

Thus, some of these men claim, "The Flower Garland Sutra is first among all the sutras; other sutras such as the Lotus and the Mahavairochana are its underlings." Again, the leaders of the True Word school claim, "The Mahavairochana Sutra is first among all the sutras; the other sutras are like crowds of little stars." The men of the Zen school say, "The Lankavatara Sutra is first among all the sutras." And so forth for the men of the various other schools. The many Buddhist teachers whose names I have listed above are honored by the people of our time, who pay reverence to them in the way that all the heavenly deities pay reverence to the lord Shakra and follow them in the way the hosts of stars follow the sun and the moon.

For ordinary people like us, whom ever we may take as our teacher, if we have faith in him, then we will not think him inadequate in any way. But though others may still revere and believe [in the teachers of their respective schools], I, Nichiren, have found it difficult to dispel my doubts.

When we look at the world, we find each of the various schools saying, "We are the one, we are the one!" But within a nation, there can be only one man who is sovereign. If two men try to be sovereign, the country will know no peace. Likewise, if one house has two masters, it will surely face destruction. Must it not be the same with the sutras?

Among the various sutras, there must be one that is the monarch of all. Yet the ten schools and seven schools I have mentioned all argue with one another over which of the sutras it is and can reach no consensus. It is as though seven men or ten men were all trying to be the monarch of a single

nation, thus keeping the populace in constant turmoil.

Wondering how to resolve this dilemma, I made a vow. I decided that I would not heed the claims of these eight or ten schools, but would do as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai did and let the sutras themselves be my sole teacher, in this way determining which of the various teachings of the Buddha's lifetime are superior and which are inferior. With this in mind, I began to read through all the sutras.

In a scripture called the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha says, "Rely on the Law and not upon persons." Relying on the Law here means relying on the various sutras. Not relying upon persons means not relying on persons other than the Buddha, such as the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy and Manjushri or the various Buddhist teachers I have enumerated earlier.

In the same sutra, the Buddha also says, "Rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final." When he speaks of the "sutras that are complete and final," he is referring to the Lotus Sutra, and when he speaks of "those that are not complete and final," he means the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, Nirvana, and other sutras preached before, during, and after the preaching of the Lotus Sutra.

If we are to believe these dying words of the Buddha, we must conclude that the Lotus Sutra is the only bright mirror we should have, and that through it we can understand the heart of all the sutras.

Accordingly, let us turn to the text of the Lotus Sutra itself. There we find it stated that "This Lotus Sutra [is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones]. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place."¹² If we accept these words of the sutra, then, like the lord Shakra dwelling on the peak of Mount Sumeru, like the wish-

granting jewel that crowns the wheel-turning kings, like the moon that dwells above the forest of trees, like the knot of flesh¹³ that tops the head of a Buddha, so the Lotus Sutra stands like a wish-granting jewel crowning the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, Nirvana, and all the other sutras.

If we set aside the pronouncements of the scholars and teachers and rely upon the text of the sutra, then we can see that the Lotus Sutra is superior to the Mahavairochana, Flower Garland, and all the other sutras as plainly and as easily as a sighted person can distinguish heaven from earth when the sun is shining in a clear blue sky.

And if we examine the texts of the Mahavairochana, Flower Garland, and the other sutras, we will find that there is not a word or even a brushstroke in them that resembles the above-cited passage of the Lotus Sutra. True, at times they speak about the superiority of the Mahayana sutras as compared to the Hinayana sutras, or of the Buddhist truth as opposed to secular truth, or they praise the truth of the Middle Way as opposed to the various views that phenomena are non-substantial or that they have only temporary existence.¹⁴ But in fact they are like the rulers of petty kingdoms who, when addressing their subjects, speak of themselves as great kings. It is the Lotus Sutra that, in comparison to these various rulers, is the true great king.

The Nirvana Sutra alone of all the sutras has passages that resemble those of the Lotus Sutra. For this reason, the Buddhist scholars who preceded T'ien-t'ai in both northern and southern China were led astray into declaring that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Nirvana Sutra. But if we examine the text of the Nirvana Sutra itself, we will find that, as in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the comparison is being made between the Nirvana Sutra and the sutras of the Flower Gar-

land, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods that were expounded during the first forty and more years of the Buddha's preaching life. It is in comparison to these earlier sutras that the Nirvana Sutra declares itself to be superior.

Moreover, the Nirvana Sutra, comparing itself with the Lotus Sutra, says: "When this [Nirvana] sutra was preached . . . the prediction had already been made in the Lotus Sutra that the eight thousand voice-hearers would attain Buddhahood,¹⁵ a prediction that was like a great harvest. Thus, the autumn harvest was over and the crop had been stored away for winter [when the Nirvana Sutra was expounded], and there was nothing left for it [but a few gleanings]." This passage from the Nirvana is saying that the Nirvana is inferior to the Lotus Sutra.

The above passages [from the Lotus and Nirvana sutras] are perfectly clear on this point. Nevertheless, even the great scholars of northern and southern China went astray, so students of later ages should take care to examine them very thoroughly. For the passage [from the Lotus Sutra] not only establishes the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over the Nirvana Sutra, but indicates its superiority over all other sutras in the worlds of the ten directions.

Earlier, there were those who were misled concerning these passages, but after the great teachers T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo had clearly indicated their meaning, one would suppose that any person with eyes would understand them. Nevertheless, even such men as Jikaku and Chisho of the Tendai school failed to understand these passages correctly, so what can one expect from the members of the other schools?

Someone might doubt my words, saying that, although the Lotus Sutra is the finest among all the sutras that have been brought to China and Japan, in

India, in the palaces of the dragon kings, the realms of the four heavenly kings, the realms of the sun and moon, the heaven of the thirty-three gods, or the Tushita heaven, for instance, there are as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. Among these, may there not be one that is superior to the Lotus Sutra?

I would reply that, by looking at one thing, you can surmise ten thousand. This is what is meant by the statement that you can come to know all under heaven without ever going out of your garden gate. But a fool will have doubts, saying, "I have seen the sky in the south, but I have not seen the sky in the east or west or north. Perhaps the sky in those other three directions has a different sun in it from the one I know." Or he will see a column of smoke rising up beyond the hills, and although the smoke is in plain sight, because he cannot see the fire itself, he will conclude that the fire may not really exist. Such a person is my questioner, an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief, no different from a man with sightless eyes!

In the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, uttering words of absolute sincerity from his golden mouth, establishes the relative superiority of the various sutras he expounded during the fifty or so years of his preaching life, saying, "The sutras I have preached number immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions. Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand."

Though this statement is the declaration of a single Buddha, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, all the bodhisattvas from the stage of near-perfect enlightenment on down should honor it and have faith in it. For the Buddha Many Treasures came from the east and

testified to the truth of these words, and the [emanation] Buddhas assembled from the ten directions and extended their long broad tongues up to the Brahma heaven just as Shakyamuni Buddha did. Afterward, they all returned to their respective lands.

The words "have preached, now preach, and will preach" include not only the sutras preached by Shakyamuni in his fifty years of teaching, but all the sutras preached by the Buddhas of the ten directions and three existences without setting aside a single character or even a single brushstroke. It is in comparison to all of these that the Lotus Sutra is proclaimed to be superior. At that time the Buddhas of the ten directions indicated their agreement beyond all doubt. If, after they had returned to their respective lands, they had told their disciples that there was in fact a sutra that is superior to the Lotus Sutra, do you suppose their disciples would ever have believed them?

If there are those who, though they have not seen it with their own eyes, nevertheless suspect that there may be a sutra superior to the Lotus Sutra somewhere in India or in the palaces of the dragon kings, the four heavenly kings, or the gods of the sun and moon, I would say this. Were not Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the dragon kings present when Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra? If the sun and moon and the other deities should say, "There is a sutra superior to the Lotus Sutra; you merely do not know about it," then they would be a sun and moon who speak great falsehoods!

In that case, I would berate them, saying: "Sun and moon, you dwell up in the sky rather than on the ground as we do, and yet you never fall down—this is because of the power you gain by observing most strictly the precept of never telling a lie. But now if you tell this great lie by saying there is a

sutra superior to the Lotus Sutra, I am certain that, even before the kalpa of decline arrives, you will come plummeting down to earth. What is more, you will not stop falling until you have reached the depths of the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering that is surrounded by solid iron! Beings who tell such great lies should not be allowed to remain a moment longer in the sky, circling above the four continents of the earth!" That is how I would berate them.

Yet such men of great wisdom, such great teachers and Tripitaka masters as Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school or Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho of the True Word school, proclaim that the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra. Though it is not for me to judge in such matters, I would say that, in the light of the higher principles of Buddhism, such men would appear to be archenemies of the Buddhas, would they not? Beside them, evil men such as Devadatta and Kokalika are as nothing. In fact they are in a class with Mahadeva and the Great Arrogant Brahman. And those who put faith in the teachings of such men—they too are a fearful lot indeed.

Question: Do you really proclaim that Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, and Shan-wu-wei and the others of the True Word school on down to Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho are the enemies of the Buddha?

Answer: This is a very important question, a matter of the gravest concern to the Buddha's teachings. Yet, on examining the text of the sutra, I find that, if someone should declare that there is a sutra superior to the Lotus Sutra, then regardless of who that person may be, he or she can-

not escape the charge of slandering the Law. Therefore, if we go by what the sutra says, then persons such as this must be regarded as enemies of the Buddha. And if, out of fear, I fail to point out this fact, then the distinctions of relative merit made among the various sutras will all have been made in vain.

If, out of awe of these great teachers of the past, I should simply point at their latter-day followers and call them enemies of the Buddha, then these latter-day followers of the various schools would say: "The assertion that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra is not something that we ourselves invented on our own. It is the doctrine taught by the patriarchs of our school. Though we may be no match for them in observing the precepts, in wisdom and understanding, or in status, when it comes to the doctrines that they taught, we never diverge from them in the slightest." And in that case, one would have to admit that they are guilty of no fault.

Nevertheless, if I know that this assertion is false and yet, out of fear of others, I fail to say so, then I will be ignoring the stern warning of the Buddha, who said, "[It is like a royal envoy who] would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler."¹⁶

What am I to do? If I speak up, I face fearful opposition from the world at large. But if I am silent, I can hardly escape the condemnation of failing to heed the Buddha's stern warning. Forward or backward, my way is blocked.

Yet perhaps it is only to be expected. For, as the Lotus Sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹⁷ Again elsewhere, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁸

When Shakyamuni Buddha had been conceived by his mother, Lady Maya, the devil king of the sixth heaven gazed down into Lady Maya's womb and said, "My archenemy, the sharp sword of the Lotus Sutra, has been conceived. Before the birth can take place, I must do something to destroy it!" Then the devil king transformed himself into a learned physician, entered the palace of King Shuddhodana, and said, "I am a learned physician, and I have brought some excellent medicine that will insure the safe delivery of the child." In this way he attempted to poison Lady Maya.

When the Buddha was born, the devil king caused stones to rain down on him and mixed poison in his milk. Later, when the Buddha left the palace to enter the religious life, the devil king changed himself into a black venomous serpent and tried to block his way. In addition, he entered the bodies of such evil men as Devadatta, Kokalika, King Virudhaka, and King Ajata-shatru, inciting them to hurl a great stone at the Buddha that injured him and drew blood, or to kill many of the Shakyas, the Buddha's clansmen, or murder his disciples.

These great persecutions were planned long ago, schemes that were designed to prevent the Buddha, the World-Honored One, from preaching the Lotus Sutra. It is persecutions such as these that the sutra means when it says, "Hatred and jealousy toward the sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world."

In addition to these troubles arising long before the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra, there were others that occurred later when he expounded the sutra itself. [These were the doubts that arose when Shakyamuni revealed that] for forty-some years, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the great bodhisattvas had in fact been among the archenemies of the Lotus Sutra.¹⁹

But the sutra says, "How much more will this be so after his passing?" By this we know that, in a future age after the passing of the Buddha, there are bound to be persecutions and difficulties even greater and more fearful than those that occurred during his lifetime. If even the Buddha had difficulty bearing up under such persecutions, how can ordinary people be expected to bear them, particularly when these troubles are destined to be even greater than those that occurred during the Buddha's lifetime?

Though one might wonder what great persecutions could possibly be more terrible than the huge rock thirty feet long and sixteen feet wide that Devadatta rolled down on the Buddha or the drunken elephant that King Ajatashatru sent charging after him, if persecutions greater than those that arose during the Buddha's lifetime keep occurring again and again to someone who is not guilty of the slightest fault, then one should realize that that person is a true votary of the Lotus Sutra in the age after the Buddha's passing.

The successors of the Buddha²⁰ were among the four ranks of bodhisattvas; they were messengers of the Buddha. Yet Bodhisattva Aryadeva was killed by a non-Buddhist, the Venerable Aryasimha had his head cut off by the king Dammira, Buddhmitra had to stand for twelve years under a red flag [before he could attract the notice of the ruler], and Bodhisattva Nagarjuna had to stand seven years under a similar flag. Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha was sold to an enemy country for the sum of three hundred thousand coins,²¹ and the Scholar Manoratha died of chagrin.²² These are examples of troubles that took place in the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law.

We come now to a time five hundred years after the beginning of the Middle Day of the Law or fifteen hundred years after the passing of the Bud-

dha. At that time in China there was a wise man who was at first known as Chih-i and later as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che. He determined to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in their true form. There had been thousands and thousands of wise men who preceded T'ien-t'ai, and they had held various opinions concerning the teachings set forth by the Buddha in his lifetime, but in general, they were grouped into ten schools or traditions, the so-called three schools of the south and seven schools of the north. Of these, one school emerged as foremost among them. This was the third of the three southern schools, the school of the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün of the temple called Kuang-che-ssu.

Fa-yün divided the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime into five periods. From among the teachings of these five periods, he selected three sutras, the Flower Garland, the Nirvana, and the Lotus. He declared that, among all the sutras, the Flower Garland Sutra ranks first and is comparable to the monarch of a kingdom. The Nirvana Sutra ranks second and is like the regent or prime minister, while the Lotus Sutra ranks third and is like one of the court nobles. All the other sutras are inferior to these and are comparable to the common people.

Fa-yün was by nature extremely clever. Not only did he study under such men of great wisdom as Hui-kuan, Hui-yen, Seng-jou, and Hui-tz'u,²³ but he refuted the doctrines of various teachers of the northern and southern schools, and retired to the seclusion of the mountain forest, where he devoted himself to the study of the Lotus, Nirvana, and Flower Garland sutras.

As a result, Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty summoned him to court and had a temple called Kuang-che-ssu built for him within the palace grounds, paying him great honor. When Fa-yün lec-

tured on the Lotus Sutra, flowers fell down from the heavens just as they had done when Shakyamuni Buddha first preached it.

In the fifth year of the T'ien-chien era (C.E. 506), there was a great drought. The emperor had the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün lecture on the Lotus Sutra, and when he reached the verses in the "Parable of the Medicinal Herbs" chapter that read, "The rain falls everywhere, coming down on all four sides," soft rain began to fall from the sky. The emperor was so overwhelmed with admiration that he appointed Fa-yün on the spot to the rank of administrator of priests, and he served him in person as the heavenly deities served the lord Shakra and as the common people look up in awe to their sovereign. In addition, it was revealed to someone in a dream that Fa-yün had been lecturing on the Lotus Sutra ever since the time of the Buddha Sun Moon Bright in the distant past.

Fa-yün wrote a commentary in four volumes on the Lotus Sutra. In this commentary²⁴ he stated, "This sutra is not truly eminent," and spoke of it as "an unusual expedient means." By this he meant that the Lotus Sutra does not fully reveal the truth of Buddhism.

Was it because Fa-yün's teachings met with the approval of the Buddha that the flowers and the rain came down on him from the sky? In any event, as a result of the wonderful and unusual things that happened to him, the people of China came to believe that the Lotus Sutra was in fact perhaps inferior to the Flower Garland and Nirvana sutras. This commentary by Fa-yün was in time disseminated to the kingdoms of Silla, Paekche, and Koguryō, and to Japan,²⁵ where people in general came to hold the same opinion as that prevalent in China.

Shortly after the death of Fa-yün, in the latter years of the Liang dynasty and the early years of the Ch'en, there appeared a young priest known as the

Dharma Teacher Chih-i. He was a disciple of the Great Teacher Nan-yüeh, but perhaps because he wished to clarify his understanding of his teacher's doctrines, he entered the storehouse where the scriptures were kept and examined the texts again and again. He singled out the Flower Garland, Nirvana, and Lotus sutras as worthy of special attention, and of these three, he lectured on the Flower Garland Sutra in particular. In addition, he compiled a book of devotional exercises²⁶ in honor of the Buddha Vairochana of the Flower Garland Sutra and day after day furthered his understanding of this scripture. The people of his time supposed that he did this because he considered the Flower Garland Sutra to be the foremost of all sutras. In fact, however, he did it because he had grave doubts about Fa-yün's assertion that the Flower Garland Sutra was to be ranked first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Lotus Sutra third, and he therefore wished to make a particularly close examination of the Flower Garland Sutra.

After he had done so, he concluded that, among all the sutras, the Lotus Sutra was to be ranked first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Flower Garland Sutra third. He also observed in sorrow that, although the sacred teachings of the Thus Come One had spread throughout the land of China, they had failed to bring benefit to its inhabitants but on the contrary caused people to stray into the evil paths. This, he concluded, was due to the errors of their teachers.

It was as though the leaders of the nation had told the people that east is west, or that heaven is earth, and the common people had accepted their assertions and believed accordingly. Later, if some person of humble stature should come forward and tell them that what they called west was really east, or that what they called heaven was really earth, not only would they refuse to

believe him, but they would curse and attack him in order to ingratiate themselves with their leaders.

Chih-i pondered what to do about the situation. He felt that he could not remain silent, and he therefore spoke out in severe condemnation of the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün of Kuang-che-ssu temple, asserting that, because of his slanders against the correct teaching, he had fallen into hell. With that, the Buddhist teachers of the north and south rose up like angry hornets and descended on him like a flock of crows.

Some proposed that Chih-i should have his head smashed; others, that he should be driven out of the country. The ruler of the Ch'en dynasty, hearing of what was going on, summoned a number of Buddhist leaders from the north and south and had them appear in his presence along with Chih-i so that he could listen to the proceedings. There were such priests as Hui-jung, a disciple of the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün, and Fa-sui, Hui-k'uang, and Hui-heng—over a hundred men, some in the ranks of administrator of priests and supervisor of priests. They struggled to outdo one another in speaking ill of Chih-i, raising their eyebrows and glaring angrily, or clapping their hands in an impatient rhythm.

The Dharma Teacher Chih-i, though he was seated in a humble position far below the others, showed no sign of emotion and made no slip of speech. Instead, with quiet dignity he took notes on each of the charges and assertions made by the other priests and succeeded in refuting them. Then he began to attack his opponents, saying: "According to the teachings of the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün, the Flower Garland Sutra ranks first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Lotus Sutra third. In what sutra is the proof of this to be found? Please produce a passage that gives clear and certain proof of this!"

Pressed in this way, the other priests all lowered their heads and turned pale, unable to say a word in reply.

He continued to press them, saying: "In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha says, 'Then I preached the twelve divisions of the correct and equal sutras,²⁷ the teaching of great wisdom, and the Flower Garland teaching of the ocean-imprint meditation.'²⁸ Thus the Buddha himself mentions the Flower Garland Sutra by name and denies its worth, saying that, in these sutras preached before the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, 'I have not yet revealed the truth.' If in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which is inferior to the Lotus Sutra, the Flower Garland Sutra is attacked in this way, then what grounds could there be for asserting that the Flower Garland Sutra represents the highest achievement of the Buddha's preaching life? Gentlemen, if you wish to show your loyalty to your teacher, then please produce some scriptural passage that will refute and override this passage I have cited from the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, and vindicate your teacher's doctrines!

"And on what passage of scripture do you base your assertion that the Nirvana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra? In the fourteenth volume of the Nirvana Sutra, there is a discussion of the relative merit of the Nirvana Sutra in comparison to the sutras of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, but no mention whatsoever of its merit in comparison to the Lotus Sutra.

"Earlier in the same sutra, however, in the ninth volume, the relative merits of the Nirvana and Lotus sutras are made abundantly clear. The passage states, 'When this [Nirvana] sutra was preached . . . the prediction had already been made in the Lotus Sutra that the eight thousand voice-hearers would attain Buddhahood, a prediction that

was like a great harvest. Thus, the autumn harvest was over and the crop had been stored away for winter [when the Nirvana Sutra was expounded], and there was nothing left for it [but a few gleanings].’

“This passage makes clear that the other sutras were the work of spring and summer, while the Nirvana and Lotus sutras were like a ripening or fruition. But while the Lotus Sutra was like a great fruition in which the harvest is gathered in autumn and stored away for winter, the Nirvana Sutra was like the gleanings of the fallen grain that takes place at the end of autumn and the beginning of winter.

“In this passage, the Nirvana Sutra is in effect acknowledging that it is inferior to the Lotus Sutra. And the Lotus Sutra speaks about the sutras that have already been preached, are presently being preached, and are to be preached in the future. By this, the Buddha is indicating that the Lotus Sutra is not only superior to the sutras preached before it as well as those preached at the same time, but is also superior to those he will preach afterward.

“If Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, laid it down so clearly, what room could there be for doubt? Nevertheless, because he was concerned about what might happen after his passing, he determined to have Many Treasures Buddha of the World of Treasure Purity in the east act as a witness to the truth of his words. Therefore, Many Treasures Buddha sprang forth from beneath the earth and testified to the verity of the Lotus Sutra, saying, ‘The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you have expounded is the truth!’²⁹ In addition, the Buddhas of the ten directions who were Shakyamuni’s emanations gathered around and put forth their long broad tongues until the tips reached to the Brahma heaven, as did Shakyamuni’s, in witness to the truth of the teachings.

“After that, Many Treasures Buddha returned to the World of Treasure Purity, and the various Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni returned to their respective lands in the ten directions. Then, when neither Many Treasures Buddha nor the emanations were present, Shakyamuni Buddha preached the Nirvana Sutra. If he had claimed that the Nirvana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra, would his disciples in fact have believed such a thing?”

This was the way Chih-i, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai Chih-che, chided them. He was like the brilliant light of the sun and moon striking the eyes of the asuras,³⁰ or the sword of the emperor of Han³¹ pressing against the necks of his barons, and his opponents accordingly closed their eyes tightly and let their heads droop. In his appearance and manner, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai was like the lion king roaring at foxes and rabbits, or like a hawk or an eagle swooping down on doves and pheasants.

As a result, not only did the fact that the Lotus Sutra is superior to the Flower Garland and Nirvana sutras become known throughout the whole of China, but word of it also spread to the five regions of India. There the Indian treatises of both the Mahayana and Hinayana divisions of Buddhism were inferior to the Great Teacher Chih-che’s doctrine, and the people there praised him, wondering if Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, had appeared in the world once again, or whether Buddhism would now have a second beginning.

In time the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai passed away, and the Ch’ien and Sui dynasties came to an end and were replaced by the T’ang dynasty. The Great Teacher Chang-an also passed away, and there were few who continued to study the type of Buddhism taught by T’ien-t’ai.

Then, in the reign of Emperor T’ai-

tsung, there appeared a priest named the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang. He journeyed to India in the third year of the Chen-kuan era (629) and returned in the nineteenth year of the same era. During his journey, he conducted a thorough investigation of Buddhism in India and on his return introduced to China the school known as the Dharma Characteristics.

This school is to the T'ien-t'ai school as fire is to water. Hsüan-tsang brought with him works such as the *Profound Secrets Sutra*, *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*, and *The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine* that were unknown to T'ien-t'ai, and claimed that, although the Lotus Sutra is superior to the other sutras, it is inferior to the *Profound Secrets Sutra*. Since this was a text that T'ien-t'ai had never seen, his followers in these later times, shallow as they were in wisdom and understanding, seemed inclined to accept this allegation.

Moreover, Emperor T'ai-tsung was a worthy ruler, but he placed extraordinary faith in the teachings of Hsüan-tsang. As a result, though there were those who might have wished to speak out in protest, they were, as is too often the case, awed by the authority of the throne and held their peace. Thus, regrettable as it is to relate, the Lotus Sutra was thrust aside. Hsüan-tsang taught that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth and the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the Lotus Sutra is an expedient means, and expounded the theory of the five natures into which all beings are inherently divided.

Though these new teachings came from India, it was as though the non-Buddhist teachings of India had invaded the land of China. The Lotus Sutra was declared to be a mere expedient teaching, and the *Profound Secrets Sutra*, the embodiment of the truth. Thus the testimony given by Shakyamuni, *Many Treasures*, and the Bud-

dhas of the ten directions was totally ignored, and instead Hsüan-tsang and his disciple Tz'u-en were looked upon as living Buddhas.

Later, during the reign of Empress Wu, a priest called the Dharma Teacher Fa-tsang appeared who, in order to vent his anger over the attacks that had been made earlier by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai on the Flower Garland Sutra, founded a new school called the Flower Garland school. In doing so, he utilized a new translation of the Flower Garland Sutra³² that had recently been completed, using it to supplement the older translation of the Flower Garland Sutra that had been the target of T'ien-t'ai's attack. This school proclaimed that the Flower Garland Sutra represents the "root teaching" of the Buddha, while the Lotus Sutra represents the "branch teachings."

To sum up, the teachers in northern and southern China ranked the Flower Garland Sutra first, the Nirvana Sutra second, and the Lotus Sutra third. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai ranked the Lotus first, the Nirvana second, and the Flower Garland third. And the newly founded Flower Garland school ranked the Flower Garland first, the Lotus second, and the Nirvana third.

Later, in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei journeyed to China from India, bringing with him the Mahavairochana and Susiddhikara sutras. In addition, the Tripitaka Master Chin-kang-chih appeared with the *Diamond Crown Sutra*. Moreover, Chin-kang-chih had a disciple named the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung.

These three men were all Indians who not only came from very distinguished families but were in character quite different from the priests of China. The doctrines that they taught appeared highly impressive in that they included mudras and mantras, something that had never been known in

China since the introduction of Buddhism in the Later Han. In the presence of this new Buddhism, the emperor bowed his head and the common people pressed their palms together in reverence.

These men taught that, whatever the relative merits of the Flower Garland, Profound Secrets, Wisdom, Nirvana, and Lotus sutras might be, they were all exoteric teachings, the various preachings of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. The Mahavairochana Sutra that they had newly introduced, on the other hand, represented the royal pronouncements of the Dharma King Mahavairochana. The other sutras were the multiple sayings of the common people; this sutra was the unique pronouncement of the Son of Heaven. Works such as the Flower Garland and Nirvana sutras could never hope to reach as high as the Mahavairochana Sutra even with the help of a ladder. Only the Lotus Sutra bears some resemblance to the Mahavairochana Sutra.

Nevertheless, the Lotus Sutra was preached by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and thus represents merely the truth as spoken by a commoner, while the Mahavairochana Sutra represents the truth as spoken by the Son of Heaven. Hence, although the words resemble each other, the persons who spoke them are as far apart as the clouds in the sky and the mud on earth. The difference between them is like the moon that is reflected in muddy water on the one hand and in clear water on the other. Both alike are reflections of the moon, yet the nature of the water that catches the reflection is vastly different.

Such were the assertions put forth by these men, and no one attempted to examine them carefully or make clear their true nature. Instead, the other schools of Buddhism all bowed down and acknowledged themselves subser-

vient to this new school called the True Word.

After Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih died, the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung made a trip to India and brought back to China a treatise entitled *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*, and the True Word school grew all the more influential.

In the T'ien-t'ai school, however, there appeared a priest known as the Great Teacher Miao-lo. Though he lived more than two hundred years after the time of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, because he was extremely wise and had a clear understanding of the teachings of T'ien-t'ai, he perceived that the meaning of T'ien-t'ai's commentaries was that the Lotus Sutra is superior to the Profound Secrets Sutra and the Dharma Characteristics school, which were both introduced to China after T'ien-t'ai's time, and to the Flower Garland school and the True Word school with its Mahavairochana Sutra, both of which were first established in China.

Up until then, either because T'ien-t'ai's followers lacked the wisdom to see what was wrong, or because they feared others or were in awe of the ruler's power, no one had spoken out. It was clear that a correct understanding of the teachings of T'ien-t'ai was about to be lost, and that the erroneous doctrines that were rife surpassed even those that had prevailed in northern and southern China in the period before the Ch'en and Sui dynasties. Therefore, Miao-lo wrote commentaries on T'ien-t'ai's works in thirty volumes, the writings known as *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight," The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,"* and *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* Not only did these thirty volumes of commentary serve to eliminate passages of repetition in T'ien-t'ai's works and to elucidate points that were

unclear, but at the same time, in one stroke, they refuted the Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and True Word schools, which had escaped T'ien-t'ai's censures because they did not exist in China during his lifetime.

Turning now to Japan, we find that, in the reign of the thirtieth sovereign Emperor Kimmei, on the thirteenth day of the tenth month in the thirteenth year of his reign (552), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*, a copy of the Buddhist scriptures and a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha were brought to Japan from the Korean kingdom of Paekche. And in the reign of Emperor Yomei, Prince Shotoku began the study of Buddhism. He dispatched a court official named Wake no Imoko to go to China and bring back the copy of the Lotus Sutra in one volume that had belonged to him in a previous life,³³ and expressed his determination to honor and protect the sutra.

Later, by the reign of the thirty-seventh sovereign Emperor Kotoku, the Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, Dharma Analysis Treasury, and Establishment of Truth schools were introduced to Japan, and in the time of the forty-fifth sovereign Emperor Shomu, the Precepts school was introduced, thus making a total of six schools. But during the time from Emperor Kotoku to the reign of the fiftieth sovereign Emperor Kammu, a period of over 120 years under fourteen reigns, the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools had not yet been introduced.

During the reign of Emperor Kammu, there was a young priest named Saicho who was a disciple of the Administrator of Priests Gyohyo of Yamashina-dera temple. He made a thorough study of Dharma Characteristics and the others of the six schools mentioned above, but he felt that he had yet to reach a true understanding of Buddhism. Then he came upon a commentary that the Dharma Teacher

Fa-tsang of the Flower Garland school had written on *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, and in it were quotations from the works of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai.

These works of T'ien-t'ai seemed to be worthy of special attention, but Saicho did not even know whether they had yet been brought to Japan or not. When he questioned someone about this, the person replied that there had been a priest named the Reverend Chien-chen, [known as Ganjin in Japan], of a temple called Lung-hsing-ssu in Yang-chou in China who had studied the T'ien-t'ai teachings and had been a disciple of the Discipline Master Tao-hsien. Toward the end of the T'ien-pao era (742-756), he journeyed to Japan, where he worked to spread a knowledge of the Hinayana rules of monastic discipline. He had brought with him copies of the works of T'ien-t'ai, but had not attempted to disseminate them. All this took place, Saicho was told, during the time of the forty-fifth sovereign Emperor Shomu.

When Saicho asked if he could see these writings, they were brought out and shown to him. On his first perusal of them, he felt as though he had been awakened from all the delusions of birth and death. And when he began to consider the basic doctrines of the six schools of earlier Buddhism in the light of what he found in these writings, it became apparent that each of the schools was guilty of doctrinal error.

Immediately he vowed to do something about the situation, saying, "Because the people of Japan are all patrons of those who are slandering the correct teaching, the nation will surely fall into chaos." He thereupon expressed his criticisms of the six schools, but when he did so, the great scholars of the six schools and the seven major temples of Nara rose up in anger and flocked to the capital, until the nation was in an uproar.

These men of the six schools and seven major temples were filled with the most intense animosity toward Saicho. But as it happened, on the nineteenth day of the first month in the twenty-first year of the Enryaku era (802), Emperor Kammu paid a visit to the temple called Takao-dera, and he summoned fourteen eminent priests—namely, Zengi, Shoyu, Hoki, Chonin, Kengyoku, Ampuku, Gonso, Shuen, Jiko, Gen'yo, Saiko, Doshu, Kosho, and Kambin—to come to the temple and debate with Saicho.

These various men of the Flower Garland, Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, and other schools expounded the teachings of the founders of their respective schools just as they had learned them. But the Honorable Saicho took notes on each point put forward by the men of the six schools and criticized it in the light of the Lotus Sutra, the works of T'ien-t'ai, or other sutras and treatises. His opponents were unable to say a word in reply, their mouths as incapable of speech as if they were noses.

The emperor was astounded and questioned Saicho in detail on various points. Thereafter he handed down an edict criticizing the fourteen men who had opposed Saicho.

They in turn submitted a memorial acknowledging their defeat and apologizing, in which they said, "We, students of the seven major temples and six schools, . . . have for the first time understood the ultimate truth."

They also said, "In the two hundred or more years since Prince Shotoku spread the Buddhist teachings in this country, a great many sutras and treatises have been lectured upon, and their principles have been widely argued, but until now, many doubts still remained to be settled. Moreover, the lofty and perfect doctrine of the Lotus Sutra had not yet been properly explained and made known."

They also said, "Now at last the dispute that has continued so long between the Three Treatises and Dharma Characteristics schools has been resolved as dramatically as though ice had melted. The truth has been made abundantly clear, as though clouds and mist had parted to reveal the light of the sun, moon, and stars."

The Reverend Saicho, in his appraisal of the teachings of his fourteen opponents, wrote as follows: "You each lecture upon the single scripture [of your own school], and though you sound the drums of the teachings within the deep valleys, both lecturers and hearers continue to go astray on the paths of the three vehicles. Though you fly the banners of doctrine from lofty peaks, and both teachers and disciples have broken free from the bonds of the threefold world, you still persist on the road of the enlightenment that takes countless kalpas to achieve, and confuse the three kinds of carts with the great white ox cart outside the gate.³⁴ How could you possibly attain the first stage of security and reach perfect enlightenment in this world that is like a house on fire?"

The two court officials [Wake no] Hiroyo and Matsuna³⁵ [the brothers who were present at the debate] commented as follows: "Through Nan-yüeh, the wonderful Law of Eagle Peak was made known, and through T'ien-t'ai, the wonderful enlightenment of Mount Ta-su³⁶ was opened up. But one regrets that the single vehicle of the Lotus is impeded by provisional teachings, and one grieves that the unification of the three truths has yet to be made manifest."

The fourteen priests commented as follows: "Zengi and the others of our group have met with great good fortune because of karmic bonds and have been privileged to hear these extraordinary words. Were it not for some profound karmic tie, how could we

have been born in this sacred age?"

These fourteen men had in the past transmitted the teachings of the various Chinese and Japanese patriarchs of their respective schools such as Fa-tsang and Shinjo of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang and Kanroku of the Three Treatises school, Tz'u-en and Dosho of the Dharma Characteristics school, or Tao-hsüan and Ganjin of the Precepts school. Thus, although the vessel in which the water of the doctrine was contained had changed from generation to generation, the water remained the same.

But now these fourteen men abandoned the erroneous doctrines that they had previously held, and embraced the teachings of the Lotus Sutra as expounded by Saicho, the Great Teacher Dengyo. Therefore, how could anyone in later times assert that the Flower Garland, Wisdom, or Profound Secrets Sutra surpasses the Lotus Sutra?

These fourteen men had of course studied the doctrines of the three Hinayana schools, [Establishment of Truth, Dharma Analysis Treasury, and Precepts]. But since the three Mahayana schools [of Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics] had suffered a doctrinal defeat, we need hardly mention the Hinayana schools. However, there are some people today who, being unaware of what actually happened, believe that one or another of the six schools did not suffer a doctrinal defeat. They are like the blind who cannot see the sun and moon, or the deaf who cannot hear the sound of thunder, and who therefore conclude that there are no sun and moon in the heavens, or that the skies emit no sound.

With regard to the True Word school, during the reign of the forty-fourth sovereign Empress Gensho, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei brought the Mahavairochana Sutra to Japan, but returned to China without spreading a knowledge of it.³⁷ Moreover, Gembo

and others brought back from China *The Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahavairochana Sutra* in fourteen volumes, as did the Preceptor Tokusei of Todai-ji.

These works were studied by the Great Teacher Dengyo, but he had doubts about what they said concerning the relative worth of the Mahavairochana and Lotus sutras. Therefore, in the seventh month of the twenty-third year of the Enryaku era (804), he went to China, where he met the Reverend Tao-sui of Hsi-ming-ssu temple and Hsing-man of Fo-lung-ssu temple, and received the teachings on concentration and insight³⁸ and the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment. He also met the Reverend Shun-hsiao of Ling-kan-ssu temple and received instruction in the True Word teachings. He returned to Japan in the sixth month of the twenty-fourth year of Enryaku. He was granted an audience with Emperor Kammu, and the emperor thereupon issued an edict instructing the students of the six schools to study the teachings on concentration and insight and the True Word teachings and to preserve them in the seven major temples of Nara.

In China there were various theories concerning the relative superiority of these two teachings—concentration and insight and the True Word. Moreover, *Meaning of the Mahavairochana Sutra* claims that, though they are equal in terms of principle, the True Word is superior in terms of practice.

The Great Teacher Dengyo, however, realized that this was an error on the part of the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei and understood that the Mahavairochana Sutra is inferior to the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he did not establish the True Word teachings as an eighth school, but instead incorporated them into the teachings of the seventh school, the Lotus school, after removing from them the label "True Word

school." He declared that the Mahavairochana Sutra is to be regarded as a supplementary sutra of the Lotus Tendai school and ranked it along with the Flower Garland, Larger Wisdom, and Nirvana sutras. However, at the time there was much dispute over whether or not a vitally important Mahayana specific ordination platform of perfect and immediate enlightenment should be established in Japan. Perhaps because of the trouble that arose on this account, it seems that the Great Teacher Dengyo did not give his disciples clear instructions concerning the relative superiority of the True Word and Tendai teachings.

In a work called *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine*, however, he clearly states that the True Word school stole the correct doctrines of the Lotus Tendai school and incorporated them into its interpretation of the Mahavairochana Sutra, thereafter declaring that the two schools were equal in terms of principle. Thus the True Word school had in effect surrendered to the Tendai school.

This is even more evident when we consider that, after the death of Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih, the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung went to India, where he met Bodhisattva Nagabodhi. Nagabodhi informed him that there were no treatises or commentaries in India that made clear the Buddha's intent, but that in China there was a commentary by a man named T'ien-t'ai that enabled one to distinguish correct from incorrect teachings and to understand the difference between partial doctrines and those that are complete. He exclaimed this in admiration and repeatedly begged that a copy of the work be brought to India.

This incident was reported to the Great Teacher Miao-lo by Pu-k'ung's disciple Han-kuang as is recorded at the end of the tenth volume of *On "The Words and Phrases."* It is also re-

corded in Dengyo's *Clarification of the Schools*. From this it is perfectly evident that the Great Teacher Dengyo believed the Mahavairochana Sutra to be inferior to the Lotus Sutra.

Thus it becomes apparent that the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, the great teachers T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo were of one mind in regarding the Lotus Sutra as the greatest of all the sutras, including the Mahavairochana Sutra. Moreover, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, who is regarded as the founder of the True Word school, held the same opinion, as becomes obvious if we carefully examine his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. Unfortunately, however, *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* brought from India by Pu-k'ung is full of errors and has led everyone astray, bringing about the present confusion.

We come now to the disciple of the Administrator of Priests Gonso of Iwabuchi named Kukai, known in later ages as the Great Teacher Kobo. On the twelfth day of the fifth month in the twenty-third year of Enryaku, he set out for T'ang China. After arriving there, he met the Reverend Hui-kuo, whose teacher belonged to the third generation of the True Word lineage beginning with the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih. From Hui-kuo he received the transmission of the two True Word mandalas.³⁹ He returned to Japan on the twenty-second day of the tenth month in the second year of Daido (807).

It was then the reign of Emperor Heizei, Emperor Kammu having passed away a short time before. Kobo was granted an audience with Emperor Heizei, who placed great confidence in him and embraced his teachings, valuing them above all. Not long after, Emperor Heizei ceded the throne to Emperor Saga, with whom Kobo likewise ingratiated himself. The Great Teacher Dengyo passed away on the

fourth day of the sixth month in the thirteenth year of Konin (822), during the reign of Emperor Saga. From the fourteenth year of the same era, Kobo served as teacher to the sovereign. He established the True Word school, was given supervision of the temple known as To-ji, and was referred to as the supreme priest of the True Word. Thus the True Word, the eighth school of Buddhism in Japan, had its start.

Kobo commented as follows on the relative merit of the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime: "First is the Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school, second is the Flower Garland Sutra, and third are the Lotus and Nirvana sutras.

"In comparison to the sutras of the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, the Lotus is a true sutra, but from the point of view of the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras, it is a doctrine of childish theory.

"Though Shakyamuni was a Buddha, in comparison to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, he was still in the region of darkness. Mahavairochana is as exalted as an emperor; Shakyamuni, by comparison, is as lowly as a subjugated barbarian.

"The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai is a thief. He stole the ghee of the True Word and claimed that the Lotus Sutra is ghee."

This is the sort of thing that Kobo wrote. As a result, though people may previously have believed that the Lotus is the greatest of all sutras, after hearing of the Great Teacher Kobo, they no longer regarded it as worthy of notice.

I will set aside the erroneous doctrines propounded by non-Buddhists in India. But these pronouncements of Kobo are certainly worse than those put forward by the priests of northern and southern China who declared that, in comparison to the Nirvana Sutra, the Lotus Sutra is a work of distorted views. They go even farther than the

assertions of those members of the Flower Garland school who stated that, in comparison to the Flower Garland Sutra, the Lotus Sutra represents the "branch teachings." One is reminded of that Great Arrogant Brahman of India who fashioned a tall dais with the deities Maheshvara, Narayana, and Vishnu, along with Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, as the four legs to support it, and then climbed up on it and preached his fallacious doctrines.

If only the Great Teacher Dengyo had still been alive, he would surely have had a word to say on the subject. But how could his disciples Gishin, Encho, Jikaku, and Chisho have failed to question the matter more closely? That was a great misfortune to the world indeed!

The Great Teacher Jikaku went to T'ang China in the fifth year of Jowa (838) and spent ten years there studying the doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools. With regard to the relative merit of the Lotus and Mahavairochana sutras, he studied under Fach'üan, Yüan-cheng, and others, eight True Word teachers⁴⁰ in all, and was taught by them that, although the Lotus and Mahavairochana sutras are equal in principle, the latter is superior in terms of practice. He also studied under Chih-yüan, Kuang-hsiu, and Wei-chüan⁴¹ of the T'ien-t'ai school, and was taught that the Mahavairochana Sutra belongs to the Correct and Equal group of sutras [that are inferior to the Lotus Sutra].

On the tenth day of the ninth month in the thirteenth year of Jowa, he returned to Japan, and on the fourteenth day of the sixth month of the first year of Kasho (848), an imperial edict was handed down [permitting him to conduct the True Word initiation ceremonies]. Perhaps because he had had difficulty determining the relative merit of the Lotus and Mahavai-

rochana sutras when he was studying in China, he proceeded to write a seven-volume commentary on the Diamond Crown Sutra and a seven-volume commentary on the Susiddhikara Sutra, making a total of fourteen volumes. The gist of these commentaries is that the doctrines set forth in the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras and the doctrines expounded in the Lotus Sutra ultimately indicate the same principle, but because of the ritual use of mudras and mantras associated with the former, the three True Word sutras just mentioned are superior to the Lotus Sutra.

In essence, this agrees exactly with the view of Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung set forth in their commentary on the Mahavairochana Sutra. But perhaps Jikaku still had doubts in his mind, or perhaps, having resolved his own doubts, he wished to clear up the doubts of others. In any event, he placed his fourteen volumes of commentary before the object of devotion in the temple where he resided and made this appeal in prayer: "Though I have written these works, the Buddha's intention is very difficult to determine. Are the Mahavairochana Sutra and the other two True Word sutras associated with it superior? Or are the Lotus Sutra and the two sutras⁴² associated with it to be ranked higher?"

While he was earnestly praying in this manner, on the fifth day, early in the morning at the time of the fifth watch,⁴³ a sign suddenly came to him in a dream. He dreamed that the sun was up in the blue sky, and that he took an arrow and shot at it. The arrow flew up into the sky and struck the sun. The sun began to roll over and over, and when it had almost fallen to the earth, Jikaku woke from his dream.

Delighted, he said, "I have had a very auspicious dream. These writings, in which I have declared that the True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus,

accord with the Buddha's will!" He then requested that an imperial edict be issued to this effect, and he disseminated his teaching throughout the country of Japan.

But the edict that was handed down as a result of this request says in effect, "It has at last become known that the concentration and insight doctrines of the Tendai school and the doctrines of the True Word school are in principle in perfect agreement." Jikaku had prayed to confirm that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra, but the edict that was issued says that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are the same!

The Great Teacher Chisho in his youth in Japan was a disciple of the Reverend Gishin, the Great Teacher Encho, the superintendent [Kojo], and Jikaku. Thus he received instruction in both the exoteric and esoteric doctrines as they were taught in Japan at the time. But presumably because he was in doubt as to the relative superiority of the Tendai and True Word schools, he journeyed to China. He arrived in T'ang China in the second year of Ninju (852),⁴⁴ where he studied under the True Word priests Fa-ch'üan and Yüan-cheng. In general, their teachings accorded with the view held by Jikaku, namely that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are equal in terms of principle, but that the former is superior in terms of practice.

Chisho also studied under the Reverend Liang-hsü of the T'ien-t'ai school, who taught him that, with regard to the relative merit of the True Word and T'ien-t'ai schools, the Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school cannot compare with the Flower Garland and Lotus sutras.

After spending seven years in China, Chisho returned to Japan on the seventeenth day of the fifth month in the first year of Jogan (859).⁴⁵

In his *Essentials of the Mahavairochana*

Sutra, Chisho states, "Even the Lotus Sutra cannot compare [to the Mahavairochana Sutra], much less the other doctrines." In this work, therefore, he argues that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. On the other hand, in another work *A Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings*, he states that the True Word, Zen, and other doctrines, when compared with the Flower Garland, Lotus, and Nirvana sutras, can at best serve as an introduction to these sutras. And he repeats this same view in his *Commentary on the Universal Worthy Sutra and Commentary on "The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra."*

On the twenty-ninth day, the day of the cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*, of the fourth month of the eighth year of Jogan (866), the year *hinoe-inu*, an imperial edict was handed down that stated, "We have heard that the two schools, True Word and Tendai, and their teachings are both worthy to be called the ghee of Buddhism, and to be described as profound and recondite."

Again, on the third day of the sixth month, an edict proclaimed, "Ever since the great teacher in former times [Dengyo] established the two disciplines⁴⁶ as the proper way for the Tendai school, the successive heads of the school in generation after generation have all followed this practice and transmitted both types of doctrines. Why then should their successors in later times depart from this old and established tradition?"

"And yet we hear that the priests of Mount Hiei do nothing but turn against the teachings of the patriarch and instead follow the prejudices and inclinations of their own hearts. It would appear that they give themselves almost entirely to promulgating the doctrines of other schools and make no attempt to restore the old disciplines of the Tendai school.

"On the path inherited from the master, one cannot neglect either the

concentration and insight or the True Word teachings. In diligently transmitting and spreading the doctrine, must not one be proficient in both types of teachings? From now on, only a person who is thoroughly familiar with both teachings shall be appointed as head of the Tendai school at Enryaku-ji, and this shall become a regular practice for future times."

These two men, Jikaku and Chisho, as we have seen, were disciples of Dengyo and Gishin, and in addition they journeyed to China and met eminent teachers of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools there. And yet it appears that they could not make up their minds as to the relative merit of these two schools. Sometimes they declared that the True Word is superior, sometimes that the Lotus is superior, and sometimes they said that the two are equal in terms of principle, but that the True Word is superior in terms of practice. Meanwhile, an edict warned that anyone attempting to argue the relative merit of the two schools would be judged guilty of violating the imperial decree.

These pronouncements of Jikaku and Chisho were clearly inconsistent, and it would appear that the followers of the other schools placed no trust in them whatsoever. Nevertheless, an imperial edict, as we have seen, states that the two schools are equal, putting this forward as the doctrine of the Tendai patriarch, the Great Teacher Dengyo. But in what work of the Great Teacher Dengyo is this view to be found? This is something that must be looked into carefully.

For me, Nichiren, to be challenging Jikaku and Chisho because of doubts over a matter pertaining to the Great Teacher Dengyo is like a person confronting his parents and arguing with them over who is older, or a person confronting the god of the sun and claiming that his own eyes shine more

brilliantly. Nevertheless, those who would defend the views of Jikaku and Chisho must produce some sort of clear scriptural evidence to support their case. Only if they do so can they hope to gain credence for such views.

The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang had been to India and seen a copy of *The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma* there, but that did not prevent him from being criticized by the Dharma Teacher Fa-pao, who had never been to India. The Tripitaka Master Dharmaraksha saw a copy of the Lotus Sutra in India, but that did not prevent a man of China⁴⁷ from pointing out that the "Entrustment" chapter was out of place in the translation he made of it, though that man had never seen the original text.

In like manner, though Jikaku may have studied under the Great Teacher Dengyo and received instruction from him, and though Chisho may have obtained the oral transmission from the Reverend Gishin, if they go against the teachings recorded in the authentic writings of Dengyo and Gishin, then how can they help but incur suspicion?

Clarification of the Schools by the Great Teacher Dengyo is the most secret of his writings. In the preface to that work, he writes: "The True Word school of Buddhism that has recently been brought to Japan deliberately obscures how its transmission was falsified in the recording [by I-hsing, who was deceived by Shan-wu-wei],⁴⁸ while the Flower Garland school that was introduced earlier attempts to disguise the fact that it was influenced by the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai."⁴⁹ The Three Treatises school, which is so infatuated with the concept of emptiness, has forgotten Chia-hsiang's humiliation,⁵⁰ and conceals the fact that he was completely won over to the T'ien-t'ai teachings by Chang-an. The Dharma Characteristics school, which clings to the concept of being,⁵¹ denies that its leader

Chih-chou was converted to the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school, and that Liang-pi used those teachings in interpreting the Benevolent Kings Sutra.⁵² . . . Now with all due circumspection I have written *Clarification of the Schools* in one volume to present to wise men of later times who share my convictions. The time is the reign of the fifty-second sovereign of Japan, the seventh year of the Konin era (816), the year *hinoe-saru*."⁵³

Farther on, in the main text of the same work, it reads, "There was an eminent monk in India who had heard that the teachings of the priest T'ien-t'ai of T'ang China were most suitable for distinguishing correct from incorrect doctrines, and expressed a longing to become better acquainted with them."

It continues, "Does this not mean that Buddhism has been lost in India, the country of its origin, and must now be sought in the surrounding regions? But even in China there are few people who recognize the greatness of T'ien-t'ai's teachings. They are like the people of Lu."⁵⁴

This work, as may be seen from these quotations, criticizes the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, and True Word schools. Now if the Great Teacher Dengyo believed that the Tendai and True Word schools are of equal worth, then why would he criticize the latter? Furthermore, he compares the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung and others to the ignorant people of the state of Lu. If he really approved of the True Word teachings as formulated by Shan-wu-wei, Chinkang-chih, and Pu-k'ung, then why would he speak ill of these men by comparing them to the people of Lu? And if the True Word teachings of India were identical with or superior to the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school, then why did the eminent monk of India question Pu-k'ung about them

and say that the correct teaching had been lost in India?

Be that as it may, these two men, Jikaku and Chisho, in words claimed to be the disciples of the Great Teacher Dengyo, but at heart they were not. That is why Dengyo wrote in the preface to his work, "Now with all due circumspection I have written *Clarification of the Schools* in one volume to present to wise men of later times who share my convictions." The words "who share my convictions" mean in effect "those who share my conviction that the True Word school is inferior to the Tendai school."

In the edict quoted earlier, which Chisho himself had requested, it says that they "do nothing but turn against the teachings of the patriarch [Dengyo] and instead follow the prejudices and inclinations of their own hearts." It also states, "On the path inherited from the master, one cannot neglect either the concentration and insight or the True Word teachings." But if we are to accept the words of the edict, we would have to say that Jikaku and Chisho themselves are the ones who have turned against their teacher Dengyo. It may be impertinent that I make charges of this kind, but if I do not do so, then the relative merit of the Mahavairochana and Lotus sutras will continue to be misunderstood as it is at present. That is why I risk my life to bring these charges.

[Since they themselves were mistaken,] it is altogether natural that these two men, Jikaku and Chisho, did not venture to accuse the Great Teacher Kobo of doctrinal error. Instead of wasting all those supplies and making work for other people by insisting upon traveling all the way to China, they should have made a more careful and thorough study of the doctrines of the Great Teacher Dengyo, who was their own teacher!

It was only in the time of the first three leaders of the Tendai school, the

Great Teacher Dengyo, the Reverend Gishin, and the Great Teacher Encho, that the correct doctrine was taught on Mount Hiei. Thereafter the chief priests of the Tendai school were transformed into True Word leaders. The area continued to be called a Tendai Mountain, but was presided over by a True Word master.

The great teachers Jikaku and Chisho, as we have seen, contradict the passage in the Lotus Sutra concerning all the sutras that the Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach."⁵⁵ And having contradicted that passage of the scripture, are they not to be regarded as the archenemies of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions? One might have thought that the Great Teacher Kobo was the foremost slanderer of the Law, but Jikaku and Chisho taught errors that far surpass those of Kobo.

When an error is as far from the truth as water is from fire or the earth from the sky, people will refuse to believe it, and such errors will have no chance of acceptance. Thus, for example, the doctrines of the Great Teacher Kobo are so full of such errors that even his own disciples would not accept them. As for the practices and ceremonies of the school, they accepted his instructions, but they could not bring themselves to accept his doctrines concerning the relative merits of the sutras. Therefore, they substituted for them the doctrines of Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Jikaku, and Chisho. It is the doctrine of Jikaku and Chisho that declares the True Word and Tendai schools to be identical in principle, and all the people have accepted that declaration.

Recognizing this situation, even followers of the Tendai school, hoping to be asked to perform the eye-opening ceremony for the consecration of painted or wooden Buddhist images, adopt the mudras and mantras in which

the True Word school is believed to excel. Thus in effect the whole of Japan goes over to the True Word school, and the Tendai school is left without a single follower.

A monk and a nun, a black object and a dark blue object, are so easily confused that a person with poor eyesight might well mistake one for the other. But a priest and a layman, or a white object and a red object, even a person with poor eyesight would never confuse, much less someone with good eyes. Now the doctrines of Jikaku and Chisho are as easy to mistake for the truth as a monk is for a nun, or a black object for a dark blue one. Therefore, even wise men are led astray, and the ignorant fall into error. As a result, for the past four hundred and more years, on Mount Hiei, at Onjo-ji and To-ji, in Nara, the five provinces surrounding the capital, the seven outlying regions,⁵⁶ and indeed throughout the whole land of Japan, all the people have been turned into slanderers of the Law.

In the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha states, "Manjushri, this Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place."

If this passage of the scripture is to be believed, then the Lotus Sutra must represent the correct teaching that dwells supreme above the Mahavairochana and all the numerous other sutras. How then, one wonders, would Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, Pu-k'ung, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho interpret this passage in the sutra and reconcile it with their beliefs?

Again, the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings."⁵⁷ If this passage of the sutra is to be believed, then the votary of the Lotus Sutra must be like the great sea as compared to the various rivers and streams,

like Mount Sumeru among the host of mountains, like the god of the moon amid the multitude of stars, like the great god of the sun amid the other shining lights, like the wheel-turning kings, like the lord Shakra, and like the great king Brahma among all various heavenly kings.

The Great Teacher Dengyo in his work entitled *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra* writes, "This sutra likewise is foremost among all the sutra teachings. . . . A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings."

After quoting this passage from the Lotus Sutra, Dengyo notes a passage from the work entitled *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* by T'ien-t'ai that interprets the same passage of scripture, and explains its meaning as follows: "One should understand that the sutras on which the other schools base their teachings are not foremost among the sutras, and those people who can uphold such sutras are not foremost among the multitude. But the Lotus Sutra, which is upheld by the Tendai Lotus school, is the foremost of all the sutras, and therefore those who can uphold the Lotus are foremost among living beings. This is borne out by the words of the Buddha himself. How could it be mere self-praise?"

Later in the work just mentioned, Dengyo says, "Detailed explanations concerning how the various schools base their teachings upon the T'ien-t'ai doctrine are given in a separate work." *Clarification of the Schools*, referred to as the separate work, states: "Now the founder of our school, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, preached the Lotus Sutra and interpreted the Lotus Sutra in a way that placed him far above the crowd; in all of China, he stood alone. One should clearly understand that he was a messenger of the Thus Come One. Those who praise him will receive blessings that will pile up as high

as Mount Calm and Bright, while those who slander him will be committing a fault that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering."

If we go by the Lotus Sutra and the interpretations of it put forward by T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo, then, in Japan at the present time, there is not a single votary of the Lotus Sutra!

In India, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was preaching the Lotus Sutra as described in the "Treasure Tower" chapter, he summoned all the various Buddhas and had them take their seats upon the ground. Only the Thus Come One Mahavairochana⁵⁸ was seated within the treasure tower, on the lower seat to the south,⁵⁹ while Shakyamuni Buddha was seated on the upper seat to the north.

This Thus Come One Mahavairochana is the master of the Mahavairochana of the Womb Realm described in the Mahavairochana Sutra, and of the Mahavairochana of the Diamond Realm described in the Diamond Crown Sutra. This Mahavairochana, or Many Treasures Buddha, who has as his vassals the Thus Come Ones Mahavairochana of the two realms just mentioned, is in turn surpassed by Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who sits in the seat above him. This Shakyamuni Buddha is a true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. Such was the situation in India.

In China, in the time of the Ch'en emperor [Shu-pao], the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai defeated in debate the Buddhist leaders of northern and southern China, and was honored with the title of Great Teacher while still alive. As Dengyo says of him, he was "far above the crowd; in all of China, he stood alone."

In Japan, the Great Teacher Dengyo defeated in debate the leaders of the six schools and became the country's first and foremost great teacher, Great Teacher Kompon.

In India, China, and Japan, these

three persons alone—Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo—were what the Lotus Sutra calls "foremost among all living beings."

Thus *Outstanding Principles* states: "Shakyamuni taught that the shallow is easy to embrace, but the profound is difficult. To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai trusted and obeyed Shakyamuni and worked to uphold the Lotus school, spreading its teachings throughout China. We of Mount Hiei inherited the doctrine from T'ien-t'ai and work to uphold the Lotus school and to disseminate its teachings throughout Japan."

In the eighteen hundred years or more since the passing of the Buddha, there has been only one votary of the Lotus Sutra in China and one in Japan. If Shakyamuni Buddha himself is added to the number, that makes a total of three persons.

The secular classics of China claim that a sage will appear once every thousand years, and a worthy once every five hundred. In the Yellow River where the Ching and Wei rivers⁶⁰ flow into it, the flow of the two tributary rivers remains separate. But it is said that, once every five hundred years, one side of the river will flow clear, and once every thousand years, both sides of the river will flow clear. [In the same way, sages and worthies appear at fixed intervals.]

In Japan, as we have seen, only on Mount Hiei in the time of the Great Teacher Dengyo was there a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Dengyo was succeeded by Gishin and Encho, the first and second chief priests of the school, respectively. But only the first chief priest, Gishin, followed the ways of the Great Teacher Dengyo. The second chief priest, Encho, was half a disciple of Dengyo and half a disciple of Kobo.

The third chief priest, the Great

Teacher Jikaku, at first acted like a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyo. But after he went to China at the age of forty, though he continued to call himself a disciple of Dengyo and went through the motions of carrying on Dengyo's line, he taught a kind of Buddhism that was wholly unworthy of a true disciple of Dengyo. Only in the matter of the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment established by Dengyo did he conduct himself like a true disciple.

He was like a bat, for a bat resembles a bird yet is not a bird, and resembles a mouse yet is not a mouse. Or he was like an owl or a hakei beast.⁶¹ He ate his father, the Lotus Sutra, and devoured his mother, those who embrace the Lotus Sutra. When he dreamed that he shot down the sun, it must have been a portent of these crimes. And it must have been because of these acts that, after his death, no grave was set aside for him.

The temple Onjo-ji, representing Chisho's branch of the Tendai school, fought incessantly with the temple Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, which represented Jikaku's branch of the school,⁶² the two going at each other like so many asuras and evil dragons. First Onjo-ji was burned down, then the buildings on Mount Hiei. As a result, the image of Bodhisattva Maitreya that had been the special object of devotion of the Great Teacher Chisho was burned, and the special object of devotion of the Great Teacher Jikaku, as well as the great lecture hall on Mount Hiei, was likewise burned. The priests of the two temples must have felt as though they had fallen into the hell of incessant suffering while they were still in this world. Only the main hall on Mount Hiei remained standing.

The lineage of the Great Teacher Kobo has likewise ceased to be what it should have been. Kobo left written instructions that no one who had not

received the precepts at the ordination platform [established by Ganjin] at Todai-ji should be allowed to become head of To-ji temple. The Retired Emperor Kampyo,⁶³ however, founded a temple [in Kyoto] called Ninna-ji and moved a number of priests from To-ji to staff it, and he also issued a decree clearly stating that no one should be allowed to reside in Ninna-ji unless he had received the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment at the ordination platform on Mount Hiei. As a result, the priests of To-ji are neither disciples of Ganjin nor those of Kobo. In terms of the precepts, they are Dengyo's disciples. However, they do not behave like true disciples of Dengyo. They turn their backs on the Lotus Sutra, which Dengyo considered to be supreme.

Kobo died on the twenty-first day of the third month in the second year of the Jowa era (835), and the imperial court sent a representative to offer prayers at his funeral. Later, however, his disciples gathered together and, bent on deception, announced that he [had not died at all but] had entered a state of deep meditation, and some of them even claimed that they had had to shave his head because his hair had grown long. Others asserted that while he was in China he had hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder all the way across the ocean to Japan;⁶⁴ that in answer to his prayers the sun had come out in the middle of the night; that he had transformed himself into the Thus Come One Mahavairochana; or that he had instructed the Great Teacher Dengyo in the eighteen paths⁶⁵ of esoteric Buddhism. Thus by enumerating their teacher's supposed virtues and powers, they hoped to make him appear wise, in this way lending support to his false doctrines and deluding the ruler and his ministers.

In addition, on Mount Koya there are two main temples, the original

temple⁶⁶ and Dembo-in. The original temple, which includes the great pagoda, was founded by Kobo and is dedicated to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana [of the Womb Realm]. The temple called Dembo-in was founded by Shokaku-bo and is dedicated to the Mahavairochana of the Diamond Realm. These two temples fight with each other day and night, in the same way as Onjo-ji at the foot of Mount Hiei and Enryaku-ji on top of Mount Hiei. Was it the accumulation of deceit that brought about the appearance in Japan of these calamities?

You may pile up dung and call it sandalwood, but when you burn it, it will give off only the odor of dung. You may pile up a lot of great lies and call them the teachings of the Buddha, but they will never be anything but a gateway to the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

The stupa built by Nirgrantha Jnataputra over a period of several years conferred great benefit upon living beings, but when Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha bowed to it, it suddenly collapsed.⁶⁷ The Brahman Demon Eloquence taught from behind a curtain and for a number of years succeeded in fooling others, but Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha berated him and exposed his falsehoods.⁶⁸ The non-Buddhist teacher Uluka turned himself into a stone and remained in that form for eight hundred years, but when Bodhisattva Dignaga berated him, he turned into water. The Taoist priests for several hundred years deceived the people of China, but when they were rebuked by the Buddhist monks Kashyapa Matanga and Chu Falan, they burned their own scriptures that purported to teach the way of the immortals.

Just as Chao Kao seized control of the country and Wang Mang⁶⁹ usurped the position of emperor, so the leaders of the True Word school deprived the Lotus Sutra of the rank it deserves and

declared that its domain belongs instead to the Mahavairochana Sutra. If the monarch of the Law has been deprived of his kingdom in this manner, can the monarch of people hope to remain peaceful and unharmed?

Japan today is filled with followers of Jikaku, Chisho, and Kobo—there is not a single person who is not a slanderer of the Law.

If we stop to consider the situation, it is very much like what prevailed in the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Great Adornment or the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha All Bright King.⁷⁰ In the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, even though people repented of their wrongdoings, they still had to suffer for a thousand kalpas in the Avichi hell.⁷¹ What, then, of the situation today? The True Word teachers, the followers of the Zen school, and the priests of the Nembutsu show not the slightest sign of repentance in their hearts. Can there be any doubt that, as the Lotus Sutra says, they “will keep repeating this cycle for a countless number of kalpas”?⁷²

Because Japan is a country where the correct teaching is slandered, heaven has abandoned it. And because heaven has abandoned it, the various benevolent deities who in the past guarded and protected the nation have burned their shrines and returned to the Capital of Tranquil Light.

Now there is only I, Nichiren, who remain behind, announcing and giving warning of these things. But when I do so, the rulers of the nation treat me like an enemy. People by the hundreds curse me and speak ill of me, attack me with staves and sticks, swords and knives. Door after door is closed to me, house after house drives me away. And when the authorities find that even such treatment does not stop me, they intervene in the matter. Twice they sent me into exile, and once, on the twelfth day of

the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), they very nearly cut off my head.

The Sovereign Kings Sutra says, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, marauders will appear from other regions, and the people of the country will meet with death and disorder."

The Great Collection Sutra states: "There may perhaps be various kings of the Kshatriya class who act in a way contrary to the Law, causing anguish to the voice-hearer disciples of the World-Honored One. Perhaps they may curse and revile them or beat and injure them with swords and staves, or deprive them of their robes and begging bowls and the other things they need. Or perhaps they may restrain and persecute those who give alms to the disciples. If there should be those who do such things, then we will see to it that their enemies in foreign lands rise up suddenly of their own accord and march against them, and we will cause uprisings to break out within their states. We will bring about pestilence and famine, unseasonable winds and rains, and contention, wrangling, [and slander]. And we will make certain that those rulers do not last for long, but that their nations are brought to destruction."

As these passages from the sutras indicate, if I, Nichiren, were not here in Japan, then one might suppose that the Buddha was a teller of great lies for making such predictions, and that he could not escape falling into the Avichi hell.

On the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei, I stood in the presence of Hei no Saemon and several hundred others and declared, "Nichiren is the pillar of Japan! Doing away with Nichiren is toppling the pillar of Japan!"

The passages of scripture I have

quoted indicate that, if the rulers, heeding the slanders of evil monks or the vicious talk of others, should inflict punishment on persons of wisdom, then warfare will immediately break out, great winds will blow, and attackers will appear from foreign lands. In the second month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), fighting did in fact break out between two factions of the ruling Hojo family;⁷³ in the fourth month of the eleventh year of Bun'ei, there were violent winds;⁷⁴ and in the tenth month of the same year, the Mongol forces attacked Japan. Has not all of this come about because of the treatment that has been given to me, Nichiren? This is exactly what I have been predicting from times past. Can anyone be in doubt about the matter?

The errors preached by Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho have for many long years been spread about the country, and then, on top of them, have come the confusions propagated by the Zen and Nembutsu schools. It is as though, in addition to adverse winds, one should be visited by huge waves and earthquakes as well. With all this, the nation has been brought to the verge of destruction.

In the past the grand minister of state⁷⁵ usurped the power of government, and after the Jokyu Disturbance the imperial court ceased to exercise its rule and the seat of authority shifted east to Kamakura. But these were no more than internal disturbances; the nation as yet had not faced invasion from abroad.

Moreover, though at that time there were those who slandered the Law, there were also a few people who continued to uphold the correct doctrine of the Tendai school. And in addition, at that time no wise person had appeared who would attempt to remedy the situation. As a result, things were relatively peaceful.

If the lion is sleeping and you do not

wake him, he will not roar. If the current is swift but you do not pull against it with your oar, no waves will rise up. If you do not accuse the thief to his face, he will remain unruffled; if you do not add fuel to the fire, it will not blaze up. In the same way, though there may be those who slander the Law, if no one comes forward to expose their error, then the government will continue for the time being on its regular course, and the nation will remain undisturbed.

For example, when the Buddhist teachings were first introduced to Japan, nothing out of the ordinary occurred. But later, when [Mononobe no] Moriya began burning Buddhist statues, seizing priests, and putting the torch to Buddhist halls and pagodas, then fire rained down from heaven, smallpox broke out in the nation, and there were repeated military clashes.

But the situation now is far worse. Today those who slander the Law fill the entire country, and I, Nichiren, attack them, strong in my determination to uphold what is right and just. We battle no less fiercely than the asuras and the god Shakra, or the Buddha and the devil king.

The Golden Light Sutra states, "There will be times when enemies among the neighboring states will begin to think as follows: 'We must call out all our four types of troops⁷⁶ and destroy that country [where the slanderers of the Law live].'"

The same sutra also says: "There will be times when the rulers of neighboring states, observing the situation and mobilizing their four types of troops, will make ready to set out for the country [where the slanderers of the Law live], determined to subdue it. At that time we [the great deities] will instruct all the countless, limitless numbers of yakshas and other deities who are our followers to assume disguises and protect these rulers, causing their

enemies to surrender to them without difficulty."

The Sovereign Kings Sutra states the same thing, as do the Great Collection and Benevolent Kings sutras. According to the statements of these various sutras, if the ruler of a state persecutes those who practice the correct teaching and instead sides with those who practice erroneous teachings, then the heavenly kings Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings will enter the bodies of the worthy rulers of neighboring states and will attack his state. For example, King Krita was attacked by King Himatala, and King Mihirakula was overthrown by King Baladitya. Kings Krita and Mihirakula were rulers in India who attempted to eradicate Buddhism. In China, too, all those rulers who tried to destroy Buddhism were attacked by worthy rulers.

But the situation in Japan today is much worse. For here the rulers appear to be supporters of the Buddhist teachings, but they assist the priests who are destroying Buddhism and persecute the practitioner of the correct teaching. As a result, ignorant people all fail to realize what is happening, and even wise persons, if they are no more than moderately wise, have difficulty grasping the situation. Even the lesser deities of heaven, I suspect, do not understand. For this reason, the confusion and depravity in Japan today are even greater than those in India or China in the past.

In the Decline of the Law Sutra the Buddha speaks as follows: "After I have entered nirvana, in the troubled times when the five cardinal sins prevail, the way of the devil will flourish. The devil will appear in the form of Buddhist monks and attempt to confuse and destroy my teachings. . . . Those who do evil will become as numerous as the sands of the ocean, while the good will be extremely few, perhaps no more than one or two persons."

And the Nirvana Sutra says, "Those who thus are able to take faith in works such as this Nirvana Sutra will be as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. . . . But those who are not able to take faith in this sutra will be as numerous as the specks of dirt in all the worlds of the ten directions."

These passages from the scriptures are extremely apt, considering the times we live in, and they are deeply etched in my mind. Nowadays in Japan one hears people everywhere declaring, "I believe in the Lotus Sutra," and "I, too, believe in the Lotus Sutra." If we took them at their word, we would have to conclude that there is not a soul who slanders the Law. But the passage from the sutra that I have just quoted says that in the Latter Day the slanderers of the Law will occupy all the lands in the ten directions, while those who uphold the correct teaching will take up no more land than can be placed on top of a fingernail. What the sutra says and what the people of the world today say are as different as fire is from water. People these days say that, in Japan, Nichiren is the only one who slanders the Law. But the sutra says that there will be more slanderers of the Law than the great earth itself can hold.

The Decline of the Law Sutra says that there will be only one or two good persons, and the Nirvana Sutra says that the believers can fit into the space of a fingernail. If we accept what the sutras say, then in Japan Nichiren is the only good person, the one who fits into the space of a fingernail. Therefore, I hope that people who are seriously concerned about the matter will consider carefully whether they want to accept what the sutras say, or what the world says.

Someone might object that the passage in the Nirvana Sutra speaks about the votaries of the Nirvana Sutra being

as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail, while I am talking about the Lotus Sutra. I would reply to this as follows.

The Nirvana Sutra itself says, "[When this sutra was preached . . . the prediction had already been made] in the Lotus Sutra [that the eight thousand voice-hearers would attain Buddhahood]." The Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "The Nirvana Sutra is itself pointing to the Lotus Sutra and saying that it is the ultimate."⁷⁷ The Nirvana Sutra is calling the Lotus Sutra the ultimate. Therefore, when followers of the Nirvana school state that the Nirvana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra, it is the same as calling a retainer a lord or a servant a master.

To read the Nirvana Sutra means to read the Lotus Sutra. For the Nirvana Sutra is like a worthy who rejoices to see another holding his sovereign in esteem even when he himself is treated with contempt. Thus the Nirvana Sutra would despise and regard as its enemy anyone who tried to demote the Lotus Sutra and praise the Nirvana Sutra instead.

With this example in mind, one must understand the following point. If there are likewise those who read the Flower Garland Sutra, the Meditation Sutra, the Mahavairochana Sutra, or some other sutra, and they do so thinking that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to those sutras, then they are doing violence to the very heart of those sutras. One must also understand the following point. Even though one reads the Lotus Sutra and appears to believe in it, if one thinks that one may also attain the way through any other sutra as well, then one is not really reading the Lotus Sutra.

For example, the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang wrote a work in ten volumes entitled *The Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra* in which he praised the Lotus Sutra. But Miao-lo

criticized the work, saying, "There are slanders in it—how can it be regarded as sincere praise?"⁷⁸

Chia-hsiang was in fact an offender against the Lotus Sutra. Thus, when he was defeated by T'ien-t'ai and served him, he no longer lectured on the Lotus Sutra. "If I were to lecture on it," he said, "I could not avoid falling back into the paths of evil." And for seven years, he made his own body a bridge [for T'ien-t'ai to walk on].

Similarly, the Great Teacher Tz'u-en wrote a work in ten volumes entitled *Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra* in which he praised the Lotus Sutra, but the Great Teacher Dengyo criticized it, saying, "Though he praises the Lotus Sutra, he destroys its heart."⁷⁹

If we consider these examples carefully, we will realize that, among those who read the Lotus Sutra and sing its praises, there are many who are destined for the hell of incessant suffering. Even men like Chia-hsiang and Tz'u-en were actually slanderers of the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra. And if such can be said of them, it applies even more to men like Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, who displayed open contempt for the Lotus Sutra.

There are those like the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang, who ceased giving lectures, dispersed the group of disciples that had gathered around him, and even made his body into a bridge for T'ien-t'ai. But in spite of these actions, the offense of his earlier slanders of the Lotus Sutra was not, I expect, so easily wiped out. The crowd of people who despised and abused Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, although they later came to believe in his teachings and became his followers, still carried the burden of their former actions and had to spend a thousand kalpas in the Avichi hell as a result.

Accordingly, if men like Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho had lectured on the Lotus Sutra, even if they had repented

of their errors, they would still have had difficulty making up for their former grave offenses. And of course, as we know, they never had any such change of heart. On the contrary, they completely ignored the Lotus Sutra and spent day and night carrying out the True Word practices and morning and evening preaching the True Word doctrines.

The bodhisattvas Vasubandhu and Ashvaghosha were both on the point of cutting out their tongues because of the offense they had committed by adhering to Hinayana doctrines and criticizing Mahayana. Vasubandhu declared that, although the Agama sutras of the Hinayana were the words of the Buddha, he would not let his tongue utter them even in jest. And Ashvaghosha, as an act of penance, wrote *Awakening of Faith* in which he refuted the Hinayana teachings.

The Great Teacher Chia-hsiang in time went to the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai and begged for his lectures. In the presence of a hundred or more distinguished Buddhists, he threw himself on the ground, and, with sweat pouring from every part of his body and tears of blood streaming from his eyes, he declared that from then on he would not see his disciples any more and would no longer lecture on the Lotus Sutra. For, as he said, "If I were to go on facing my disciples and lecturing on the Lotus Sutra, they might suppose that I have the ability to understand the sutra correctly, when in fact I do not."

Chia-hsiang was both older and more eminent than T'ien-t'ai, and yet, in the presence of others, he deliberately put T'ien-t'ai on his back and carried him across a river. Whenever T'ien-t'ai was about to ascend the lecture platform, Chia-hsiang would take him on his back and carry him up to the platform. After T'ien-t'ai's death, when Chia-hsiang was summoned into the presence of the emperor of the Sui

dynasty,⁸⁰ he is said to have wept and dragged his feet like a little child whose mother has just died.

When one examines *Profundity of the Lotus Sutra* by the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang, one finds that it is not the kind of commentary that speaks slanderously of the Lotus Sutra. It merely says that, although the Lotus Sutra and the other Mahayana sutras differ in the profundity of their teachings, they are at heart one and the same. Is this statement perhaps the source of the charge that the work slanders the Law?

Both Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school and Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school declared that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra reveal the same principle. Therefore, if the Great Teacher Chia-hsiang is to be blamed for the statement I have just referred to, then the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei can hardly escape being blamed as well.

The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei in his youth was the ruler of a kingdom in central India. But he abdicated the throne and traveled to other lands, where he met two men named Shusho and Shodai from whom he received instruction in the Lotus Sutra.⁸¹ He built hundreds and thousands of stone stupas, and appeared to be a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Later, however, after he had received instruction in the Mahavairochana Sutra, he seems to have concluded that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. He did not insist on this opinion at first, but came to do so later when he went to China and became a teacher to Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty.

Perhaps because he was consumed by jealousy of the T'ien-t'ai school, he died very suddenly and found himself bound with seven cords of iron and dragged by two wardens of hell to the court of Yama, the lord of hell. But he was told that his life span had not

reached its conclusion and therefore was sent back to the human world.

While in hell, he suspected that he had been brought before Yama because he had slandered the Lotus Sutra, and he therefore quickly set aside all his True Word mudras, mantras, and methods of concentration, and instead chanted the passage from the Lotus Sutra that begins, "Now this threefold world is all my [Shakyamuni Buddha's] domain,"⁸² whereupon the cords that bound him fell away and he was returned to life.

On another occasion, he was ordered by the imperial court to recite prayers for rain, and rain did in fact suddenly begin to fall, but a huge wind also rose up and did great damage to the country.

Later, when he really did die, his disciples gathered around his deathbed and praised the remarkable way in which he died, but in fact he fell into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. You may ask how I know that this is so. I would reply that, if you examine his biography, you will find it stated, "Looking now at Shan-wu-wei's remains, one can see that they are gradually shrinking, the skin is turning blackish, and the bones are exposed."⁸³

Shan-wu-wei's disciples perhaps did not realize that this was a sign that after his death he had been reborn in hell, but supposed that it was a manifestation of his virtue. Yet in describing it, the author of the biography exposed Shan-wu-wei's guilt, recording that after his death his body gradually shrank, the skin turned black, and the bones began to show.

We have the Buddha's own golden word for it that, if a person's skin turns black after he dies, it is a sign that he has done something that destined him for hell. What was it, then, that the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei did that would destine him for hell? In his youth he gave up the position of ruler, showing that he had an incomparable

determination to seek the way. He traveled about to more than fifty different lands in India in the course of his religious practice, and his unbounded compassion even led him to visit China. The fact that the True Word teachings have been transmitted through India, China, Japan, and the other lands of Jambudvipa and numerous practitioners ring bells in prayer is due to the merit of this man, is it not? Those who are concerned about their own destiny after death should inquire carefully as to the reason why Shan-wu-wei fell into hell.

Then there was the Tripitaka Master Chin-kang-chih, who was a son of the ruler of a kingdom in southern India. He introduced the Diamond Crown Sutra to China, and his virtue was similar to that of Shan-wu-wei. He and Shan-wu-wei acted as teachers to one another.

The Tripitaka Master Chin-kang-chih received an imperial order to conduct prayers for rain. Within the space of seven days, rain did in fact fall, and the emperor was very pleased. Suddenly, however, a violent wind arose, and the ruler and his ministers, much disillusioned, sent men to drive Chin-kang-chih out of the country, though in the end he managed to remain in China under one pretext or another.

Sometime later, when one of the emperor's favorite daughters lay dying, he was ordered to pray for her recovery. He selected two seven-year-old girls who served at the court to be substitutes for the dying lady and had piles of firewood lighted all around them so that they burned to death. It was indeed a cruel thing to do. Moreover, the emperor's daughter failed to return to life.

The Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung came to China together with Chin-kang-chih.⁸⁴ But perhaps because his suspicions were aroused by the happenings I have just mentioned, after Shan-wu-

wei and Chin-kang-chih died, he returned to India and studied the True Word doctrines all over again, this time under Nagabodhi. In the end, he became a convert to the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school. But although he acknowledged allegiance to these teachings in his heart, he would never do so in his outward actions.

Pu-k'ung, too, was ordered by the emperor to pray for rain, and within three days, rain did in fact fall. The emperor was pleased and dispensed rewards with his own hand. But shortly after, a huge wind descended from the sky, buffeting and damaging the imperial palace and toppling the quarters of the upper noblemen and high ministers until it seemed that not a building would be left standing. The emperor, astounded, issued an imperial command for prayers that the wind be stopped. But though it would stop for a time, it would start blowing again and again, until in the end it blew uninterrupted for a space of several days. Eventually, messengers were dispatched to drive Pu-k'ung out of the country, and then at last the wind subsided.

The evil winds of these three men have become the huge wind of the True Word leaders that blows throughout all of China and Japan. And if that is so, then the great gale that arose on the twelfth day of the fourth month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274) must have been an adverse wind brought about by the Dharma Seal Kaga of the Amida Hall, one of the most learned priests of To-ji temple, when he was praying for rain. We must conclude that the evil teachings of Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung have been transmitted without the slightest alteration. What a strange coincidence indeed!

Let us turn now to the Great Teacher Kobo. At the time of the great drought in the second month of the first year of Tencho (824), the emperor

ordered Shubin to pray for rain, and within seven days Shubin was able to make rain fall. But the rain fell only in the capital and did not extend to the countryside.

Kobo was then ordered to take over the prayers for rain, but seven days passed and there was no sign of it. Another seven days passed and there still were no clouds. After seven more days had passed, the emperor ordered Wake no Matsuna to go and present offerings in Shinsen'en garden,⁸⁵ whereupon rain fell from the sky for a period of three days. The Great Teacher Kobo and his disciples thereupon proceeded to appropriate this rain and claim it as their own, and for more than four hundred years now, it has been known as "Kobo's rain."

The Great Teacher Jikaku said he had a dream in which he shot down the sun. And the Great Teacher Kobo told a great falsehood, claiming that, in the spring of the ninth year of the Konin era (818), when he was praying for an end to the great epidemic, the sun came out in the middle of the night.

Since the kalpa of formation, when the earth took shape, down to the ninth period of decrease⁸⁶ in the kalpa of continuance, twenty-nine kalpas have passed by, but in all that time, the sun has never been known to come out at night! As to the Great Teacher Jikaku's dream of the sun, where in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of the Buddhist scriptures or the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist scriptures is it recorded that to dream of shooting the sun is auspicious? The king of the asuras, angered at the deity Shakra, shot an arrow at the sun god, but the arrow came back and struck the king himself in the eye. King Chou⁸⁷ of the Yin dynasty used the sun as a target for his arrows, and in the end he was destroyed.

In Japan, in the reign of Emperor Jimmu, the emperor's elder brother Itsuse no Mikoto engaged in battle with the chieftain of Tomi,⁸⁸ and Itsuse no Mikoto was wounded in the hand by an arrow. He said, "I am a descendant of the sun deity. But because I have drawn my bow while facing the sun, I have incurred this punishment from the sun deity."

In India, King Ajatashatru renounced his earlier mistaken views and became a follower of the Buddha. He returned to his palace and lay down to sleep, but later rose up in alarm and said to his ministers, "I have dreamed that the sun has left the sky and fallen to the earth!" His ministers said, "Perhaps this means the passing away of the Buddha." Subhadra⁸⁹ also had the same kind of dream just before the Buddha passed away.

It would be particularly inauspicious to dream [as Jikaku claims he did] of shooting the sun in Japan, since the supreme deity in Japan is the Sun Goddess, and the name of the country, Japan, means "source of the sun." In addition, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, is called Sun Seed because his mother, Lady Maya, dreamed that she conceived the sun and in time gave birth to this child, the crown prince.

The Great Teacher Jikaku established the Thus Come One Mahavairochana as the object of devotion on Mount Hiei and rejected Shakyamuni Buddha. He paid honor to the three True Word sutras and acted as an enemy to the Lotus Sutra and its two companion sutras. That was no doubt the reason why he dreamed this dream of shooting the sun.

On the subject of dreams, there is also the case of the priest Shan-tao in China. In his youth he met a priest named Ming-sheng⁹⁰ of Mi-chou and received instruction in the Lotus Sutra. Later, however, when he met Tao-

ch'o, he threw aside the Lotus Sutra and put all his trust in the Meditation Sutra. He even wrote a commentary on the sutra, which asserted that with the Lotus Sutra, not even one person in a thousand can be saved, whereas the Nembutsu practice insures that ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land. In order to prove his point, he prayed before Amida Buddha to confirm whether or not his views accorded with the Buddha's intent. His commentary says, "Every night in a dream a priest would appear and tell me what to write," and "Therefore, this commentary should be regarded with the same respect as the sutra itself." It also says, "*The Teaching on Meditation Sutra* should also be revered as though it were a sutra."

The Lotus Sutra says, "If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."⁹¹ But Shan-tao says that not even one in a thousand will be saved.⁹² The Lotus Sutra and Shan-tao are as different as fire is from water. Shan-tao says that with the Meditation Sutra ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land. But in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra the Buddha says that in the Meditation Sutra "I have not yet revealed the truth." The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and this priest of the Willow Tree⁹³ are as far apart as heaven and earth.

In view of this, can we really believe that Amida Buddha took the form of a priest and appeared to Shan-tao in dreams to assure him that his commentary represented the truth? Was not Amida among those present when the Lotus Sutra was preached, and did he not extend his tongue along with the other Buddhas and testify to the truth of the sutra? Were his attendants, the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Great Power, not also

present when the Lotus Sutra was preached? The answers to these questions are obvious, and in like manner, if we stop to think of it, we can see that Jikaku's dream was a portent of evil.

Question: The Great Teacher Kobo in his *Secret Key to the Heart Sutra* writes: "In the spring of the ninth year of Konin, the empire was troubled by a great plague. Thereupon the emperor in person dipped his writing brush in gold, took a piece of dark blue paper in his hand, and wrote out a copy of the Heart Sutra in one roll. I had been appointed by the ruler to lecture on the Heart Sutra. Having compiled my explanations of its meaning, I [was delivering the lecture but] had not yet reached my concluding remarks, when those who had recovered from the plague began to fill the streets of the capital. Moreover, when night came, the sun continued to shine bright and red.

"This was certainly not the result of any virtuous observance of the precepts on the part of an ignorant person like myself, but was due rather to the power of faith manifested by the sovereign as the gold-wheel-turning king.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, those who go to pray at the shrines of the gods should recite this commentary of mine. For I was present long ago at Eagle Peak when the Buddha preached the Heart Sutra, and I personally heard him expound its profound doctrines. How, then, could I fail to understand its meaning?"

Again in the work entitled *The Annotations on the Peacock Sutra*, we read: "After the Great Teacher Kobo returned from China, he desired to establish the True Word school in Japan, and representatives of all the various schools were summoned to the imperial court. But many of them had doubts about the True Word doctrine of the attaining of Buddhahood in one's present form. The great teacher thereupon formed his hands in the wisdom mudra and faced

south. Suddenly his mouth opened, and he turned into the golden-colored Buddha Mahavairochana—that is, he reverted to his original form. In this way he demonstrated that the Buddha is present in the individual and that the individual is present in the Buddha, and that one can immediately attain Buddhahood in one's present form. On that day, all doubts concerning the matter were completely resolved, and from that time the True Word, or Yoga,⁹⁵ school with its doctrines of secret mandalas was established."

The same work also says: "At this time the students of the other schools all bowed to the opinion of the Great Teacher Kobo and for the first time received instruction in the True Word doctrines, sought their benefit, and practiced them. Dosho of the Three Treatises school, Gennin of the Dharma Characteristics school, Doyu⁹⁶ of the Flower Garland school, and Encho of the Tendai school were all among those who did so."

In addition, the biography of the Great Teacher Kobo states: "On the day when he set out by ship from China, he voiced a prayer, saying, 'If there is a spot that is particularly suitable for the teaching of these doctrines that I have learned, may this three-pronged diamond-pounder land there!' Then he faced in the direction of Japan and threw the diamond-pounder up into the air. It sailed far away and disappeared among the clouds. In the tenth month, he returned to Japan."

The same work states: "He journeyed to the foot of Mount Koya and determined to establish his place of meditation there . . . and later it was discovered that the three-pronged diamond-pounder that he had thrown out over the sea was there on the mountain."

It is clear from these two or three incidents that the Great Teacher Kobo was a person of inestimable power and

virtue. Since he was a person of such great power, why do you say that one should not believe in his teachings, and that anyone who does so will fall into the Avichi hell?

Answer: I, too, admire and believe in these various accomplishments of his. There are other men of old who possessed such uncanny powers. But the possession of such power does not indicate whether that person's understanding of the Buddhist teaching is correct or not. Among the non-Buddhist believers of India there have been men who could pour all the waters of the Ganges River into their ear and keep it there for twelve years, or those who could drink the ocean dry, grasp the sun and moon in their hands, or change the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha into oxen or sheep. But such powers only made them more arrogant than ever and caused them to create further karma to confine themselves in the sufferings of birth and death. It is men like these whom T'ien-t'ai is referring to when he says, "They seek after fame and profit and increase their illusions of thought and desire."⁹⁷

The Chinese priest Fa-yün of Kuangche-ssu temple could make it rain suddenly or cause flowers to bloom immediately, but Miao-lo writes of him, "Though he could bring about a response in this way, his understanding still did not accord with the truth [of the Lotus Sutra]."⁹⁸ When the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai read the Lotus Sutra, soft rain began to fall in an instant, and the Great Teacher Dengyo caused sweet rain to fall within the space of three days. However, they did not say that because of such powers their understanding of the truth coincided with that of the Buddha.

Regardless of what unusual powers the Great Teacher Kobo may have had, he described the Lotus Sutra as a doctrine of childish theory and wrote that Shakyamuni Buddha was still in the

region of darkness. Persons of wisdom and understanding should have nothing to do with such writings.

Say what you may, there are surely doubtful points in the accounts of Kobo's powers you have just cited. The text says, "In the spring of the ninth year of Konin, the empire was troubled by a great plague." But spring is ninety days long.⁹⁹ On which day of which month of spring did this happen? This is the first doubtful point.

Secondly, was there in fact an outbreak of plague in the ninth year of Konin?

Thirdly, the text says, "When night came, the sun continued to shine bright and red." If it really did so, then this is an occurrence of major importance. During the ninth year of Konin, Emperor Saga reigned. But did the court historians of the left and right¹⁰⁰ record any such event?

Even if they had, it would be difficult to believe. During the twenty kalpas of the kalpa of formation and nine kalpas of the kalpa of continuance, a total of twenty-nine kalpas, never once has such a thing occurred. What then is this about the sun appearing in the middle of the night? In all the sacred teachings expounded by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni during his lifetime, there is no mention of any such thing. And in the *Three Records* and the *Five Canons* of China, which describe the three sovereigns and five emperors of antiquity, there is no prediction that at some future date the sun will come out in the middle of the night. In the scriptures of Buddhism, we are told that, in the kalpa of decline, two suns, three suns, or even seven suns will appear, but these will appear in the daytime, not at night. And if the sun should appear at night in our own region, the continent of Jambudvīpa in the south, then what about the other three regions of the east, west, and north?

Regardless of what the Buddhist scriptures or the secular works may have to say about such an event, if in fact there were some entry in the daily records of the courtiers, the other families of the capital, or the priests of Mount Hiei saying that in the spring of the ninth year of Konin, in such and such a month, on such and such a day, at such and such an hour of the night the sun appeared, then we might perhaps believe it. [But no such record exists.]

Later, the text says, "I was present long ago at Eagle Peak when the Buddha preached the Heart Sutra, and I personally heard him expound its profound doctrines." This is surely a wild falsehood that is intended to make people have faith in his commentary. If not, are we to believe that at Eagle Peak the Buddha announced that the Lotus Sutra was a piece of childish theory and that the Mahāvairocana Sutra represented the truth, and that Ananda and Mañjuśrī were simply mistaken in saying that the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law represents the truth?

As for making it rain, even a woman who was licentious and a priest who was a breaker of the precepts¹⁰¹ were able by their poems to cause rain to fall. Yet Kobo prayed for twenty-one days and still it did not rain, so what sort of powers could he have possessed? This is the fourth doubtful point.

On the Peacock Sutra states, "The great teacher [Kobo] thereupon formed his hands in the wisdom mudra and faced south. Suddenly his mouth opened, and he turned into the golden-colored Buddha Mahāvairocana." Now in what year of the reign of what ruler did this happen?

In China from the time of the Chien-yüan era (140–134 B.C.E.), and in Japan from the time of the Taiho era (701–704), among the records of events kept by priests and the laity, those of important occurrences have always been

accompanied by the name of the era in which they took place. With an event as important as that described, why then is there no mention of who the ruler was, who his high ministers were, what the name of the era was, or what day and hour the event took place?

The passage goes on to list “Doshō of the Three Treatises school, Gennin of the Dharma Characteristics school, Doyu of the Flower Garland school, and Encho of the Tendai school” [as those who learned the True Word doctrines from Kobo]. Encho is known posthumously as the Great Teacher Jakko and was the second chief priest of the Tendai school. Now at that time, why was Gishin, the first chief priest, or the Great Teacher Dengyo, the founder of the school, not invited to be present? Encho, the second chief priest of the Tendai school, was a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyo and also became a disciple of the Great Teacher Kobo. Rather than inviting a disciple or rather than inviting men of the Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, and Flower Garland schools, why did Kobo not invite the two most important men of the Tendai school, Dengyo and Gishin?

Speaking of the time when these men were invited, *On the Peacock Sutra* states, “From that time the True Word, or Yoga, school with its doctrines of secret mandalas was established.” This would seem to refer to a time when both Dengyo and Gishin were still alive. From the second year of Daido (807), in the reign of Emperor Heizei, until the thirteenth year of Konin (822) [when Dengyo died], Kobo was very active in spreading the True Word doctrines, and during this period both Dengyo and Gishin were still alive. Moreover, Gishin lived on until the tenth year of Tencho (833). Had Kobo’s True Word teachings not been spread by that time? The whole matter is very strange.

On the Peacock Sutra was written by Shinzei,¹⁰² a disciple of Kobo, and therefore it is difficult to trust what it says. Is it likely that a person of such deluded views would have troubled to read the writings of the courtiers, the other important families, or Encho on which to base his account? One should also check the writings of Doshō, Gennin, and Doyu to see if they have anything to say on the matter.

The text says, “Suddenly his mouth opened, and he turned into the golden-colored Buddha Mahavairochana.” What does it mean by the expression “his mouth opened”? The writer probably intended to write the characters meaning the “area between the eyebrows,”¹⁰³ but he mistakenly wrote those for “mouth” instead. Because he wrote a book of fabrications, he quite likely made mistakes of this kind.

The whole passage says: “The great teacher thereupon formed his hands in the wisdom mudra and faced south. Suddenly his mouth opened, and he turned into the golden-colored Buddha Mahavairochana.”

Now in the fifth volume of the *Nirvana Sutra* we read: “Kashyapa spoke to the Buddha, saying: ‘World-Honored One, I will no longer depend upon the four ranks of sages. Why is this? Because in the Ghoshila Sutra that the Buddha preached for the sake of Ghoshila,¹⁰⁴ it is said that the devil king in heaven, because he is determined to try to destroy the Buddhist teachings, will turn himself into the likeness of a Buddha. He will have all the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics of a Buddha, will be solemn and imposing in appearance, and a round halo of light will radiate from him ten feet in all directions. His face will be round and full like the moon at its fullest and brightest, and the tuft of white hair in between his eyebrows will be whiter than snow. . . . From his left side will come water, and

from his right side will come fire.’ ”

Again, in the sixth volume of the Nirvana Sutra, it is recorded: “The Buddha announced to Kashyapa: ‘After I have passed into nirvana . . . this devil king Papiyas will in time try to destroy the correct teaching of mine. . . . He will change his form into that of an arhat or a Buddha. The devil king, though still subject to illusion, will assume the form of one who has been freed from illusion, and will try to destroy the correct teaching of mine.’ ”

The Great Teacher Kobo declared that, in comparison to the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras, the Lotus Sutra was a piece of childish theory. And this same man, we are told, appeared in the form of a Buddha. He must be the devil who, as the Nirvana Sutra states, will change his shape, which is still subject to illusion, into that of a Buddha and attempt to destroy the correct teaching of Shakyamuni.

This “correct teaching” referred to in the Nirvana Sutra is the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, we find later on in the Nirvana Sutra the statement “It has already been a long time since I attained Buddhahood.” The text also says, “[When this sutra was preached . . . the prediction had already been made] in the Lotus Sutra [that the eight thousand voice-hearers would attain Buddhahood].”

Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions declared with regard to the various sutras that the Lotus Sutra represents the truth; the Mahavairochana and all the other sutras do not represent the truth. Yet the Great Teacher Kobo appeared in the form of a Buddha and announced that, compared to the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras, the Lotus Sutra is a piece of childish theory. If the words of the Buddha are true, then Kobo must be none other than the devil king in heaven, must he not?

Again, the matter of the three-pronged diamond-pounder appears to be particularly suspicious. It would be difficult to believe even if a Chinese [who had not known the circumstances] had come to Japan and happened to dig up the pounder. Surely someone must have been sent earlier to bury it in that particular spot. Since Kobo was a Japanese, he could have arranged such a thing. There are many such wild and absurd stories associated with his name. Such incidents hardly lend support to the assertion that his teachings accord with the will of the Buddha.

Thus the doctrines of the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu schools spread and prospered in Japan. Eventually, Takahira, the Retired Emperor of Oki who was the eighty-second sovereign, began making efforts to overthrow the acting administrator.¹⁰⁵ Since he was the sovereign, the leader of the nation, people supposed that, even without assistance, it would be as easy as a lion pouncing on a hare, or a hawk seizing a pheasant. Moreover, for a period of several years appeals had been made at Mount Hiei, the temples of To-ji and Onjo-ji, and the seven major temples of Nara, as well as to the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the deities of Sanno, Kamo, and Kasuga shrines,¹⁰⁶ asking that the emperor’s enemies be subdued, and that the gods lend their aid. Yet when war broke out, the imperial forces were not able to hold out for more than two or three days. In the end, the three retired emperors were exiled to the provinces of Sado, Awa, and Oki, respectively,¹⁰⁷ where their lives came to a close.

Moreover, not only was the prelate of Omuro,¹⁰⁸ who was leading the prayers to subdue the enemies of the court, driven out of To-ji temple, but his favorite, the page Setaka,¹⁰⁹ who was as dear to him as his very eyes, was

beheaded. Thus, as the Lotus Sutra says, the curses in the end “rebound upon the originator.”¹¹⁰

But this is a trifling matter compared to what is to come. Hereafter, I have no doubt that the officials and the countless common people of Japan will without exception suffer a fate like that of heaps of dry grass to which a torch has been set, or like huge mountains crumbling and valleys being filled up, for our country will be attacked by enemies from abroad.

I, Nichiren, am the only one in the whole country of Japan who understands why these things will happen. But if I speak out, I will be treated as King Chou of the Yin dynasty treated Pi Kan, tearing open his chest; as King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty treated Kuan Lung-feng, cutting off his head; or as King Dammira treated the Venerable Aryasimha, beheading him. I will be banished like the priest Chu Tao-sheng, or branded on the face like the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao.

In the Lotus Sutra, however, it is written, “We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.”¹¹¹ And the Nirvana Sutra warns, “[It is like a royal envoy who] would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler.”

If in this present existence I am so fearful for my life that I fail to speak out, then in what future existence will I ever attain Buddhahood? Or in what future existence will I ever be able to bring salvation to my parents and my teacher? With thoughts such as these uppermost in my mind, I decided that I must begin to speak out. And, just as I had expected, I was ousted, I was vilified, I was attacked, and I suffered wounds. Finally, on the twelfth day of the fifth month in the first year of the Kocho era (1261), the year with the cyclical sign *kanoto-tori*, having incurred the wrath of the authorities, I

was banished to Ito in the province of Izu. Eventually, on the twenty-second day of the second month in the third year of Kocho, cyclical sign *mizunoto-i*, I was pardoned and allowed to return.

After that, I became more determined than ever to attain enlightenment and continued to speak out. Accordingly, the difficulties I encountered became increasingly severe, like great waves that rise up in a gale. I experienced with my own body the kind of attacks with sticks and staves that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging suffered in ancient times. It would seem that even the persecutions suffered by the monk Realization of Virtue in the latter age after the passing of the Buddha Joy Increasing could not compare to my trials. Nowhere in all the sixty-six provinces and the two offshore islands of Japan, not for a day, not for an hour, could I find a place to rest in safety.

Even sages who persevere in their practice as earnestly as did Rahula in ancient times, strictly observing all the two hundred and fifty precepts, or men who are as wise as Purna, speak evil of Nichiren when they encounter him. Even worthies who are as honest and upright as the court officials Wei Cheng¹¹² and Fujiwara no Yoshifusa,¹¹³ when they see Nichiren, forsake reason and treat him unjustly.

How much more so is this the case with the ordinary people of the day! They behave like dogs who have seen a monkey, or hunters in pursuit of a deer. Throughout the whole of Japan, there is not a single person who says, “Perhaps this man has some reason for his behavior.”

But that is only to be expected. For whenever I come upon a person who recites the Nembutsu, I tell him that those who believe in the Nembutsu will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Whenever I come upon a person who honors the True Word teachings, I tell him that True Word is an evil

doctrine that will destroy the nation. And to the ruler of the nation, who honors the Zen school, I declare that Zen is the invention of the heavenly devil.

Since I willingly bring these troubles upon myself, when others vilify me, I do not rebuke them. Even if I wanted to rebuke them, there are too many of them. And even when they strike me, I feel no pain, for I have been prepared for their blows from the very beginning.

And so I went about with ever increasing vigor and ever less concern for my safety, trying to persuade others to change their ways. As a result, several hundred Zen priests, several thousand Nembutsu believers, and even more True Word teachers went to the magistrate or the men of powerful families, or to their wives or their widows who were lay nuns, and filled their ears with endless slanders concerning me.

Finally, all were convinced that I was the gravest offender in the entire nation, for it was said that in my capacity as a priest I was saying prayers and spells for the destruction of Japan, and that I had reported that the late lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji had fallen into the hell of incessant suffering. Those widows who were lay nuns insisted that investigation was unnecessary; rather, I should have my head cut off at once, and my disciples should likewise be beheaded or exiled to distant lands or placed in confinement. So infuriated were they that their demands for punishment were immediately carried out.

On the night of the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, I was to have been beheaded at Tatsunokuchi in the province of Sagami. But for some reason the execution was postponed, and that night I was taken to a place called Echi. On the night of the thirteenth day, people

made a great uproar, saying I had been pardoned. But, again for reasons that are unclear, I was ordered into exile in the province of Sado.

While people speculated from one day to the next if I would be beheaded, I passed four years¹¹⁴ on Sado. Then, on the fourteenth day of the second month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei, cyclical sign *kinoe-inu*, I was pardoned. On the twenty-sixth day of the third month of the same year, I returned to Kamakura, and on the eighth day of the fourth month I met with Heino Saemon-no-jo. I reported on various matters and informed him that the Mongols would certainly invade Japan within that year. Then on the twelfth day of the fifth month, I left Kamakura and came to this mountain where I am now living.

All these things I have done solely to repay the debt I owe to my parents, the debt I owe to my teacher, the debt I owe to the three treasures of Buddhism, and the debt I owe to my country. For their sake I have been willing to destroy my body and to give up my life, though as it turns out, I have not been put to death after all.

If a worthy man makes three attempts to warn the rulers of the nation and they still refuse to heed his advice, then he should retire to a mountain forest. This has been the custom from ages past, and I have accordingly followed it.

I am quite certain that the merit I have acquired through my efforts is recognized by everyone from the three treasures on down to Brahma, Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon. Through this merit I will surely lead to enlightenment my parents and my teacher, the late Dozen-bo.

But there are certain doubts that trouble me. The Venerable Maudgalyayana attempted to save his mother, Shodai-nyo, but he could not do so, and she remained in the realm of hun-

gry spirits. The monk Sunakshatra was a son of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and yet he fell into the Avichi hell. Thus, although one may exert one's full effort to save others, it is very difficult to save them from the karmic retribution that they have brought upon themselves.

The late Dozen-bo treated me as one of his favorite disciples, so I cannot believe that he bore any hatred toward me. But he was a timid man, and he could never bring himself to give up his position at the temple where he lived, Seicho-ji. Moreover, he was fearful of what Kagenobu, the steward of the region, might do if he gave ear to my teachings. And at Seicho-ji he had to live in the midst of priests like Enchi and Jitsujo, who were as evil as Devadatta or Kokalika, and to put up with their intimidations, so that he became more fearful than ever. As a result, he turned a deaf ear to the longtime disciples he was fondest of. I wonder what will become of such a man in the next life.

There is one thing to be thankful for. Kagenobu, Enchi, and Jitsujo all died before Dozen-bo did, and that was something of a help. These men all met an untimely death because of the chastisement of the ten demon daughters who protect the Lotus Sutra. After they died, Dozen-bo began to have some faith in the Lotus Sutra. But it was rather like obtaining a stick after the fight is over, or lighting a lantern at midday—the proper time had already passed.

In addition, whatever happens, one ought to feel pity and concern for one's own children or disciples. Dozen-bo was not an entirely helpless man, and yet, though I was exiled all the way to the province of Sado, he never once tried to visit me. This is hardly the behavior of one who believes in the Lotus Sutra.

In spite of all that, I thought a great

deal of him, and when I heard the news of his death, I felt as though, whether I had to walk through fire or wade through water, I must rush to his grave, pound on it, and recite a volume of the Lotus Sutra for his sake.

However, it often happens with worthies that, although they do not think of themselves as having retired from the world, other people assume that they have, and therefore, if they were to come rushing out of retreat for no good reason, people would suppose that they had failed to accomplish their purpose. For this reason, no matter how much I might wish to visit his grave, I feel that I cannot do so.

Now you two, Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, were my teachers in my youth. You are like the administrators of priests Gonso and Gyohyo, who though they were at one time the teachers of the Great Teacher Dengyo, later instead became his disciples. When Kagenobu was bent on harming me and I decided that I must leave Mount Kiyosumi [on which Seicho-ji is located], you helped me escape in secret. You have performed an unrivaled service for the Lotus Sutra. There can be no doubt about the reward that awaits you in your next rebirth.

Question: Within the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters that constitute the entirety of the Lotus Sutra, what part represents the true heart of the work?

Answer: The heart of the Flower Garland Sutra is the title Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra. The heart of the Agama Sutra is the title Medium-Length Agama Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha. The heart of the Great Collection Sutra is the title Great Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra. The heart of the Wisdom Sutra is the title Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra. The heart of the Two-Volumed Sutra is the title Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha. The

heart of the Meditation Sutra is the title Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha. The heart of the Amida Sutra is the title Amida Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha. The heart of the Nirvana Sutra is the title Mahaparinirvana Sutra. It is the same with all the sutras. The daimoku, or title, of the sutra, which appears before the opening words "This is what I heard," is in all cases the true heart of the sutra. This is true whether it is a Mahayana sutra or a Hinayana sutra. As for the Mahavairochana Sutra, the Diamond Crown Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, and so forth—in all cases the title constitutes the heart.

The same is true of the Buddhas. The Thus Come One Mahavairochana, Sun Moon Bright Buddha, Burning Torch Buddha, Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha, Cloud Thunder Sound King Buddha—in the case of all these Buddhas, the name itself contains within it all the various virtues that pertain to that particular Buddha.

The same, then, applies to the Lotus Sutra. The five characters Myohorenge-kyo that appear before the opening words "This is what I heard" comprise the true heart of the eight volumes of the work. Moreover, they are the heart of all the sutras, as well as the correct teaching that stands above all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the people of the two vehicles, and all the heavenly and human beings, asuras, and dragon deities.

Question: If one person should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo without understanding its meaning, and another person should chant the words *Namu daihoko butsu kegonkyo* (Devotion to the Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra) without understanding their meaning, would the merit acquired by the two persons be equal, or would one acquire greater merit than the other?

Answer: One would acquire greater merit than the other.

Question: Why do you say so?

Answer: A small river can accommodate the water flowing into it from dew, brooks, wells, ditches, and little streams, but it cannot accommodate the water from a big river. A big river can accommodate the water from a small river with its dew, brooks, and so forth, but it cannot accommodate the water from the great ocean. Now the Agama sutras are like the small river with its wells, streams, brooks, and dew, while the sutras of the Correct and Equal period, the Amida Sutra, the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the Flower Garland Sutra are like the big river that accommodates the small river. But the Lotus Sutra is like the great ocean that can hold all the water from dew, brooks, wells, streams, small rivers, big rivers, and the rains from heaven, without losing a single drop.

Suppose that a person is burning with fever. If he sits down beside a large body of cold water and stays there for a while, his fever will abate, but if he lies down beside a little body of water, he will continue to suffer as before. In the same way, if an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief, who has committed the five cardinal sins and has slandered the Law, should try to cool himself beside the little bodies of water that are the Agama, Flower Garland, Meditation, and Mahavairochana sutras, the raging fever caused by his great offenses would never be dispelled. But if he should lie down on the great snowy mountain that is the Lotus Sutra, then the raging fever caused by the five cardinal sins, his slander of the Law, and his incorrigible disbelief would be dispelled instantly.

Therefore, ignorant people should by all means have faith in the Lotus Sutra. For although one may think that all the titles of the sutras are the same in effect and that it is as easy to chant

one as another, in fact the merit acquired even by an ignorant person who chants the title of the Lotus Sutra is as far superior to that acquired by a wise person who chants some other title as heaven is to earth!

To illustrate, even a person with great strength cannot break a strong rope with his bare hands. But if one has a little knife, then even a person of meager strength can sever the rope with ease. Even a person with great strength cannot cut through a piece of hard stone with a dull sword. But if one has a sharp sword, then even a person of meager strength can cut the stone in two.

Or, to give another example, even though one may not know what is in the medicine, if one takes a dose of it, one's illness can be cured. But if one takes only ordinary food, one's illness will never be cured. Or, to give yet another example, an elixir can actually increase one's life span, whereas ordinary medicine, though it can cure illness, can never prolong one's life.

Question: Of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, which is the heart, which is the most essential?

Answer: Some would say that each chapter is essential to the matter that it deals with. Some would contend that the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters are the heart, others that the "Expedient Means" alone is the heart, or that the "Life Span" alone is the heart. Some would say that the heart is the passage telling how the Buddhas open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, show it, cause them to awaken to it, and induce them to enter its path,¹¹⁵ others that the passage on the "true aspect of all phenomena"¹¹⁶ is the heart.

Question: What is your opinion?

Answer: I believe that the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo constitute the heart.

Question: What is your proof?

Answer: The fact that Ananda, Manjushri, and the others wrote, "This is what I heard."

Question: What do you mean by that?

Answer: Over a period of eight years, Ananda, Manjushri, and the others listened to the immeasurable meanings of the Lotus Sutra, never missing a single phrase, a single verse, a single word. Yet, after the Buddha had passed away, at the time of the compilation of his teachings, when the 999 arhats took up their writing brushes and dipped them in ink, they first of all wrote "Myoho-enge-kyo," and after that they intoned the words, "This is what I heard." Therefore, the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo must be the heart of the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters that compose the work, must they not?

Therefore, the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün of Kuang-che-ssu temple, who is said to have lectured on the Lotus Sutra ever since the distant age of Sun Moon Bright Buddha, states, "The words 'This is what I heard' indicate that one is going to transmit the doctrines one has heard preached. The title, which precedes these words, sums up the sutra as a whole."¹¹⁷

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, who was present on Eagle Peak when the Lotus Sutra was preached and heard it in person, writes, "The word 'this' [of 'This is what I heard'] indicates the essence of a doctrine heard from the Buddha."¹¹⁸ And the Great Teacher Chang-an writes, "The transcriber [Chang-an] comments on T'ien-t'ai's explanation of the title of the Lotus Sutra, saying, 'Hence [his explanation of the title in] the preface conveys the profound meaning of the sutra. The profound meaning indicates the heart of the text.'¹¹⁹

In this passage, "the heart of the text" signifies that the daimoku, or title, of the text is the heart of the Lotus

Sutra. As the Great Teacher Miao-lo states, "It is the heart of the Lotus Sutra that encompasses all the doctrines preached by the Buddha in the course of his lifetime."¹²⁰

India comprises seventy states, but they are known collectively by the name India. Japan comprises sixty provinces,¹²¹ but they are known collectively by the name Japan. Within the name India are contained all the seventy states, as well as all their people, animals, treasures, and so forth. Within the name Japan are contained all the sixty-six provinces. The feathers sent as tribute from Dewa, the gold of the province of Mutsu,¹²² and all the other treasures of the nation, as well as the people and animals, and temples and shrines, are contained within the two characters that form the name Japan.

One who possesses the heavenly eye can look at the two characters of the name Japan and see all the sixty-six provinces along with their people and animals. One who possesses the Dharma eye can see all the people and animals now dying in one place, now being born in another place.

It is like hearing someone's voice and knowing what the person must look like, or seeing someone's footprints and judging whether the person is large or small. Or it is like estimating the size of a pond by looking at the lotuses that grow in it, or imagining the size of the dragons by observing the rain that they cause to fall. Each of these examples illustrates the principle that all things are expressed in one.

It might appear from this that the daimoku, or title, of any Agama sutra must contain all the teachings of the Buddhas, but in fact it contains only one Buddha, the Shakyamuni of the Hinayana teachings. It might also appear that the titles of the Flower Garland, Meditation, and Mahavairochana sutras must contain all the teachings of the Buddhas, but in fact they do not include the

doctrine concerning the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles, or the Shakyamuni Buddha who gained enlightenment in the far distant past. They are like flowers that bloom but are followed by no fruit, thunder that rolls but brings no rain, a drum that has no sound, eyes that cannot see, a woman who bears no child, or a person who has no life or spirit.

The mantras associated with the Buddhas Mahavairochana, Medicine Master, and Amida and Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds are of the same nature. Though in the various sutras containing these mantras they are said to be like a great king, Mount Sumeru, the sun and moon, good medicine, a wish-granting jewel, or a sharp sword, they are as far beneath the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra as mud is beneath the clouds.

Not only are they vastly inferior, but all of them have lost their respective inherent functions. When the sun comes up, the light of the crowds of stars is completely eclipsed; when bits of iron are placed near a magnet, they lose their property. When a great sword is exposed to even a small fire, it ceases to be of any use; when cow's milk or donkey's milk comes into the presence of lion king's milk, it turns to water. A pack of foxes will forget all their tricks if they meet up with a dog; a band of dogs will all quake with fright if they encounter a small tiger.

In the same way, if one chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, then the power of the words Namu Amida Butsu, the power of the mantras invoking Mahavairochana, the power of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and the power of all the Buddhas, all the sutras, and all the bodhisattvas will without exception vanish before the power of Myoho-enge-kyo.

Unless these other sutras manage to borrow the power of Myoho-enge-kyo, they will all become worthless

things. This is a fact that stands before our very eyes in the present age.

Because I, Nichiren, chant and spread Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the power of Namu Amida Butsu will be like a moon waning, a tide running out, grass withering in autumn and winter, or ice melting in the sun. Watch and see!

Question: If this Law that you have been describing is in fact so wonderful, why is it not better known? Why have not Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo spread it abroad the way Shantao spread the practice of reciting Namu Amida Butsu throughout China or the way Eshin, Yokan,¹²³ and Honen spread it in Japan, turning the whole country into worshipers of Amida Buddha?

Answer: This is an old criticism, not by any means one that is raised here for the first time.

Bodhisattvas Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna were great scholars who lived, respectively, six hundred and seven hundred years after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. When these men appeared in the world and began spreading the doctrines of the Mahayana sutras, the various followers of the Hinayana raised objections.

"Mahakashyapa and Ananda," they said, "lived on for twenty or forty years after the passing of the Buddha, preaching the correct teaching. Presumably they conveyed the heart of all the teachings that the Buddha had propounded during his lifetime. Now we find that what these two men emphasized were simply the concepts of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna may be very wise, but are we to suppose that they are superior to Mahakashyapa and Ananda? This is our first objection.

"Mahakashyapa obtained his enlightenment through direct encounters with the Buddha. But these two men, Ash-

vaghosha and Nagarjuna, have never encountered the Buddha. This is our second objection.

"The non-Buddhist philosophers who preceded the Buddha taught that life is permanent, joyful, endowed with self, and pure. Later, when the Buddha appeared in the world, he declared that life is marked by suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. Now Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna insist that it is permanent, joyful, endowed with self, and pure. This being so, we must suppose that, since both the Buddha and Mahakashyapa have passed away from the world, the devil king of the sixth heaven has taken possession of these two men and is trying to overthrow the teachings of Buddhism and replace them with the teachings of the non-Buddhists.

"If that is so, then these men are the enemies of Buddhism. We must smash their skulls, cut off their heads, put an end to their lives, see that they get no more to eat. Let us drive them from the country!"

Such were the declarations of the Hinayana believers. And Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna, each having only a few allies, were forced day and night to listen to these shouts of calumny, and morning and evening to bear the attacks of sticks and staves.

But these two men were in fact messengers of the Buddha. For in the Maya Sutra, it is predicted that Ashvaghosha will appear six hundred years, and Nagarjuna, seven hundred years, after the Buddha's passing. The same prediction is also recorded in the Lankavatara Sutra, and of course in the Buddha's Successors Sutra as well.

But the Hinayana believers would not heed these predictions, and instead attacked the Mahayanists blindly and without reason. "Since hatred and jealousy . . . abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"

says the Lotus Sutra. Looking at the time of Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna, one begins to have a little understanding of what these words of the sutra really mean. Moreover, Bodhisattva Aryadeva was killed by a non-Buddhist, and the Venerable Aryasimha had his head cut off. These events, too, give one cause for thought.

Then, some fifteen hundred or more years after the passing of the Buddha, in the country of China, which lies east of India, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai appeared in the world during the years of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties. He declared that among the sacred teachings put forth by the Thus Come One were the Mahayana and the Hinayana, the exoteric and the esoteric, the provisional and the true. Mahakashyapa and Ananda had concentrated on spreading the Hinayana teachings, he explained. Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Vasubandhu had spread the provisional Mahayana teachings. But with regard to the true Mahayana teaching of the Lotus Sutra, they had merely touched on it briefly but concealed its meaning, or had described the surface meaning of the sutra but failed to discuss the whole range of the Buddha's teachings expounded throughout his lifetime. Or they had described the theoretical teaching but not the essential teaching, or they had understood the theoretical and essential teachings but not the teaching for observing the mind.

When the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai expounded these views, the millions of followers of the ten schools of Buddhism, three in southern China and seven in northern China, all with one accord gave a great laugh of derision.

"Here in these latter days, a truly amazing priest has made his appearance among us!" they exclaimed. "Though there have at times been persons who adhered to biased views and opposed us, never has there been anyone who maintained that all the 260 or more

Tripitaka masters and teachers of Buddhism, who have lived since the introduction of Buddhism in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67) of the Later Han, the year with the cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, down to these present years of the Ch'en and Sui, were ignorant. And on top of that, he says that they are slanderers of the Law who are destined to fall into the evil paths. Such is the kind of person that has appeared!

"He is so insane that he even maintains that the Tripitaka Master Kumara-jiva, the man who introduced the Lotus Sutra to China, was an ignorant fool. Whatever he may say about the men of China, imagine his saying that the great scholars of India such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu and the several hundred others, all of them bodhisattvas of the four ranks, did not teach the true doctrine. Anyone who killed this man would be doing no more than killing a hawk. In fact, he would be more praiseworthy than someone who kills a demon!"

This was the way they railed at the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. And later, in the time of the Great Teacher Miao-lo, when the Dharma Characteristics and True Word doctrines were introduced from India, and the Flower Garland school was first established in China, Miao-lo spoke out against these teachings and was met with a similar uproar.

In Japan, the Great Teacher Dengyo made his appearance eighteen hundred years after the Buddha had passed away. After examining the commentaries of T'ien-t'ai, he began to criticize the six schools that had flourished in Japan in the 260 or more years since the time of Emperor Kimmei. People in turn slandered him, saying that the Brahmanists who lived in the time of the Buddha or the Taoists of China must have been reborn in Japan.

Dengyo also proposed to set up an ordination platform for administering

the great precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment, such as had never existed in India, China, or Japan in the eighteen hundred years since the Buddha's passing. Indeed he went farther than this, declaring that the ordination platform at Kannon-ji temple in the western region [of Tsukushi], the ordination platform at Ono-dera temple in the eastern province of Shimotsuke, and the ordination platform at Todai-ji temple in the central province of Yamato¹²⁴ all stank with the foul odor of the Hinayana precepts and were as worthless as broken tile and rubble. And the priests who upheld such precepts, he said, were no better than foxes and monkeys.

In reply, his critics exclaimed: "Ah, how amazing! This thing that looks like a priest must in fact be a great swarm of locusts that has appeared in Japan and is about to gobble up the tender shoots of Buddhism in one swoop. Or perhaps Chou of the Yin dynasty or Chieh of the Hsia has been reborn in Japan in the shape of this priest. Perchance Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou and Emperor Wu-tsung¹²⁵ of the T'ang have reappeared in the world. At any moment now, Buddhism may be wiped out and the nation overthrown."

As for the ordinary people, they clapped their hands in alarm and wagged their tongues, saying, "Whenever the priests of these two types of Buddhism, Mahayana and Hinayana, appear together, they fight like the lord Shakra and the asuras, or like Hsiang Yü and Kao-tsu¹²⁶ disputing possession of the kingdom."

Dengyo's opponents continued to revile him, saying: "In the time of the Buddha, there were two ordination platforms,¹²⁷ one belonging to the Buddha and the other to Devadatta, and a number of people were killed in the dispute over them. This man may well defy the other schools, but he declares

that he must set up an ordination platform for administering the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment such as even his master, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, was unable to establish. How strange! And how frightening, how frightening!"

But Dengyo had his passages of scripture to support him, and as you know, the Mahayana ordination platform was eventually set up and has been in existence for some time now on Mount Hiei.

Thus, although their enlightenment may have been the same, from the point of view of the teaching that they propagated, Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna were superior to Mahakasyapa and Ananda, T'ien-t'ai was superior to Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna, and Dengyo surpassed T'ien-t'ai. In these latter times, people's wisdom becomes shallow, while the Buddhist teaching becomes more profound. To give an analogy, a mild illness can be cured with ordinary medicine, but a severe illness requires an elixir. A man who is weak must have strong allies to help him.

Question: Is there a correct teaching that was not propagated even by T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo?

Answer: Yes, there is.

Question: What sort of teaching is it?

Answer: It consists of three things. It was left behind by the Buddha for the sake of those who live in the Latter Day of the Law. It is the correct teaching that was never propagated by Mahakasyapa or Ananda, Ashvaghosha or Nagarjuna, T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo.

Question: What form does it take?

Answer: First, Japan and all the other countries throughout Jambudvīpa should all make the Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching their object of devotion.¹²⁸ In other words, the Shakyamuni and Many Treasures who appear in the treasure tower, all the other Buddhas, and the four bodhisatt-

vas, including Superior Practices, will act as attendants to this Buddha. Second, there is the sanctuary of the essential teaching. Third, in Japan, China, India, and all the other countries of Jambudvīpa, every person, regardless of whether wise or ignorant, will set aside other practices and join in the chanting of Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō. This teaching has never been taught before. Here in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, in all the 2,225 years since the passing of the Buddha, not a single person chanted it. Nichiren alone, without sparing his voice, now chants Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō.

The size of the waves depends upon the wind that raises them, the height of the flames depends upon how much firewood is piled on, the size of the lotuses depends upon the pond in which they grow, and the volume of rain depends upon the dragons that make it fall. The deeper the roots, the more prolific the branches. The farther the source, the longer the stream.

The Chou dynasty lasted for seven hundred years because of the propriety and filial devotion of its founder, King Wen. The Ch'in dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.), on the other hand, lasted hardly any time at all, because of the perverse ways of its founder, the First Emperor of the Ch'in. If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering. Its benefit surpasses that of Dengyo and T'ien-t'ai, and is superior to that of Nagarjuna and Mahakashyapa.

A hundred years of practice in the Land of Perfect Bliss cannot compare to the benefit gained from one day's practice in the impure world. Two

thousand years of propagating Buddhism during the Former and Middle Days of the Law are inferior to an hour of propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. This is in no way because of Nichiren's wisdom, but simply because the time makes it so. In spring the blossoms open, in autumn the fruit appears. Summer is hot, winter is cold. The season makes it so, does it not?

"After I [the Buddha] have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, or kumbhanda demons to seize the advantage!"¹²⁹

If this passage of the Lotus Sutra should prove to be in vain, then Shari-putra will never become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, the Venerable Mahakashyapa will never become the Thus Come One Light Bright, Maugalyayana will never become Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha, Ananda will never become Mountain Sea Wisdom Unrestricted Power King Buddha, the nun Mahaprajapati will never become the Buddha Gladly Seen by All Living Beings, and the nun Yashodhara will never become the Buddha Endowed with a Thousand Ten Thousand Glowing Marks. Major world system dust particle kalpas will then likewise be childish theory, and numberless major world system dust particle kalpas also will become a lie. Very likely Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, will fall into the hell of incessant suffering, Many Treasures Buddha will be gasping amid the flames of the Avichi hell, the Buddhas of the ten directions will have their home in the eight great hells, and all the various bodhisattvas will be forced to suffer in the 136 hells.

But how could such a thing ever be? Since the sutra's prediction was not

made in vain, then it is certain that all the people of Japan will chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo!

Thus the flower will return to the root, and the essence of the plant will remain in the earth. The benefit that I have been speaking of will surely accumulate in the life of the late Dozen-bo. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Written on the twenty-first day of the seventh month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*.

Respectfully sent from Mount Minobu, Hakiri Village, Kai Province, to Joken-bo and Gijo-bo of Mount Kiyosumi, Tojo District, Awa Province.

COVER LETTER

I have received your letter. One should never speak of matters pertaining to the Buddhist doctrine to someone who has no faith, regardless of whether the person is a close friend or relation or a stranger. This is something you should keep in mind.

I have inscribed the Gohonzon for you. Even more in the years after the passing of the Buddha than during his lifetime, even more during the Middle Day of the Law than during the Former Day, and even more now in the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law than during the Middle Day, the enemies of the Lotus Sutra are bound to grow in power. If you understand this, you as well as anyone else will realize that there is no one in Japan other than myself who is a true votary of the Lotus Sutra.

A sketchy report of the passing of the Reverend Dozen-bo reached me last month. I felt that I should go in person as quickly as possible, as well as sending the priest¹³⁰ who bears this letter. However, though I do not think of myself as one who has retired from the world, other people seem to look at me in that way, and so I make it a rule not to leave this mountain.

This priest informed me of private reports from various people that there are likely to be doctrinal debates with the other schools in the near future. I have therefore been sending people to a number of temples in the different

provinces in order to search out sutras and treatises from all over the country. I had sent this priest on such a mission to the province of Suruga, and he has just now returned, [so I am sending him with this letter].

In the enclosed treatise, I have written matters of the utmost importance. It would be wrong, therefore, to make the contents known to persons who do not understand the essence of Buddhism. And even if they are made known only to persons who do, if there are too many people involved, then word of the contents is likely to reach the ears of outsiders. That would not be conducive to your welfare, nor to mine.

Therefore, I ask that just the two of you, you and Gijo-bo, have the work read aloud two or three times at the summit of Kasagamori, with this priest to do the reading. Please have him read it once before the grave of the late Dozen-bo as well. After that, leave it in the possession of this priest, and have him read it to you repeatedly. If you listen to it again and again, I believe you will come to understand and appreciate its meaning.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the seventh month

To the priest of Kiyosumi¹³¹

Background

This lengthy treatise is one of Nichiren Daishonin's five major writings. It is dated the twenty-first day of the seventh month, 1276, a little more than two years after the Daishonin had taken up residence at Minobu. It was prompted by the news of the death of Dozen-bo, a priest of Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province, who had been the Daishonin's teacher when he first entered the temple as a boy of twelve. Nichiren Daishonin wrote this treatise to express his gratitude to Dozen-bo and sent it to Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, senior priests at the time he entered the temple, who later became his followers. He entrusted this text to Niko, one of his disciples, and requested that it be taken to Seicho-ji on his behalf and read aloud at Kasagamori on the summit of Mount Kiyosumi where he had first chanted *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, and again in front of the tomb of his late teacher.

In 1233, Nichiren Daishonin entered Seicho-ji temple to study under Dozen-bo. At that time, temples served as centers of learning as well as religion. During his stay at this temple, the Daishonin developed his extraordinary literary skills that later proved so valuable in propagating his teachings. He also embarked on a lifelong journey to find and proclaim the unique truth of Buddhism, which had been all but obscured by the emergence of various misleading schools.

On the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month, 1253, the Daishonin proclaimed *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* to be the sole teaching leading directly to enlightenment in the Latter Day of the Law, while denouncing the doctrines of the then prevalent Pure Land school. Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of the area and a fervent Pure Land believer, became furious on hearing of this and sent his men to the temple to arrest the

Daishonin. Dozen-bo, a devotee of the Pure Land teaching, could not defend him openly, but instructed the two senior priests, Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, to guide his young disciple to safety.

Nichiren Daishonin and his former teacher met again in 1264, when the Daishonin visited his home in Awa after returning from exile on the Izu Peninsula. He later wrote that Dozen-bo had asked him on this occasion if his practice of the Pure Land teaching would lead him into the hell of incessant suffering. In reply, the Daishonin told Dozen-bo that he could not free himself from the effects of his slander unless he revered the Lotus Sutra as the fundamental teaching. Afterward, though Dozen-bo did not entirely abandon his belief in Amida, he carved a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. The Daishonin rejoiced that Dozen-bo was apparently beginning to see his error because he felt indebted to this man who had initiated him into the priesthood and earnestly desired to lead him to the correct teaching.

Nichiren Daishonin begins this treatise by emphasizing the need to repay one's obligations to one's parents, teacher, the three treasures of Buddhism, and one's sovereign. He teaches the importance of repaying debts of gratitude as a fundamental aspect of human behavior. Of these four debts of gratitude, this work stresses specifically repaying the debt owed to one's teacher. Next, the Daishonin states that to repay such debts one must master the truth of Buddhism and attain enlightenment. To accomplish this goal, one must dedicate oneself single-mindedly to the Buddhist practice. However, to attain enlightenment, one must also practice the correct Buddhist teaching. The Daishonin traces the development of the various schools of Buddhism in India, China, and Japan, and examines

their doctrines in terms of the relative superiority of the sutras on which they are based, emphasizing the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. In particular, he refutes the erroneous doctrines of the True Word school. He vehemently denounces Jikaku and Chisho who, though they were patriarchs of the Japanese Tendai school, corrupted the school's profound teachings, which are based on the Lotus Sutra, by mixing them with esoteric elements. The Daishonin concludes that only the Lotus Sutra contains the ultimate truth and, moreover, that the essence of the sutra, and of the whole of Buddhism, is Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. This is the teaching to be propagated in the Latter Day of the Law.

The concluding part of this work makes clear that the Buddha of the Latter Day is none other than Nichiren Daishonin himself, and that the Buddhism he teaches comprises the Three Great Secret Laws—the invocation or daimoku of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the object of devotion, and the sanctuary—which are implicit in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra but have never before been revealed. The Daishonin also makes it clear that, in

establishing the Three Great Secret Laws for the enlightenment of all people, he is at the same time repaying his debt of gratitude to the deceased Dozen-bo. *Flowering and Bearing Grain*, written two years later, states, “The blessings that Nichiren obtains from propagating the Lotus Sutra will always return to Dozen-bo” (p. 909). This passage restates the message of the concluding part of this letter.

The present treatise is particularly important because it is the first extant writing in which Nichiren Daishonin specifies each of the Three Great Secret Laws, declaring that this teaching will save people for the ten thousand years of the Latter Day and more, for all eternity. These three, the core of the Daishonin's Buddhism, represent the Law that was transferred to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter for propagation in the Latter Day. The object of devotion is the Gohonzon that enables all people to attain Buddhahood; the daimoku is the chanting of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with faith in the object of devotion; and the sanctuary is the place where the object of devotion is enshrined and the daimoku is chanted to it.

Notes

1. This appears in “Nine Pieces” of *Elegies of Ch'u* and other Chinese works. A commentary on *Elegies of Ch'u* by Chu Hsi of the Sung dynasty states: “The old fox dies, invariably turning his head toward the hillock. This is because he never forgets the place of his birth.”

2. This story appears in *A Collection of Stories and Poems*. When the young Mao Pao, who later became a general of the Chin dynasty, was walking along the Yangtze River, he saw a fisherman about to kill a turtle he had caught. Moved to pity, he gave the fisherman his clothing in exchange for the turtle and thus saved its life. Later, pursued by enemies, he reached the banks of the Yangtze. There the turtle he had saved in his youth appeared and car-

ried him to the opposite shore.

3. According to *Records of the Historian*, Yü Jang of Chin first served the Fan and Chung-hang families but was not given an important position. Later, Yü Jang served under Chih Po, who treated him with great favor. In time, Chih Po was killed by Hsiang-tzu, the lord of Chao. To avenge his lord, Yü Jang disguised himself as a leper by lacquering his body, made himself a mute by drinking lye, and in this way attempted to approach Hsiang-tzu. But his attempt at assassination failed, and he was caught. Hsiang-tzu, understanding his feeling of loyalty, gave Yü Jang his robe. Yü stabbed it three times to show his enmity for the man who had killed his lord and then turned his sword upon himself.

4. This story appears in *Records of the Historian*. While Hung Yen was away on a journey, enemies attacked the state of Wei and killed his lord, Duke Yi, and devoured his body, leaving only the duke's liver. Then they left the land. When Hung Yen returned, he saw the disastrous scene and wept. He slit open his own stomach and inserted the liver to save his lord from dishonor, and so died.

5. Salvation by Men of Pure Faith Sutra. Though this sutra is no longer extant, this passage from it is quoted in *The Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Law*. "The Buddhist life" in the sutra's context means a monastic life, but here the Daishonin interprets it as a life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

6. This story is found in *Records of the Historian*. King Chou of the Yin dynasty was so absorbed in his affection for his consort, Ta Chi, that he totally neglected affairs of state. When his minister Pi Kan remonstrated with him, King Chou flew into a rage and killed him.

7. Tu-shun (557-640), Chih-yen (602-668), Fa-tsang (643-712), and Ch'eng-kuan (738-839) are the first four patriarchs of the Flower Garland school in China.

8. Hsüan-tsang (602-664), Tz'u-en (632-682), Chih-chou (678-733), and Chisho were scholars of the Dharma Characteristics school. Hsüan-tsang is generally regarded as the founder of the school, and Tz'u-en who formally established the school is considered his successor. Chih-chou is the fourth patriarch counting from Hsüan-tsang. Chisho is thought to refer either to Chiho (Kor Chipong), who studied the Dharma Characteristics doctrine under Chih-chou, or to Doshō, who studied under Hsüan-tsang and founded the school in Japan.

9. Hsing-huang, more commonly known as Fa-lang (507-581), and Chia-hsiang, known also as Chi-tsang (549-623), were establishers of the Three Treatises school.

10. Bodhidharma (n.d.), Hui-k'o (487-593), and Hui-neng (638-713) are the first, second, and sixth patriarchs of Zen in China.

11. Tao-ch'o (562-645) and Shan-tao (613-681) are listed as the second and third patriarchs of Pure Land Buddhism in China. Huai-kan (seventh century) studied under Shan-tao's guidance. Genku is another name for Honen, the founder of the Pure Land school in Japan.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

13. The knot of flesh is one of the thirty-two features of a Buddha.

14. This refers to the three truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence, and the Middle Way, which are expounded in the provisional teachings as being separate and independent of one another.

15. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

16. A part of the following passage from the Nirvana Sutra: "For example, it is like a royal envoy skilled in discussion and clever with expedient means who, when sent on a mission to another land, would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler. Wise persons too do this. In the midst of ordinary people and without begrudging their lives, those who are wise should without fail proclaim the Thus Come One's prize teaching from the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle, that is, all living beings possess the Buddha nature."

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

18. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

19. The translation has been expanded here for the sake of clarity. The two major revelations of the Lotus Sutra, that people of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood and that Shakyamuni has been the Buddha since the remote past, awoke great doubts on the part of the voice-hearer disciples (represented by Shariputra and Maudgalyayana) and the great bodhisattvas, respectively. Because the two groups had been unaware of these crucial teachings before the Lotus Sutra was revealed, the Daishonin says they were its "archenemies."

20. The successors of the Buddha are the twenty-four successors who inherited the lineage of Shakyamuni's Buddhism and propagated it in India in the Former Day of the Law. See also twenty-four successors in Glossary.

21. This story appears in *The Record of the Western Regions*. When Ashvaghosha, the twelfth successor, was preaching Buddhism in Pataliputra in Magadha, King Kanishka led his army against Pataliputra and demanded a huge sum in tribute. The defeated king offered Ashvaghosha in place of the money. Later, with the support of Kanishka, Ashvaghosha propagated Buddhism in northern India.

22. This story appears in *Record of the Western Regions*. Manoratha is thought to have been the teacher of Vasubandhu. King

Vikramaditya of Shravasti resented Manoratha and plotted to humiliate him. He assembled one hundred scholars from various schools to debate with Manoratha. Ninety-nine yielded, but the last, in collusion with the king, refused to yield to Manoratha. As a result, Manoratha is said to have bitten off his tongue and died.

23. Hui-kuan (368–438), Hui-yen (363–443), Seng-jou (431–494), and Hui-tz'u (434–490) were all celebrated priests during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period.

24. This presumably refers to Fa-yün's *Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, though the two quotations below are not found in this commentary.

25. This means that *The Annotations on the Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, attributed to Prince Shotoku, is based on Fa-yün's *Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

26. The fourth volume of *The One Hundred Records of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai* that sets forth forms of daily and nightly worship of the Buddha Vairochana and all the other Buddhas.

27. The twelve divisions of the correct and equal sutras refer to a generic term for all the Mahayana teachings. In general, these sutras refute attachment to Hinayana.

28. A kind of meditation expounded in the Flower Garland Sutra. In this meditation all phenomena of the three existences appear clearly in the mind, just as all things are clearly reflected on the surface of the ocean when the waves are quiet.

29. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.

30. It is said that the asura king was blinded by the light of the sun and moon when he tried to do battle with the god Shakra.

31. The emperor of Han refers to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.E.), the founder of the Former Han dynasty, who is said to have controlled the other lords by wielding his three-foot sword.

32. The eighty-volume Flower Garland Sutra, translated by Shikshananda in the T'ang dynasty.

33. This story appears in *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests*, written in Japan by the Zen priest Kokan Shiren (1278–1346). Tradition also has it that, in a previous life, Shotoku was Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai's master.

34. Reference is to the parable of the three carts and the burning house in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra.

35. Hiroyo and Matsuna were sons of Wake no Kiyomaro, a court official. In 802, in response to an imperial command, they assembled fourteen learned priests from the seven major temples of Nara at Mount Takao to debate with Dengyo. Later, they supported Dengyo in establishing the Tendai school.

36. The place where T'ien-t'ai studied under Nan-yüeh and is said to have awakened to the truth of the Lotus Sutra.

37. The legend that Shan-wu-wei went to Japan is found in *Genko Era Biographies*.

38. The "teachings on concentration and insight" refers to the entire system of meditation set forth by T'ien-t'ai.

39. The Diamond Realm mandala and the Womb Realm mandala.

40. Along with the two priests mentioned in the text, Tsung-ju, Ch'üan-ya, I-chen, Pao-yüeh, K'an, and Wei-chin.

41. Chih-yüan (768–844) was a T'ien-t'ai priest who lived at Hua-yen-ssu temple on Mount Wu-t'ai. Kuang-hsiu (771–843) was the eighth patriarch in the T'ien-t'ai lineage, counting from T'ien-t'ai. He was also a disciple of Tao-sui, who taught the T'ien-t'ai doctrine to Dengyo. Wei-chüan was a leading disciple of Kuang-hsiu.

42. The two sutras refer to the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the Universal Worthy Sutra, which are regarded as the introduction and the epilogue to the Lotus Sutra. These two sutras and the Lotus itself are sometimes referred to collectively as the threefold Lotus Sutra.

43. Fifth watch: The hour of the tiger (3:00–5:00 A.M.).

44. The third year of Ninju (853) is generally accepted as the date of Chisho's journey to China.

45. The sixth month of the second year of Ten'an (858) is the generally accepted date.

46. The Tendai "concentration and insight" and the Mahavairochana practices.

47. "A man of China" refers to Miao-lo, who stated in his *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* that Kumarajiva's placement of the "Entrustment" chapter is correct.

48. In *The Annotations on the Mahavairochana Sutra* given by Shan-wu-wei, the founder of the esoteric True Word school in China, I-hsing appropriated the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and interpreted it as

belonging to the True Word teachings.

49. Fa-tsang established a classification of the Buddhist sutras, dividing them into five groups according to their level of teaching: the Hinayana teaching, the elementary Mahayana teaching, the final Mahayana teaching, the sudden teaching, and the perfect teaching. This system of the five teachings was modeled on T'ien-t'ai's classification of the five periods.

50. While giving a lecture, Chia-hsiang was criticized by Fa-sheng, a seventeen-year-old student of the T'ien-t'ai school.

51. The Dharma Characteristics doctrine maintains that all dharmas, or phenomena, arise from the alaya-consciousness and have actual existence. Being preoccupied with the characteristics of the dharmas, among the three truths, it emphasizes only temporary existence.

52. Chih-chou (678-733) was the third patriarch of the Dharma Characteristics school, who lived in P'u-yang and wrote a commentary on the Brahma Net Sutra on the basis of T'ien-t'ai's teachings. Liang-pi of Ch'ing-lung-ssu temple interpreted the Benevolent Kings Sutra, the concluding sutra to the Wisdom sutras, following T'ien-t'ai's annotations on the sutra.

53. The wording of the Japanese text has been expanded here.

54. This is actually Miao-lo's remark from his *On "The Words and Phrases,"* which Dengyo quotes in his *Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine.* "Lu" in this passage is Confucius's native state in China. The people of Lu are said to have been unaware of the greatness of Confucius.

55. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

56. The five provinces are Yamashiro, Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi, and Settsu. The seven outlying regions are Tokaido, Tosando, Hokurikudo, San'indo, San'yodo, Nan-kaido, and Saikaido.

57. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

58. "Mahavairochana" here indicates the Buddha Many Treasures.

59. The south here corresponds to the left, as the treasure tower faces the west. The south seat is "lower" because, according to Indian custom, the left is inferior to the right.

60. Rivers in Shansi Province, China. The Ching River is always turbid and the Wei clear.

61. The owl was said to eat its mother,

and the legendary hakei, a beast like a tiger, to eat its father.

62. Some time after Chisho's death, friction over doctrinal differences arose between his followers and those in the line of Jikaku. It culminated in a violent dispute over succession to the chief priesthood after the death of Ryogen, the eighteenth chief priest of Enryaku-ji. In 993, the followers of Chisho left Enryaku-ji and established themselves at Onjo-ji. The priests of the two temples attacked one another repeatedly.

63. Kampyo refers to the fifty-ninth emperor Uda (867-931) of Japan. After his abdication in 897, he took Buddhist vows and was known as the Retired Emperor Kampyo.

64. A ritual implement used for prayers in esoteric True Word Buddhism. This story appears in *The Biography of the Great Teacher Kobo* by the True Word priest Ken'i (1072-1145). According to this work, before Kobo left China, he hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder into the air. Returning to Japan, he went to Mount Koya to carry out the practice of the esoteric teachings. There he found the same diamond-pounder resting in a tree's branches.

65. Esoteric practices employing eighteen different mudras, nine for the Diamond Realm and nine for the Womb Realm.

66. The original temple refers to Kongobu-ji, the head temple of the True Word school, located on Mount Koya.

67. This story appears in *A History of the Buddha's Successors.* King Kanishka happened to pass by the stupa adorned with seven kinds of treasures that Nirgrantha Jnataputra, one of the six non-Buddhist teachers and the founder of Jainism, had built. He mistook it for a Buddhist stupa and worshiped it, whereupon it collapsed. The Daishonin says that Ashvaghosha was the one who caused the stupa to collapse, probably because King Kanishka was converted to Buddhism by Ashvaghosha.

68. This story appears in *Record of the Western Regions.* In India there was a conceited Brahman named Demon Eloquence who amused himself with paradoxical theories and worshiped demons. He lived in a forest secluded from people. Because he conducted debates from behind a curtain, nobody had seen his true form. One day Ashvaghosha, together with the ruler, went to confront him in debate and argued him

into silence. Then Ashvaghosha lifted the curtain, exposing his demonic appearance.

69. Wang Mang (45 B.C.E.—C.E. 23) was a high official who lived toward the end of the Former Han dynasty and controlled the throne by appointing nine-year-old Emperor P'ing to succeed. Eventually he poisoned P'ing, usurped the throne, and established a new dynasty called the Hsin.

70. According to the Buddha Treasury Sutra, in the remote past after the death of Great Adornment Buddha, his followers split into five schools, and only the monk Universal Practice correctly upheld what the Buddha had taught. The leaders of the four other schools held erroneous views and persecuted Universal Practice. For this reason, they and their followers fell into hell, where they suffered for a long time. Later, they were able to encounter and practice the correct teaching of the Buddha All Bright King. However, because of their grave offenses in the past, not one of them was able to attain nirvana at that time but had to endure again the sufferings of hell. The Buddha Treasury Sutra does not specifically mention that they were reborn in the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha All Bright King.

71. This refers to the people who persecuted Bodhisattva Never Disparaging after the death of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, as described in the Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.

72. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

73. Hojo Tokisuke (1247–1272), elder half brother of Regent Hojo Tokimune, attempted to seize power, but failed. Many were killed in the fighting in Kyoto and Kamakura.

74. A reference to prayers for rain conducted by the True Word priest Dharma Seal Kaga, which produced not only rain but a destructive gale as well. The incident is described in detail in *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra* (pp. 775–76).

75. Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181), warrior and leader of the Heike clan.

76. Troops that travel by foot, horse, elephant, and chariot.

77. On “*The Words and Phrases.*”

78. Ibid.

79. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra.*

80. The emperor of the Sui dynasty refers to the second ruler, Emperor Yang (569–618).

81. This story appears in *The Sung Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests*. Shusho and Shodai were men of India, but their Sanskrit names are not known.

82. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3. The line following in the verse reads, “The living beings in it are all my children.”

83. *Sung Dynasty Biographies.*

84. A comparison of dates would indicate that Pu-k'ung did not meet Chin-kang-chih and become his disciple until after he had arrived in China, but this may not have been known in the Daishonin's time.

85. Shinsen'en was a garden established by Emperor Kammu within the imperial palace in Kyoto. It was the site of a large pond where prayers for rain were performed. According to *Genko Era Biographies*, a dragon lived in this pond, and when it made an appearance, rain would fall. Matsuna's offerings were made to this dragon.

86. “The ninth period of decrease” corresponds to the present age. See kalpa of continuance in Glossary.

87. A dissolute ruler who was conquered by King Wu of the Chou dynasty. According to *Records of the Historian*, he had a human figure made and called it a heavenly god, and caused people to treat it with contempt. Moreover, it is said that he shot arrows at a leather bag filled with blood, claiming that he had shot the god of the sun.

88. The chieftain of Tomi refers to Nagasunebiko, a powerful local leader in Yamato. According to *The Chronicles of Japan*, Jimmu, the legendary first emperor, proceeded southward to invade the Yamato region, where he was engaged in battle by Nagasunebiko and driven back.

89. The last convert of Shakyamuni Buddha. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, he had a dream in which all people were deprived of their eyesight and left standing naked in the darkness, whereupon the sun fell from the sky, the earth cracked, the seas ran dry, and Mount Sumeru was toppled by a great wind. In the morning, being told that the Buddha would enter nirvana before the next day, he went to Shakyamuni and joined the Order, and that night attained the state of arhat.

90. Ming-sheng (n.d.) was a priest of the Three Treatises school during the T'ang dynasty. He was a disciple of Fa-lang, and

Chia-hsiang was one of his fellow priests.

91. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

92. *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land.*

93. "This priest of the Willow Tree" refers to Shan-tao, who was so called because he is said to have attempted to commit suicide by hanging himself from a branch of a willow tree in front of the temple where he lived in hopes of going to the Pure Land. However, either the rope or the willow branch broke, and he fell to the ground. He died a week later in torment from his injuries.

94. One of the four types of wheel-turning kings. The king who rules all the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru.

95. Yoga (Skt), or "union," is another name for the True Word school. Esoteric Buddhism stresses the union of the body, voice, and mind of common mortals with those of Mahavairocana Buddha. In terms of practice, mudras represent the body, mantras, the voice, and meditation on mandalas, the mind.

96. Doshō (799–875) first studied the Three Treatises doctrines but later became a follower of Kōbo. Gennin (818–887) first studied the Dharma Characteristics doctrines but later studied the esoteric teachings under Shinga. In 885, he became the chief priest of Tō-ji temple. Doyū (d. 851) first studied the Dharma Characteristics teachings but later turned to the Flower Garland doctrines. He became the seventh patriarch of the Flower Garland school.

97. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

98. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

99. The ninety-day period from the beginning of the first month through the end of the third. In the lunar calendar, the first day of the first month was regarded as the beginning of spring.

100. "Court historian" was an official position of the Grand Council of State. There were eight altogether: four of the left and four of the right. A historian of the left recorded events; a historian of the right recorded the words of the emperor.

101. A reference to the poet and court lady-in-waiting Izumi Shikibu (b. c. 976) and the priest Noin (b. 988), whose works include poems that express prayers for rain.

102. Shinzei (800–860) was a priest of the True Word school. He was granted the position of acharya, which qualifies one to

transmit the secret doctrines of the True Word.

103. This implies one of the thirty-two features of a Buddha, a tuft of white hair between the eyebrows.

104. Ghoshila was a wealthy household-er of Kaushambi, who built Ghoshilavana Monastery to invite Shakyamuni Buddha to preach.

105. Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224), the second regent of the Kamakura government.

106. Sanno Shrine on Mount Hiei is dedicated to the deity Mountain King. The Kamo shrines are two independent but closely related shrines located on the Kamo River in Kyoto. According to tradition, they were built in 678. They enjoyed the patronage of the imperial court and the shogunate. Kasuga Shrine in Nara was founded in 709 by Fujiwara Fuhito and dedicated to the deities associated with the Fujiwara family. Thus it served as both a clan shrine and a national shrine.

107. Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki, and Juntoku to the island of Sado. Tsuchimikado was exiled to Tosa Province in Shikoku and later was moved to the neighboring province of Awa (different from the Awa Province in eastern Japan where the Daishonin was born).

108. The prelate of Omuro refers here to Prince Dojo, a son of Emperor Gotoba, who entered the priesthood and lived at Ninna-ji temple of the True Word school in Kyoto.

109. Setaka (d. 1221) was a son of Sasaki Hirotsuna, the constable of Omi who rallied to the imperial cause during the Jokyu Disturbance. Setaka served Dojo at Ninna-ji temple but was killed after the disturbance.

110. Lotus Sutra, chap. 25.

111. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

112. Wei Cheng (580–643) was a minister who faithfully served Emperor T'ai-tsung of the T'ang dynasty and gave counsel to his government.

113. Fujiwara no Yoshifusa (804–872) was the minister of the left and grandfather of the fifty-sixth emperor Seiwa. Having become a court official at an early age, he laid the foundation for the prosperity of the Fujiwara family.

114. The Daishonin means here that his exile on Sado spanned the years 1271 to 1274.

115. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

116. A reference to the “true aspect of all phenomena,” as revealed in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra.

117. This passage is quoted in Chisho's *Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings* as Fa-yün's words.

118. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

119. *Profound Meaning*.

120. On “*The Profound Meaning*.”

121. The text reads sixty, although Japan actually had sixty-six provinces, as indicated in the sentence after next.

122. The province of Dewa in northern Japan is said to have been famous for hawk and eagle feathers. Gold was first discovered in Japan in the northern province of Mutsu in the twenty-first year of the Tempyo era (750).

123. Eshin (942–1017) was a Tendai priest, famed for having compiled *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*. Yokan (1032–1111) was a precursor of the Nembutsu school, who propagated the Pure Land teaching, centering his activities in the Kyoto area.

124. Kannon-ji, Ono-dera (also called Yakushi-ji), and Todai-ji temples were the sites of the three Hinayana ordination platforms officially established by Ganjin in 754, 761, and 762.

125. Emperor Wu (543–578) and Emperor Wu-tsung (814–846) both were responsible for persecutions of Buddhism in

574 and 845. Wu valued Confucianism and strove to abolish the Buddhist teachings. Wu-tsung came to revere Taoism after he ascended the throne, and he imposed oppressive measures on the Buddhist community.

126. Hsiang Yü (232–202 B.C.E.) and Kao-tsu (247–195 B.C.E.) were warlords who contended for power in the confusion following the death of the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty. After a lengthy struggle Kao-tsu (Liu Pang) emerged the victor and founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C.E.

127. Some ten years after attaining enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha established an ordination platform at Jetavana Monastery in Shravasti. To defy him, Devadatta established a rival platform on Mount Gayashirsha.

128. “The Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching” here refers to the Buddha of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, who embodies the ultimate Law, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, that is implied in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Here “the essential teaching” refers to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, not to the Lotus Sutra's latter fourteen chapters.

129. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

130. The “priest” refers to Niko, one of the Daishonin's six senior disciples.

131. Joken-bo, one of the Daishonin's seniors at Seicho-ji temple.

The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood



THE “Expedient Means” chapter in volume one of the Lotus Sutra states, “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable.” A commentary says that the riverbed of reality is described as “infinitely profound” because it is boundless, and that the water of wisdom is described as “immeasurable” because it is hard to fathom.¹

Is not the meaning of the sutra and the commentary that the way to Buddhahood lies within the two elements of reality and wisdom? Reality means the true nature of all phenomena, and wisdom means the illuminating and manifesting of this true nature. Thus when the riverbed of reality is infinitely broad and deep, the water of wisdom will flow ceaselessly. When this reality and wisdom are fused, one attains Buddhahood in one’s present form.

The sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra cannot lead to Buddhahood because they are provisional and expedient teachings that separate reality and wisdom. The Lotus Sutra, however, unites the two as a single entity. The sutra says that the Buddhas open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, show it, cause them to awaken to it, and induce them to enter its path. By realizing this Buddha wisdom, one attains Buddhahood.²

This inner enlightenment of the Buddha is far beyond the understanding of voice-hearers and pratyekabuddhas. This is why the “Expedient Means” chapter goes on to say, “Not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it.” What then are these two elements of reality and wisdom? They are simply the five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Shakyamuni Buddha called forth the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and entrusted to them these five characters that constitute the essence of the sutra. This is the teaching that was transferred to the bodhisattvas who had been the disciples of the Buddha since the remote past.

The Lotus Sutra states that Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the others will appear in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law to propagate the five characters, the embodiment of the two elements of reality and wisdom. The sutra makes this perfectly clear. Who could possibly dispute it? I, Nichiren, am neither Bodhisattva Superior Practices nor his envoy, but I precede them, spreading the five characters to prepare the way. Bodhisattva Superior Practices received the water of the wisdom of the Mystic Law from the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and causes it to flow into the wasteland of the people’s lives in the evil world

of the latter age. This is the function of wisdom. Shakyamuni Buddha transferred this teaching to Bodhisattva Superior Practices, and now Nichiren propagates it in Japan. With regard to the transfer of teachings, it is divided into two categories: general and specific. If you confuse the general with the specific even in the slightest,³ you will never be able to attain Buddhahood and will wander in suffering through endless transmigrations of births and deaths.

For example, the voice-hearers in Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime received the seeds of Buddhahood from Shakyamuni in the distant past when he was the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence. Therefore, they could not attain enlightenment by following Amida, Medicine Master, or any other Buddha. To illustrate, if a family member brings home water from the ocean, the entire family can use it. But were they to refuse even a single drop of that water and instead go looking for water from some other ocean, it would be terribly misguided and foolish. In the same way, to forget the original teacher who had brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death.

One should abandon even one's teacher if he or she is misguided, though there will be cases where this is not necessary. One should decide according to the principles both of the world and of Buddhism. Priests in the Latter Day of the Law are ignorant of the principles of Buddhism and are conceited, so they despise the correct teacher and fawn on patrons. True priests are those who are honest and who desire little and yet know satisfaction. Volume one of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* states: "Those who have yet to attain the truth should

humble themselves before the highest principle, which is comparable to heaven, and feel abashed before all the sages. Then they will be monks with a sense of shame. When they manifest insight and wisdom, then they will be true monks."

The Nirvana Sutra states: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer." You should etch deeply in your mind the two words "see" and "disregard" in the phrase "sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him." Both teacher and followers will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering if they see enemies of the Lotus Sutra but disregard them and fail to reproach them. The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh says that they "will fall into hell along with those evil persons."⁴ To hope to attain Buddhahood without speaking out against slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water. No matter how sincerely one believes in the Lotus Sutra, if one is guilty of failing to rebuke slander of the Law, one will surely fall into hell, just as a single crab leg will ruin a thousand pots of lacquer. This is the meaning of the passage in the sutra, "Because the poison has penetrated deeply and their minds no longer function as before."⁵

The sutra states, "Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers,"⁶ and "If one stays close to the teachers of the Law, one will speedily gain the bodhisattva way. By following and learning from these

teachers one will see Buddhas as numerous as Ganges sands.”⁷⁷ A commentary says, “Originally one followed this Buddha and for the first time conceived the desire to seek the way. And by following this Buddha again, one will reach the stage where there is no retrogression.”⁷⁸ Another commentary says, “In the beginning one followed this Buddha or bodhisattva and formed a bond with him, and so it will be through this Buddha or bodhisattva that one will attain one’s goal.”⁷⁹ Above all, be sure to follow your original teacher so that you are able to attain Buddhahood. Shakyamuni Buddha is the original teacher for all people, and moreover, he is endowed with the virtues of sovereign and par-

ent. Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed. As the saying goes, “Good advice grates on the ear.” But still I am not discouraged. The Lotus Sutra is like the seed, the Buddha like the sower, and the people like the field. If you deviate from these principles, not even I can save you in your next life.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The third day of the eighth month
in the second year of Kenji (1276),
cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

To Soya



Background

This letter is addressed to Soya, a lay follower who lived in Soya Village in Shimosa Province. His full name and title were Soya Jiro Hyoe-no-jo Kyoshin, and he is thought to have been an officer of the high court of the Kamakura shogunate. He had converted to Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings around 1260 and became one of the leading believers in the area, together with Toki Jonin and Ota Jomyo.

In 1271, Soya became a lay priest and was given the Buddhist name Horen Nichirai by the Daishonin. Horen built two temples and lived at one of them until he died in 1291 at the age of sixty-eight.

In this letter, the Daishonin first quotes the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra and states, “The way to Buddhahood lies within the two elements of reality and wisdom.” Reality indicates the ultimate truth that the Law permeates all phenomena in the universe. Wisdom, on the other hand, means the ability to perceive and un-

derstand this truth. When this wisdom exists—when the “water of wisdom” fills the “riverbed of reality”—it is known as the fusion of reality and wisdom. This is enlightenment. In other words, one illuminates and manifests the Law in one’s own life.

The Daishonin stresses that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Law that unites both reality and wisdom; it is the seed of Buddhahood for all people in the Latter Day. This Law is to be propagated by Bodhisattva Superior Practices at the beginning of the Latter Day. The Daishonin states that he is the first one to embark on this great mission, by which he is really indicating that he is the original teacher who will lead all people to enlightenment.

Next, he points out that any teacher or disciple who ignores those who commit slander of the Law will fall into hell. This amounts to a compassionate warning about the responsibility believers have to protect the Buddha’s teaching.

Notes

1. This commentary is based on passages from *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* and *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

2. The wording of the Japanese text has been expanded for clarity. In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni reveals the "one great reason" why the Buddhas make their advent in the world. He says it is to enable all people to realize their inherent Buddha wisdom.

3. The general refers to an overall or surface view, and the specific, to a deeper, more sharply delineated view. In the "Entrustment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni makes a general transfer of the sutra to all the bodhisattvas present, but in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, he spe-

cifically transfers the essence of the sutra, or the Mystic Law, to Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

4. This phrase is found in a passage from *On the Peaceful Practices of the Lotus Sutra*, which reads: "If there should be a bodhisattva who protects evil persons and fails to chastise them . . . then, when his life comes to an end, he will fall into hell along with those evil persons."

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.

6. Ibid., chap. 7.

7. Ibid., chap. 10.

8. *Profound Meaning.*

9. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

Letter to the Lay Priest Domyo



I HAVE received your request for prayers for your father, and I will offer them before the Buddha. Concerning prayer, there are conspicuous prayer and conspicuous response, conspicuous prayer and inconspicuous response, inconspicuous prayer and inconspicuous response, and inconspicuous prayer and conspicuous response. But the only essential point is that, if you believe in this sutra, all your desires will be fulfilled in both the present and the future. The third volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “Although the devil and the devil’s people will be there, they will all protect the Law of the Buddha.”¹ And the seventh volume states, “[If a

person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra, then] his illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age nor death.”² You must not doubt these golden words. I deeply appreciate the lay nun Myoichi’s³ visit to this mountain. I have given her a written scroll. You should open it and read it. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nichiren

The tenth day of the eighth month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

To the lay priest Domyo



Background

Little is known about the lay priest Domyo, the recipient of this letter. He may have been a retainer of the lay nun Myoichi or of Indo Saburo Saemon Sukenobu, who was an elder brother of Nissho, one of the Daishonin’s six senior disciples. In any event, Domyo had evidently requested the lay nun Myoichi to carry a letter to the Daishonin asking him to pray for Domyo’s father, who was ill.

In this reply, the Daishonin clarifies

the relationship between prayer and its resulting benefit. “Conspicuous prayer” means prayer offered with a clear objective or purpose. “Inconspicuous prayer” means prayer offered without a pressing need, that is, simply chanting the daimoku continually. “Conspicuous response” indicates the immediately perceptible fulfillment of one’s prayers. “Inconspicuous response” indicates benefit that may not become manifest immediately, but is evident over the

course of time, such as the gradual purification of one's life.

The Daishonin stresses that the im-

portant thing is simply to maintain strong faith in the Gohonzon.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 6.
2. Ibid., chap. 23.
3. A follower of Nichiren Daishonin, who lived in Kamakura. She was related to

Nissho (1221–1323), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples, and was the recipient of the letter *Winter Always Turns to Spring*.

Propagation by the Wise



THE correct teaching of the time can be propagated only by a person of wisdom. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha, after expounding all the sutras, entrusted the Hinayana sutras to Ananda and the Mahayana sutras to Manjushri. Concerning the heart of the Lotus Sutra, however, the Buddha refused to transfer it to any of the voice-hearers [such as Ananda] or to bodhisattvas such as Manjushri. The Buddha instead summoned Bodhisattva Superior Practices and entrusted it to him.

Even if a person of wisdom who embraces the correct teaching existed, how could he propagate it without lay believers who supported him? Shakyamuni Buddha had the support of Brahma and Shakra, who were his patrons in heaven. From among the six paths, the Buddha chose the worlds of human and heavenly beings, and of these two, he chose to be born among human beings. Of all the places in the major world system inhabited by human beings, he appeared in the center, the five regions of India, and within the five regions, in the kingdom of Magadha.

The king of this land should have been a patron of the Buddha, but instead the country's ruler, King Ajatashatru, was an evil man. The most unfortunate destiny for a sage is to be born during the reign of an evil monarch.

King Ajatashatru had murdered his father, a worthy ruler. Even worse, he had taken Devadatta as his mentor. Devadatta had committed three cardinal sins, the worst of which was injuring the Buddha and causing him to bleed. The unfilial and evil king joined forces with this blasphemous teacher, thus laying a double burden on the people.

Not only for one or two years but for several decades, this king repeatedly harassed the Buddha and killed countless numbers of his disciples. This infuriated the heavenly gods, and the skies reacted violently. Moreover, the earthly gods were so provoked that great disasters occurred on earth. Month after month violent gales raged, and year after year famines and epidemics struck, killing the majority of the people. Furthermore, neighboring kingdoms attacked on all sides, driving Magadha to the brink of ruin.

Then, motivated by a revelation in a dream, by the advice of Jivaka and, finally, by his own inner doubts, King Ajatashatru left Devadatta and presented himself before the Buddha to repent of his sinful deeds. As a result, his illness was cured immediately, the invasions ceased, and the entire country became peaceful. Not only that, he was also able to thwart the prophecy that he would die on the seventh day of the third month and in fact prolonged his

life by forty years. In gratitude, he assembled a thousand arhats to record all the Buddha's teachings, especially the Lotus Sutra, for future generations. It is therefore owing to King Ajatashatru that we have the Lotus Sutra we embrace today.

But let us set aside the story of Ajatashatru. If I were to repeat the teachings given by the Buddha to King Ajatashatru, the Japanese would consider them to be merely my own fabrications. But since you are my disciple and supporter, I will reveal them to you. The Buddha states: "After my death, in the Latter Day of the Law, the land will be filled with those who pretend to be pious by observing the five ascetic practices¹ as Devadatta did. They will persuade an evil ruler to act against the one person of wisdom. They will curse or strike him, cause him to be exiled, and even make an attempt on his life. At that time there will be ominous changes in the heavens and strange occurrences on earth, as well as violent winds, famines, and epidemics greater than ever witnessed before, and these disasters will continue year after year. The land will be attacked by another country." This is the substance of the tenth volume of the Protection Sutra.

The present age has developed exactly as the Buddha predicted it would, and Nichiren may be the person of wisdom whom the Buddha described. Though some people wish to help me, either their determination is weak, or, though firmly resolved, they are unable to act on their intentions. Thus, you are one of the very few whose actions match their will. You surpass others in your resolve, and it is because of your devoted support that I have been able to survive. The heavens are certainly

aware of this; the earth surely knows about it, too. If any misfortune were to occur to you, it could only mean that heaven wanted my life itself. Wherever one may be, whether in the mountains, on the seas, in the skies, or in the cities, one cannot escape death. Nevertheless, a sutra explains that even one's fixed karma can be changed.² T'ien-t'ai's commentary also states that one can prolong one's fixed span of life.

As I have advised you before, until the Mongol forces actually attack this country, continue to conduct yourself in a circumspect manner. As for the reply to your lord, declare to him firmly: "Since I am ill, it is most distressing for me to be transferred to a remote place. Moreover, the entire country is already in turmoil. Should an emergency arise, how could I possibly be a coward? At this moment I am resolved to sacrifice my life for my lord if anything grave happens. But should a sudden crisis occur, it is doubtful whether I could reach you in time from the distant province of Echigo. Therefore, even at the risk of losing my estate, I will not leave you this year. Anything else you command of me, I will obey without hesitation or fear. Even more important to me than this, however, are the priest Nichiren and my deceased parents."

Say in a ringing voice, "Even if you disown me, I will devote my life to you. My next life I have entrusted to the priest Nichiren."

Nichiren

The sixth day of the ninth month
in the second year of Kenji (1276),
cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

To Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was sent from Minobu to Shijo Kingo in the ninth month of 1276. Because Lord Ema disapproved of his retainer Shijo Kingo's belief in the Daishonin's teachings, he harassed Kingo in various ways. At one point he even threatened to transfer the samurai to the remote province of Echigo on the Sea of Japan if he refused to re-

nounce his allegiance to the Daishonin. This letter was the Daishonin's answer to Kingo's request for guidance in these circumstances.

The letter clarifies the two necessary elements for the propagation of Buddhism: a person of wisdom and supporters to aid him.

Notes

1. The five ascetic practices refer to the five precepts expounded in Hinayana Buddhism: to wear discarded ragged clothes, to seek alms, to have only one meal a day, to remain out of doors always, and to avoid sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, and salty food.

2. This statement is adopted from a passage in *The Annotations on "The Words and*

Phrases of the Lotus Sutra." Karma is the potential force inherent in one's life that influences one's future. Fixed karma means a span of life fixed by karma. The reference in the next sentence to T'ien-t'ai's commentary indicates *Great Concentration and Insight*.

The Fourteen Slanders



I HAVE received the string of coins, the horseload of polished rice, and the white quilted robe that you sent.

Rolling fields and hills stretch out more than a hundred *ri* to the south of this mountain. To the north stands lofty Mount Minobu, which joins the peaks of Shirane farther off. Jutting sharply up to the west is a mountain called Shichimen. Snow remains on these peaks throughout the year. There is not a single dwelling other than mine in the area. My only visitors, infrequent as they are, are the monkeys that come swinging through the treetops. And to my regret, even they do not stay for long, but scurry back to where they came from. To the east run the surging waters of the Fuji River, which resemble the flowing sands of the desert. It is extraordinary indeed that you send letters from time to time to this place whose inaccessibility makes visitors rare.

I learned that the scholar Nichigen of Jisso-ji temple, upon becoming my disciple, was driven out by his own disciples and lay supporters, and had to give up his lands, so that he now has no place of his own.¹ Nonetheless, he still visits me and takes care of my disciples. What devotion to the way! Nichigen is a sage. He is already unrivaled as a scholar of Buddhism. Yet he has discarded all desire for fame and fortune and become my disciple. He

has lived the words in the sutra, “We care nothing for our bodies or lives.”² To repay his debts of gratitude to the Buddha, he has taught you and your fellow believers and inspired you, Matsuno, to make these sincere offerings. All this is truly amazing.

The Buddha stated that, in the latter age, monks and nuns with the hearts of dogs would be as numerous as the sands of the Ganges.³ By this he meant that the priests and nuns of that day would be attached to fame and fortune. Because they wear robes and surplices, they look like ordinary priests and nuns. But in their hearts they wield a sword of distorted views, hastening here and there among their patrons and filling them with countless lies so as to keep them away from other priests or nuns. Thus they strive to keep their patrons to themselves and prevent other priests or nuns from coming near them, like a dog who goes to a house to be fed, but growls and springs to attack the moment another dog approaches. Each and every one of these priests and nuns is certain to fall into the evil paths. Being the scholar that he is, Nichigen must have read this passage in the sutra. His unusual consideration and frequent visits to me and my disciples are deeply appreciated.

In your letter you write: “Since I took faith in this sutra [the Lotus],

I have continued to recite the ten factors of life⁴ and the verse section of the 'Life Span' chapter and chant the daimoku without the slightest neglect. But how great is the difference between the blessings received when a sage chants the daimoku and the blessings received when we chant it?" To reply, one is in no way superior to the other. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses; a fire made by a fool is the same as a fire made by a wise man.

However, there is a difference if one chants the daimoku while acting against the intent of this sutra. There are various stages in the practice of this sutra [and various forms of slander exist accordingly]. Let me sum them up by quoting from volume five of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"*: "In defining the types of evil, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* states briefly, 'Expound among the wise but not among the foolish.'⁵ One scholar⁶ enumerates the types of evil as follows: 'I will first list the evil causes and then their effects. There are fourteen evil causes: (1) arrogance, (2) negligence, (3) wrong views of the self, (4) shallow understanding, (5) attachment to earthly desires, (6) not understanding, (7) not believing, (8) scowling with knitted brows, (9) harboring doubts, (10) slandering, (11) despising, (12) hating, (13) envying, and (14) bearing grudges.'⁷ Since these fourteen slanders apply equally to priesthood and laity, you must be on guard against them.

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old said that all people have the Buddha nature and that, if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood. He further stated that to slight a person is to slight the Buddha himself. Thus, his practice was to revere all people. He revered even those who did not embrace the Lotus Sutra because they too had the Buddha

nature and might someday believe in the sutra. Therefore, it is all the more natural to revere those priests and lay people who do embrace the sutra.

The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "If there were a person who spoke only one word to curse the lay persons or monks or nuns who uphold and preach the Lotus Sutra, then his offense would be even graver than that of cursing Shakyamuni Buddha to his face for the space of a kalpa."⁷ The Lotus Sutra also states, "[If anyone sees a person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person], whether what he speaks is true or not, [he will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy]."⁸ Take these teachings to heart, and always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense.

When one chants the daimoku bearing in mind that there are no distinctions among those who embrace the Lotus Sutra, then the blessings one gains will be equal to those of Shakyamuni Buddha. A commentary states, "Both the beings and the environment of the Avichi hell exist entirely within the life of the highest sage [Buddha], and what is more, the life and the environment of Vairochana [Buddha] never transcend the lives of common mortals."⁹ You can surmise the significance of the fourteen slanders in the light of the above quotations.

That you have asked me about Buddhism shows that you are sincerely concerned about your next life. The Lotus Sutra states, "... a person capable of listening to this Law, such a person is likewise rare."¹⁰ Unless the Buddha's true envoy appears in this world, who is there that can expound this sutra in exact accord with the

Buddha's intent? Moreover, it would appear that there are very few who ask about the meaning of the sutra in an effort to resolve their doubts and thus believe in it wholeheartedly. No matter how humble a person may be, if his wisdom is the least bit greater than yours, you should ask him about the meaning of the sutra. But the people in this evil age are so arrogant, prejudiced, and attached to fame and profit that they are afraid that, should they become the disciple of a humble person or try to learn something from him, they will be looked down upon by others. They never rid themselves of this wrong attitude, so they seem to be destined for the evil paths.

The "Teacher of the Law" chapter says: "If you make offerings to the priest who preaches the Lotus Sutra and hear its teachings for even a moment, then you will experience joy because you can gain even greater benefits than one who offers immeasurable treasures to the Buddha for the space of eighty million kalpas."¹¹

Even an ignorant person can obtain blessings by serving someone who expounds the Lotus Sutra. No matter if he is a demon or an animal, if someone proclaims even a single verse or phrase of the Lotus Sutra, you must respect him as you would the Buddha. This is what the sutra means when it says, "You should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha."¹² You should respect one another as Shakyamuni and Many Treasures did at the ceremony¹³ in the "Treasure Tower" chapter.

The priest Sammi-bo may be lowly, but since he can explain even a little about the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, you should respect him as you would the Buddha and ask him about the teachings. "Rely on the Law and not upon persons"¹⁴ should be your guideline.

Long, long ago there was a young

man who lived in the Snow Mountains and was called the boy Snow Mountains. He gathered ferns and nuts to keep himself alive, made garments of deerskin to clothe his body, and quietly practiced the way. As he observed the world with care and attention, the boy came to understand that nothing is permanent and everything changes, and that all that is born is destined to die. This weary world is as fleeting as a flash of lightning, as the morning dew that vanishes in the sun, as a lamp easily blown out by the wind, or as the fragile leaves of the plantain that are so easily broken.

No one can escape this transience. In the end, all must take the journey to the Yellow Springs, the land of darkness. When we imagine the trip to the other world, we sense utter darkness. There is no light from the sun, the moon, or the stars; not even so much as fire to light a torch. And along that dark road, there is no one to keep you company. When one is in the saha world, one is surrounded by parents and relatives, brothers and sisters, wife and children, and retainers. Fathers may show lofty compassion, and mothers, profound loving sympathy. Husband and wife may be as faithful as two shrimps of the sea who vow to share the same hole and never to part throughout life. Yet, though they push their pillows side by side and sport together under quilts embroidered with mandarin ducks,¹⁵ they can never be together on that journey to the land of darkness. As you travel alone in complete darkness, who will come to encourage you?

Though old and young alike dwell in the realm of uncertainty, it is part of the natural order for the elderly to die first and the young to remain awhile. Thus, even as we grieve, we can find some cause for consolation. Sometimes, however, it is the old who remain and the young who die first.

No one feels more bitter resentment than a young child who dies before its parents. No one despairs more deeply than parents who see their child precede them in death. People live in this fleeting world where all is uncertainty and impermanence, yet day and night they think only of how much wealth they can amass in this life. From dawn to dusk they concentrate on worldly affairs, and neither revere the Buddha nor take faith in the Law. They ignore Buddhist practice and lack wisdom, idling their days away. And when they die and are brought before the court of Yama, the lord of hell, what can they carry as provisions on the long journey through the threefold world? What can they use as a boat or raft to ferry themselves across the sea of the sufferings of birth and death to the Land of Actual Reward or the Buddha Land of Tranquil Light? When one is deluded, it is as if one were dreaming. And when one is enlightened, it is as if one had awakened. Thinking in this way, the boy Snow Mountains resolved to awake from the dream of the transient world and to seek the reality of enlightenment. So he secluded himself in the mountains and devoted himself to deep meditation, sweeping away the dust of delusion and befuddlement in his single-minded pursuit of the Buddhist teaching.

The god Shakra looked down from heaven and observed the boy Snow Mountains in the distance. He thought to himself: "Though the baby fish are many, there are few that grow up to be big fish. Though the flowers of the mango tree are many, there are few that turn into fruit. In like manner, there are many people who set their hearts on enlightenment, but only a few who continue their practice and in fact attain the true way. The aspiration for enlightenment in common mortals is often hindered by evil influences and easily swayed by circumstances; though many

warriors don armor, few go without fear into battle. Let me go test this young man's resolve." So saying, Shakra disguised himself as a demon and appeared at the boy's side.

At that time the Buddha had not yet made his appearance in the world, and although the boy Snow Mountains had sought everywhere for the scriptures of the great vehicle, he had been unable to learn anything of them. Just then he heard a faint voice saying, "All is changeable, nothing is constant. This is the law of birth and death." The young man looked all around in amazement, but there was no one in sight except a demon standing nearby. In appearance it was fierce and horrible; the hairs on its head were like flames and the teeth in its mouth like swords, and its eyes were fixed on the boy in a furious glare. When the boy saw this, he was not frightened in the least. He was so overjoyed at the opportunity to hear something of the Buddhist teaching that he did not even question it. He was like a calf separated from its mother that hears the faint sound of her lowing. "Who spoke that verse? There must be more!" he thought, and once more he searched all around, but still there was no one to be seen. He wondered if it could have been the demon who recited the verse. But on second thought that seemed impossible, since the demon must have been born a demon in retribution for some past evil act. The verse was certainly a teaching of the Buddha, and he was sure it could never have come from the mouth of a lowly demon. But as there was no one else about, he asked, "Was it you who preached that verse?" "Don't speak to me!" replied the demon. "I've had nothing to eat for days. I'm starved, exhausted, and almost out of my mind. I may have uttered some sort of nonsense, but in my dazed condition I don't even know what it was."

"For me to hear only the first half of

that verse," said the boy, "is like seeing only half the moon, or obtaining half a jewel. It must have been you who spoke, so I beg you to teach me the remaining half." The demon replied sarcastically, "You are already enlightened, so you should feel no resentment even if you don't hear the rest of the verse. I'm dying of starvation, and I haven't the strength to speak—say no more to me!"

"Could you teach me if you had something to eat?" asked the boy. "If I had something to eat, I might be able to," said the demon. Elated, the boy said, "Well, then, what kind of food would you like?" But the demon replied, "Ask no more. You will certainly be horrified when you hear what I eat. Besides, you would never be able to provide it."

Yet the boy Snow Mountains was insistent. "If you will just tell me what you want, I will try to find it for you." The demon answered, "I eat only the tender flesh of humans and drink only their warm blood. I fly through the air far and wide in search of food, but people are protected by the Buddhas and gods so that, even though I want to kill them, I cannot. I can only kill and eat those whom the Buddhas and gods have forsaken."

Hearing this, the boy decided to give his own body for the sake of the Law, so that he could hear the entire verse.

"Your food is right here," he said. "You need look no further. Since I am still alive, my flesh is warm, and since my flesh is warm, so is my blood. Therefore, I ask you to teach me the rest of the verse, and in exchange, I will offer you my body." Then the demon grew furious and demanded, "Who could believe your words? After I've taught you the rest of the verse, who can I call on as a witness to make you keep your promise?"

The boy replied: "This body of

mine is mortal. But if I give my life for the Law, casting away this vile body that would otherwise die in vain, in the next life I will certainly attain enlightenment and become a Buddha. I will receive a pure and wonderful body. It will be like throwing away a piece of crockery and receiving a precious vessel in exchange. I call upon Brahma and Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions to be my witnesses. I could not possibly deceive you in their presence."

The demon, somewhat mollified, said, "If what you say is true, I will teach you the rest of the verse." The boy Snow Mountains was overjoyed and, removing his deerskin garment, spread it out for the demon to sit upon while he preached. Then the boy knelt, bowed his head to the ground, and placed his palms together in reverence, saying, "All I ask is that you teach me the rest of the verse." Thus he offered his heartfelt respect to the demon. The demon, seating himself on the deerskin, then recited these words: "Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana." The moment he heard this, the boy was filled with joy, and his reverence for the verse was boundless. Resolving to remember it in his next life, he repeated it over and over again, and etched it deep in his heart.

He pondered, thinking to himself, "I rejoice that this verse [though it came from a demon] is no different from the teaching of the Buddha, but at the same time I lament that I alone have heard it and that I am unable to transmit it to others." Thereupon he inscribed the stanza on stones, cliff faces, and the trees along the road, and he prayed that those who might later pass by would see it, understand its meaning, and finally enter the true way. This done, he climbed a tall tree and threw himself down before the

demon. But before he had reached the ground, the demon quickly resumed his original form as Shakra, caught the boy, and gently placed him on a level spot. Bowing before him reverently, the god said, "In order to test you, I held back the Thus Come One's sacred teaching for a time, causing anguish in the heart of a bodhisattva. I hope you will forgive my fault and save me without fail in my next life."

Then all of the heavenly beings gathered around to praise the boy Snow Mountains, saying, "Excellent, excellent! He is truly a bodhisattva." By casting away his body to listen to half a verse, the bodhisattva was able to eradicate offenses calling for twelve kalpas of the sufferings of birth and death [and attain enlightenment]. His story is referred to in the Nirvana Sutra.

In the past the boy Snow Mountains was willing to give his life to hear but half a verse. How much more thankful should we be to hear a chapter or even a volume of the Lotus Sutra! How can we ever repay such a blessing? Indeed, if you care about your next life, you should make this bodhisattva your example. Even though you may be too poor to offer anything of value, if the opportunity should arise to give up your life to acquire the Law of the Buddha, you should offer your life in order to pursue the Law.

This body of ours in the end will become nothing more than the soil of the hills and fields. Therefore, it is useless to begrudge your life, for though you may wish to, you cannot cling to it forever. Even people who live a long time rarely live beyond the age of one hundred. And all the events of a lifetime are like the dream one dreams in a brief nap. Though a person may have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being and may have even entered the priesthood, if he fails to study the Buddha's teaching and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in

idleness and chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes. He may call himself a priest and earn his livelihood as such, but in no way does he deserve to be regarded as a true priest. He is nothing but a thief who has stolen the title of priest. How shameful and frightening!

In the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra there is a passage that reads, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way."¹⁶ Another passage from the essential teaching reads, "Not hesitating even if it costs them their lives."¹⁷ The Nirvana Sutra states, "One's body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one's life in order to propagate the Law."¹⁸ Thus both the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, as well as the Nirvana Sutra, all indicate that one should give one's life to spread the Law. It is a grave offense to go against these admonitions, and though invisible to the eye, the error piles up until it sends one plummeting to hell. It is like heat or cold, which has no shape or form that the eye can see. Yet in winter the cold comes to attack the trees and grasses, humans and beasts, and in summer the heat comes to torment people and animals.

As a lay believer, the important thing for you is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo single-mindedly and to provide support for the priests. And if we go by the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should also teach the sutra to the best of your ability. When the world makes you feel downcast, you should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, remembering that, although the sufferings of this life are painful, those in the next life could be much worse. And when you are happy, you should remember that your happiness in this life is nothing but a dream within a dream, and that the only true happiness is that found in the pure land of Eagle Peak, and with that thought in mind, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Continue your practice without backsliding until the final moment of your life, and when that time comes, behold! When you climb the mountain of perfect enlightenment and gaze around you in all directions, then to your amazement you will see that the entire realm of phenomena is the Land of Tranquil Light. The ground will be of lapis lazuli, and the eight paths¹⁹ will be set apart by golden ropes. Four kinds of flowers²⁰ will fall from the heavens, and music will resound in the air. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas will be present in complete joy, caressed by the breezes of eternity,

happiness, true self, and purity. The time is fast approaching when we too will count ourselves among their number. But if we are weak in faith, we will never reach that wonderful place. If you still have questions, I am waiting to hear them.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The ninth day of the twelfth month in the second year of Kenji (1276), cyclical sign *hinoe-ne*

Reply to Matsuno



Background

Written near the end of 1276, this letter was a reply to the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon. Four in his family received letters from Nichiren Daishonin—he, his wife, son, and daughter-in-law. One of his daughters married Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro and gave birth to Nanjo Tokimitsu, a staunch supporter of the Daishonin and his disciple Nikko Shonin. It is thought that Matsuno was converted to the Daishonin's teachings through this connection with the Nanjo family.

This letter explains the fourteen slanders, citing Miao-lo's *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* These slanders are referred to originally in the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Asked if there is a difference in benefits derived when a sage chants the daimoku and when an ordinary person chants it, the Daishonin answers in the negative. "However, there is a difference," he continues, "if one chants the daimoku while acting against the intent of this sutra." He explains "the intent" of the sutra by referring to the fourteen slanders.

The first ten of the fourteen slanders

concern one's attitude and action toward the Law, that is, the Buddha's teachings; the last four concern those toward people who believe in and practice that Law.

Emphasizing the importance of unity among believers, the Daishonin says, "Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another." The reason he gives is that "all those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense." In other words, he warns against the last four of the fourteen slanders: "despising, hating, envying, and bearing grudges against" fellow believers.

The Daishonin next recounts in detail the story of the boy Snow Mountains, who offers his body to a fierce demon in order to learn a Buddhist teaching. He encourages Matsuno to make this bodhisattva's spirit a model for his own faith and practice. He further clarifies that a priest who lacks the spirit to study and practice Buddhism diligently, and to strive to refute its slanderers, is "no better than an

animal dressed in priestly robes," a thief who has stolen the title of priest.

The Daishonin concludes by instructing Matsuno how to practice his teaching as a lay believer. He encourages the lay priest to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, provide support for the priests, and, in accord with the

Lotus Sutra, put effort into spreading the Law. Clearly, in light of the preceding paragraphs, "priests" here indicates not any priest, but the Daishonin's disciples—those who are practicing in accord with the spirit elucidated in this letter.

Notes

1. Nichigen (d. 1315) was a priest of Jisso-ji temple, which belonged to the Tendai school. He became a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin after the Daishonin's move to Mount Minobu. Later, he returned to Jisso-ji and converted other priests. He also built temples in Musashi and Suruga provinces.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

3. The source of this statement is not known, but "monks and nuns with the hearts of dogs" is described in the Accumulated Treasures Sutra.

4. Presumably this indicates the first section of the "Expedient Means" chapter, which ends with "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance . . . and their consistency from beginning to end."

5. Chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra says that one should not expound this sutra among the foolish in order to protect them from committing the evil of slandering the sutra.

6. This "one scholar" has been identified as the Dharma Characteristics scholar, Tz'u-en, by Ts'ung-i in his *Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works*. The attribution, however, is dubious. Tz'u-en in his *Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra* mentions slanders, but does not enumerate or enlarge upon them.

7. Paraphrase of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.

9. *The Diamond Scalpel*.

10. This is mentioned in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra.

11. Paraphrase of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

12. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.

13. In the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha assembles all the Buddhas from throughout the universe and then opens the treasure tower. Many Treasures Buddha invites him to share his seat, and the Ceremony in the Air begins.

14. Nirvana Sutra.

15. Mandarin ducks: A symbol of conjugal happiness. The male and female are said to remain faithful to each other throughout their lives.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. 16.

18. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

19. The eight paths lead in eight directions, that is, toward the eight points of the compass.

20. Mandarava, great mandarava, manjushaka, and great manjushaka flowers. Fragrant red and white flowers that, according to Indian tradition, bloom in heaven.

The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra



ON the eighteenth day of the intercalary first month of the fifth year of Bun'ei (1268), an official letter arrived from the great Mongol empire in which those barbarians of the west¹ declared their intention to attack Japan. My prediction in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, which I wrote in the first year of Bunno (1260), cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, has been fulfilled to the letter. My admonitions have surpassed even those set forth in the *yüeh-fu* poems of Po Chü-i,² and my prophecies are not inferior to those of the Buddha. Can there be anything more wondrous in this latter age? If our land were governed by a worthy ruler or sage sovereign, then the highest honors in Japan would be bestowed upon me, and I would be awarded the title of Great Teacher while still alive. I had expected to be consulted about the Mongols, invited to the war council, and asked to defeat them through the power of prayer. Since that did not happen, however, I sent letters of warning to eleven of our country's leaders in the tenth month of the same year.

If there were a worthy person in this country, he would immediately think, "What a wonder! This is surely no ordinary matter. The Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman must be offering a way to save Japan through

this priest." In actuality, however, priests of the other schools cursed and deceived my messengers. The government officials ignored or refused to reply to my letters, and even when they did reply, they deliberately neglected to report the content of my letters to the regent. Their behavior was highly irregular. Even if the letters concerned only some personal matter of mine, the government officials should nevertheless pass them on to the ruler for his due attention, this being the proper way of government. But in this case, the letters were a warning of dire things to come that would affect the destiny not only of the regent's government but of every other official as well. Even if the officials did not heed my warning, to slander my messengers was going too far. This came about because all Japanese, high and low, have for a long time now shown hostility toward the Lotus Sutra. Thus they have piled up great offenses and become possessed by demons. The official letter from the Mongols has deprived them of the last remnants of sanity. In ancient China, King Chou of the Yin dynasty refused to heed the admonitions of his loyal minister Pi Kan and instead cut out Pi Kan's heart. Later his dynasty was overthrown by the kings Wen and Wu of the Chou. King Fu-ch'a of the state of Wu, in-

stead of listening to the remonstrances of his minister Wu Tzu-hsü, forced the latter to commit suicide.³ Eventually Fu-ch'a was killed by King Kou-chien of the state of Yüeh.

Thinking how tragic it would be if our country were to meet with a similar fate, I risked my reputation and life to remonstrate with the authorities. But just as a high wind creates great waves, or a powerful dragon brings forth torrential rains, so my admonitions called forth increasing animosity. The regent's supreme council met to discuss whether to behead me or banish me from Kamakura, and whether to confiscate the estates of or execute my disciples and lay supporters, or to imprison or exile them to distant places.

Hearing this, I rejoiced, saying that I had long expected it to come to this. In the past, the boy Snow Mountains offered his body for the sake of half a verse, Bodhisattva Ever Wailing sold his body, the boy Good Treasures threw himself into a fire, the ascetic Aspiration for the Law peeled off his own skin, Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his own arms, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was beaten with sticks and staves, the Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded, and Bodhisattva Aryadeva was killed by a non-Buddhist, [all because of their devotion to Buddhism].

These events should be considered in terms of the time in which they occurred. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai declared that practice "should be that which accords with the time."⁴ The Great Teacher Chang-an states, "You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other."⁵ The Lotus Sutra represents a single truth, but the way of its practice varies greatly according to the people's capacity and the time.

The Buddha made a prophecy, saying: "After my death, during the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law

that follows the two millennia of the Former and Middle Days, a person will appear who will propagate only the heart of the Lotus Sutra, the five characters of the daimoku. At that time an evil ruler will be in power, and evil monks, more numerous than the dust particles of the land, will argue with one another over the various Mahayana and Hinayana sutras. When the votary of the daimoku challenges the monks, they will incite their lay supporters to abuse, beat, or imprison him, to confiscate his lands, to exile or behead him. In spite of such persecutions, he will continue his propagation without ceasing. Meanwhile the ruler who persecutes him will be beset by rebellion, and his subjects will devour each other like hungry spirits. Finally the land will be attacked by a foreign country, for Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings have ordained that other countries shall assault a land that is hostile to the Lotus Sutra."⁶

None of you who declare yourselves to be my disciples should ever give way to cowardice. Neither should you allow concern for your parents, wife, or children to hold you back, or be worried about your property. Since countless kalpas in the past you have thrown away your life more times than the number of dust particles of the land for the sake of your parents, your children, or your lands. But not once have you given up your life for the Lotus Sutra. You may have tried to practice its teachings to some extent, but whenever you were persecuted, you backslid and ceased to live by the sutra. That is like boiling water only to pour it into cold water, or like trying to strike fire but giving up halfway. Each and every one of you should be certain deep in your heart that sacrificing your life for the Lotus Sutra is like exchanging rocks for gold or dung for rice.

Now, at the beginning of the Latter

Day of the Law, I, Nichiren, am the first to embark on propagating, throughout Jambudvipa, the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo, which are the heart of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all Buddhas. During the 2,220 or more years since the Buddha's passing, not even Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Nan-yüeh, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, or Dengyo has propagated them. My disciples, form your ranks and follow me, and surpass even Mahakashyapa or Ananda, T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo! If you quail before the threats of the ruler of this little island country [and abandon your faith], how will you face the even more terrible anger of Yama, the lord of hell? If, while calling yourselves the Buddha's messengers, you give way to fear, you will be the most despicable of persons!

[While the regent's government could not come to any conclusion,] the priests of the Nembutsu, the observers of the precepts, and the True Word priests, who realized they could not rival me in wisdom, sent petitions to the government. Finding their petitions were not accepted, they approached the wives and widows of high-ranking officials and slandered me in various ways. [The women reported the slander to the officials, saying:] "According to what some priests told us, Nichiren declared that the late lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji have fallen into the hell of incessant suffering. He said that the temples Kencho-ji, Jufuku-ji, Gokuraku-ji, Choraku-ji, and Dai-butsu-ji should be burned down and the honorable priests Doryu and Ryokan beheaded." Under these circumstances, at the regent's supreme council my guilt could scarcely be denied. To confirm whether I had or had not made those statements, I was summoned to the court.

At the court the magistrate said, "You have heard what the regent stated. Did you say these things or not?" I

answered, "Every word is mine. However, the statement about the lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji falling into hell is a fabrication. I have been declaring this doctrine [that the schools they belonged to lead to hell] since before their deaths.

"Everything I said was with the future of our country in mind. If you wish to maintain this land in peace and security, it is imperative that you summon the priests of the other schools for a debate in your presence. If you ignore this advice and punish me unreasonably on their behalf, the entire country will have cause to regret your decision. If you condemn me, you will be rejecting the Buddha's envoy. Then you will have to face the punishment of Brahma and Shakra, of the gods of the sun and moon, and of the four heavenly kings. Within one hundred days after my exile or execution, or within one, three, or seven years, there will occur what is called the calamity of internal strife, rebellion within the ruling clan. This will be followed by the calamity of foreign invasion, attack from all sides, particularly from the west. Then you will regret what you have done!" Hearing this, the magistrate Hei no Saemon, forgetting all the dignity of his rank, became wild with rage like the grand minister of state and lay priest [Taira no Kiyomori].

On the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, I was arrested in a manner that was extraordinary and unlawful, even more outrageous than the arrest of the priest Ryoko, who was actually guilty of treason, and the Discipline Master Ryoken, who sought to destroy the government.⁷ Hei no Saemon led several hundreds of armor-clad warriors to take me. Wearing the headgear of a court noble, he glared in anger and spoke in a rough voice. These actions were in essence no different from those of the grand min-

ister of state and lay priest, who seized power only to lead the country to destruction.

Observing this, I realized it was no ordinary event and thought to myself, "Over the past months I have expected something like this to happen sooner or later. How fortunate that I can give my life for the Lotus Sutra! If I am to lose this worthless head [for Buddhahood], it will be like trading sand for gold or rocks for jewels."

Sho-bo, Hei no Saemon's chief retainer, rushed up, snatched the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra⁸ from inside my robes, and struck me in the face with it three times. Then he threw it open on the floor. Warriors seized the nine other scrolls of the sutra, unrolled them, and trampled on them or wound them about their bodies, scattering the scrolls all over the matting and wooden floors until every corner of the house was strewn with them.

I, Nichiren, said in a loud voice, "How amusing! Look at Hei no Saemon gone mad! You gentlemen have just toppled the pillar of Japan." Hearing this, the assembled troops were taken aback. When they saw me standing before the fierce arm of the law unafraid, they must have realized that they were in the wrong, for the color drained from their faces.

Both on the tenth [when I was summoned], and on the twelfth, I fully described to Hei no Saemon the errors of the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu schools, as well as Ryokan's failure in his prayers for rain. As his warriors listened, they would burst into laughter, and at other times become furious. But I will not go into the details here.

Ryokan prayed for rain from the eighteenth day of the sixth month to the fourth day of the following month, but I blocked his prayers so that no rain came. Ryokan prayed himself into a sweat, but nothing fell except his own

tears. There was no rain in Kamakura, but on the contrary, strong gales blew continually.

At this news I sent a messenger to him three times, saying: "If a person cannot manage to cross a moat ten feet wide, how can he cross one that is a hundred or two hundred feet? Izumi Shikibu,⁹ a licentious woman, violated one of the eight precepts by writing poetry, but still she made it rain with a poem. The priest Noin, although he broke the precepts, was successful in bringing rainfall with a poem. How is it possible then that hundreds and thousands of priests, all of whom observe the two hundred and fifty precepts, gather to pray for rain and can do no more than raise a gale, even after one or two weeks of prayer? It should be clear from this that none of you will be able to attain rebirth in the Pure Land." Ryokan read the message and wept in vexation, and to others he reviled me.

When I reported what had happened with Ryokan, Hei no Saemon attempted to defend him, but it was hopeless. In the end he was unable to utter a word. I will not record all of our conversation as it was too detailed.

That night of the twelfth, I was placed under the custody of the lord of the province of Musashi¹⁰ and around midnight was taken out of Kamakura to be executed. As we set out on Wakamiya Avenue,¹¹ I looked at the crowd of warriors surrounding me and said, "Don't make a fuss. I won't cause any trouble. I merely wish to say my last words to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman." I got down from my horse and called out in a loud voice, "Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, are you truly a god? When Wake no Kiyomaro¹² was about to be beheaded, you appeared as a moon ten feet wide. When the Great Teacher Dengyo lectured on the Lotus Sutra, you bestowed upon him a purple surplice as an offering. Now I,

Nichiren, am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in all of Japan, and am entirely without guilt. I have expounded the doctrine to save all the people of Japan from falling into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering for slandering the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, if the forces of the great Mongol empire attack this country, can even the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman remain safe and unharmed? When Shakyamuni Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra, Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions gathered, shining like so many suns and moons, stars and mirrors. In the presence of the countless heavenly gods as well as the benevolent deities and sages of India, China, and Japan, Shakyamuni Buddha urged each one to submit a written pledge to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra at all times. Each and every one of you gods made this pledge. I should not have to remind you. Why do you not appear at once to fulfill your solemn oath?" Finally I called out: "If I am executed tonight and go to the pure land of Eagle Peak, I will dare to report to Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, that the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman are the deities who have broken their oath to him. If you feel this will go hard with you, you had better do something about it right away!" Then I remounted my horse.

Out on Yui Beach as the party passed the shrine there, I spoke again. "Stop a minute, gentlemen. I have a message for someone living near here," I said. I sent a boy called Kumao to Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo], who rushed to meet me. I told him, "Tonight, I will be beheaded. This is something I have wished for many years. In this saha world, I have been born as a pheasant only to be caught by hawks, born a mouse only to be eaten by cats, and born human

only to be killed attempting to defend my wife and children from enemies. Such things have befallen me more times than the dust particles of the land. But until now, I have never given up my life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. In this life, I was born to become a humble priest, unable to adequately discharge my filial duty to my parents or fully repay the debt of gratitude I owe to my country. Now is the time when I will offer my head to the Lotus Sutra and share the blessings therefrom with my deceased parents, and with my disciples and lay supporters, just as I have promised you." Then the four men, Saemon-no-jo and his brothers, holding on to my horse's reins, went with me to Tatsunokuchi at Koshigoe.

Finally we came to a place that I knew must be the site of my execution. Indeed, the soldiers stopped and began to mill around in excitement. Saemon-no-jo, in tears, said, "These are your last moments!" I replied, "You don't understand! What greater joy could there be? Don't you remember what you have promised?" I had no sooner said this when a brilliant orb as bright as the moon burst forth from the direction of Enoshima, shooting across the sky from southeast to northwest. It was shortly before dawn and still too dark to see anyone's face, but the radiant object clearly illuminated everyone like bright moonlight. The executioner fell on his face, his eyes blinded. The soldiers were filled with panic. Some ran off into the distance, some jumped down from their horses and huddled on the ground, while others crouched in their saddles. I called out, "Here, why do you shrink from this vile prisoner? Come closer! Come closer!" But no one would approach me. "What if the dawn should come? You must hurry up and execute me—once the day breaks, it will be too ugly a job." I urged them on, but they made no response.

They waited a short while, and then I was told to proceed to Echi in the same province of Sagami. I replied that, since none of us knew the way, someone would have to guide us there. No one was willing to take the lead, but after we had waited for some time, one soldier finally said, "That's the road you should take."

Setting off, we followed the road and around noon reached Echi. We then proceeded to the residence of Homma Rokuro Saemon. There I ordered sake for the soldiers. When the time came for them to leave, some bowed their heads, joined their palms, and said in a most respectful manner: "We did not realize what kind of a man you are. We hated you because we had been told that you slandered Amida Buddha, the one we worship. But now that we have seen with our own eyes what has happened to you, we understand how worthy a person you are, and will discard the Nembutsu that we have practiced for so long." Some of them even took their prayer beads out of their tinder bags and flung them away. Others pledged that they would never again chant the Nembutsu. After they left, Rokuro Saemon's retainers took over the guard. Then Saemon-no-jo and his brothers took their leave.

That evening, at the hour of the dog (7:00-9:00 P.M.), a messenger from Kamakura arrived with an order from the regent. The soldiers were sure that it would be an official letter to behead me, but Uma-no-jo, Homma's deputy, came running with the letter, knelt, and said: "We were afraid that you would be executed tonight, but now the letter has brought wonderful news. The messenger said that, since the lord of Musashi had left for a spa in Atami this morning at the hour of the hare (5:00-7:00 A.M.), he set off at once and rode for four hours to get here because he feared that something might happen to you. The messenger has left im-

mediately to take news to the lord in Atami tonight." The accompanying letter read, "This person is not really guilty. He will shortly be pardoned. If you execute him you will have cause to regret."

Now it was the night of the thirteenth. There were scores of warriors stationed around my lodging and in the main garden. Because it was the middle of the ninth month, the moon was very round and full. I went out into the garden and there, turning toward the moon, recited the verse portion of the "Life Span" chapter. Then I spoke briefly about the faults of the various schools, citing passages from the Lotus Sutra. I said: "You, the god of the moon, are Rare Moon, the son of a god, who participated in the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra. When the Buddha expounded the 'Treasure Tower' chapter, you received his order, and in the 'Entrustment' chapter, when the Buddha patted your head with his hand, in your vow you said, 'We will respectfully carry out all these things just as the World-Honored One has commanded.' You are that very god. Would you have an opportunity to fulfill the vow you made in the Buddha's presence if it were not for me? Now that you see me in this situation, you should rush forward joyfully to receive the sufferings of the votary of the Lotus Sutra in his stead, thereby carrying out the Buddha's command and also fulfilling your vow. It is strange indeed that you have not yet done anything. If nothing is done to set this country to rights, I will never return to Kamakura. Even if you do not intend to do anything for me, how can you go on shining with such a complacent face? The Great Collection Sutra says, 'The sun and moon no longer shed their light.' The Benevolent Kings Sutra says, 'The sun and moon depart from their regular courses.' The Sovereign Kings Sutra says, 'The thirty-three heavenly gods

become furious.' What about these passages, moon god? What is your answer?"

Then, as though in reply, a large star bright as the Morning Star fell from the sky and hung in a branch of the plum tree in front of me. The soldiers, astounded, jumped down from the veranda, fell on their faces in the garden, or ran behind the house. Immediately the sky clouded over, and a fierce wind started up, raging so violently that the whole island of Enoshima seemed to roar. The sky shook, echoing with a sound like pounding drums.

The day dawned, and on the fourteenth day, at the hour of the hare, a man called the lay priest Juro came and said to me: "Last night there was a huge commotion in the regent's residence at the hour of the dog. They summoned a diviner, who said, 'The country is going to erupt in turmoil because you punished that priest. If you do not call him back to Kamakura immediately, there is no telling what will happen to this land.' At that some said, 'Let's pardon him!' Others said, 'Since he predicted that war would break out within a hundred days, why don't we wait and see what happens.'"

I was kept at Echi for more than twenty days. During that period seven or eight cases of arson and an endless succession of murders took place in Kamakura. Slanderers went around saying that Nichiren's disciples were setting the fires. The government officials thought this might be true and made up a list of over 260 of my followers who they believed should be expelled from Kamakura. Word spread that these persons were all to be exiled to remote islands, and that those disciples already in prison would be beheaded. It turned out, however, that the fires were set by the observers of the precepts and the Nembutsu believers in an attempt to implicate my disciples. There were other things that happened, but they are too numerous to mention here.

I left Echi on the tenth day of the tenth month (1271) and arrived in the province of Sado on the twenty-eighth day of the same month. On the first day of the eleventh month, I was taken to a small hut that stood in a field called Tsukahara behind Homma Rokuro Saemon's residence in Sado. One room with four posts, it stood on some land where corpses were abandoned, a place like Rendaino in Kyoto. Not a single statue of the Buddha was enshrined there; the boards of the roof did not meet, and the walls were full of holes. The snow fell and piled up, never melting away. I spent my days there, sitting in a straw coat or lying on a fur skin. At night it hailed and snowed, and there were continual flashes of lightning. Even in the daytime the sun hardly shone. It was a wretched place to live.

I felt like Li Ling,¹³ who was imprisoned in a rocky cave in the land of the northern barbarians, or the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao, who was branded on the face and exiled to the area south of the Yangtze by Emperor Hui-tsung. Nevertheless, King Suzudan received severe training under the seer Asita to obtain the blessings of the Lotus Sutra, and even though Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was beaten by the staves of arrogant monks and others, he achieved honor as votary of the one vehicle.¹⁴ Therefore, nothing is more joyful to me than to have been born in the Latter Day of the Law and to suffer persecutions because I propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. For more than twenty-two hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, no one, not even the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che, experienced the truth of the passage in the sutra that says, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹⁵ Only I have fulfilled the prophecy from the sutra, "again and again we will be banished."¹⁶ The Bud-

dha says, in reference to those who “listen to one verse or one phrase [of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law],” that “I will bestow on all of them a prophecy [that they will attain supreme perfect enlightenment].”¹⁷ Thus there can be no doubt that I will reach supreme perfect enlightenment. It is the lord of Sagami above all who has been a good friend to me. Hei no Saemon is to me what Devadatta was to Shakyamuni Buddha. The Nembutsu priests are comparable to the Venerable Kokalika, and the observers of the precepts to the monk Sunakshatra. The age of the Buddha is none other than today, and our present age is none other than that of the Buddha. This is what the Lotus Sutra describes as the “true aspect of all phenomena” and as “consistency from beginning to end.”¹⁸

The fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, “As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere.” It also states, “It will only be like a boar rubbing against the golden mountain; like the various rivers flowing into the sea; like logs making a fire burn more briskly; or like the wind swelling the body of the kalakula insect.” These passages mean that, if one understands and practices the Lotus Sutra just as it teaches, in accordance with the people’s capacity and at the right time, then these seven obstacles and devils will confront one. Among them, the devil king of the sixth heaven [is the most powerful. He] will possess one’s sovereign, parents, wife or children, lay supporters, or evil persons, and through them will attempt in a friendly manner to divert one from one’s practice of the Lotus Sutra, or will oppose one outright. The practice of Buddhism is always accompanied by persecutions and difficulties corresponding in severity to whichever sutra one may uphold. To practice the Lotus Sutra will provoke

particularly harsh persecutions. To practice as it teaches, and in accordance with the time and the people’s capacity, will incite truly agonizing ordeals.

The eighth volume of *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* states, “So long as a person does not try to depart from the sufferings of birth and death and aspire to the Buddha vehicle, the devil will watch over him like a parent.” This passage means that, even though a person may cultivate roots of goodness, so long as he practices Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, Precepts, or any teaching other than the Lotus Sutra, he will have the devil king for a parent. The devil king will possess and cause other persons to respect him and give him alms, and people will be deluded into believing that he is a truly enlightened priest. If he is honored by the sovereign, for instance, the people are sure to offer him alms. On the other hand, a priest who incurs the enmity of the ruler and others [because of the Lotus Sutra] is surely practicing the correct teaching.

Devadatta was the foremost good friend to the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. In this age as well, it is not one’s allies but one’s powerful enemies who assist one’s progress. We find examples before our very eyes. The Hojo clan in Kamakura could not have firmly established itself as the ruler of Japan had it not been for the challenges posed by Yoshimori and the Retired Emperor of Oki.¹⁹ In this sense these men were the best allies the ruling clan could have. For me, Nichiren, my best allies in attaining Buddhahood are Kagenobu, the priests Ryokan, Doryu, and Doamidabutsu, and Hei no Saemon and the lord of Sagami. I am grateful when I think that without them I could not have proved myself to be the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

In the yard around the hut the snow piled deeper and deeper. No one came to see me; my only visitor was the

piercing wind. *Great Concentration and Insight* and the Lotus Sutra lay open before my eyes, and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo flowed from my lips. My evenings passed in discourse to the moon and stars on the fallacies of the various schools and the profound meaning of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, one year gave way to the next.

One finds people of mean spirit wherever one goes. The rumor reached me that the observers of the precepts and the Nembutsu priests on the island of Sado, including Yuiamidabutsu, Shoyu-bo, Insho-bo, Jido-bo, and their followers—several hundred of them—had met to decide what to do about me. One said: “Nichiren, the notorious enemy of Amida Buddha and an evil teacher to all people, has been exiled to our province. As we all know, exiles to this island seldom manage to survive. Even if they do, they never return home. So no one is going to be punished for killing an exile. Nichiren lives all alone at a place called Tsukahara. No matter how strong and powerful he is, if there’s no one around, what can he do? Let’s go together and shoot him with arrows!” Another said, “He was supposed to be beheaded, but his execution has been postponed for a while because the wife of the lord of Sagami is about to have a child. The postponement is merely temporary, though. I hear he is eventually going to be executed.” A third said, “Let’s ask Lord Rokuro Saemon to behead him. If he refuses, we can plan something ourselves.” There were many proposals about what to do with me, but the third proposal [mentioned above] was decided on. Eventually several hundred people gathered at the constable’s office.²⁰

Rokuro Saemon addressed them, saying: “An official letter from the regent directs that the priest shall not be executed. This is no ordinary, contemptible criminal, and if anything happens to him, I, Shigetura, will be guilty

of grave dereliction. Instead of killing him, why don’t you confront him in religious debate?” Following this suggestion, the Nembutsu and other priests, accompanied by apprentice priests carrying the three Pure Land sutras, *Great Concentration and Insight*, the True Word sutras, and other literature under their arms or hanging from their necks, gathered at Tsukahara on the sixteenth day of the first month [in 1272]. They came not only from the province of Sado but also from the provinces of Echigo, Etchu, Dewa, Mutsu, and Shinano. Several hundred priests and others gathered in the spacious yard of the hut and in the adjacent field. Rokuro Saemon, his brothers, and his entire clan came, as well as lay priest farmers,²¹ all in great numbers. The Nembutsu priests uttered streams of abuse, the True Word priests turned pale, and the Tendai priests called loudly to vanquish the opponent. The lay believers cried out in hatred, “There he is—the notorious enemy of our Amida Buddha!” The uproar and jeering resounded like thunder and seemed to shake the earth. I let them clamor for a while and then said, “Silence, all of you! You are here for a religious debate. This is no time for abuse.” At this, Rokuro Saemon and others voiced their accord, and some of them grabbed the abusive Nembutsu followers by the neck and pushed them back.

The priests proceeded to cite the doctrines of *Great Concentration and Insight* and the True Word and the Nembutsu teachings. I responded to each, establishing the exact meaning of what had been said, then coming back with questions. However, I needed to ask only one or two at most before they were completely silenced. They were far inferior even to the True Word, Zen, Nembutsu, and Tendai priests in Kamakura, so you can imagine how the debate went. I overturned them as easily as a sharp sword cutting through

a melon or a gale bending the grass. They not only were poorly versed in the Buddhist teachings but contradicted themselves. They confused sutras with treatises or commentaries with treatises. I discredited the Nembutsu by telling how Shan-tao fell out of the willow tree, and refuted the story about the Great Teacher Kobo's three-pronged diamond-pounder and of how he transformed himself into the Thus Come One Mahavairochana.²² As I demonstrated each falsity and aberration, some of the priests swore, some were struck dumb, while others turned pale. There were Nembutsu adherents who admitted the error of their school; some threw away their robes and beads on the spot and pledged never to chant the Nembutsu again.

The members of the group all began to leave, as did Rokuro Saemon and his men. As they were walking across the yard, I called the lord back to make a prophecy. I first asked him when he was departing for Kamakura, and he answered that it would be around the seventh month, after his farmers had finished their work in his fields. Then I said: "For a warrior, 'work in the fields' means assisting his lord in times of peril and receiving fiefs in recognition of his service. Fighting is about to break out in Kamakura. You should hasten there to distinguish yourself in battle, and then you will be rewarded with fiefs. Since your warriors are renowned throughout the province of Sagami, if you remain here in the countryside tending to your farms and arrive too late for the battle, your name will be disgraced." I do not know what he thought of this, but Homma, dumbfounded, did not utter a word. The Nembutsu priests and the observers of the precepts and lay believers looked bewildered, not comprehending what I had said.

After everyone had gone, I began to put into shape a work in two volumes

called *The Opening of the Eyes*, which I had been working on since the eleventh month of the previous year. I wanted to record the wonder of Nichiren, in case I should be beheaded. The essential message in this work is that the destiny of Japan depends solely upon Nichiren. A house without pillars collapses, and a person without a soul is dead. Nichiren is the soul of the people of this country. Hei no Saemon has already toppled the pillar of Japan, and the country grows turbulent as unfounded rumors and speculation rise up like phantoms to cause dissension in the ruling clan. Further, Japan is about to be attacked by a foreign country, as I described in my *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*. Having written to this effect, I entrusted the manuscript to Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo's messenger. The disciples around me thought that what I had written was too provocative, but they could not stop me.

Just then a ship arrived at the island on the eighteenth day of the second month. It carried the news that fighting had broken out in Kamakura and then in Kyoto, causing indescribable suffering. Rokuro Saemon, leading his men, left on fast ships that night for Kamakura. Before departing, he humbly begged for my assistance with palms joined.

He said: "I have been doubting the truth of the words you spoke on the sixteenth day of last month, but they have come true in less than thirty days. I see now that the Mongols will surely attack us, and it is equally certain that believers in Nembutsu are doomed to the hell of incessant suffering. I will never chant the Nembutsu again."

To this I replied: "Whatever I may say, unless the lord of Sagami heeds my words, the people of Japan will not heed them either, and in that case our country will surely be ruined. Although I myself may be insignificant, I

propagate the Lotus Sutra and therefore am the envoy of Shakyamuni Buddha. The Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, who are insignificant, are treated with great respect in this country, but they are only petty gods as compared with Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings. It is said, however, that to kill someone who serves these two gods is equal to the sin of killing seven and a half ordinary persons. The grand minister of state and lay priest and the Retired Emperor of Oki perished because they did so. Thus, persecuting me is incomparably worse than molesting the servants of those two gods. As I am the envoy of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman should bow their heads before me, press their palms together, and prostrate themselves. The votary of the Lotus Sutra is attended by Brahma and Shakra on either side, and the gods of the sun and moon light his path before and behind. Even if my counsel is heeded, if I am not given due respect as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the country will perish. How ominous that the authorities have turned hundreds of persons against me and have even banished me twice! This country is surely doomed, but since I have asked the gods to withhold their punishment on our land, it has survived until now. However, that punishment has finally descended because these unreasonable actions continued. And if my counsel is not heeded on this occasion, the gods will cause the Mongol empire to send its forces to destroy Japan. That would seem to be the kind of disaster that Hei no Saemon is intent upon calling forth. When it happens, I doubt that you and your followers can find any safety even on this island." After I had finished speaking, Homma, looking deeply perplexed, set off on his way.

The lay believers, hearing of this,

said to one another, "Perhaps this priest has some kind of transcendental powers. How terrifying! From now on, we had better cease giving any alms or support to the Nembutsu priests and the observers of the precepts." The observers of the precepts, who were followers of Ryokan, and the Nembutsu priests said, "[Since this priest predicted the outbreak of rebellion in our country,] perhaps he is one of the conspirators." After this things grew somewhat quieter.

Then the Nembutsu priests gathered again in council. "If things go on this way," they said, "we will die of starvation. By all means, let's rid ourselves of this priest! Already more than half the people in the province have gone over to his side. What are we to do?"

Yuiamidabutsu, the leader of the Nembutsu priests, along with Dokan, a disciple of Ryokan, and Shoyu-bo, who were leaders of the observers of the precepts, journeyed in haste to Kamakura. There they reported to the lord of the province of Musashi: "If this priest remains on the island of Sado, there will soon be not a single Buddhist hall left standing or a single priest remaining. He takes the statues of Amida Buddha and throws them in the fire or casts them into the river. Day and night he climbs the high mountains, bellows to the sun and moon, and curses the regent. The sound of his voice can be heard throughout the entire province."

When the former governor of Musashi heard this, he decided there was no need to report it to the regent. Instead he sent private orders that any followers of Nichiren in the province of Sado should be driven out of the province or imprisoned. He also sent official letters containing similar instructions. He did so three times. I will not attempt to describe what happened during this period—you can probably imagine. Some people were thrown into

prison because they were said to have walked past my hut, others were exiled because they were reported to have given me donations, or their wives and children were taken into custody. The former governor of Musashi then reported what he had done to the regent. But quite contrary to his expectations, the regent issued a letter of pardon on the fourteenth day of the second month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274), which reached Sado on the eighth day of the third month.

The Nembutsu priests held another council. "This man, the archenemy of the Buddha Amida and slanderer of the Reverend Shan-tao and the Honorable Honen, has incurred the wrath of the authorities and happened to be banished to this island. How can we bear to see him pardoned and allowed to return home alive!"

While they were engaged in various plots, for some reason there was an unexpected change in the weather. A favorable wind began to blow, and I was able to leave the island. The strait can be crossed in three days with a favorable wind, but not even in fifty or a hundred days when the weather is bad. I crossed over in no time at all.

Thereupon the Nembutsu priests, observers of the precepts, and True Word priests of the provincial capital of Echigo and Zenko-ji temple in Shinano gathered from all directions to hold a meeting. "What a shame that the Sado priests should have allowed Nichiren to return alive! Whatever we do, we must not let this priest make his way past the living body of the Buddha Amida."²³

But in spite of their machinations, a number of warriors from the provincial government office in Echigo were dispatched to escort me. Thus I was able to pass safely by Zenko-ji, and the Nembutsu priests were powerless to stop me. I left the island of Sado on the thirteenth day of the third month, and

arrived in Kamakura on the twenty-sixth day of the same month.

On the eighth day of the fourth month, I met with Hei no Saemon. In contrast to his behavior on previous occasions, his manner was quite mild, and he treated me with courtesy. An accompanying lay priest asked me about the Nembutsu, a layman asked about the True Word school, and another person asked about Zen, while Hei no Saemon himself inquired whether it was possible to attain the way through any of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra. I replied to each of these questions by citing passages from the sutras.

Then Hei no Saemon, apparently acting on behalf of the regent, asked when the Mongol forces would invade Japan. I replied: "They will surely come within this year. I have already expressed my opinion on this matter, but it has not been heeded. If you try to treat someone's illness without knowing its cause, you will only make the person sicker than before. In the same way, if the True Word priests are permitted to try to overcome the Mongols with their prayers and imprecations, they will only bring about the country's military defeat. Under no circumstances whatever should the True Word priests, or the priests of any other schools for that matter, be allowed to offer up prayers. If each of you has a real understanding of Buddhism, you will understand this matter on hearing me explain it to you.

"Also, I notice that, although advice from others is heeded, when I offer advice, it is for some strange reason invariably ignored. Nevertheless, I would like to state certain facts here so that you may think them over later. The Retired Emperor of Oki was the sovereign of the nation, and the acting administrator [Hojo Yoshitoki] was his subject, [and yet the latter attacked and defeated the retired emperor]. Why

would the Sun Goddess permit a subject to attack a sovereign, who should be like a father to him? Why would Great Bodhisattva Hachiman allow a vassal to attack the lord with impunity? And yet, as we know, the sovereign and the courtiers supporting him were defeated by Hojo Yoshitoki. That defeat was no mere accident. It came about because they put their faith in the misleading teachings of the Great Teacher Kobo and the biased views of the great teachers Jikaku and Chisho, and because the priests of Mount Hiei, To-ji, and Onjo-ji, in their opposition to the Kamakura shogunate, offered prayers for its defeat. Thus their curses 'rebounded upon the originator,'²⁴ and as a consequence the sovereign and his courtiers were forced to suffer defeat. The military leaders in Kamakura knew nothing of such rituals, so no prayers to subdue the enemy were offered; thus they were able to win. But if they now depend on such prayers, they will meet the same fate as the courtiers.

"The Ezo people of northern Japan have no understanding of the principles of birth and death. Ando Goro²⁵ was a pious man who knew the law of cause and effect and erected many Buddhist halls and pagodas. How could it happen, then, that the Ezo beheaded him? In view of these events, I have no doubt that, if these priests are allowed to go on offering prayers for victory, Your Lordship will meet with some untoward event. And when that happens, you must not under any circumstances say that I failed to warn you." Such was the stern manner in which I addressed him.

When I returned home, I heard that the Dharma Seal of the Amida Hall²⁶ had been asked to pray for rain from the tenth day of the fourth month. This Dharma Seal is the most learned priest of To-ji and the teacher of the prelate of Omuro.²⁷ He has mastered

the True Word esoteric teachings of the great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, and has memorized all the doctrines of the various schools such as Tendai and Flower Garland. He began praying for rain on the tenth day, and on the eleventh a heavy rain fell. There was no wind, but only a gentle rain that fell for a day and a night. The regent, the lord of Sagami, was said to have been so deeply impressed that he presented the Dharma Seal with thirty *ryo* in gold, a horse, and other gifts as a reward.

When the people of Kamakura heard this, eminent and humble alike clapped their hands, pursed their lips, and laughed with derision, saying: "That Nichiren preached a false kind of Buddhism and came near to getting his head cut off. He was finally pardoned, but instead of learning his lesson, he goes on slandering the Nembutsu and Zen schools, and even dares to speak ill of the esoteric teachings of True Word. How fortunate that we have had this rain to serve as proof of the power of True Word prayers!"

Faced with such criticisms, my disciples became quite downcast and complained that I had been too provocative in my attacks on the True Word school. But I said to them, "Just wait a while. If the evil teachings of the Great Teacher Kobo could be correct and in fact produce effective prayers for the welfare of the nation, then the Retired Emperor of Oki would surely have been victorious in his struggle with the Kamakura shogunate, and Setaka,²⁸ the favorite boy attendant of the prelate of Omuro, would not have had his head cut off. Kobo in his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind* states that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra. In his *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury* he claims that the Shakyamuni Buddha of the 'Life Span' chapter of the Lotus Sutra is an ordinary person, and in his *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric*

Buddhism he calls the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai a thief. Moreover, Shokaku-bo²⁹ in his *Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics* states that the Buddha who preached the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra is not even worthy to tend the sandals of a True Word master. The Dharma Seal of the Amida Hall is a follower of the men who taught these perverse doctrines. If such a man could show himself superior to me, then the dragon kings who send down the rain must be the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, and they will surely be chastised by the gods Brahma and Shakra and the four heavenly kings. There must be more to this than meets the eye!"

"What do you mean by 'more than meets the eye'?" my disciples asked with a scornful smile.

I replied: "Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung both caused rain to fall in answer to their prayers, but it is recorded that they also brought about high winds. When Kobo prayed for rain, it fell after twenty-one days had passed. But under such circumstances, it is the same as though he had not caused it to rain at all, since some rain is naturally bound to fall in the course of a twenty-one-day interval. The fact that it happened to rain while he was praying for it is in no way remarkable. What is really impressive is to cause it to fall through a single ceremony, the way T'ien-t'ai and Senkan³⁰ did. That is why I say there must be something peculiar about this rain."

I had not even finished speaking when a great gale began to blow. Houses of every size, Buddhist halls and pagodas, old trees, and government buildings all were swept up into the air or toppled to the ground. A huge shining object flew through the sky, and the earth was strewn with beams and rafters. Men and women were blown to their death, and many cattle and horses were struck down. One might have excused such an evil wind if it

had come in autumn, the typhoon season, but this was only the fourth month, the beginning of summer. Moreover, this wind did not blow throughout the country, but struck only the eight provinces of the Kanto region, and in fact only the two provinces of Musashi and Sagami. It blew strongest in Sagami; and within Sagami, it blew strongest in Kamakura; and within Kamakura, it blew strongest at the government headquarters, Wakamiya, and the temples Kencho-ji and Gokuraku-ji. It was apparent that it was no ordinary wind, but rather the result of the Dharma Seal's prayers alone. The people who had earlier pursed their lips and laughed at me suddenly turned sober, and my disciples too were astonished and expressed their wonder.

I had been determined all along that, if after three attempts to warn the rulers of the nation my advice still went unheeded, I would leave the country. With that thought in mind, I accordingly left Kamakura on the twelfth day of the fifth month and came here to Mount Minobu.

In the tenth month of the same year (1274), the Mongols launched their attack. Not only were the islands of Iki and Tsushima³¹ assaulted and captured, but the forces of the Dazaifu government office in Kyushu were defeated as well. When the military leaders, the lay priest Shoni and Otomo,³² received word of this, they fled, and the remaining warriors were struck down without difficulty. [Though the Mongol forces withdrew,] it was apparent just how weak Japan's defenses would be if they should launch another attack in the future.

The Benevolent Kings Sutra says, "Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise." The Sovereign Kings Sutra states, "Because evil people are respected and favored and good people are subjected to punishment, marauders will appear

from other regions, and the people of the country will meet with death and disorder." If these pronouncements of the Buddha are true, then evil men certainly exist in our country, and the ruler favors and respects such men while treating good men with enmity.

The Great Collection Sutra states, "The sun and moon no longer shed their light. All the four directions will be afflicted by drought. . . . The wicked rulers and monks who perform these ten evil acts will curse and destroy my correct teaching." In the Benevolent Kings Sutra we read, "Evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit, in many cases appear before the ruler, the crown prince, or the other princes, and take it upon themselves to preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, listens to and puts faith in such doctrines. . . . In this way he brings about the destruction of Buddhism and of the nation." And the Lotus Sutra speaks of the "evil monks of that muddied age."³³ If these passages in the sutras are true, then there must unquestionably be evil monks in this country. The crooked trees are destined to be cut down on a treasure mountain, and dead bodies are rejected by the great sea. Though the great sea of the Buddhist Law and the treasure mountain of the one vehicle may admit the shards and rubble of the five cardinal sins or the dirty water of the four major offenses,³⁴ they have no room for the "dead bodies" of those who slander the Law, or for the "crooked trees" who are icchantikas, persons of incorrigible disbelief. Therefore, those who endeavor to practice the Buddhist Law and who care about what happens to them in future lives should know what a fearful thing it is to slander the Lotus Sutra.

Many people wonder why anyone should pay heed to a person like myself

who speaks ill of Kobo, Jikaku, and others of their group. I do not know about other regions, but I know that the people everywhere in the province of Awa have good reason to believe what I say. They have seen the proof right before their eyes. Endon-bo of Inomori, Saigyo-bo and Dogi-bo of Kiyosumi, and Jitchi-bo of Kataumi were all eminent priests; but one should inquire what kind of deaths they met with. However, I will say no more of them. Enchi-bo spent three years in the great hall of Seicho-ji copying the text of the Lotus Sutra in a laborious fashion, bowing three times as he copied each character. He had memorized all ten volumes, and every day and night recited the entire sutra twice for a period of fifty years. Everyone said that he would surely become a Buddha. But I alone said that he, along with Dogi-bo, was even more certain to fall into the depths of the hell of incessant suffering than were the Nembutsu priests. You would do well to inquire carefully just how these men met death. If it had not been for me, people would have believed that these priests had attained Buddhahood.

You should realize from this that the manner of the death of Kobo, Jikaku, and the others indicated that a truly miserable fate was in store for them. But their disciples contrived to keep the matter secret, so that even the members of the imperial court never learned of it. Hence these men have been looked up to with increasing reverence in later times. And if there had been no one like me to reveal the truth, they would have gone on being honored in that manner for endless ages to come. The non-Buddhist teacher Uluka [turned to stone at his death], but eight hundred years later [his errors were brought to light and] the stone melted and turned to water. And in the case of another non-Buddhist teacher Kapila, a thousand years

passed before his faults were brought to light.³⁵

People are able to be born in human form because they have observed the five precepts in a previous existence. And if they continue to observe the five precepts in this life, then the twenty-five benevolent deities will protect them, and Same Birth and Same Name, the two heavenly messengers who have been with each of them since birth on their shoulders, will guard them. So long as they commit no fault, the demons will have no chance to do them harm. And yet in this country of Japan, there are countless people who cry out in misery. We know, too, that the people on the islands of Iki and Tsushima had to suffer at the hands of the Mongols, and what befell the defenders of the Dazaifu in Kyushu. What fault were the people of this country guilty of that they should meet with such a fate? One would surely like to know the answer. One or two of the persons there may have been guilty of evil, but is it possible that all of them could have been?

The blame lies entirely in the fact that this country is filled with the disciples of those who despised the Lotus Sutra—True Word priests who follow the doctrines handed down from Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho; Nembutsu priests who are latter-day disciples of Shan-tao and Honen; and the followers of Bodhidharma and the other patriarchs of the Zen school. That is why Brahma, Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and the other deities, true to the vows they took when the Lotus Sutra was expounded to split into seven pieces the head [of anyone who troubles a preacher of the sutra],³⁶ have sent down this punishment.

Some people may be perplexed at this point and object that, although those who do harm to the votary of the Lotus Sutra are supposed to have their heads split into seven pieces, there

are people who slander the priest Nichiren and yet do not have broken heads. Are we to conclude, they may ask, that the priest Nichiren is not a true votary of the Lotus Sutra?

I would reply by saying that, if Nichiren is not a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then who is? Is Honen a votary, who in his writings ordered people to throw the Lotus Sutra away? Is the Great Teacher Kobo a votary, who said that Shakyamuni Buddha was still in the region of darkness? Or are Shan-wu-wei and Jikaku votaries, who taught that, although the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are equal in terms of principle, the latter is superior in practice?

Again, this matter of the head being split into seven pieces—one need not imagine the kind of split made by a sharp sword. On the contrary, the Lotus Sutra says that the split is like that of the “branches of the arjaka tree.”³⁷ In a person’s head there are seven drops of liquid, and outside there are seven demons. If the demons drink one drop, the person’s head begins to ache. If they drink three drops, his life will be endangered, and if they drink all seven drops, he will die. People in the world today all have heads that have split apart like the branches of the arjaka tree, but they are so steeped in evil karma that they are not even aware of the fact. They are like persons who have been injured while they were asleep or in a state of drunkenness, and have not yet become conscious of their injury.

Rather than saying that the head is split into seven pieces, we sometimes say that the mind is split into seven pieces. The skull bone under the scalp cracks or even breaks apart at the time of death. Many people of our own period had their heads split open in the great earthquake of the Shoka era (1257) or at the time of the appearance of the great comet in the Bun’ei era (1264). At the time their heads split

open, they had a severe coughing condition, and when their five solid internal organs³⁸ failed to function correctly, they suffered from dysentery. How could they have failed to realize that they were being punished because they slandered the votary of the Lotus Sutra!

Because venison is tasty, the deer is hunted and killed; because oil can be obtained from the turtle, the turtle loses its life. If a woman is beautiful, there will be many who envy her. The ruler of a nation has much to fear from other nations, and the life of a man with great wealth is constantly in danger. One who abides by the Lotus Sutra will inevitably attain Buddhahood. Therefore, the devil king of the sixth heaven, the lord of this threefold world, will become intensely jealous of anyone who abides by the sutra. This devil king, we are told, attaches himself like a plague demon to people in a way that cannot be detected by the eye. Thereafter, like persons who gradually become drunk on fine old wine, rulers, fathers and mothers, wives and children gradually become possessed by him and are filled with jealousy toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra. And that is precisely the situation we face today in the world around us. Because I

chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, I have for over twenty years been driven from place to place. Twice I have incurred the wrath of the authorities, and in the end I have retired to this mountain.

Here I am surrounded by four mountains, Shichimen to the west, Tenshi to the east, Minobu to the north, and Takatori to the south. Each is high enough to touch the sky, and so steep that even flying birds have trouble crossing them. In their midst are four rivers called Fuji, Haya, Oshira, and Minobu. In the middle, in a ravine some hundred yards or so across, I have built my hut. I cannot see the sun in the daytime or the moon at night. In winter there is deep snow, and in summer the grass grows thick. Because so few people come to see me, the trail is very hard to travel. This year, especially, the snow is so deep that I have no visitors at all. Knowing that my life may end at any time, I put all my trust in the Lotus Sutra. In these circumstances, your letter was particularly welcome. It seemed almost like a message from Shakyamuni Buddha or from my departed parents, and I cannot tell you how grateful I was. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.



Background

This work is an autobiographical account covering the events of an important period in Nichiren Daishonin's life—from the time shortly before the Tatsunokuchi Persecution through his two-and-a-half-year exile on Sado Island to his eventual retirement to Mount Minobu. In the course of his struggles over this period of nine years, the Daishonin fulfilled the predictions in the Lotus Sutra concerning its votary and established himself in both

word and deed as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

This letter was written in the second year of Kenji (1276) and addressed to the lay nun Konichi, a widow who lived in Awa, the Daishonin's native province. Her son had earlier converted to the Daishonin's teachings, and through him she herself became a convert. Some time after her conversion, her son died. But she overcame her deep sorrow and remained a sincere

believer in the Daishonin's Buddhism to the end of her life.

The chronicle of events begins in 1268 when the Mongol empire sent a delegate to Japan to demand that the nation acknowledge fealty to the Mongols. The predictions of foreign invasion made in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* had started to come true. The Daishonin once more remonstrated with the Kamakura authorities and religious leaders, but they ignored his repeated warnings and instead struck out against him and his followers. At this point the Daishonin urges his disciples never to yield to persecution but to devote their whole lives to propagating the Mystic Law.

His undaunted struggle incurred further wrath from the regime and from the other religious schools and finally led to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. Later in his work *The Opening of the*

Eyes, the Daishonin points to that attempt on his life as the immediate cause for him to reveal himself as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. In the passage that follows, the Daishonin speaks of his life on Sado. He expresses joy in the knowledge that he was the only one who fulfilled the prophecy in the Lotus Sutra concerning the votary who is exiled more than once.

After he returned to Kamakura in 1274, he remonstrated with the regime for yet a third time. When the government again spurned his counsel, he left Kamakura to live in the recesses of Mount Minobu, where this letter was written. Just five months later, the Mongol forces attacked Japan. The cause for this, he states, was the nation's slander of the Lotus Sutra. In conclusion, the Daishonin expresses appreciation to the lay nun Konichi for having sent a letter to him at his lonely retreat on Mount Minobu.

Notes

1. The "barbarians of the west" is the set phrase that the Chinese invented to describe the tribes in the west, and the Daishonin applied it to the Mongols.

2. Po Chü-i (772-846) was a Chinese poet-official noted for his *Hsin Yüeh-fu*, "New Yüeh-fu," a series of poems in *yüeh-fu* or ballad form criticizing social and political ills of the time.

3. Fu-ch'a (d. 473 B.C.E.) was the twenty-fifth ruler of the state of Wu. His father was killed by Kou-chien, king of the state of Yüeh, and Fu-ch'a took revenge two years later by defeating him in battle. Kou-chien proposed a peaceful settlement with Fu-ch'a, but really planned to attack the state of Wu again. Wu Tzu-hsü, a loyal minister of Fu-ch'a, discovered the plot and urged the king to kill Kou-chien, but the king would not listen. Instead, he compelled Wu Tzu-hsü to commit suicide in 485 B.C.E.

4. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

5. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

6. This is not an actual quotation, but

Nichiren Daishonin's view of what Shakyamuni must have believed, based on various passages in the Lotus Sutra and other sutras.

7. Ryoko and Ryoken plotted against the Kamakura government; their plots were discovered, and they were put to death. Ryoko was executed in 1251, and Ryoken in 1261.

8. The fifth volume includes chapters twelve to fifteen; the thirteenth, or "Encouraging Devotion," chapter says the votary of the Lotus Sutra will be attacked with swords and staves. The "nine other scrolls of the sutra" that appears in the sentence after next indicates those of the other seven volumes of the Lotus Sutra, plus the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra in one volume and the Universal Worthy Sutra in one volume. These two sutras are regarded as, respectively, the prologue and epilogue to the Lotus Sutra.

9. Izumi Shikibu (b. c. 976) was a poet of the Heian period, noted for her passionate love affairs. Noin (b. 988), who appears in the following sentence, was a poet-priest

who lived in Kyoto. The works of Izumi Shikibu and Noin both include poems praying for rain.

10. The lord of the province of Musashi refers to Hojo Nobutoki, the governor of Musashi Province (1267–1273) and concurrently the constable of Sado Province. He is also referred to as “the former governor of Musashi” in this letter.

11. The main street in Kamakura, running from north to south. Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine stands along the street, where Nichiren Daishonin reprimanded Great Bodhisattva Hachiman.

12. Wake no Kiyomaro (733–799) was a high-ranking court official who thwarted the attempt of the priest Dokyo to usurp the throne and suffered persecution as a result.

13. Li Ling (d. 74 B.C.E.) was a military commander who led the Chinese forces in an attack on the nomadic Hsiung-nu tribes living north of China and was taken prisoner by them.

14. The one vehicle here means the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

15. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

16. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

17. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

18. Here “the true aspect” refers to the principle that the votaries of the Lotus Sutra meet with persecutions, and “all phenomena” to the fact that persecutions befall both Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin. In the phrase “consistency from beginning to end,” “beginning” refers to Shakyamuni’s age and “end” to the Daishonin’s age.

19. Wada Yoshimori (1147–1213) and the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239). Yoshimori was the chief of military police under Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura regime, but in 1213 turned against the Hojo clan only to be defeated and killed. Gotoba attempted to overthrow the Kamakura regime in 1221, but was defeated and exiled to Oki (the Jokyu Disturbance). Hence he was called the Retired Emperor of Oki. Clashes such as these established the power of the Hojo regents.

20. The constable of Sado Province was Hojo Nobutoki, the lord of Musashi Province, who lived in Kamakura. Homma Rokuro Saemon, the steward of Niiho in Sado, served in the office as the deputy constable of the province.

21. Lay priest farmers were individuals

who, though they take religious vows, do not enter a temple but continue to farm and live in their own homes.

22. The Chinese Pure Land leader Shantao (613–681) was said to have so earnestly desired rebirth in the Pure Land that he attempted to hang himself on a willow tree, but instead fell out of the tree and mortally injured himself. According to legend, when Kobo was about to leave China to return to Japan, he threw his three-pronged diamond-pounder in the air; it was later found on top of Mount Koya in Japan. On another occasion, when he was debating with eminent Buddhist leaders at court, he is said to have transformed himself into Mahavairochana Buddha, the Buddha revered by the True Word school.

23. The living body of the Buddha Amida indicates the statue of Amida Buddha enshrined at Zenko-ji temple in the province of Shinano (present-day Nagano Prefecture).

24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 25. In the sutra, the sentence reads in the future tense. It was changed here to fit the context of this letter.

25. Ando Goro (n.d.) was a magistrate who exercised jurisdiction over the northern part of Japan in the time of the regent Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224).

26. The Dharma Seal of the Amida Hall refers to the True Word priest Kaga Josho, who was the superintendent of the Amida Hall in Kamakura.

27. The prelate of Omuro refers to Prince Dojo (n.d.), a son of Emperor Gotoba who had entered the priesthood. This generally means the title of a retired emperor or prince who entered the priesthood and lived at Ninna-ji, a True Word temple in Kyoto. Omuro is another name for Ninna-ji.

28. Setaka (d. 1221) was the sixth son of Sasaki Hirotsuna, a warrior who supported Emperor Gotoba. He was the cherished favorite of the prince-priest Dojo at Ninna-ji, and was beheaded in 1221 at the time of the Jokyu Disturbance.

29. Shokaku-bo (1095–1143), also called Kakuban, was the precursor of the New Doctrine branch of the True Word school.

30. Senkan (918–983) was a priest of the Tendai school. In the summer of 962, when Japan was suffering from drought, the emperor ordered him to offer prayers for rain. It is said that, immediately after the impe-

rial envoy reached him, he caused rain to fall.

31. Iki and Tsushima are islands off the coast of Kyushu in southern Japan. The Dazaifu office was the administrative center of Kyushu, Iki, and Tsushima, and served as a foreign affairs conduit as well as a rallying point in the case of foreign invasion. During the Mongol attack of 1274, it was a focal point of defense against the Mongols.

32. Shoni is Shoni Sukeyoshi (1198–1281), the constable of Chikuzen. Otomo is Otomo Yoriyasu (1222–1300), the constable of Bungo.

33. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

34. The four major offenses are precepts for monks, dealing with killing, theft, sexual misconduct, and lying.

35. Kapila was the founder of the Samkhya school, one of the six main schools of

Brahmanism in India. According to *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* he transformed himself into a stone because he was afraid of death. But when Bodhisattva Dignaga wrote a verse of admiration on the stone, it cracked into pieces, thereby revealing the falsity of Kapila's teachings a thousand years after his death.

36. Lotus Sutra, chap. 26. It states, "If there are those who fail to heed our spells and trouble and disrupt the preachers of the Law, their heads will split into seven pieces."

37. Ibid. The arjaka tree grows in India and other tropical places. It is said that, when a branch of this tree falls to the ground, it splits into seven pieces.

38. The lungs, heart, spleen, liver, and kidneys.

On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice



I HAVE received the string of blue-duck coins¹ that you sent. Scholars of Buddhism these days all agree on the following: Whether in the Buddha's lifetime or after his passing, those who wish to practice the Lotus Sutra must devote themselves to the three types of learning. If they neglect any one of these, they cannot attain the Buddha way.

In the past, I, too, subscribed to this opinion. Setting aside here the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime as a whole, let us examine the question in the light of the Lotus Sutra. Here, too, we may set aside the teachings contained in the preparation and revelation sections.² That brings us to the transmission section, which constitutes a clear mirror for the Latter Day of the Law and is most to be relied upon [in determining this matter].

The transmission section has two parts. The first is that of the theoretical teaching and consists of the five chapters beginning with the "Teacher of the Law" chapter. The second is that of the essential teaching and consists of the latter part of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter through the eleven chapters that comprise the remainder of the sutra. The five chapters from the theoretical teaching and the eleven and a half chapters from the essential teaching combine to make sixteen and a

half chapters, and in these it is clearly explained how one should practice the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. If this is not convincing enough, then further examining the matter in light of the Universal Worthy and Nirvana sutras³ will surely leave no doubt.

Within these chapters of transmission, the four stages of faith and the five stages of practice expounded in the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter refer to what is most important in the practice of the Lotus Sutra, and are a standard for those living in the time of the Buddha and after his passing.

Ching-hsi⁴ writes, "To produce even a single moment of belief and understanding' represents the beginning in the practice of the essential teaching."⁵ Of these various stages, the four stages of faith are intended for those living in the Buddha's lifetime, and the five stages of practice, for those living after his passing. Among these, the first of the four stages of faith is that of producing even a single moment of belief and understanding, and the first of the five stages of practice is that of rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra. These two stages together are the treasure chest of the hundred worlds and thousand factors and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life; they are the gate from

which all Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences emerge.

The two sage and worthy teachers T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo established these two initial stages of faith and practice, and put forth three interpretations concerning them. One equates them with the stage of resemblance to enlightenment, the ten stages of faith, and the stage of the iron-wheel-turning king.⁶ The second equates them with the first of the five stages of practice, which are identified with the stage of perception and action, at which one has not yet severed the illusions of thought and desire. The third equates them with the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth.

In reconciling these differences of interpretation, *Great Concentration and Insight* states: "The Buddha's intentions are difficult to determine. He explained things differently according to the differing capacities of his listeners. If only we understand this, then what need is there for troublesome disputes?"

My opinion is that, of the three interpretations, the one that refers to hearing the name and words of the truth accords best with the text of the Lotus Sutra. For, in describing the first of the five stages of practice that apply to the time after the Buddha's passing, the sutra speaks of those who "[hear this sutra and] do not slander or speak ill of it but feel joy in their hearts."⁷ If one equates the stage described here with a level as advanced as the five stages of practice at the stage of resemblance to enlightenment, then the words "do not slander or speak ill of it" would hardly be appropriate.

In particular, the passages in the "Life Span" chapter that speak of those who are "out of their minds" and those who are "not out of their minds" refer in both cases to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth.⁸ The Nirvana Sutra says, "Whether they have faith or do not have faith . . ."

and "If there are living beings who, in the presence of Buddhas numerous as the sands of the Hiranyavati River, have conceived the desire for enlightenment, then when they are born in an evil age such as this, they will be able to accept and uphold a sutra like this and will never slander it."⁹ One should also consider these passages.

Again, in the four-character phrase "a single moment of belief and understanding," the word "belief" applies to the first of the four stages of faith, and the word "understanding," to those that follow. And if this is so, then faith without understanding would apply to the first of the four stages of faith. The second stage of faith is described in the sutra as that at which one "generally understands the import of the words"¹⁰ of the sutra. And in volume nine of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* we read, "The initial stage of faith is different from the others, because in the initial stage there is as yet no understanding."

Then we come to the following "Responding with Joy" chapter, where the initial stage of rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra is restated and clarified in terms of fifty persons who in turn hear and rejoice in the Lotus Sutra, the merit that they gain thereby decreasing with each successive person. With regard to the stage achieved by the fiftieth person, there are two interpretations. The first interpretation holds that the fiftieth person falls within the stage of rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra.¹¹ The other interpretation holds that the fiftieth person cannot yet be said to have entered the stage of rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra but is still at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. This is what one commentary means when it says, "The truer the teaching, the lower the stage [of those it can bring to enlightenment]."¹² Thus, for example, the perfect teaching can save people of lower

capacity than can the doctrines of the four flavors and three teachings. Similarly, the Lotus Sutra can save people of lower capacity than can the perfect teaching expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra, and the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra can save more people than can the theoretical teaching—people of any capacity at all. One should carefully ponder the six-character phrase: “the truer the teaching, the lower the stage.”

Question: In the Latter Day of the Law, is it necessary for beginners in the practice of the Lotus Sutra to devote themselves to all three types of learning associated with the perfect teaching?

Answer: This is a very important question, and so I will be consulting the text of the sutra in answering you. In describing the first, second, and third of the five stages of practice, the Buddha restricts those at these stages from practicing precepts and meditation, and places all emphasis upon the single factor of wisdom. And because our wisdom is inadequate, he teaches us to substitute faith for wisdom, making this single word “faith” the foundation. Disbelief is the cause for becoming an icchantika and for slander of the Law, while faith is the cause for wisdom and corresponds to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth.

T’ien-t’ai states: “When persons have reached the stage of resemblance to enlightenment, the benefits they have accrued will not be forgotten when they are reborn in another existence. But for persons at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth or at the stage of perception and action, those benefits will be forgotten when they are reborn in succeeding existences, though there may be some among them who do not forget. Even in the case of persons who have forgotten those benefits, if they should encounter a good friend, then the roots of goodness that they planted in their previous existences will be revived. If

they encounter an evil friend, they will lose their true mind.”¹³

This is probably what happened to the two eminent men of these middle days, the great teachers Jikaku and Chisho of the Tendai school. They turned their backs upon the teachings of T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo, who had been good friends to them, and instead transferred their allegiance to Shan-wu-wei, Pu-k’ung, and others, who were evil friends. And many of the scholars in the latter age have been deluded by Eshin’s introduction to his *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land* and have as a result lost the true mind of faith in the Lotus Sutra, giving their allegiance instead to the provisional teachings associated with Amida. They are persons who have abandoned a great doctrine and instead chosen lesser doctrines. If we judge from examples in the past, they will probably suffer for countless kalpas in the three evil paths. It is persons such as these that T’ien-t’ai meant when he said, “If they encounter an evil friend, they will lose their true mind.”

Question: What proof can you offer to support your claim?

Answer: Volume six of *Great Concentration and Insight* states: “Persons who are saved by the teachings preached previous to the Lotus Sutra are those who have reached a high level of attainment. The reason is because these teachings are mere expedients. Those saved by the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra belong to a low level of attainment, because this teaching represents the truth.”

The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight” comments on this as follows: “This passage concerning the teachings preached previous to the Lotus Sutra makes clear the relative worth of the provisional and the true teachings, because it indicates that the truer the teaching, the lower the stage [of those it can bring to enlighten-

ment]. Conversely, the more provisional the teaching, the higher must be the stage [of those who embrace it in order to attain enlightenment].” And volume nine of *On “The Words and Phrases”* says, “In determining a person’s stage of attainment, the more profound the object of meditation, the lower will be the level of the practitioner [who can attain enlightenment thereby].”

I will say nothing here about followers of other schools, but why would scholars of the Tendai school set aside this interpretation that “the truer the teaching, the lower the stage,” and instead accept the writings of the Supervisor of Priests Eshin? The teachings of Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung, and those of Jikaku and Chisho, can wait until later. This is a matter of utmost importance, the most important in the entire land of Jambudvīpa. Thinking persons should listen to what I say. After that, if they wish to reject me, let them do so.

Question: For practitioners in the Latter Day of the Law, who have just aroused the aspiration for enlightenment, what types of practice are restricted?

Answer: Such persons are restricted from practicing almsgiving, the keeping of the precepts, and the others of the five paramitas, and are directed to chant *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō* exclusively. This practice corresponds to the capacity of persons at the stages of “producing even a single moment of belief and understanding” and “rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra.” It represents the true intention of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: I have never before heard such an assertion. It astonishes my mind and makes me wonder if my ears have not deceived me. Please clearly cite some passages of scriptural proof and kindly explain.

Answer: The sutra says, “[Such persons] need not for my sake erect towers

and temples or build monks’ quarters or make the four kinds of offerings to the community of monks.”¹⁴ This passage from the sutra makes it quite clear that practitioners who have just aroused the aspiration for enlightenment are restricted from almsgiving, the keeping of the precepts, and the others of the five paramitas.

Question: The passage you have just quoted restricts us only from erecting temples or towers, or providing for the community of monks. It says nothing about the keeping of the various precepts and the other practices.

Answer: The passage mentions only the first of the five paramitas, that of almsgiving, and skips mention of the other four.

Question: How do we know this?

Answer: Because a subsequent passage, in describing the fourth stage of practice, goes on to say, “How much more is this true of those who are able to embrace this sutra and at the same time dispense alms, keep the precepts . . . !” The sutra passages clearly indicate that persons at the first, second, and third stages of practice are restricted from practicing almsgiving, the keeping of the precepts, and the others of the five paramitas. Only when they reach the fourth stage of practice,¹⁵ are they permitted to observe them. And because such practices are permitted only at this later stage, we may know that, for persons in the initial stages, they are restricted.

Question: The sutra passages you have just quoted seem to support your argument. But can you offer any passages from the treatises or commentaries?

Answer: What commentaries would you like me to cite? Are you referring to the treatises by the four ranks of sages of India, or to works written by Buddhist teachers of China and Japan? In either case, it amounts to rejecting the root and searching among the

branches, seeking the shadow apart from the form, or forgetting the source and prizing only the stream. You would ignore a sutra passage that is perfectly clear and instead seek an answer in the treatises and commentaries. But if there should be some later commentary that contradicts the original sutra passage, would you then cast aside the sutra and follow the commentary?

Nevertheless, I will comply with your wishes and cite some passages. In volume nine of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* it is stated: "There is a danger that a beginner will be led astray by subordinate concerns, and that this will interfere with the primary practice. The beginner should directly give all his attention to embracing this sutra; that is the highest type of offering. If one sets aside formal practices but maintains the principle, then the benefits will be many and far-reaching."

In this passage of commentary, "subordinate concerns" refers to the five paramitas. If the beginner tries to practice the five paramitas at the same time that he embraces the Lotus Sutra, that may work to obstruct his primary practice, which is faith. Such a person will be like a small ship that is loaded with wealth and treasure and sets out to cross the sea. Both the ship and the treasure will sink. And the words "should directly give all his attention to embracing this sutra" do not refer to the sutra as a whole. They mean that one should embrace the daimoku, or title, of the sutra exclusively and not mix it with other passages. Even recitation of the entire sutra is not permitted. How much less are the five paramitas!

To "set aside formal practices but maintain the principle" means that one should set aside the keeping of the precepts and the other formal practices [of the five paramitas] and embrace the principle of the daimoku exclusively. When the commentary says that "the

benefits will be many and far-reaching," it implies that, if the beginner should attempt to carry out various other practices and the daimoku at the same time, then all benefit will be completely lost.

Words and Phrases continues: "Question: If what you say is true, then upholding the Lotus Sutra is the foremost among all the precepts. Why, then [in describing the fourth stage of practice], does the Lotus Sutra speak about 'one who can keep the precepts'? Answer: This is done in order to make clear by contrast what is needed at the initial stages. One should not criticize persons at the initial stages for failing to observe requirements that pertain only to the later stages."¹⁶

The scholars of today, ignoring this passage of commentary, would place ignorant people of the latter age in the same category as the two sages Nan-yüeh and T'ien-t'ai—a most grievous error!

Miao-lo further clarifies the matter as follows: "Question: If that is so, then is there no need to construct actual towers to house the Buddha's relics, and is there no need to formally keep the precepts? And further, is there no need to provide alms for monks who carry out the formal practices [of the six paramitas]?"¹⁷

The Great Teacher Dengyo declared, "I have forthwith cast aside the two hundred and fifty precepts!"¹⁸ And the Great Teacher Dengyo was not the only one to do so. Nyoho and Dochü,¹⁹ who were disciples of Ganjin, as well as the priests of the seven major temples of Nara, all in like manner cast them aside. Moreover, the Great Teacher Dengyo left this warning for future ages: "If in the Latter Day of the Law there should be persons who keep the precepts, that would be something rare and strange, like a tiger in the marketplace. Who could possibly believe it?"²⁰

Question: Why do you not advocate the meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, but instead simply encourage the chanting of the daimoku?

Answer: The two characters that comprise the name Japan contain within them all the people and animals and wealth in the sixty-six provinces of the country, without a single omission. And the two characters that make up the name India—do they not likewise contain within them all the seventy countries of India?²¹ Miao-lo says, “When for the sake of brevity one mentions only the daimoku, or title, the entire sutra is by implication included therein.”²² He also says, “When for the sake of brevity we speak of the Ten Worlds or the ten factors, the three thousand realms are perfectly encompassed therein.”²³

When Bodhisattva Manjushri and the Venerable Ananda came to compile all the words spoken by the Buddha at the three assemblies during the eight years [in which the Lotus Sutra was preached], they wrote down the title Myoho-enge-kyo, and to show their understanding [that the entire sutra is contained in these five characters], they proceeded with the words “This is what I heard.”²⁴

Question: If a person simply chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with no understanding of its meaning, are the benefits of understanding thereby included?

Answer: When a baby drinks milk, it has no understanding of its taste, and yet its body is naturally nourished. Who ever took the wonderful medicines of Jivaka knowing of what they were compounded? Water has no intent, and yet it can put out fire. Fire consumes things, and yet how can we say that it does so consciously? This is the explanation of both Nagarjuna and T’ien-t’ai, and I am restating it here.

Question: Why do you say that all

teachings are contained within the daimoku?

Answer: Chang-an writes: “Hence [T’ien-t’ai’s explanation of the title in] the preface conveys the profound meaning of the sutra. The profound meaning indicates the heart of the text, and the heart of the text encompasses the whole of the theoretical and essential teachings.”²⁵ And Miao-lo writes, “On the basis of the heart of the text of the Lotus Sutra, one can evaluate all the other various teachings of the Buddha.”²⁶

Though muddy water has no mind, it can catch the moon’s reflection and so naturally becomes clear. When plants and trees receive the rainfall, they can hardly be aware of what they are doing, and yet do they not proceed to put forth blossoms? The five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo do not represent the sutra text, nor are they its meaning. They are nothing other than the intent of the entire sutra. So, even though the beginners in Buddhist practice may not understand their significance, by practicing these five characters, they will naturally conform to the sutra’s intent.

Question: When your disciples, without any understanding, simply recite with their mouths the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, what level of attainment do they reach?

Answer: Not only do they go beyond the highest level of the four flavors and three teachings, as well as that attained by practitioners of the perfect teaching set forth in the sutras that precede the Lotus Sutra, but they surpass by a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times the founders of the True Word and various other schools of Buddhism, such as Shan-wu-wei, Chih-yen, Tz’u-en, Chi-tsang, Tao-hsüan, Bodhidharma, and Shan-tao.

Therefore, I entreat the people of this country: Do not look down upon my disciples! If you inquire into their past, you will find that they are great

bodhisattvas who have given alms to Buddhas over a period of eight hundred thousand million kalpas, and who have carried out practices under Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Hiranyavati and Ganges rivers. And if we speak of the future, they will be endowed with the benefit of the fiftieth person, surpassing that of one who gave alms to innumerable living beings for a period of eighty years.²⁷ They are like an infant emperor wrapped in swaddling clothes, or a great dragon who has just been born. Do not despise them! Do not look on them with contempt!

Miao-lo writes, "Those who vex or trouble [the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra] will have their heads split into seven pieces, but those who give alms to them will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles."²⁸ King Udayana behaved insolently toward the Venerable Pindolabharadvaja, and within seven years lost his life.²⁹ The lord of Sagami condemned Nichiren to exile, and within a hundred days armed rebellion broke out in his domain.³⁰

The sutra says: "If anyone sees a person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person, whether what he speaks is true or not, he will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy, . . . and other severe and malignant illnesses."³¹ It also says, "That person will be born eyeless in existence after existence."

Myoshin and Enchi³² contracted white leprosy in their present lifetime, while Doamidabutsu lost his sight. The epidemics that afflict our nation are punishments of the kind described as "the head being split into seven pieces." And if we surmise the degree of benefit according to the degree of punishment, then there can be no doubt that my followers "will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles."

The Buddhist teachings were first introduced to Japan in the reign of the thirtieth sovereign, Emperor Kimmei. During the twenty reigns, or more than two hundred years, from that time until the reign of Emperor Kammu, although the so-called six schools of Buddhism existed in Japan, the relative superiority of the Buddhist teachings had not yet been determined. Then, during the Enryaku era (782–806), a sage appeared in this country, a man known as the Great Teacher Dengyo. He examined the teachings of the six schools, which had already been propagated, and made all the priests of the seven major temples of Nara his disciples. In time he established a temple on Mount Hiei to serve as the head temple, and won over the other temples in the country to serve as its branches. In this way the Buddhist teachings of Japan came to be unified in a single school. The secular rule likewise was not divided but clearly established, so that the nation was purified of evil. If we were to speak of Dengyo's accomplishments, we would have to say that they all spring from the passage [declaring the Lotus Sutra to be foremost among all the sutras the Buddha] "has preached, now preaches, and will preach."³³

In the period that followed, the three great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, claiming to be following Chinese authority, expressed the opinion that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the others of the three major True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, they appended the term "school" to the True Word teachings, a term that the Great Teacher Dengyo had purposely omitted in reference to that school, and thus recognized the True Word as the eighth school³⁴ of Buddhism. These three men each persuaded the emperor to issue an edict upholding the True Word and propagated those teachings through-

out Japan, so that every temple accordingly went against the principles of the Lotus Sutra. In so doing, they utterly violated the passage concerning the sutras the Buddha “has preached, now preaches, and will preach,” and became archenemies of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Thereafter, Buddhism gradually declined and the ruler’s authority likewise became increasingly ineffectual. The protective deities who had dwelt here for so long, such as the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, have lost their power. Brahma, Shakra, and the four heavenly kings have deserted the

country, and the country is already on the point of ruin. What thinking person could fail to be pained at and to lament such a situation?

In conclusion, the false doctrines propagated by the three great teachers are disseminated from three temples: To-ji, Soji-in on Mount Hiei, and Onjo-ji.³⁵ If measures are not taken to prohibit the activities of these temples, then without a doubt the nation will be destroyed, and its people will fall into the evil paths. Although I have generally discerned the nature of the situation and informed the ruler, no one has ventured to make the slightest use of my advice. How truly pitiable!



Background

This work is one of Nichiren Daishonin’s ten major writings. It is thought to have been written on the tenth day of the fourth month in the third year of Kenji (1277). In the previous month, Toki Jonin, one of the Daishonin’s most learned and devout disciples, had sent him a letter via Nissho, one of the six senior priests. Toki had expressed concern about how he might carry out a correct practice and appended a list of specific questions. This work is the Daishonin’s reply. In it he stresses that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Mystic Law is the correct practice for the Latter Day of the Law and contains the merit of all other practices within it, leading directly to Buddhahood.

In the opening section, the Daishonin takes issue with those of his contemporaries who hold that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra must devote themselves to the three types of learning: precepts, meditation, and wisdom. These three were traditionally said to encompass the whole of Buddhist practice. The

Daishonin begins his explanation by discussing the “four stages of faith and the five stages of practice” enumerated by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai on the basis of the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The first stage of faith, that of “producing even a single moment of belief and understanding,” and the first stage of practice, that of “rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra,” correspond to the status of practitioners in the Latter Day of the Law, the Daishonin says. Among various interpretations of these initial stages set forth in the recorded teachings of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo, he designates as most appropriate the view that they correspond to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth, the stage where one first hears and takes faith in the Lotus Sutra. For people at these initial stages, the Daishonin continues, of the three types of learning, the Buddha restricted the practice of precepts and meditation, emphasizing only wisdom. And, because the wisdom of people in the Latter Day is inadequate, they

should substitute faith; faith in the Lotus Sutra becomes the cause for acquiring the Buddha wisdom.

The Daishonin then criticizes Eshin's *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*, a work that had greatly encouraged Nembutsu practices in Japan. Pure Land adherents generally held that the Lotus Sutra was too profound for the limited capacities of people born in the Latter Day, emphasizing instead the "easy practice" of reciting Amida Buddha's name. The Daishonin replies that the higher the teaching, the lower the capacity of the people it can save; thus chanting the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra alone can bring all beings to Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Blue-duck coins were copper coins imported from Sung-dynasty China, with a square hole in the center that made them look like a duck's eye.

2. The preparation and revelation sections are the first two of the three divisions of a sutra, the third being transmission. In the subsequent paragraph, the transmission section is applied to both the theoretical teaching and the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In terms of the theoretical teaching, it corresponds to the "Teacher of the Law" (10th) through "Peaceful Practices" (14th) chapters. In terms of the essential teaching, it corresponds to the latter part of the "Distinctions in Benefits" (17th) chapter through the end of the sutra, as well as the Universal Worthy Sutra.

3. According to the T'ien-t'ai system of classification, these two sutras represent the last that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded. The Universal Worthy Sutra is regarded as an epilogue to the Lotus Sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra, as a restatement of its important teachings. Thus, in a broad sense, these two texts can be said to constitute the transmission section of the entire body of teachings.

4. Another name for the Great Teacher Miao-lo. Ching-hsi was the name of his birthplace.

5. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

The next part explains that people in the Latter Day, who are at the initial stages of practice, need not practice almsgiving, the keeping of precepts, or any other of the five paramitas, but should devote themselves exclusively to chanting the daimoku. It may be noted here that the Daishonin is not rejecting the spirit implicit in such acts as almsgiving, but rather is denying their efficacy as actual practices. The merit of all these good deeds, he says, is already inherent in the daimoku. The practice of daimoku contains all practices within itself. The Daishonin asserts that even those who chant it without understanding its meaning are certain to attain Buddhahood.

6. The stage of resemblance to enlightenment is the fourth of the six stages of practice, and the ten stages of faith indicate the first ten of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. According to commentarial tradition, the various kinds of wheel-turning kings are used to represent different divisions within the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. The lowest ranking of the kings, he who turns the iron wheel, represents the initial stages, the ten stages of faith.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 17.

8. The reference here is to the parable of the skilled physician, whose sons swallow poison in his absence. Some are only mildly affected and retain their right mind, while others take leave of their senses. The physician (who represents the Buddha) offers to cure them with good medicine (the Lotus Sutra), but only those who are still in their right mind take it and are cured. As an expedient to save the others, the physician leaves home and has word sent that he has died in another country. In their grief, those children who have lost their minds finally decide to take the medicine and are cured. The Daishonin says here that both groups of children represent persons at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth, because both have heard the Lotus Sutra.

9. In the Japanese text, the Daishonin

gives only a few characters from each passage; the full quotations are supplied here in translation. The Hiranyavati River flows through Kushinagara, the capital of the ancient state of Malla in northern India. Shakyamuni is said to have entered nirvana in a grove of sal trees on the west bank of this river.

10. This phrase actually appears in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, where T'ien-t'ai comments on a passage of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "If there is someone who, hearing of the long duration of the Buddha's life span, can understand the import of such words, the benefits that such a person acquires will be without limit or measure, able to awaken in him the unsurpassed wisdom of the Thus Come One."

11. This interpretation corresponds to the second of the three interpretations of the initial levels of practice, cited earlier, in which the five stages of practice, including that of "rejoicing on hearing the Lotus Sutra," are equated with the stage of perception and action.

12. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* This passage consists of six Chinese characters in *On "Great Concentration and Insight."*

13. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*

14. Lotus Sutra, chap. 17. This quotation comes from the passage describing the second of the five stages of practice, that of reading and reciting the Lotus Sutra. The four kinds of offerings are food and drink, clothing, bedding, and medicine.

15. The fourth stage of practice is that of practicing the six paramitas while embracing the Lotus Sutra.

16. The wording of the Japanese text has been expanded here in translation for the sake of clarity.

17. *On "The Words and Phrases."* The implication is that, for those at the initial stages, such acts are included in faith.

18. *The Documents Pertaining to "A Clarification of the Precepts."* Dengyo rejected the two hundred and fifty precepts of Hinayana, while embracing the bodhisattva precepts of Mahayana.

19. Nyoho (Chin Ju-fa, d. 814), a Precepts priest, accompanied his teacher Ganjin (Chien-chen) to Japan, where he conferred precepts on Emperor Kammu. Dochu (n.d.) was a Japanese Precepts priest,

under whom Encho, the second chief priest of Enryaku-ji, first entered the priesthood. In saying that Ganjin and his disciples cast aside the two hundred and fifty Hinayana precepts, the Daishonin may be referring to the fact that Ganjin was the first to bring to Japan the writings of T'ien-t'ai, on which Dengyo based his understanding of the Mahayana precepts.

20. *The Treatise on the Lamp for the Latter Day of the Law.* This work is traditionally attributed to Dengyo.

21. The seventy countries of India refer to the whole of India. The source for this figure may be Hsüan-tsang's *Record of the Western Regions.*

22. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

23. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

24. "This is what I heard" is the opening phrase of the Lotus Sutra, and of virtually all sutras.

25. *Profound Meaning.* This passage appears in Chang-an's preface to *Profound Meaning* and refers to T'ien-t'ai's own preface to the same work.

26. *On "The Profound Meaning."*

27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 18.

28. *On "The Words and Phrases."* "Have their heads split into seven pieces" refers to the vow made by the ten demon daughters in chapter 26 of the Lotus Sutra to afflict in this way anyone who troubles a teacher of the sutra. The ten honorable titles are epithets for the Buddha expressing his virtue, wisdom, and compassion.

29. This story appears in *The Fourfold Rules of Discipline.* Udayana was the king of Kaushambi in Shakyamuni's time. He revered the Buddha's disciple Pindolabharadvaja and visited him every day. His jealous minister persuaded the king that Pindolabharadvaja was insufficiently respectful and urged him to kill the disciple if the latter did not rise to greet him. Knowing this with his supernatural powers, Pindolabharadvaja rose from his seat to save the king from the offense of killing a disciple of the Buddha, but as a result of his own ill intent, the king was soon captured by an enemy ruler and died within seven years.

30. Lord of Sagami is another name for Regent Hojo Tokimune. The "armed rebellion" refers to an attempt on the part of his elder half brother, Hojo Tokisuke, to usurp the regency in the second month of 1272.

31. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28. The quotation

immediately following is also from this chapter.

32. Myoshin, a priest-disciple of the Daishonin, later discarded his faith and turned against him. Enchi was a priest of Seicho-ji temple, where the Daishonin had entered the priesthood. *The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra* suggests that he was slanderous at heart and met with a miserable death (p. 777).

33. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

34. Eighth school: That is, in addition to the six schools and the Tendai school.

35. Temples descending, respectively, from the three great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho. See To-ji and Onjo-ji in Glossary. Soji-in was founded on Mount Hiei by Jikaku in 851 as a center for esoteric practice.

The Eight Winds



I HAD been anxious about you because I had not heard from you in so long. I was overjoyed to receive your messenger, who arrived with your various offerings. I am going to bestow the Gohonzon on you for your protection.

About the problem of your transfer to another estate: I have studied your lord's letter to you and your letter to me, and compared them. I anticipated this problem even before your letter arrived. Since your lord regards this as a matter of the utmost importance, I surmise that other retainers have spoken ill of you to him, saying: "He shows a lack of respect for you in his unwillingness to move to a new estate. There are many selfish people, but he is more selfish than most. We would advise you to show him no further kindness for the time being." You must beware and act cautiously.

As vassals, you, your parents, and your close relatives are deeply indebted to your lord. Moreover, he showed you great clemency by taking no action against your clan when I incurred the wrath of the government and the entire nation hated me. Many of my disciples had their land seized by the government and were then disowned or driven from their lords' estates. Even if he never shows you the slightest further consideration, you should not hold a grudge against your lord. It is

too much to expect another favor from him, just because you are reluctant to move to a new estate.

Worthy persons deserve to be called so because they are not carried away by the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering, and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor grieved by decline. The heavenly gods will surely protect one who is unbending before the eight winds. But if you nurse an unreasonable grudge against your lord, they will not protect you, not for all your prayers.

When one goes to court, one may win one's case, but then again one may lose, when satisfaction could have been obtained outside of court. I considered how the night watchmen¹ might win their case. I felt great pity for them; they were deeply troubled, and their houses and lands had been confiscated just because they were Nichiren's followers. I said that I would pray for them, provided they did not go to court. They agreed and promised not to go. So when I heard they had submitted petitions and were embroiled in lawsuits, I was concerned that it would not go their way; so far no results have been forthcoming.

Daigaku and Uemon no Tayu² had their prayers answered because they followed my advice. Hakiri³ seems to believe my teachings, but he ignored my

suggestions about his lawsuit, and so I have been concerned about its progress. Some good seems to have come of it, perhaps because I warned him that he would lose unless he followed my advice. But because he did not listen to the extent I had hoped, the outcome has been less fruitful than he expected.

If lay believers and their teacher pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water. Even if they pray with one mind, their prayers will go unanswered if they have long made the error of attacking greater teachings with lesser ones. Eventually, both lay believers and their teacher will be ruined.

Myoun was the fiftieth chief priest of the Tendai school. He was punished by the retired emperor⁴ in the fifth month of the second year of Angen (1176) and ordered into exile in the province of Izu. En route, however, he was rescued at Otsu by his priests from Mount Hiei. He reassumed his position as chief priest, but in the eleventh month of the second year of Juei (1183), he was captured by [Minamoto no] Yoshinaka⁵ and beheaded. I am not saying that being exiled or beheaded is in itself an indication of fault. Even sages and worthies undergo such things.

When civil war broke out between Yoritomo of the Minamoto clan and Kiyomori of the Taira clan, more than twenty of Kiyomori's clansmen signed a pledge and affixed their seals. They vowed: "We will look to Mount Hiei as our clan temple. We will revere the three thousand monks as our own parents. The sorrows of the mountain temple will be our sorrows, and the joys of the mountain temple, our joys." They donated all the twenty-four districts of Omi Province to the temple. Then the chief priest [Myoun] and his disciples employed all the rites of the True Word teachings in their prayers to vanquish the enemy and even ordered

their armed priests to shoot arrows at the Minamoto soldiers. Yoshinaka [of the Minamoto clan] and one of his retainers, Higuchi, however, accompanied by a mere five or six men, climbed Mount Hiei and burst into the main hall. They dragged Myoun from the platform where he was praying for victory, bound him with a rope, rolled him down the west slope of the mountain like a big stone, and beheaded him. Nevertheless, the people of Japan do not shun the True Word teachings, nor have they ever delved into this matter.

During the fifth, sixth, and seventh months of the third year of Jokyu (1221), the cyclical sign *kanoto-mi*, the imperial court and the barbarian warriors engaged in combat.⁶ At that time Mount Hiei, To-ji, the seven major temples of Nara, Onjo-ji, and the other temples each performed all the most esoteric rites of the True Word school in their prayers to the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the Mountain King,⁷ and other deities. Forty-one of the most renowned priests, including the General Administrator of Priests Jien, a former chief priest of the Tendai school, and the administrators of priests of To-ji, of Omuro,⁸ and of the Joju-in hall of Onjo-ji temple, prayed repeatedly for [Hojo] Yoshitoki's defeat.

The prelate of Omuro also began a ceremony to overpower the enemies in Shishin-den Palace on the eighth day of the sixth month. He proclaimed that the imperial court would be victorious within seven days. But on the seventh day—the fourteenth day of the sixth month—the battle ended in defeat, and the prelate died of extreme grief because his beloved page, Setaka,⁹ had been beheaded. Yet despite all this, no one ever wondered what was wrong with the True Word doctrines. The ceremonies that incorporated all the True Word doctrines—the first conducted by Myoun and the second

by Jien—resulted in the complete collapse of royal rule in Japan. Now, for the third time, a special religious ceremony is being held to ward off the Mongol invasion. The present regime will surely suffer the same fate. This is a confidential matter; you should keep it strictly to yourself.

As for your own problem, I advise you not to go to court. Neither harbor

a grudge against your lord, nor leave his service. Stay on in Kamakura. Go to attend on your lord less frequently than before; wait upon him only from time to time. Then you can expect that your wish will be fulfilled. Never conduct yourself in a shameful manner. Be unmoved by greed, by the desire for fame, or by anger.



Background

This is one of the many letters Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo, his loyal disciple in Kamakura. Because of Kingo's devotion to the Daishonin's teachings, he was ordered in 1276 to move from his estate near Kamakura to the distant province of Echigo. The letter is not dated, but it is known to have been written in the third year of Kenji (1277).

The concept of the "eight winds" is described in works such as *The Treatise on the Stage of Buddhahood Sutra*. They advise people not to be swayed by their attachment to prosperity, honor, praise, or pleasure (the four favorable winds), or by their aversion to decline, disgrace,

censure, or suffering (the four adverse winds).

The Daishonin cautions Kingo to remain in the good graces of his lord, reminding him that Lord Ema refrained from harassing him during the Daishonin's exile to Sado, when the government was persecuting the Daishonin and his followers. Then the Daishonin tells Kingo that only by putting faith first and controlling his feelings of resentment against his lord can he expect to find a way out of this impasse. He also says that courts of law and other expedients are secondary to faith and that, if Kingo is to win, he must proceed exactly as the Daishonin teaches.

Notes

1. The night watchmen are thought to have been Shijo Kingo's escorts, who lived in his residence. Their estates had been confiscated because of their belief in the Daishonin's teachings.

2. Daigaku is Hiki Daigaku Saburo Yoshimoto (1202–1286), a Confucian scholar who is said to have converted to the Daishonin's teaching on reading a draft of *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. Uemon no Tayu is another name for Ikegami Munenaka, the elder son of an official in the Kamakura government. He is thought to have become the Daishonin's disciple around 1256.

3. Hakiri Sanenaga (1222–1297), the

steward of the Minobu area in Kai Province. He had been converted by Nikko Shonin, but opposed him after the Daishonin's passing.

4. When the warrior-priests of Enryaku-ji temple made forcible demands on the imperial court, the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa was angered and had the temple's chief priest Myoun exiled to Izu.

5. Yoshinaka (1154–1184) was a cousin of Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto clan, who assisted the latter in his revolt against the Taira.

6. A reference to the Jokyu Disturbance, an attempt by the Retired Emperor Go-toba to overthrow the military Kamakura shō-

gunate. The victory of the shogunate clearly established the power of the Hojo regency.

7. The Mountain King refers to Hie Shrine, which is located at the foot of Mount Hiei, and to the main god of the shrine, who was revered as the guardian deity of Mount Hiei and of the Tendai school.

8. Another name for Ninna-ji temple of

the True Word school in Kyoto. The prelate of Omuro, who appears in the next sentence, refers to Prince Dojo, the second son of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, who had entered the priesthood at Ninna-ji.

9. Setaka (d. 1221) was the sixth son of Sasaki Hirotsuna, the constable of Omi, who rallied to the imperial cause during the Jokyu Disturbance.

The Workings of Brahma and Shakra



I RECEIVED on the fourteenth day of the fifth month the horseload of yams that you took the trouble to send me. Considering the labor involved in producing them, yams today are as precious as jewels or medicine. I will comply with the request you made in your letter.

Once there was a man named Yin Chi-fu.¹ He had an only son, whose name was Po-ch'i. The father was wise, and so was the son. One would have thought that no one would try to estrange them, but Po-ch'i's stepmother frequently slandered him to her husband. However, Chi-fu would not listen to her. Undaunted, she continued for several years to contrive a variety of plots against her stepson. In one such scheme, she put a bee into her bosom, rushed to Po-ch'i, and had him remove the insect, making sure as she did so that her husband would observe the scene. In an attempt to have her stepson killed, she then accused him of making advances to her.²

A king named Bimbisara was a worthy ruler and the greatest lay supporter of the Buddha within the entire land of Jambudvīpa. Moreover, he reigned over Magadha, the state where the Buddha intended to preach the Lotus Sutra. Since the king and the Buddha were thus united in mind, it seemed certain that the Lotus Sutra would be ex-

pounded in Magadha. A man named Devadatta wished to prevent this by any means possible, but all his attempts ended in failure. After much thought, he spent several years befriending King Bimbisara's son, Prince Ajatashatru, and gradually obtained his confidence. Then he set out to estrange father and son. He deceived the prince into killing his own father, King Bimbisara.

Now that Ajatashatru, the new king, had become of the same mind as Devadatta and the two had banded together, non-Buddhists and evil men from all five regions of India swarmed like clouds or mist gathering into Magadha. Ajatashatru flattered them and won them over by giving them land and treasures. Thus the king of the state became an archenemy of the Buddha.

Seeing this, the devil king of the sixth heaven of the world of desire descended with his innumerable followers to Magadha and possessed the bodies of Devadatta, Ajatashatru, his six ministers, and others. Therefore, although these people were human in appearance, they wielded the power of the devil king of the sixth heaven. They were more boisterous, frightful, and alarming than a high wind flattening the grasses and trees, a gale stirring up waves upon the sea, a great quake jolting the earth, or a huge fire devouring one house after another.

A king named Virudhaka, incited by Ajatashatru, put hundreds of Shakyamuni Buddha's clan to the sword. King Ajatashatru unleashed a herd of drunken elephants and let them trample to death countless disciples of the Buddha. He also had many other disciples killed by concealing his soldiers in ambush at the roadsides, defiling well water with excrement, or persuading women to bring false charges³ against them. Shariputra and Maudgalayana were severely persecuted.⁴ Kalodayin was buried in horse dung.⁵ The Buddha was forced to survive for ninety days, one whole summer, on horse fodder.

People thought that perhaps not even the Buddha's power could match that of those evil persons. Even those who believed in him swallowed their words and said nothing, and closed their eyes so that they might not see. They could only wave their hands helplessly,⁶ speechless with dismay. Finally, Devadatta beat to death the Thus Come One Shakyamuni's foster mother, the nun Utpalavarna,⁷ and then caused the Buddha's body to bleed. Under these circumstances, there was no one who would side with the Buddha.

And yet somehow, despite all these many persecutions, the Buddha at length managed to preach the Lotus Sutra. A passage from this sutra states, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁸ This passage means that, even while the Buddha was alive, the enemies of the Lotus Sutra offered fierce opposition; all the more will they harass those who, in the latter age, preach and believe in a single character or even a single brushstroke in the Lotus Sutra.

In light of this passage, it would seem that no one during the more than 2,220 years since the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra has lived it as the

Buddha himself did. Only one who has met with great persecution can be said to have mastered the Lotus Sutra. The great teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo would appear to have been votaries of the Lotus Sutra, but they did not meet persecutions as severe as the Buddha did in his lifetime. They encountered only minor opposition—T'ien-t'ai from the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north, and Dengyo from the seven major temples of Nara. Neither of them was persecuted by the ruler of the state, attacked by sword-brandishing multitudes, or abused by the entire nation. [According to the Lotus Sutra,] those who believe in the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing will suffer obstacles more terrible than those of the Buddha. Yet neither T'ien-t'ai nor Dengyo met oppression as harsh as what the Buddha did, let alone persecutions that were greater or more numerous.

When a tiger roars, gales blow; when a dragon intones, clouds gather.⁹ Yet a hare's squeak or a donkey's bray causes neither winds nor clouds to arise. As long as the foolish read the Lotus Sutra and the worthy lecture on it, the country will remain quiet and undisturbed. But it is stated that, when a sage emerges and preaches the Lotus Sutra exactly as the Buddha did, the nation will be thrown into an uproar, and persecutions greater than those during the Buddha's lifetime will arise.

Now I am not a worthy, let alone a sage. I am the most perverse person in the world. However, my actions seem to be in exact accord with what the sutra teaches. Therefore, whenever I meet great difficulties, I am more delighted than if my deceased parents had returned to life, or than one who sees the person one hates meet with some mishap. I am overjoyed that I, a foolish man, should be regarded as a sage by the Buddha. Suppose there are wise persons who strictly observe the

two hundred and fifty precepts and are revered by the entire nation more than the lord Shakra is by all heavenly beings. Yet what if, in the eyes of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, they are as sinister as Devadatta? They may appear respectable now, but what horrors await them in their next life!

If rumor spreads that you appear to be a votary of the Lotus Sutra, both those who are close to you and those who are not will unexpectedly admonish you as if they were your true friends, saying, "If you believe in the priest Nichiren, you will surely be misled. You will also be in disfavor with your lord." Then, because the plots that people devise are fearsome even to worthy persons, you will certainly abandon your faith in the Lotus Sutra. So it is advisable that you do not carelessly let it be known that you are a believer. Those possessed by a great devil will, once they succeed in persuading a believer to recant, use that person as a means for making many others abandon their faith.

Sho-bo, Noto-bo, and the lay nun of Nagoe¹⁰ were once Nichiren's disciples. Greedy, cowardly, and foolish, they nonetheless pass themselves off as wise persons. When persecutions befell me, they took advantage of these to convince many of my followers to drop out. If you allow yourself to be so persuaded, those in Suruga who seem to believe in the Lotus Sutra, as well as the others who are about to take faith in it, will all discard the sutra without exception. There are a few in this province of Kai who have expressed their desire to take faith. Yet I make it a rule not to permit them to join us unless they remain steadfast in their resolve. Some people, despite their shallow understanding, pretend staunch faith and speak contemptuously to their fellow believers, thus often disrupting the faith of others. Leave such people strictly alone. The time will certainly come

when, by the workings of Brahma, Shakra, and other gods, the entire Japanese nation will simultaneously take faith in the Lotus Sutra. At that time, I am convinced, many people will insist that they too have believed since the very beginning.

If your faith is firm, then you should single-mindedly resolve: "I maintain faith not for the sake of other people but for the benefit of my deceased father. Others will not perform memorial services for him; because I am his son, I am the one who must pray for his repose. I govern one village. I will spend one half of my revenue making offerings for the sake of my deceased father, and use the other half to feed my wife, children, and clansmen. Should an emergency arise, I will give my life for my lord." Speak in a mild manner, no matter what the circumstances.

If people should try to weaken your belief in the Lotus Sutra, consider that your faith is being tested. Tell them sardonically, "I deeply appreciate your warning. However, you should save your admonishment for yourselves. I know well that our lord does not approve of my faith. The idea of your threatening me in his name is simply absurd. I was contemplating visiting you all and giving you some advice, but you came here before I could follow through. You will surely join your palms together and beseech me for help when you, along with your beloved wife and children, are dragged out before King Yama."

What you say about Niida¹¹ may well be true. I have also heard about the people at Okitsu.¹² If the occasion arises, you should behave exactly as they did. When those of rank reproach you for your faith, think of them as worthy adversaries of the Lotus Sutra. Consider it an opportunity as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara plant, or the blind turtle encountering a float-

ing sandalwood log,¹³ and reply to them firmly and resolutely.

There have been instances in which those who governed a thousand or ten thousand *cho* of land had their lives summarily taken and their estates confiscated over trifling matters. If you give your life now for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, what is there to regret? Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his own body for twelve hundred years and became a Buddha. King Suzudan made a bed of his own body for his teacher for a thousand years; as a result, he was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha.

Make no mistake. If you abandon your faith in the Lotus Sutra now, you will only make yourself the laughing-stock of your foes. Shamelessly pretending friendship, they will try to maneuver you into recanting, with the

intention of later laughing at you and letting others ridicule you as well. Let them say all they have to say. Then tell them, "Instead of advising me in the presence of many people, why don't you admonish yourselves first?" With this remark, abruptly rise from your seat and depart.

Please let me know in a day or two what has happened since you wrote. There are so many things I want to say that I cannot write all of them here. I will do so in my future letters.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifteenth day of the fifth month
in the third year of Kenji (1277)

Reply to Ueno



Background

This letter, written at Minobu in 1277, is entitled *The Workings of Brahma and Shakra*, because it contains the passage, "The time will certainly come when, by the workings of Brahma, Shakra, and other gods, the entire Japanese nation will simultaneously take faith in the Lotus Sutra." In this letter Nichiren Daishonin encourages the nineteen-year-old Nanjo Tokimitsu, who succeeded

his father as steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province, to maintain his faith. He also advises Tokimitsu on how to respond to those who attempt to threaten or deceive him into discarding his faith. For if they succeed in their attempt, the Daishonin warns, they will use him "as a means for making many others abandon their faith."

Notes

1. A minister who served King Hsüan, the eleventh ruler of China's Chou dynasty who reigned from 828 to 782 B.C.E. He is said to have helped Hsüan restore the dynasty's declining fortunes.

2. This story appears in *Tales of Times Now Past*. With this scheme, the stepmother succeeded in arousing Chi-fu's suspicions. Po-ch'i, distressed, left home and drowned himself.

3. In an attempt to disgrace and create

animosity against the Buddha's followers, Ajatashatru persuaded women to pretend to have been impregnated by these followers.

4. According to *The Monastic Rules on Various Matters*, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, leading disciples of Shakyamuni, while on their travels to spread Buddhism in Rajagriha, once refuted the master of a group of Brahmans. As a result, they were attacked with staves, and Maudgalyayana is said to have been beaten to death.

5. According to *The Ten Divisions of Monastic Rules*, Kalodayin, a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, was given offerings by a woman when he was going about begging for alms in Shravasti. Her jealous husband killed Kalodayin and buried his head in horse dung.

6. This indicates a gesture of advising others not to speak out.

7. According to most accounts, Shakyamuni's foster mother was his maternal aunt, Mahaprajapati, under whose guidance the nun Utpalavarna is said to have attained the state of arhat. The story of Utpalavarna is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

9. This refers to a traditional Chinese saying. According to popular belief, the roaring of a tiger causes the wind to arise, and the chanting of a dragon produces rain. Nichiren Daishonin cites these beliefs to indicate that a great action invites repercussions of the same magnitude.

10. Disciples of the Daishonin who later abandoned their faith. Sho-bo is said to have begun doubting the Daishonin around the time of the Izu Exile in 1261. Noto-bo is said to have lost his faith around 1271. The lay nun of Nagoe, the wife of Hojo

Tomotoki, a younger brother of the third regent Yasutoki, abandoned her faith around the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271.

11. Niida Shiro Nobutsuna, a follower of the Daishonin who lived in Hatake of Izu Province. He was an elder brother of Nichimoku Shonin (1260-1333), and his mother was an elder sister of Nanjo Tokimitsu. Together with Tokimitsu and others, he endeavored to spread the Daishonin's teachings in northern Japan. What Tokimitsu reported about him is not clear, but presumably the Daishonin means that Niida never yielded to persecution but steadfastly maintained his faith.

12. A village located on the shore of Suruga Bay. The "people at Okitsu" possibly refers to Joren-bo, a disciple who lived here and had a close connection with the lay priest Takahashi of Fuji District, and to other followers.

13. The udumbara plant is said to bloom once every three thousand years to herald the advent of a Buddha. The analogy of the blind turtle is mentioned in chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra, which says that encountering Buddhism is as rare as a one-eyed turtle finding a floating sandalwood log with a hollow in it to hold him.

The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto



ON the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month I respectfully read your official letter of the twenty-third, which I received through the intermediaries, the lay priests Shimada no Saemon and Yamashiro no Mimbu.¹ In the letter you state, “I am shocked to hear that all those present on that occasion are unanimous in saying that you behaved in a disorderly manner at the place where the priest Ryuzo was preaching. They say you interrupted with a group of your cohorts, all wearing weapons.”

That is a groundless falsehood. I do not know who told you so, but surely it would be fitting if, out of pity for me, you were to summon them to confront me in your presence and inquire into the truth or falsehood of their accusations.

Briefly, the root of this matter is as follows. On the ninth day of the sixth month, Sammi-ko, who is a disciple of the Sage Nichiren, came to my residence and said: “Recently a priest named Ryuzo-bo has arrived from Kyoto and settled in Kuwagayatsu, west of the gate of Daibutsu-den temple.² He preaches day and night, urging those who have questions about Buddhism to come and hold discourse with him in order to settle their doubts about this life and the next. All the people in Kamakura, high and low, revere him as they would Shakyamuni

Buddha. However, I hear that no one has ever actually debated with him. I want to go to Kuwagayatsu to debate with him and clarify whatever doubts the people might have about their next life. Won’t you come and listen?”

At that time I was busy with official matters, so I did not originally intend to accompany him. However, I had heard that it concerned the Buddhist teachings, and I have often gone to hear preaching on that subject. Being a lay believer, however, I never said a single word. Therefore, I believe that a strict investigation on your part should be sufficient to reveal that I was not in any way abusive.

In any event, during his sermon, Ryuzo-bo said, “If anyone among you has a question about the Buddhist teachings, please do not hesitate to ask.” Thereupon Sammi-ko, the disciple of the priest Nichiren, raised the following question: “That death is inevitable from the time of birth is certainly no cause for surprise; in addition, especially in recent times, countless people in Japan have perished in calamities. No one can fail to realize this transience, which lies before our very eyes. Under these circumstances I heard that you, a respected priest, had come from Kyoto to dispel the doubts of the people, so I came to listen. I was feeling hesitant, thinking it rude to ask a question in the

middle of your sermon, so I am happy that you have invited anyone who has doubts to speak freely.

"What puzzles me first of all is this: I am a lowly person, born in the Latter Day of the Law in a remote land [far from the birthplace of Buddhism]. Yet fortunately Buddhism, which originated in India, has already been introduced to this country. One should embrace it by all means. However, the sutras amount to no less than five thousand or seven thousand volumes. Since they are the teachings of a single Buddha, they must essentially be one sutra. But Buddhism is divided into eight schools, if one includes Flower Garland and True Word, or ten schools, if one includes Pure Land and Zen. Although these schools represent different gates of entry, I would presume that their truth must ultimately be one.

"However, the Great Teacher Kobo, the founder of the True Word school in Japan, said, 'The Lotus Sutra, when compared with the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras, not only represents a different gate but is a doctrine of childish theory, and the Buddha who expounded it is still in the region of darkness.'³ He also stated, 'The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of the Lotus school and others vied with one another to steal the ghee [of the True Word school].' The Great Teacher Tz'u-en, the founder of the Dharma Characteristics school, said, 'The Lotus Sutra is an expedient means while the Profound Secrets Sutra represents the truth; those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment can never attain Buddhahood.'⁴

"Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school said, 'The Flower Garland Sutra represents the root teaching, and the Lotus Sutra, the branch teachings.'⁵ He also said, 'The Flower Garland Sutra is the teaching of enlightenment for the people of the sudden teaching, and the Lotus Sutra, the teaching of

enlightenment for the people of the gradual teaching.'⁶ The Great Teacher Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school said, 'Of all the Mahayana sutras, the Wisdom sutras are supreme.' The Reverend Shan-tao of the Pure Land school said, '[If people practice the Nembutsu continuously until the end of their lives,] then ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land. . . . However, not even one person in a thousand can be reborn there'⁷ through the Lotus and other sutras. The Honorable Honen urged people to 'discard, close, ignore, and abandon' the Lotus Sutra in favor of the Nembutsu, and also likened the votaries of the Lotus Sutra to 'a band of robbers.'⁸ And the Zen school declares itself to represent 'a separate transmission outside the sutras, independent of words or writing.'⁹

"Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, said of the Lotus Sutra, 'The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth.'¹⁰ And Many Treasures Buddha declared, 'The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!'¹¹ The sutra also states that the Buddhas of the ten directions, who were emanations of Shakyamuni, extended their tongues to the Brahma heaven.¹²

"The Great Teacher Kobo wrote that the Lotus Sutra is a doctrine of childish theory. Yet Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions unanimously declared that all its teachings are true. Which of all these statements are we to believe?

"The Reverend Shan-tao and the Honorable Honen said of the Lotus Sutra that not even one person in a thousand can be saved by it, and that one should 'discard, close, ignore, and abandon' it. However, Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Bud-

dhas of the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni assert that, of those who hear the Lotus Sutra, 'not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood,'¹³ and that all will achieve the Buddha way. Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and all the other Buddhas are in their statements as far apart from the Reverend Shan-tao and the Honorable Honen as fire and water, or clouds and mud.

"Which of them are we to believe? Which are we to reject?"

"In particular, of the forty-eight vows of the monk Dharma Treasury mentioned in the Two-Volumed Sutra, which both Shan-tao and Honen revere, the eighteenth one states that, if he attains Buddhahood, only those who commit the five cardinal sins and those who slander the correct teaching will be excluded [from salvation]. Surely this means that, even if Amida Buddha's original vow is true and enables one to attain rebirth in his Pure Land, those who slander the correct teaching are excluded from rebirth in the land of Amida Buddha?"

"Now the second volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, 'If a person fails to have faith [but instead slanders this sutra] . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.'¹⁴ If these scriptural passages are true, then how can Shan-tao and Honen, who both regarded the Nembutsu school as representing the essence of Buddhism, escape falling into the great citadel of the Avichi hell? And if these two priests fall into hell, there can be no doubt that the scholars, disciples, and lay believers who follow in their footsteps will also as a matter of course fall into the evil paths. These are the matters that perplex me. What is your opinion, the Honorable Ryuzo?" In this manner, Sammi-ko posed his question.

The Honorable Ryuzo answered, "How could I doubt the worthies and learned men of antiquity? Ordinary priests such as myself believe them

with profound reverence." Then Sammi-ko retorted, saying: "These words do not impress me as those of a wise man. Everyone believes in those Buddhist teachers who were revered in their own time. But the Buddha enjoins us in the Nirvana Sutra as his final instruction, 'Rely on the Law and not upon persons.' The Buddha taught us to rely on the sutras if the Buddhist teachers should be in error. You say those teachers could not possibly be in error, but between the Buddha's golden words and your personal opinion, I am committed to the former."

The Honorable Ryuzo asked, "When you speak of the many errors of the Buddhist teachers, to which teachers do you refer?" Sammi-ko answered, "I refer to the doctrines of the Great Teacher Kobo and the Honorable Honen, whom I mentioned before." The Honorable Ryuzo exclaimed, "That is impossible! I would not dare discuss the Buddhist teachers of our nation. The people in this audience all follow them, and if angered, will surely create an uproar. That would be a fearsome thing."

Then Sammi-ko said: "Because you asked me to specify which teachers were in error, I mentioned those whose teachings contradict the sutras and treatises.¹⁵ But now you suddenly have reservations and refuse to discuss the matter. I think that you merely perceive your own dilemma. In matters of doctrine, to fear others or stand in awe of society's opinion and not expound the true meaning of the scriptural passages in accordance with the Buddha's teaching is the height of foolishness. You do not appear to be a wise or honorable priest. As a teacher of the Law, how can you not speak out when evil doctrines spread throughout the land, when the people fall into the evil paths and the country stands on the brink of ruin? That is why the Lotus Sutra reads, 'We care nothing for our

bodies or lives,¹⁶ and the Nirvana Sutra says, "... even though it costs him his life."¹⁷ If you are a true sage, how can you begrudge your life in fear of the world or of other people?

"Even in non-Buddhist literature we find mention of a man named Kuan Lung-feng, who was beheaded, and of the worthy Pi Kan, who had his chest torn open. But because Kuan Lung-feng remonstrated with King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and Pi Kan admonished King Chou of the Yin dynasty, their names have been handed down in history as those of worthies.

"The Buddhist scriptures tell us that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was beaten with sticks and staves, the Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded, the priest Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, and the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face and exiled to the area south of the Yangtze River. Yet was it not because they propagated the correct teaching that they gained the name of sages?"

Then the Honorable Ryuzo replied, "Such people cannot possibly appear in the latter age. We are the sort who fear society and dread the opinions of others. Even though you speak so boldly, I doubt that you actually live up to your words."

Sammi-ko retorted: "How can you possibly know another's mind? Let me tell you that I am a disciple of the Sage Nichiren, who is now widely known throughout the country. Although the sage, my teacher, is a priest in the latter age, unlike the eminent priests of our day, he neither seeks invitations nor flatters people, nor has he earned the slightest bad reputation in secular matters.

"He simply declares, in light of the sutras, that because the evil teachings of such schools as the True Word, Zen, and Pure Land as well as their slanderous priests fill this country, and everyone from the ruler on down to the

general populace has taken faith in them, the people have all become arch-enemies of the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha. In this life they will be forsaken by the gods of heaven and earth, and suffer invasion by a foreign country, and in the next life they will fall into the great citadel of the Avichi hell.

"He has said that if he declares such a thing he will incur great enmity, but that if he does not he cannot escape the Buddha's condemnation. The Nirvana Sutra says, 'If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching.' Realizing that, if in fear of the world's opinion he did not speak out, he would fall into the evil paths, my teacher has risked his life for more than two decades, from the Kencho era¹⁸ through this third year of the Kenji era (1277), without slackening in the least. Therefore, he has undergone countless persecutions at the hands of individuals, and twice he has even incurred the ruler's wrath.¹⁹ I myself was one of those who accompanied him when the wrath of the authorities fell upon him on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of the Bun'ei era (1271),²⁰ and I was considered equally guilty and came close to being beheaded myself. Despite all this, do you still say that I hold my own life dear?"

As Ryuzo-bo closed his mouth and turned pale, Sammi-ko persisted: "With such paltry wisdom it is unwarranted for you to declare that you will dispel the people's doubts. The monks Shore of Suffering and Superior Intent thought they knew the correct teaching and intended to save the people, but they fell into the hell of incessant suffering along with their disciples and lay believers. If you, with your limited knowl-

edge of Buddhist doctrines, preach in an attempt to save people, then surely you and your followers will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. You had better reconsider such preaching from this day forth. I had not felt that I should speak in this way; but I, too, cannot be exempted from the Buddha's warning that, if one sees a misguided priest sending others into hell with his evil teachings and fails to reproach that priest and expose his errors, then one is oneself betraying the Buddha's teaching. Moreover, I feel pity that all those, both high and low, who listen to your preaching will fall into the evil paths. Therefore, I am speaking out in this way. Is not a person of wisdom one who admonishes the ruler when the country is endangered or corrects others' mistaken views? But in your case, no matter what error you may see, you will no doubt refuse to correct it for fear of society's reaction. Because of this, I am powerless to help you. Even if I had Manjushri's wisdom and Purna's eloquence, they would be wasted on you." So saying, Sammi-ko rose to leave; but the members of the audience, rejoicing, joined their palms together and implored him to stay and teach them the Buddhist doctrines for a little while. However, Sammi-ko left.

I have no further details to add, so you may surmise what really happened. How could a person who believes in the Lotus Sutra and aspires to the Buddha way possibly contemplate misbehavior or deliberately use foul language when the Buddhist teaching is being expounded? However, I leave this to your judgment.

Having declared myself to be a follower of the Sage Nichiren, I returned home and reported to you exactly what had happened during the debate. Moreover, no one was present on that occasion whom I did not know. What you heard must have been the fabrication of those who harbor jealousy

against me. If you quickly summon them to face me in your presence, the truth of the matter will be brought to light.

In your official letter you also state, "I revere the elder of Gokuraku-ji temple as the World-Honored One reborn," but this I cannot accept. The reason is that, if what the sutra states is true, the Sage Nichiren is the envoy of the Thus Come One who attained enlightenment in the remote past, the manifestation of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the votary of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and the great leader in the fifth five-hundred-year period [following the Buddha's passing]. In an attempt to have this sage executed, the Honorable Ryokan submitted a letter of petition to the authorities proposing that he be beheaded; but for some reason the execution was not carried out, and he was instead exiled far away to Sado Island. Was this not the doing of the Honorable Ryokan? I am sending you a copy of his petition together with this letter.

Even though the priest Ryokan preaches day and night on each of the six days of purification²¹ against killing even a blade of grass, he actually proposed that the priest who propagates the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra be beheaded. Has he not contradicted his own words? Is the priest Ryokan himself not possessed by the heavenly devil?

Let me explain how this situation came about. Whenever the priest Ryokan preached, he would lament: "I am endeavoring to help all people in Japan become 'observers of the precepts'²² and to have them uphold the eight precepts so that an end can be put to all the killings in this country and the drunkenness in the entire land; but Nichiren's slander has prevented me from achieving my desire." Hearing of this, the Sage Nichiren declared, "Somehow I must overturn the delusion of his great

arrogance and save him from the agonies of the hell of incessant suffering.” Hearing this, I, Yorimoto, and his other disciples all anxiously advised him, saying, “Even though you speak out of profound compassion as a champion of the Lotus Sutra, since the Honorable Ryokan is revered throughout Japan, especially by the samurai in Kamakura, perhaps you should refrain from making strong statements.”

Then, at the time of the great drought, the government ordered the priest Ryokan to perform a ceremony for rain on the eighteenth day of the sixth month in the eighth year of the Bun’ei era (1271), cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, in order to save the people. Hearing this news, the Sage Nichiren said, “Although prayers for rain are a trifling matter, perhaps I should take this opportunity to demonstrate to everyone the power of the Law that I embrace.” He sent a message to the priest Ryokan, saying: “If the Honorable Ryokan brings about rainfall within seven days, I, Nichiren, will stop teaching that the Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering and become his disciple, observing the two hundred and fifty precepts. But if no rain falls, that will show clearly that the Honorable Ryokan is deliberately confusing and misleading others, though he appears to be observing the precepts. In ancient times there were many instances in which the supremacy of one teaching over another was determined through prayers for rain, such as the challenge between Gomyo and the Great Teacher Dengyo,²³ or between Shubin and Kobo.”²⁴

The Sage Nichiren sent this message to the priest Ryokan through the intermediaries, the priest Suo-bo and the lay priest Irusawa, who are Nembutsu believers. In addition to being Nembutsu believers, this priest and lay priest are Ryokan’s disciples and do not yet believe in Nichiren’s teaching. So the

Sage Nichiren said to them, “We will decide whose teachings are correct through this prayer for rain. If it rains within seven days, you can believe that you will be reborn in the Pure Land by virtue of the eight precepts and the Nembutsu, which you already uphold. But if it does not rain, you should place your faith in the Lotus Sutra alone.” Delighted to hear this, the two delivered the message to the priest Ryokan at Gokuraku-ji temple.

With tears of joy, the priest Ryokan, along with more than 120 of his disciples, offered prayers, the sweat of their faces rising up in steam and their voices resounding to the heavens. They chanted the Nembutsu, the Prayer for Rain Sutra,²⁵ and the Lotus Sutra, and the priest Ryokan preached on the eight precepts in an effort to produce rainfall within seven days. When no sign of rain appeared after four or five days, he grew frantic and summoned hundreds of his disciples from Taho-ji temple²⁶ to join him, exhausting all his powers of prayer. But within seven days not a drop of rain fell.

At that time, the Sage Nichiren sent a messenger to him on no less than three occasions, saying, “A wanton woman called Izumi Shikibu and a priest named Noin²⁷ who broke the precepts were each able to cause rain immediately with just a thirty-one-syllable poem that made little sense and was full of excess flourishes. Why is it, then, that the Honorable Ryokan—who observes all the precepts and rules, has mastered the Lotus and True Word doctrines, and is renowned as the foremost in compassion—cannot produce rainfall within seven days, even when assisted by hundreds of his followers? Consider this: if one cannot cross a moat ten feet wide, can one cross a moat that is twenty or thirty feet wide? If you cannot bring about rainfall, which is easy, how can you attain rebirth in the pure land and achieve

Buddhahood, which is difficult?

"Accordingly you should from this point on revise your prejudiced views, which lead you to hate Nichiren. If you fear for your next life, come to me immediately as you have promised. I will teach you the Law that causes rain to fall and the path that leads to Buddhahood. Have you not failed to produce rain within seven days? The drought intensifies and the eight winds²⁸ blow all the more violently, while the people's grief grows deeper and deeper. Stop your prayers immediately." When the messenger conveyed the Sage Nichiren's message word for word at the hour of the monkey (3:00–5:00 P.M.) on the seventh day, the priest Ryokan wept, and his disciples and lay believers also cried aloud in their chagrin.

When the Sage Nichiren incurred the wrath of the government authorities and was asked about this matter, he told the story as it really happened. So he said: "If the priest Ryokan had had any sense of shame, he would have disappeared from public view and retired to a mountain forest. Or if he had become my disciple as he had promised, then he would have shown at least a little seeking spirit. But in actuality, he made endless false accusations against me in an attempt to have me executed. Is this the conduct of a noble priest?" I, Yorimoto, also personally observed the situation. Where other affairs are concerned, I would not dare to address my lord in this fashion, but in this matter alone, however I may consider it, I find I cannot remain silent.

You state in your official letter, "After meeting the priest Ryuzo and the elder of Gokuraku-ji temple, I look up to them as I would to Shakyamuni or Amida Buddha." Addressing this statement, too, with the utmost respect, I must point out that, while in Kyoto, the priest Ryuzo was feeding morning and evening on human flesh;

and when this became known, the priests of Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei rose up against him, saying, "The world has entered the latter age, and evil demons are rampant throughout the country. We must subdue them with the power of the Mountain King."²⁹ They burned down his dwelling and intended to punish him, but he quickly escaped, and no one knew of his whereabouts. At this point he suddenly appeared in Kamakura and was again eating human flesh, causing right-minded people to tremble in fear. Nevertheless, you say you respect him as a Buddha or a bodhisattva. How can I, as your retainer, refrain from pointing out my lord's error? I wonder what the level-headed people in our clan think about this matter.

In the same letter you also state, "To defer to one's lord or parents, whether they are right or wrong, is exemplary conduct according with the will of Buddhas and gods and also with social propriety." As this matter is of the utmost importance, I will refrain from expressing my own opinion and instead cite authoritative works [of sages and worthies]. *The Classic of Filial Piety* states, "[In a case of moral wrong,] a son must admonish his father, and a minister must admonish his lord." Cheng Hsüan³⁰ says, "If a lord or a father behaves unjustly and his minister or son fails to remonstrate with him, then the state or the family will come to ruin." *The New Narrations*³¹ states, "If one fails to remonstrate against one's ruler's tyranny, one is not a loyal minister. If one fails to speak out for fear of death, one is not a man of courage."

The Great Teacher Dengyo states, "In general, where unrighteousness is concerned, a son must admonish his father, and a minister must admonish his lord. Truly one should know this: As is the case with lord and minister, or with father and son, so it is with

teacher and disciple. A disciple must speak out when his teacher goes astray.”³² The Lotus Sutra states, “We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.” The Nirvana Sutra reads, “For example, it is like a royal envoy skilled in discussion and clever with expedient means who, when sent on a mission to another land, would rather, even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler. Wise persons too do this.” The Great Teacher Chang-an says, “[A royal envoy . . . would rather], even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler’ means that one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.”³³ He also states, “One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha’s teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender . . . rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent.”³⁴ My fellow samurai may think that I, Yorimoto, am lacking in propriety toward you, but in all other worldly affairs, I will resolutely heed the words of my lord and my parents.

I can only lament when I see my lord, to whom I am so profoundly indebted, being deceived by those who embrace evil teachings and in danger of falling into the evil paths. Because King Ajatashatru took Devadatta and the six non-Buddhist teachers as his mentors and opposed Shakyamuni Buddha, all the people of the kingdom of Magadha became enemies of Buddhism, and the 580,000 clansmen of the king also opposed the Buddha’s disciples. Among them, only Minister Jivaka was the Buddha’s disciple. The great king disapproved of his minister’s devotion to the Buddha just as my lord disapproves of me, Yorimoto. But in

the end he discarded the erroneous doctrines of the other six ministers and took faith in the correct teaching that Jivaka espoused. Perhaps, in the same way, I will save you in the end.

When I speak this way, you may wonder how I dare to compare you to Ajatashatru, who committed the five cardinal sins. But it is clear in the light of the sutra that your offense is a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times graver than his, though I hesitate to say such a thing.

The Lotus Sutra states, “Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children.”³⁵ If this scriptural statement is correct, Shakyamuni Buddha is the father and mother, teacher and sovereign to all living beings in Japan. Amida Buddha does not possess these three virtues. However, you ignore the Buddha of the three virtues and invoke the name of another Buddha [Amida] day and night, morning and evening, sixty thousand or eighty thousand times a day. Is this not an unfilial deed? It was the Thus Come One Shakyamuni himself who originally taught that Amida had vowed to save all people; but in the end he regretted it and said, “I am the only person [who can rescue and protect others].” After that, he never again taught that there are two or three Buddhas who can save the people. No one has two fathers or two mothers. What sutra says that Amida is the father of this country? What treatise indicates him as its mother?

The teachings of Nembutsu, such as the Meditation Sutra, were expounded provisionally in preparation for the Lotus Sutra. They are like the scaffolding used when building a pagoda. Some think that, because the Nembutsu teachings and the Lotus Sutra are both a part of Buddhism, they differ only in that one was expounded earlier and one later; but these people are laboring under a profound misconception. They

are like someone foolish enough to prize the scaffolding even after the pagoda has been completed, or like someone who says that the stars are brighter than the sun. Concerning such persons, the sutra states, "Though I teach and instruct them, they do not believe or accept my teachings. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."³⁶

All the inhabitants of Japan at present are people who reject Shakyamuni Buddha while invoking the name of Amida Buddha, who discard the Lotus Sutra and believe in the Meditation and other sutras. Or they are lay men and women who make offerings to these slanderers, or the renowned priests and even the ruler of the country who revere as wise men those who in fact commit the five or seven cardinal sins³⁷ or the eight offenses. Of such people, the sutra states that they "will keep repeating this cycle [of rebirth in the Avichi hell] for a countless number of kalpas."³⁸

Being aware to some small degree of these errors, I have ventured to bring them to your attention. Among those in service, despite their differences in rank, there is none who does not honor his lord, each according to his station. If, knowing that my lord will fare badly in both this life and the next, I were to remain silent in fear of my fellow samurai or of the world at large, then would I not be guilty of complicity in your offense?

No one can deny that the Nakatsukasa of two generations, my father and myself, have dedicated our lives in service to our lords. When your father³⁹ incurred the wrath of the authorities, his hundreds of retainers all shifted their allegiance; among them, my late father Yorikazu alone remained faithful to the end, accompanying him into exile to the province of Izu. Shortly before the battle that took place in Kamakura on the twelfth day of the

second month in the eleventh year of the Bun'ei era,⁴⁰ I, Yorimoto, was in the province of Izu, but no sooner had I received word at the hour of the monkey on the tenth day than I hastened alone over the Hakone pass and joined with seven others who vowed before you to put an end to their lives. But the world at length grew calm again, and my lord now lives in peace. Since that time, you have included me among those who enjoy your trust in all matters, whether trifling or significant. How, then, could I estrange myself from you? I would obediently follow you even into the next life. If I should attain Buddhahood, I would save my lord as well, and if you were to attain Buddhahood, I expect you would do the same for me.

So I listened to the sermons of various priests and inquired into which teaching leads to Buddhahood. And I came to believe that, according to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Sage Nichiren is the sovereign of the three-fold world, the father and mother of all living beings, and the emissary of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni—Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

More than four hundred years have now passed since the evil teaching called the True Word school was introduced to Japan. The Great Teacher Dengyo brought it from China in the twenty-fourth year of the Enryaku era (805), but he considered it undesirable for this country, and therefore did not allow it to be designated as a school in its own right, defining it merely as an expedient teaching of the Tendai Lotus school. Later, when the Great Teacher Dengyo had passed away, the Great Teacher Kobo, not to be outdone by him, took advantage of the opportunity to establish the True Word teaching as an independent school, but Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei would not accept it. However, Jikaku and Chisho were of limited insight,

and although they lived on Mount Hiei, their hearts inclined toward Kobo of To-ji temple. Perhaps for this reason, they turned against their teacher Dengyo and for the first time established the True Word school at Enryaku-ji. This marked the beginning of our country's ruin.

For the more than three hundred years that followed, some insisted on the superiority of the True Word teaching over the Lotus Sutra; others, on the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over the True Word teaching; and still others, on the equality of both teachings. As the dispute continued unresolved, the imperial rule remained unaffected and did not come to an end. However, in the time of the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa, the seventy-seventh sovereign, the chief priest of the Tendai school, Myoun, became exclusively committed to the True Word teaching and was killed by Yoshinaka.⁴¹ This is an example of the passage that states, "Their heads will split into seven pieces."⁴²

Then, in the time of the Retired Emperor of Oki, the eighty-second sovereign, the Zen and Nembutsu schools appeared and spread throughout the land, as had the great evil True Word teaching. So the vows made by the Sun Goddess and the god Hachiman to protect one hundred sovereigns throughout one hundred reigns were broken, and the imperial authority came to an end.⁴³ Through the workings of the Sun Goddess and the god Hachiman, affairs of state then came to be entrusted to the Acting Administrator Yoshitoki of the Kanto region.⁴⁴

These three evil teachings spread to Kanto, where they gained support within the ruling clan to a surprising degree. Therefore, the two heavenly lords Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings were enraged and admonished the rulers by means of unprecedented disturbances in the heavens and calamities on earth.

When their admonitions went unheeded, they commanded a neighboring country to punish those who slandered the Lotus Sutra. The Sun Goddess and the god Hachiman were powerless to help. The Sage Nichiren alone was aware of all this.

Such being the strictness of the Lotus Sutra, I have set aside all trivial concerns and served you devotedly until this day in my desire to lead my lord to enlightenment. Are not those who accuse me falsely thereby disloyal to you? If I were to leave the clan and abandon you now, you would immediately fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Then, even if I myself were to attain Buddhahood, I could only grieve, feeling that I had done so in vain.

As for the Hinayana precepts,⁴⁵ the two hundred and fifty precepts were expounded for the heavenly gods by the great arhat Purna, but the layman Vimalakirti reprimanded him, saying, "You should not place impure food in a jeweled vessel."⁴⁶ Angulimala reproached Manjushri, saying, "You will never realize the truth of emptiness expounded in the Mahayana teachings through [Hinayana] practices, which are as insignificant as mosquitoes and gadflies."⁴⁷ Manjushri later set forth seventeen flaws in the Hinayana precepts,⁴⁸ and the Thus Come One likewise repudiated them with the eight analogies.⁴⁹ The Great Teacher Dengyo denounced them as donkey's milk and likened them to a toad.⁵⁰ The later disciples of Ganjin⁵¹ accused the Great Teacher Dengyo of calumny and appealed directly to Emperor Saga, but because what Dengyo had said is clearly indicated in the sutras, their efforts were to no avail. The petition submitted to the emperor by the schools of Nara proved futile, and the great ordination platform [for conferring the Mahayana precepts] was erected at Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei. Thus the Hinayana precepts have already long since been

discarded. Even if I, Yorimoto, should compare the priest Ryokan to a mosquito, a gadfly, or a toad, because such assertions are clearly based on the sutras, you would have no reason to find fault with me.

Now it is unimaginably grievous to me that you would order me to submit a written oath [discarding my faith in the Lotus Sutra]. If I, Yorimoto, were to follow the trend of the times, which goes against the Buddhist teachings, and write such an oath, you would immediately incur the punishment of the Lotus Sutra. When the Sage Nichiren, the envoy of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, was exiled because of the false charges leveled against him by the priest Ryokan, fighting broke out within one hundred days,⁵² just as he had predicted, and a great number of warriors perished. Among them were the

scions of the Nagoe clan.⁵³ Is not the priest Ryokan solely to blame for their deaths? And if you now pay heed to the views of Ryuzo and Ryokan and force me to write this oath, will you not be equally guilty?

I am not sure whether those who slander me are simply ignorant of this causal principle, or whether they are intentionally trying to do you harm. In any event, I urge you to summon those who are plotting to use me in order to provoke some major incident, and have them confront me in your presence.

With my deep respect.

The twenty-fifth day of the sixth month in the third year of Kenji (1277), cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

Submitted by Shijo Nakatsukasa-no-jo Yorimoto.



Background

This petition was written by Nichiren Daishonin in the sixth month of 1277 on behalf of his loyal follower Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo Yorimoto, or Shijo Kingo, who had been served an official letter of reprimand from his lord, Ema Chikatoki. The petition, addressed to Lord Ema, asserts that Shijo Kingo was being subjected to unjustified slander.

On the ninth day of the sixth month, 1277, a religious debate took place at Kuwagayatsu in Kamakura, in which Sammi-ko (also known by the more commonly used name Sammi-bo), a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin, soundly defeated Ryuzo-bo, a Tendai priest who had been expelled from Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei and had later come to Kamakura where he won the patronage of Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple. The audience was so pleased

that they begged Sammi-bo to remain and preach for them.

Shijo Kingo had been present at this debate merely as a member of the audience. His enemies, however, told Lord Ema that he had forcibly disrupted the debate and shown contempt for Ryuzo-bo and Ryuzo-bo's teacher, Ryokan—whom Lord Ema revered. About two weeks later, he was suddenly served an official letter from his lord accusing him of these things. The letter further charged Kingo with disobeying his lord, in defiance of both Buddhist and secular custom, and ordered him to write an oath to the effect that he would discard his faith in the Lotus Sutra. If he refused to do so, Lord Ema threatened, his fief would be confiscated and he would be banished.

Shijo Kingo immediately wrote a re-

port of the entire affair and sent it with Lord Ema's official letter to Nichiren Daishonin at Minobu. In his report he expressed his firm resolve never to write an oath discarding his faith, even if his fief were to be confiscated.

Kingo's messenger left Kamakura on the afternoon of the twenty-fifth and arrived at Minobu on the evening of the twenty-seventh. Nichiren Daishonin was delighted to learn that his disciple was determined to uphold his faith and propagate the Law even at the cost of his life. He also perceived the machinations of Ryokan and Ryuzo-bo behind this incident. He therefore

wrote this letter of petition to encourage Kingo and sent it addressed to Lord Ema in which he defended Kingo. This petition, however, was apparently never submitted.

In it the Daishonin sought to correct Lord Ema's misunderstanding about Kingo's behavior during the debate, and to expose the real intentions of the priests Ryokan and Ryuzo-bo and enable Lord Ema to understand the error of their teachings. The petition also clarifies what true loyalty from a vassal to his lord really means—in both Buddhist and secular terms.

Notes

1. Shimada no Saemon and Yamashiro no Mimbu were apparently two of Lord Ema's retainers, who, as messengers, carried his official letter to Shijo Kingo. Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter, a petition from Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo Yorimoto, or Shijo Kingo, to his lord, Ema Chikatoki, on behalf of his disciple. "I" refers to Shijo Kingo, "you" to Lord Ema.

2. "Temple of the Great Buddha Image." One of the seven major temples of Kamakura, which enshrines a huge image of Amida Buddha.

3. This and the following quotation summarize Kobo's views as expressed in his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, and *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*. Ghee means the finest clarified butter, or the last of the five flavors (milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee). Ghee is used as a metaphor for the highest of all the sutras.

4. On the basis of the *Profound Secrets Sutra*, the Dharma Characteristics school divides people into five categories called the five natures. "Those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment" is one of these five. See five natures in Glossary.

5. The Flower Garland school divides the perfect teaching, the highest of the five teachings, into the root teaching and the branch teachings, and asserts that the Flower Garland Sutra is the root, and the Lotus Sutra, the branches.

6. Views from Ch'eng-kuan's *Profound Discourse on the Flower Garland Teachings*. "The sudden teaching" means those teachings in which the Buddha directly expounded his enlightenment without preparatory instruction. "The gradual teaching" means those teachings that the Buddha expounded to gradually elevate the people's capacity. Ch'eng-kuan asserted that the Flower Garland Sutra represented the perfect teaching within the sudden teaching, and that the Lotus Sutra represented the perfect teaching within the gradual teaching.

7. Views from Shan-tao's *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*.

8. Views from Honen's *Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

9. The Zen school asserted that the essence of Buddhism was transmitted from mind to mind, claiming that the Buddha's enlightenment was transferred in this way to Mahakashyapa and then to each successive Zen patriarch.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

11. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

12. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

13. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

15. "Treatises" here indicates the works of great bodhisattvas such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu.

16. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

17. The entire passage appears on page 810.

18. Nichiren Daishonin first proclaimed the teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in the fifth year of Kencho (1253).

19. This refers to the Izu Exile in 1261, and to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271 and the Sado Exile that immediately followed it.

20. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

21. The six days of purification are six days each month on which lay followers purify body and mind by observing the eight precepts (see Glossary). They are the 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th, and 30th days of the month.

22. The "observers of the precepts" refers here to those who observe the eight precepts, that is, followers of Ryokan's Precepts school.

23. Gomyo (750-834) was a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school. According to *The Record of the Precepts of the One Mind*, in 818, when people were enduring the hardships of a great drought, Dengyo, in response to Emperor Saga's command, offered prayers employing the Lotus, Golden Light, and Benevolent Kings sutras. On the third day rain began to fall. Gomyo prayed for rain with his forty disciples using only the Benevolent Kings Sutra, and rain did not fall until the fifth day.

24. Shubin was a ninth-century priest of the True Word school. In 823 he was given Sai-ji (West Temple) by Emperor Saga, while Kobo was given To-ji (East Temple). In the spring of 824, during a drought, Shubin competed with Kobo in praying for rain. He brought about rainfall on the seventh day, while Kobo could not make rain fall even after twenty-one days.

25. This sutra, translated by Pu-k'ung, details the ritual of the prayer for rain and the proper conduct to be observed by the one performing it.

26. A temple, no longer extant, in Kamakura. In light of the text, it would appear to have been a large temple and under the supervision of Ryokan.

27. Izumi Shikibu (b. c. 976), a court lady-in-waiting, and Noin (b. 988), a poet-priest, whose works include poems that express prayers for rain.

28. Eight kinds of gales including rainstorms, tornados, and storms. Explanations vary according to the source, but in any event they indicate actual violent weather conditions. When Ryokan offered his

prayers, no rain fell; instead, destructive winds arose.

29. A deity said to be the guardian god of Mount Hiei and the Tendai school.

30. Cheng Hsüan (127-200) was a scholar of the Later Han dynasty, who wrote commentaries on *The Classic of Filial Piety*, *Analects*, and other texts.

31. A collection of the anecdotes that appeared from the Spring and Autumn period through the Former Han dynasty. Written by Liu Hsiang (77-6 B.C.E.), it consists of ten fascicles.

32. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

33. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

34. *Ibid*.

35. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3. This passage indicates the virtues of sovereign and parent. A passage at the end of this paragraph, "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others," indicates the virtue of teacher.

36. *Ibid*.

37. According to *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"*, the seven cardinal sins are the five cardinal sins (see Glossary) plus the offenses of killing a monk of high virtue and killing a teacher.

38. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

39. "Your father" here is thought to refer to Ema Mitsutoki. Nakatsukasa Yorikazu, Yorimoto's father, served Ema Mitsutoki. After Yorikazu's death, Yorimoto served both Mitsutoki, who had by that time become a lay priest, and his son Chikatoki, to whom this letter is addressed. In 1246 Mitsutoki came under suspicion of plotting a rebellion against the regent Hojo Tokiyori and was exiled to Ema in Izu.

40. Reference is to an unsuccessful attempt by Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune, to seize power. It actually occurred in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272). "The eleventh year of the Bun'ei era (1274)" (the year of invasion by the Mongol forces) is probably an error. Among the chief conspirators in the rebellion were Ema Mitsutoki's younger brothers, Noritoki and Tokiakira, who plotted to have Hojo Tokisuke assume the regency. These two, along with Tokisuke, were eventually executed for their part in this affair. Their nephew, Ema Chikatoki, was the lord of the Ema clan at the time of the attempted coup and fell under suspicion of complicity. It would appear that Chikatoki's faithful retainers vowed to com-

mit suicide should their lord be executed.

41. Yoshinaka is Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–1184). Also known as Kiso Yoshinaka. A general of the Minamoto clan. He beheaded Myoun, the fifty-fifth and fifty-seventh chief priest of Enryaku-ji, when he attacked Mount Hiei during the struggle between the Minamoto and the Taira clans.

42. Lotus Sutra, chap. 26.

43. During the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221, the imperial forces were defeated in an attempt to overthrow the shogunate government based in Kamakura. This defeat strengthened the Kamakura government's hold upon the nation and effectively broke the power of imperial rule. The Retired Emperor Gotoba, who had planned the attempted overthrow, was exiled by the regent Hojo Yoshitoki to Oki, an island in the Sea of Japan.

44. Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224) was the regent of the Kamakura shogunate during the Jokyu Disturbance. The Kamakura shogunate made Kanto (eastern Japan) its base, while the imperial court was located in Kyoto in the western part of the country.

45. The Hinayana precepts are divided into several categories, such as the five precepts, the eight precepts (both being for lay believers), the ten precepts for both male and female novices of the Buddhist Order, the two hundred and fifty precepts for fully ordained monks, and the five hundred precepts for fully ordained nuns. Ryokan, whom Lord Ema revered, took great pride in observing the two hundred and fifty precepts.

46. Vimalakirti Sutra. This means that one should not exhort those of superior capacity to observe the Hinayana precepts. It also refers to the inferiority of the Hinayana in comparison to the Mahayana teachings.

47. Presumably a rephrasing of a passage in the Angulimala Sutra.

48. The “seventeen flaws” refers to the reasons why the Hinayana precepts are inferior to the Mahayana precepts, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts reflect abhorrence of the threefold world, the realm inhabited by unenlightened beings, while the Mahayana precepts do not; the Hinayana precepts show disdain for benefits, while the Mahayana precepts encompass them all.

49. Comparisons by which Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized the superiority of the Mahayana precepts over the Hinayana, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts practiced by voice-hearers do not even produce benefit as small as the print of a cow's hoof, while the Mahayana precepts upheld by bodhisattvas produce benefit as vast as the ocean.

50. Donkey's milk is said to be too distasteful to drink, while cow's milk (the Mahayana precepts) appeases people's thirst and nurtures life. With this metaphor, Denryo indicates that the Hinayana precepts do not lead to enlightenment. In addition, he employs the simile of a toad to denounce the blindness of attachment to the Hinayana precepts, using an analogy similar to “a frog in a well.” Jikaku cites these analogies in his *Treatise Clarifying and Praising the Mahayana Precepts*.

51. This refers to the leaders of the six schools of Nara, who upheld the Hinayana precepts that the Chinese Precepts priest Ganjin (688–763) had established in Japan.

52. The rebellion led by Hojo Tokisuke in the second month of 1272. See also n. 40.

53. The scions of the Nagoe clan refer to Tokiakira and Noritoki, who were Ema Mitsutoki's younger brothers and Chikato-ki's uncles. Since Tomotoki, the father of Mitsutoki, lived at Nagoe in Kamakura, his clan was called the Nagoe clan.

On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors



I HAVE placed your offerings of one sack of rice, parched rice, melons, eggplants, and other items before the Buddha.

As to the origin of the service for deceased ancestors,¹ among the disciples of the Buddha was one called the Venerable Maudgalyayana. As the foremost in transcendental powers among the disciples, he ranked alongside Shariputra, the foremost in wisdom. These two were like the sun and moon ranged side by side around Mount Sumeru, or like the ministers of the left and right who assist a great king.

Maudgalyayana's father was called Kissen Shishi, and his mother was called Shodai-nyo.² His mother, because she was guilty of greed and stinginess, after her death was reborn in the realm of hungry spirits, but the Venerable Maudgalyayana rescued her from there, and this began the tradition of the service.

It came about as follows. Though Maudgalyayana's mother had fallen into the realm of hungry spirits and was suffering there, Maudgalyayana, being only a common mortal, had no way of knowing this. When he was a young boy, he entered the house of a teacher of Brahmanism and there made an exhaustive study of the four Vedas and the eighteen major scriptures, which constitute the complete sacred writings of Brahmanism. At this time, however, he

still did not know where his mother had been reborn.

Later, at the age of thirteen, he and Shariputra together visited Shakyamuni Buddha and became his disciples. Thereafter, Maudgalyayana was able to free himself from the illusions of thought and to advance to the first stage of sagehood³ and then to cut off the illusions of desire and become an arhat, thereupon gaining the three insights and the six transcendental powers. Having opened the heavenly eye, he could see throughout the entire major world system as though it were reflected in a clear mirror. His vision penetrated the earth, and he could see into the three evil paths just as we, looking down through a layer of ice, see fish beneath the ice when the morning sun shines on it. And as he looked down, he saw that his mother was in the realm of hungry spirits.

She had nothing to drink, nothing to eat. Her skin was like that of a golden pheasant when its feathers have been plucked; her bones were like round stones placed one beside the other. Her head was big as a ball, her neck thin as a thread, and her stomach swelled like the sea. Her mouth open, her palms pressed together begging for something to eat, she resembled a starving leech that has caught the scent of a human. The sight of her famished

form as she gazed at the son she had had in her previous existence and began to weep was beyond the power of analogy to describe. One can imagine how heartrending a scene this must have been for Maudgalyayana.

The priest Shunkan, temple administrator of Hossho-ji, was exiled to the island of Iogashima. Naked, his hair hanging down unbound, his body wasted and thin, he wandered along the seashore where he picked up bits of seaweed and wrapped them about his loins or, spotting a fish, seized it with his right hand and gnawed it with his teeth. At that time a youth who had once been in the priest's service came to the island to visit him.⁴ I wonder which was the more miserable sight, this priest or Maudgalyayana's mother? I venture to think that Maudgalyayana's mother was even more pitiful to look at than this priest.

The Venerable Maudgalyayana was so overwhelmed with pity at the sight of his mother that he immediately employed his great transcendental powers and offered her some rice. His mother was delighted, and, seizing some of the rice in her right hand while concealing the remainder with her left, she stuffed the rice into her mouth. What should happen then but the rice changed into fire and began to burn! It burst into flame as though a bundle of torches had been lit, and his mother's body crackled and burned.

When Maudgalyayana saw this, he panicked and became utterly confused and, employing his transcendental powers, summoned forth a great flood of water. But the water turned into firewood, and his mother's body only burned more fiercely, the sight of which filled him with even greater pity.

Maudgalyayana, realizing that his own transcendental powers were altogether inadequate to remedy the situation, raced away and in an instant appeared in the presence of the Buddha,

where he presented his tearful appeal.

"I was born into a family of believers of Brahmanism," he said, "but later I became a disciple of the Buddha. I have gained the rank of arhat, freed myself from rebirth in the threefold world, and acquired the three insights and the six transcendental powers that go with the status of arhat. But now when I try to rescue my own mother from the great sufferings that beset her, I seem only to make her anguish worse than before, which fills my heart with grief!"

The Buddha replied: "Your mother has committed grave misdeeds. You alone do not have the power to remedy this situation. And indeed no one, neither the gods of heaven, the gods of earth, the devils, the Brahmanists, the Taoist priests, the four heavenly kings, nor the gods Shakra and Brahma have the power to do so. Therefore, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you should bring together all the sage monks of the ten directions, prepare offerings of food and drink representing a hundred different flavors, and present them for the purpose of rescuing your mother from her sufferings."

Maudgalyayana did just as the Buddha had instructed him, and as a result his mother was freed from the realm of hungry spirits, where she had been destined to suffer for the period of a kalpa. So we are told in the scripture known as the Service for the Deceased Sutra. That is the reason why even now, in this latter age after the passing of the Buddha, people perform this ceremony on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. It is common practice for them to do so.

I, Nichiren, would like to note the following. The Venerable Maudgalyayana was, among the Ten Worlds, one who belonged to that of the voice-hearer. His observance of the two hundred and fifty precepts was as firm as a rock, and his attention to the three

thousand rules of conduct, without a single exception, was as perfect as the full moon on the night of the fifteenth. His wisdom was like the sun, and his transcendental powers enabled him to encircle Mount Sumeru fourteen times⁵ and thereby move the huge mountain.

And yet, even though he was a sage of this order, he found it very difficult to repay the great debt of kindness he owed his mother. Moreover, when he attempted to repay it, he actually increased her already great suffering.

In comparison, the priests of today observe the two hundred and fifty precepts in name only and, in fact, use their so-called observance of the precepts as a means to dupe others. They have not a trace of transcendental power—a huge stone could sooner ascend to heaven than they could exercise such powers. Their wisdom is in a class with that of oxen, no different from that of sheep. Though they might gather together by the thousands or ten thousands, they could never relieve one iota of the sufferings of departed parents.

All things considered, the reason the Venerable Maudgalyayana could not rescue his own mother from suffering was that he put his faith in the Hinayana version of Buddhism and devoted himself to the observance of the two hundred and fifty precepts. According to the Vimalakirti Sutra, the layman called Vimalakirti criticized Maudgalyayana, saying, “Those who give alms to you will fall into the three evil paths.” The meaning of this passage is that those who make offerings to the Venerable Maudgalyayana, a worthy man who observes the two hundred and fifty precepts, will be reborn in one of the three evil paths. And this does not apply to Maudgalyayana alone, but to all the voice-hearers and to those in this latter age who place great emphasis upon the observance of the precepts.

In comparison to the Lotus Sutra, this Vimalakirti Sutra I have just mentioned is no more than a lowly servant far down in the ranks of retainers. The point is that the Venerable Maudgalyayana had not yet attained Buddhahood himself. Since he himself had not yet attained Buddhahood, it was very difficult for him to relieve the sufferings of his parents. And how much more difficult would it have been for him to do so for anyone else!

Later, however, following the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to honestly discard expedient means,⁶ the Venerable Maudgalyayana summarily rejected and cast aside the two hundred and fifty precepts of the Hinayana teaching and chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. In time Maudgalyayana attained Buddhahood and was called by the name Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha. And at that time his father and mother, too, attained Buddhahood. Hence it is said in the Lotus Sutra, “Then our wishes will be fulfilled and the longings of the multitude will likewise be satisfied.”⁷

Maudgalyayana’s physical body was inherited by him from his parents. Therefore, when his own physical body attained Buddhahood, the bodies of his father and mother likewise attained Buddhahood.

By way of analogy, let us consider the case of the military leader Taira no Kiyomori, the governor of Aki, who lived at the time of the eighty-first sovereign of Japan, Emperor Antoku. Kiyomori, engaging in one battle after another, overthrew the enemies of the nation and in time advanced to the highest post in the government, that of grand minister of state. Emperor Antoku was his grandson. All the members of his clan were permitted to enter the palace and were assigned to positions of great eminence. Kiyomori held the entire country of Japan, with its sixty-six provinces and two outlying

islands,⁸ in the palm of his hand, and people bowed before him as plants and trees bow before a great wind.

But he became arrogant and puffed up with pride and, in the end, treated the gods and Buddhas with contempt and attempted to control the shrine keepers and the Buddhist priests. As a result, he aroused the enmity of the priests of Mount Hiei and of the seven major temples of Nara. Eventually, on the twenty-second day of the twelfth month in the fourth year of the Jisho era (1180), he went so far as to burn down two of those seven temples, Todai-ji and Kofuku-ji.

The retribution for this grave offense soon fell upon the person of the grand minister and lay priest himself. In the following year, the first year of the Yowa era, on the fourth day of the intercalary second month, [having contracted a fever] he began to burn like a piece of charcoal, his body the fuel, his face the flames. In the end, tongues of flame shot out from his body, and he perished from the heat.

The results of his grave offense then fell upon his second son, Munemori. Munemori was thought to have drowned in the western sea [at the battle of Dannoura], but he came floating up on the eastern horizon, where he was captured, bound, and forced to kneel in the presence of the general of the right, Minamoto no Yoritomo.

Meanwhile, Kiyomori's third son, Tomomori, threw himself into the sea and ended up as the excrement of fish. And his fourth son, Shigehira,⁹ was taken captive and bound and, after having been dragged first through Kyoto and then through Kamakura, was in the end handed over to the seven major temples of Nara. There a great multitude of a hundred thousand temple followers gathered and, declaring him to be an enemy of their Buddha, one by one slashed him with swords.

The greatest evil among evils pro-

duces consequences that not only affect the perpetrators personally but extend to their sons, their grandsons, and so on down to the seventh generation. And the same is true of the greatest good among good.

The Venerable Maudgalyayana put his faith in the Lotus Sutra, which is the greatest good there is, and thus not only did he himself attain Buddhahood, but his father and mother did so as well. And, amazing as it may seem, all the fathers and mothers of the preceding seven generations and the seven generations that followed, indeed, of countless lifetimes before and after, were able to become Buddhas. In addition, all their sons, their wives or husbands, their retainers, supporters, and countless other persons not only were enabled to escape from the three evil paths, but all attained the first stage of security and then Buddhahood, the stage of perfect enlightenment.

Therefore, it is said in the third volume of the Lotus Sutra, "We beg that the merit gained through these gifts may be spread far and wide to everyone, so that we and other living beings all together may attain the Buddha way."¹⁰

With all this in mind, I note that you have a grandson, Jibu-bo, who is a Buddhist priest. This priest does not uphold the precepts and is lacking in wisdom. He does not observe a single one of the two hundred and fifty precepts or a single one of the three thousand rules of conduct. In his lack of wisdom he is in a class with oxen or horses, and because of his failure to observe the rules of conduct he resembles a monkey. But he reveres Shakyamuni Buddha and puts his faith in the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Hence he is like a snake that grips a jewel in its mouth, or a dragon that bears sacred relics on its head.¹¹ A wisteria vine, by twining around a pine, may climb a thousand fathoms into the air; and a

crane, because it has its wings to rely upon, can travel ten thousand *ri*. It is not their own strength that allows them to do these things.

This applies likewise in the case of the priest Jibu-bo. Though he himself is like the wisteria vine, because he clings to the pine that is the Lotus Sutra, he is able to ascend the mountain of perfect enlightenment. Because he has the wings of the single vehicle to rely upon, he can soar into the sky of Tranquil Light. With wings such as these, he is a priest who can bring comfort to not only his parents and his grandfather and grandmother, but also all his relatives down to the seventh generation.

How fortunate a woman you are to possess this fine jewel of a grandson. The dragon king's daughter offered her jewel and thereby obtained Buddhahood.¹² You have given your grandson to be a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and this will lead you to enlightenment.

I am so pressed by various matters that I cannot write in detail just now. I will write again another time.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the seventh month

Reply to the grandmother of
Jibu-bo



Background

This letter was written for the grandmother of Jibu-bo Nichii, one of the Daishonin's disciples, in response to the offerings she had made just before the yearly service for deceased ancestors.

Though traditionally thought to have been written in the third year of Kenji (1277), recent studies suggest that this letter was written in the second year of Koan (1279).

In this letter, the Daishonin offers a detailed explanation of the origin of the service that was the established custom of his day. The Daishonin attributes the roots of this tradition to the story of Maudgalyayana's efforts to save his deceased mother. He explains that Maudgalyayana, one of Shakyamuni's foremost disciples, failed initially to relieve his mother's torment because he had put his faith in the Hinayana version of Buddhism and devoted him-

self to observing precepts and thus had not attained Buddhahood. When Maudgalyayana rejected the precepts, chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and attained Buddhahood, his deceased parents attained Buddhahood as well, the Daishonin says.

It is thought that Jibu-bo's grandmother lived in Ihara District of Suruga Province. According to Nikko Shonin's *List of Disciples upon Whom Nikko Bestowed the Gohonzon*, Jibu-bo, originally a Tendai priest at Shijuku-in temple in Suruga, took faith in the Daishonin's teaching and studied under Nichiji, who later became one of the six senior disciples of the Daishonin. Although details are unclear, it is believed that it was Jibu-bo who urged his grandmother to take faith in the Daishonin's teachings.

Notes

1. A Buddhist service held for the repose of the dead. Such ceremonies were conducted annually, usually on the fifteenth day of the seventh month.

2. Kissen Shishi and Shodai-nyo are the Japanese names for this couple. Their Sanskrit names are unknown.

3. The first of the four stages of Hinayana enlightenment that voice-hearers aim to attain.

4. Shunkan (d. 1179) was a priest of the Tendai school. In 1177, he helped formulate a plot to overthrow Taira no Kiyomori, who held military control of the capital. The plot was discovered, however, and Shunkan was banished to Iogashima, an island located south of Kyushu, where he died. According to *The Tale of the Heike*, during the third year of Shunkan's exile, a youth called Ario who had served him since childhood traveled to the island to visit his teacher.

5. T'ien-t'ai quotes a similar statement from the Increasing by One Agama Sutra in his *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 9.

8. The two outlying islands refer to Iki

and Tsushima, islands off the coast of Kyushu.

9. Taira no Shigehira (1156-1185). In 1180, by command of his father, Taira no Kiyomori, he attacked the priests of Nara and burned down Todai-ji and Kofuku-ji temples. In 1184, however, at the Battle of Ichinotani, Shigehira was captured by the Minamoto forces and eventually handed over to the priests of Nara, who had him beheaded.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 7.

11. The Marquis of Sui in China once came upon a large snake that had been wounded. He applied medicine to the wound, and the snake later appeared holding a jewel in its mouth to reward him. The story is referred to in the letter addressed to Yang Te-tsu by Ts'ao Chih (192-232), which is included in *Literary Anthology*. The source of the dragon reference is unknown.

12. This is described in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The dragon girl possessed an extremely precious jewel, which she presented to the Buddha.

A Warning against Begrudging One's Fief



YOUR letter dated the twenty-fifth of last month arrived at the hour of the cock (5:00–7:00 P.M.) on the twenty-seventh of the same month. On reading the official letter [ordering you to submit a written oath renouncing your faith in the Lotus Sutra] and your pledge not to write such an oath, I felt that it was as rare and as fragrant as seeing the udumbara plant in bloom and smelling the budding red sandalwood.

Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and Mahakashyapa were great arhats who had acquired the three insights and the six transcendental powers. Moreover, they were bodhisattvas who, because of the Lotus Sutra, had attained the first stage of development and the first stage of security, that is, the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena. Yet even they deemed themselves unable to endure the great persecutions that would attend the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in the saha world in the Latter Day of the Law, and declined to accept the task. How then is it possible for ordinary people in the latter age, who have not yet eradicated the three categories of illusion, to become votaries of this sutra?

Even though I myself have been able to withstand attacks with sticks of wood or tiles and stones, vilification,

and persecution by the authorities, how could people such as lay believers, who have wives and children, and are ignorant of Buddhism, possibly do the same? Perhaps they would have done better never to have believed in the first place. If they are unable to carry through with their faith to the end, and uphold it only for a short while, they will be mocked by others. So thinking, I felt pity for you. But during the repeated persecutions I suffered and throughout my two sentences of exile, you have demonstrated your resolve. Though that has been wondrous enough, I have no words sufficient to praise you for having written a pledge to carry through with your faith in the Lotus Sutra, in spite of your lord's threats and at the cost of your two fiefs.

The Buddha wondered whether even bodhisattvas like Universal Worthy and Manjushri could undertake the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age, and he therefore entrusted the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo to Superior Practices and the other three leaders of bodhisattvas who had sprung up from the earth as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds. Now, pondering the meaning of this matter, I wonder if Bodhisattva Superior Practices has taken possession of your body in order to assist me along the way. Or could it be

the design of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings?

The fact that those retainers who resent you are growing more presumptuous is definitely the result of the scheming of the priests Ryokan and Ryuzo. Should you write an oath discrediting your faith, they would only become more arrogant, and they would mention it to everyone they meet. Then my disciples in Kamakura would be hounded until not a single one remained.

It is the nature of ordinary people not to know what awaits them in the future. Those who have a full understanding of this are called worthies or sages. Passing over examples from the past, I will cite one from the present. The lord of Musashi¹ gave up both his domains and became a lay priest. I hear that ultimately he abandoned many estates, forsook his sons and daughters as well as his wife, and secluded himself from the world. You have neither sons nor reliable brothers. You have only your two fiefs. This life is like a dream. One cannot be sure that one will live until tomorrow. However wretched a beggar you might become, never disgrace the Lotus Sutra. Since it will be the same in any event, do not betray grief. Just as you have written in your letter, you must act and speak without the least servility. If you try to curry favor, the situation will only worsen. Even if your fiefs should be confiscated or you yourself driven out, you must think that it is due to the workings of the ten demon daughters, and wholeheartedly entrust yourself to them.

Had I not been exiled, but remained in Kamakura, I would certainly have been killed in the battle.² In like manner, since remaining in your lord's service will likely be to your detriment, this may well be the design of Shakyamuni Buddha.

I have written a petition³ on your behalf. Although there are several priests

there [in Kamakura], as they are too unreliable, I was thinking of sending Sammi-bo. However, since he has still not recovered from his illness, I am sending this other priest⁴ in his stead. Have either Daigaku Saburo, Taki no Taro, or Toki⁵ make a clean copy of it when he has time, and present it to your lord. If you can do that, the matter will be resolved. You need not be in a great hurry; rather, make preparations quietly within your lord's clan. As for the others, let them clamor against you far and wide. Then, if you submit the petition, it may spread throughout Kamakura, and perhaps even reach the regent himself. This would be misfortune changing into fortune.

I explained the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to you before. Matters of minor importance arise from good, but when it comes to a matter of great importance, great disaster without fail changes into great fortune. When people read this petition, their errors will surely come to light. You have only to speak briefly. Say rebukingly, "I will neither leave my lord's clan nor return my fief of my own accord. If my lord should confiscate it, I will regard it as an offering to the Lotus Sutra and a blessing."

You must in no way behave in a servile fashion toward the magistrate.⁶ Tell him, "These fiefs were not bestowed upon me by my lord. They were awarded to me because I saved his life with the medicine of the Lotus Sutra when he was seriously ill. If he takes them from me, his illness will surely return. At that time, even if he should apologize to me, I will not accept it." Having said so, take your leave in an abrupt manner.

Avoid all gatherings. Maintain a strict guard at night. Be on good terms with the night watchmen⁷ and make use of them. You should always be in company with them. If you are not ousted this time, the chances are nine to one that your fellow samurai will

make an attempt on your life. No matter what, be sure not to die a shameful death.

Nichiren

The seventh month in the third year of Kenji (1277), cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu, when the Daishonin was fifty-six years old, and sent to Shijo Kingo in Kamakura. Kingo served the Ema family, a branch of the ruling Hojo clan, and was well versed in both medicine and the martial arts.

In the sixth month of 1277, Shijo Kingo attended a religious debate at Kuwagayatsu in Kamakura at which Sammi-bo, a disciple of the Daishonin, defeated Ryuzo-bo, a protégé of Ryo-kan. Other retainers of Lord Ema, jealous of Kingo, reported falsely to the lord that Kingo had forcibly disrupted the debate. As a result, Lord Ema threatened to confiscate Kingo's fief. When Kingo received an official letter from Lord Ema after the Kuwagayatsu Debate ordering him to write an oath forsaking his faith in the Lotus Sutra, he sent the letter to the Daishonin at Minobu, along with a letter of his own in which he pledged never to write such an oath.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote the pres-

ent letter in reply to encourage Kingo and also sent him a petition addressed to Lord Ema in which he defended Kingo and praised the faithful service that he had rendered his lord. This petition is entitled *The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto*. (Yorimoto was part of Shijo Kingo's full name.) Not long after that, Lord Ema fell ill. Eventually, he had no choice but to ask Kingo for help. He recovered under Kingo's treatment and thereafter placed renewed trust in him. Later, Shijo Kingo received from him an estate three times larger than the one he already held.

In this letter, the Daishonin states, "However wretched a beggar you might become, never disgrace the Lotus Sutra," and defines a basic attitude in faith: No matter what social position one occupies or adversity one faces, it is vital to continue in faith, never compromising one's integrity as a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Notes

1. Hojo Yoshimasa (1242–1281). He held various positions in the Kamakura government and in 1276 became cosigner to the regent Hojo Tokimune. "Both his domains" refers here to Suruga and Musashi provinces.

2. Reference is probably to the conflict that broke out in the second month of 1272 between the regent Hojo Tokimune and his elder half brother Hojo Tokisuke.

3. The petition, known as *The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto*, that the Daishonin

wrote to Lord Ema on Shijo Kingo's behalf in the sixth month of 1277. The petition was apparently never submitted to Lord Ema.

4. The identity of "this other priest" is unknown.

5. Daigaku Saburo (1202–1286), also called Hiki Yoshimoto, was an official teacher of Confucianism for the Kamakura shogunate. He is said to have converted to the Daishonin's teachings upon reading a draft of *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*

for the Peace of the Land. Taki no Taro is also said to have been a teacher of Confucianism, but little is known about him except that he was a follower of the Daishonin. Toki, or Toki Jonin, served as a retainer to Lord Chiba, the constable of Shimosa Province, and was one of the Daishonin's leading disciples in Shimosa. He was a man of considerable learning, and the Daishonin entrusted him with many of his most important works.

6. The magistrate was an administrative official who carried out the orders of his superior. In this case, the official who would have been assigned to carry out Lord Ema's orders.

7. The night watchmen are thought to have been Shijo Kingo's escorts, who lived in his residence. Their estates had been confiscated because of their belief in the Daishonin's teachings. One opinion has it that they were Shijo Kingo's younger brothers.

Reply to Yasaburo



[I SUGGEST you begin the religious debate with these words:] “Although I am an ignorant layman, among the teachings I have heard, I was especially impressed by the passage in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra that reads, ‘Now this threefold world [is all my domain . . .]’ ”¹ This sutra passage means that this country of Japan is the domain of Shakyamuni Buddha. In addition to the fact that all the gods, such as the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and Emperor Jimmu, and all the people, from the ruler of the nation on down, dwell within his realm, he is the Buddha to whom we living beings are greatly indebted for three reasons. First, he is our sovereign; second, he is our teacher; and third, he is our father. Among all the Buddhas of the ten directions, only Shakyamuni Buddha is endowed with these three virtues. Therefore, even if all the people of the country of Japan were to serve Shakyamuni Buddha wholeheartedly just as they now do Amida Buddha, if they were to place him side by side with another Buddha and treat him in the same manner, that would still be a grave error. For example, though someone were our own ruler and wise besides, if we were to shift our allegiance to the ruler of another country—for instance, if, while dwelling in Japan, we were to pay honor to the king of China or Koryō, and

slight the sovereign of Japan—could we be called persons who honor the great sovereign of this country?

This is all the more true in the case of the priests of Japan, who without exception have shaved their heads and donned their robes as disciples of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. They are not the disciples of Amida Buddha. However, priests who have no halls in their temples where Shakyamuni is enshrined or where the Lotus meditation² is practiced, and who have neither painted nor wooden images [of Shakyamuni] nor even a copy of the Lotus Sutra, have set aside Shakyamuni Buddha, who is fully endowed with the three virtues. In each district, village, and household throughout the country, they have erected more images than there are people of Amida Buddha, who possesses not a single one of these virtues, and they chant the name of Amida Buddha exclusively, sixty thousand or eighty thousand times a day. Although such acts appear to be most admirable, when we view the matter in the light of the Lotus Sutra, we find that these good people are guilty of offenses heavier than those of wicked men who daily commit the ten evil acts. Evil people do not rely on any Buddha whatsoever, so they cannot be accused of disloyalty. Moreover, if they should become good people, they

might even devote themselves to the Lotus Sutra. Yet it is difficult to imagine that the people of Japan could ever turn their hearts with more seriousness and affection toward Shakyamuni Buddha than Amida Buddha, or toward the Lotus Sutra than the Nembutsu. Thus, they are evildoers who only resemble virtuous people. And among evildoers, they are the worst of the most terrible slanderers and icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief, in all Jambudvīpa. With regard to such people, Shakyamuni Buddha declared in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra, "When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."³

The priests of Japan today are all men of great evil, surpassing even Devadatta or the Venerable Kokalika. And because lay people revere them and make them offerings, this country is being transformed before our very eyes into the hell of incessant suffering, where countless people in their present existence, in addition to undergoing starvation, pestilence, and horrible agonies unknown in previous ages, will be attacked by a foreign power. This is due solely to the workings of deities like Brahma, Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon.

In all Japan, I alone understand why such things are happening. At first I pondered whether or not I should speak out. Yet what was I to do? Could I turn my back on the teachings of the Buddha who is father and mother to all living beings? Resolving to bear whatever might befall me, I began to speak out, and in these more than twenty years I have been driven from my dwelling, my disciples have been killed, and I have been wounded, exiled twice, and finally was nearly beheaded. I spoke out solely because I had long known that the people of Japan would meet with great suffering, and I felt pity for them. Thoughtful persons should therefore realize that I have met these trials for their sake. If they were

people who understood their obligations or were capable of reason, then out of two blows that fall on me, they would receive one in my stead. But far from it—rather, they arouse hatred toward me, which is something I cannot understand. And lay people, not having heard the truth, either drive me from my dwelling place or hate my disciples. It is beyond comprehension. For example, even if unwittingly we mistook our parents for enemies and reviled or struck and killed them, how could we avoid the guilt of that offense? These people, failing to recognize their own rudeness, seem to think that I am rude. They are like a jealous woman with furious eyes who, unaware that when she glares at a courtesan her own expression is disagreeable, instead complains that the courtesan's gaze is frightening.

Explain that these things have happened solely because the ruler has failed to inquire [about Buddhist doctrines]. And that the reason no inquiry has been made is that the people of this country are guilty of so many offenses that their evil karma has destined them unflinchingly to be attacked by a foreign country in this lifetime and to fall into the hell of incessant suffering in the next.

[And please add something along these lines:] "I believe this because it is clearly recorded in the sutras. Even though you may attack and threaten insignificant persons like ourselves or drive us from our homes, in the end you will never get away with it. The resolve of this priest is such that it is most unlikely that even the Sun Goddess or Great Bodhisattva Hachiman can make him obey, let alone ordinary persons! That is why we hear that he has never quailed, even in the face of repeated persecutions, but has instead become all the more firmly determined."

Now if that priest objects, then re-

spond by asking if what you have just said is a distorted view. Ask him whether or not the Lotus Sutra contains a passage stating that Shakyamuni Buddha is our parent, our teacher, and our sovereign. If he answers that it does, demand to know if a passage exists stating that Amida Buddha is his parent, sovereign, and teacher: Yes or no? If he replies that such a sutra passage exists, insist on knowing whether or not he has two fathers. But if he says that no such passage exists, then demand to know how, having abandoned his parent, he could treat another person well. In addition, you should assert that the Lotus Sutra in no way resembles the other sutras, quoting the passage, “In these more than forty years, [I have not yet revealed the truth].”⁴ If he attempts to cite the passage “She will immediately go to the World of Peace and Delight,”⁵ then demand to know if he admits that he is at a loss to reply to your question. If he admits this, then you should further explain the meaning of this passage.

You must be firmly resolved. Do not begrudge your fief; do not think of

your wife and children. And do not depend on others. You must simply make up your mind. Look at the world this year as a mirror. The reason that you have survived until now when so many have died was so that you would meet with this affair. This is where you will cross the Uji River. This is where you will ford the Seta.⁶ This will determine whether you win honor or disgrace your name. This is what is meant when it is said that it is difficult to be born as a human being, and that it is difficult to believe in the Lotus Sutra. You should pray intently that Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will all gather and enter into your body to assist you. If you happen to be summoned before the steward, you should first explain all this thoroughly.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fourth day of the eighth month
in the third year of Kenji (1277),
cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

Reply to Yasaburo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to the believer Yasaburo. One explanation identifies Yasaburo with a man named Saito Yasaburo, who lived at Numazu in Suruga Province. The wording of the last paragraph suggests that he may have been a samurai.

Yasaburo had evidently sought the Daishonin’s advice in preparation for an upcoming debate with a priest of the Pure Land school. This letter is the Daishonin’s reply. It can be roughly divided into two parts. The first and longer part outlines the general argument that the Daishonin suggests Yasa-

bu should present in debating with a follower of the Pure Land school. The second, beginning from “Now if that priest objects . . .,” instructs Yasaburo in how to press his opponent on specific points and urges him to muster up a resolute spirit.

The letter states that only Shakyamuni possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent with respect to the people of this saha world. In the Daishonin’s day, due to the growing influence of the Pure Land school, people tended increasingly to place their trust in Amida Buddha of the Western

Paradise, hoping to win rebirth in his Pure Land after death. But the Daishonin stressed the importance of reverence for Shakyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism who actually appeared in this world. Here he asserts that to worship Amida and slight Shakyamuni is an act of utter disloyalty. Thus, though the believers in Amida may seem

to be devoted to pious acts, they are in fact guilty of an offense far worse than that of impious men with no religious awareness whatsoever. Their grave error, the Daishonin says, is bringing disaster on the country in the form of famine, epidemics, and the impending Mongol invasion.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3. This passage indicates the Buddha's three virtues: "Now this threefold world is all my domain [the virtue of sovereign], and the living beings in it are all my children [the virtue of parent]. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others [the virtue of teacher]."

2. A meditation established by T'ien-t'ai on the basis of the Lotus Sutra, aimed at perceiving the ultimate reality. Carried out over a twenty-one-day period, it combined both walking and seated meditation, worship of the Buddha, repentance, and sutra chanting.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

4. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23. This passage means that a woman who embraces the Lotus Sutra can, at death, attain immediate rebirth in the World of Peace and Delight, or Amida's Pure Land. The Daishonin anticipates that Yasaburo's opponent may quote this passage in an attempt to justify his wor-

ship of Amida. By citing it in this context, however, he will be demonstrating that he in fact does regard another Buddha as equal to Shakyamuni. Having persuaded him to acknowledge that error, Yasaburo should "further explain the meaning of this passage"—in other words, that it is not a rationale for worshipping Amida, but rather expresses the blessings of the Lotus Sutra.

6. Uji River: The middle reaches of the Seta River, which originates at the southern edge of Lake Biwa and flows through Kyoto Prefecture, eventually emptying into Osaka Bay. In ancient times, it marked the southeastern line of defense for Kyoto, the capital, and was the site of several famous battles. Because of its strategic importance, whether or not one succeeded in crossing the Uji River determined one's troops' victory or defeat. Seta, the area facing the site where this river emerges from the lake, was another strategic point of defense. Thus, "crossing the Uji River" and "fording the Seta" have the identical meaning: winning decisively.

The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon



I HAVE received your offerings to the Gohonzon of five thousand coins, one horse-load of polished rice, and fruit. To begin with, this Gohonzon was revealed in the last eight years of the fifty that the Buddha preached in this world, and in this period of eight years, in eight chapters [of the Lotus Sutra], from the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter through the “Entrustment” chapter. Now, during the three periods following the Buddha’s passing, in the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, not even the term “object of devotion of the essential teaching” yet existed. How then could the object of devotion have been revealed? Moreover, there was no one who was able to give it expression. T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo perceived it in their hearts, but for some reason never put it into words, just as Yen Yüan¹ realized the true meaning of Confucius’s teaching, but never gave it expression. Yet the sutra itself and the commentaries of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo explicitly state that the Gohonzon will appear after two thousand years have elapsed following the Buddha’s passing, in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law.

How wondrous it is that, around two hundred years and more into the Latter Day of the Law, I was the first to reveal as the banner of propagation

of the Lotus Sutra this great mandala that even those such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo were unable to express. This mandala is in no way my invention. It is the object of devotion that depicts Shakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One, seated in the treasure tower of Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas who were Shakyamuni’s emanations as perfectly as a print matches its woodblock. Thus the five characters of the Lotus Sutra’s title are suspended in the center, while the four heavenly kings are seated at the four corners of the treasure tower. Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are side by side at the top. Seated below them are the bodhisattvas, including Universal Worthy and Manjushri, and the voice-hearers, including Shariputra and Maudgalyayana. [Beside them are] the gods of the sun and moon, the devil king of the sixth heaven, the dragon king, and an asura. In addition, the wisdom kings Immovable and Craving-Filled take up their stations to the south and north. The evil and treacherous Devadatta and the ignorant dragon king’s daughter form a group. Not only the Mother of Demon Children and the ten demon daughters, who are evil demons that sap the lives of people throughout the major world system, but also the Sun

Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the seven reigns of the heavenly gods and five reigns of the earthly gods, who are the guardian deities of Japan—all the various great and small gods, that is, the main gods, are ranged in rows. How then could the remaining subordinate gods be left out? The “Treasure Tower” chapter states, “[Shakya-muni Buddha used his transcendental powers to] lift all the members of the great assembly up into the air.”

Without exception, all these Buddhas, bodhisattvas, great sages, and, in general, all the various beings of the two worlds and the eight groups² who appear in the “Introduction” chapter of the Lotus Sutra dwell in this Gohonzon. Illuminated by the light of the five characters of the Mystic Law, they display the dignified attributes that they inherently possess. This is the object of devotion.

This is what is meant when the sutra says “the true aspect of all phenomena.”³ Miao-lo stated: “The true aspect invariably manifests in all phenomena, and all phenomena invariably manifest in the ten factors. The ten factors invariably manifest in the Ten Worlds, and the Ten Worlds invariably manifest in life and its environment.”⁴ It is also stated that the profound principle of the true aspect is the originally inherent Myoho-enge-kyo.⁵ The Great Teacher Dengyo said, “A single moment of life comprising the three thousand realms is itself the Buddha of limitless joy; this Buddha has forsaken august appearances.”⁶ Therefore, this Gohonzon shall be called the great mandala never before known; it did not appear until more than 2,220 years after the Buddha’s passing.

A woman who makes offerings to such a Gohonzon invites happiness in this life, and in the next, the Gohonzon will be with her and protect her always. Like a lantern in the dark, like a strong guide and porter on a treach-

erous mountain path, the Gohonzon will guard and protect you, Nichinyo, wherever you go. Therefore, you should take every care to ward off slanderers of the Law in the same way that you would never wish a courtesan even to come near your home. This is the meaning of “Thrust aside evil friends and associate with good companions.”⁷

Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness,⁸ the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life’s functions. To be endowed with the Ten Worlds means that all ten, without a single exception, exist in one world. Because of this it is called a mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that is translated as “perfectly endowed” or “a cluster of blessings.” This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith.⁹ This is what the sutra means when it states that one can “gain entrance through faith alone.”¹⁰

Since Nichiren’s disciples and lay supporters believe solely in the Lotus Sutra, honestly discarding expedient means¹¹ and not accepting even a single verse of the other sutras,¹² exactly as the Lotus teaches, they can enter the treasure tower of the Gohonzon. How reassuring! Make every possible effort for the sake of your next life. What is most important is that, by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo alone, you can attain Buddhahood. It will no doubt depend on the strength of your faith. To have faith is the basis of Buddhism. Thus the fourth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, “Buddhism is like an ocean that one can only enter with faith.” The fourth volume of *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* explains this: “With regard to the phrase ‘Buddhism is like an ocean that one can

only enter with faith,' even Confucius taught that faith is first and foremost. How much more so is this true of the profound doctrines of Buddhism! Without faith, how could one possibly enter? That is why the Flower Garland Sutra defines faith as the basis of the way and the mother of blessings." The first volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* says, "How does one hear, believe in, and practice the perfect teaching to attain perfect enlightenment?" The first volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* says, "To 'believe in the perfect teaching' means to awaken faith through doctrine and to make faith the basis of practice."

A non-Buddhist document relates that, because the emperor of Han¹³ believed his aide's report, the waters of a river froze on the spot. Another tells how Li Kuang, because he was eager to revenge his father, shot an arrow all the way up to its feathers into a boulder hidden in the grass. The commentaries of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo make it perfectly clear that faith is the cornerstone. Because the Han emperor believed

completely in his retainer's words, the river froze over. And Li Kuang was able to pierce a rock with his arrow because he fully believed it to be the tiger that had killed his father. How much more so is this true in Buddhism!

Embracing the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in itself encompasses the five practices. It was this matter, the wonderful practice that includes the immediate completion of the five practices, that was transmitted to the Great Teacher Dengyo when he journeyed to T'ang China and met the Reverend Tao-sui. No other teaching is more important for Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters. It is referred to in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter.¹⁴ I will write again in detail.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the eighth month in the third year of Kenji (1277)

Reply to Nichinyo



Background

In this reply to Nichinyo, Nichiren Daishonin expresses his gratitude for her offerings to the Gohonzon and explains the significance of the object of devotion. The exact identity of Nichinyo is unclear. She is thought to have been either the wife of Ikegami Munenaka, the older of the Ikegami brothers, or a daughter of the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, an earnest believer in Suruga Province. Judging from two letters the Daishonin sent her, she seems to have been a woman of good education and considerable affluence. Moreover, as the recipient of a Gohonzon, or object of devotion, she was evidently a

sincere believer. This letter contains a description of the Gohonzon that details the figures represented therein and their significance. The Daishonin also underscores the importance of faith in the Gohonzon.

In the first half of the letter, the Daishonin points out the rarity and importance of the Gohonzon. He cites the Lotus Sutra and other works to show that the Gohonzon is the embodiment of "the true aspect of all phenomena" and "the three thousand realms in a single moment of life."

In the second half, describing the great benefit of faith in the Gohonzon,

the Daishonin declares, “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself,” adding that the Gohonzon is also found only in faith. Sharing two examples from secular tradition, the Daishonin reminds Nichinyo that faith is by far the most

important element in manifesting “the Gohonzon” in one’s life. He concludes by stressing that chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with faith is the most complete form of Buddhist practice.

Notes

1. Yen Yüan (514–483 B.C.E.), also called Yen Hui, was one of Confucius’s most trusted disciples.

2. Beings assembled at the ceremony of the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. The two worlds—the world of desire and the world of form—are two divisions of the threefold world. The “eight groups” refers to the gods of the world of desire, the gods of the world of form, the dragon kings and their followers, the kinnara kings and their followers, the gandharva kings and their followers, the asura kings and their followers, the garuda kings and their followers, and the king of the human world (Ajatashatru) and his followers.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

4. *The Diamond Scalpel*.

5. This statement is attributed to T’ien-t’ai, but its source has not been identified.

6. This quotation is said to derive from *The Treatise on the Secret and Sacred Teachings*.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

8. The ninth, or amala-, consciousness is the Buddha nature, or the fundamental purifying force, that is free from all karmic im-

pediments. Here the Daishonin is associating it with Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

9. The Japanese word for faith consists of two Chinese characters.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

11. This phrase appears in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra.

12. This phrase appears in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra.

13. Emperor Kuang-wu (6 B.C.E.–C.E. 57), the founder of the Later Han dynasty. Before becoming emperor, he was once defeated in battle. While retreating, he and his forces were cornered before a broad river. When his trusted aide, Wang Pa, falsely reported that the river was frozen and that they could cross it, the emperor-to-be believed his report and then found the river indeed frozen.

14. This presumably refers to a passage of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, “After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way.”

The Hero of the World



HAVING glanced through your letter, I feel as relieved as if the day had finally broken after a long night, or as if I had returned home after a long journey.

Buddhism primarily concerns itself with victory or defeat, while secular authority is based on the principle of reward and punishment. For this reason, a Buddha is looked up to as the Hero of the World,¹ while a king is called the one who rules at his will. India is called the Land of the Moon,² and our country, the Land of the Sun. Of the eighty thousand countries in the land of Jambudvīpa, India is one of the largest, and Japan, one of the smallest. When it comes to the auspiciousness of their names, however, India ranks second and Japan first. Buddhism began in the Land of the Moon; it will reside in the Land of the Sun. It is in the natural course of events that the moon appears in the west³ and travels eastward while the sun proceeds from east to west. This truth is as inalterable as the fact that a magnet attracts iron, or that the ivory plant⁴ is nourished by the sound of thunder. Who could possibly deny it?

Let us examine how Buddhism came to Japan. Our country was first under the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and then under the five reigns of the earthly deities. Their reigns were fol-

lowed by the age of human sovereigns, the first being Emperor Jimmu. The thirtieth emperor was Kimmei, who reigned for thirty-two years. In those days there was a state called Paekche⁵ to the west of this country. It was under the suzerainty of the Japanese emperor and was governed by a king named Syōngmyōng. When the king made his annual tribute to Japan on the thirteenth day, with the cyclical sign *kanoto-tori*, of the tenth month in the thirteenth year of Emperor Kimmei's reign (552), the year with the cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*, he sent along with it a gilded bronze image of Shakyamuni Buddha, a number of Buddhist scriptures, and also priests and nuns. Overjoyed, the emperor sought counsel from his ministers as to whether or not the nation should worship the Buddha of the western countries.

The Great Minister Iname⁶ of the Soga clan said, "All the countries of the west worship this Buddha. Why should Japan alone deny him?" However, the Chief Minister Okoshi of the Mononobe clan, Nakatomi no Kamako,⁷ and others advised the emperor, saying: "The sovereign who rules over our nation has traditionally performed rites throughout the four seasons of the year in honor of heaven and earth, the gods of the land and of grain, and numerous other deities. If we alter this

custom in favor of the god of the west, our native deities will be angered." Unable to decide, the emperor decreed that the Great Minister Soga alone should worship the Buddha by way of trial, and that no one else should do so. Soga was exceedingly glad to receive this decree. He took the image of Shakyamuni Buddha to his residence at a place called Ohada⁸ and enshrined it there, to the surprise and outrage of the Chief Minister Mononobe.

At that time, a terrible epidemic broke out in Japan and killed a majority of the populace. Since it seemed as though the entire nation would perish, the Chief Minister Mononobe took this opportunity to declare to the emperor that the Buddha image should be destroyed. The emperor concurred and commanded that Buddhism, a foreign religion, be discarded immediately. The Chief Minister Mononobe, acting on the emperor's behalf, confiscated the statue, heated it in a charcoal fire, and smashed it with a hammer. He razed the Buddha image hall and flogged the priests and nuns. Then, although the sky was cloudless, a gale blew and rain fell. The imperial palace was consumed in a fire that descended from heaven.⁹ All three men—the emperor, Mononobe, and Soga—fell ill in the epidemic. Each suffered excruciating agony, as though he were being mangled or burned alive. Mononobe finally died, while the emperor and Soga barely recovered. From that time, nineteen years passed without anyone taking faith in Buddhism.

The thirty-first emperor, Bidatsu, was the second son of Kimmei. He reigned for fourteen years, aided by the ministers of the left and right. One of them was a son of the Chief Minister Mononobe no Okoshi, Yuge no Moriya,¹⁰ who had succeeded to his father's position. The other was a son of the Great Minister Soga no Iname, Soga no Umako [who also assumed his father's

position]. It was during Emperor Bidatsu's reign that Prince Shotoku was born. He was a son of Emperor Yomei and a nephew of Bidatsu. One day in the second month of the year when the prince was two years old, he faced the east, extended his third finger, and chanted "Hail, Buddha," whereupon the Buddha's ashes materialized in his palm. This was the first time that anyone in Japan had invoked the name of Shakyamuni Buddha.

When the prince was only eight years old, he proclaimed, "Those who, in the latter age, worship the image of the sage of the west, Shakyamuni Buddha, will forestall calamities and receive benefits. Those who despise it will invite disasters and have their lives shortened." Hearing this, the Chief Minister Mononobe no Moriya and others said in anger, "The Sogas have been worshiping the god of a foreign land in violation of the imperial decree." Epidemics still raged incessantly, nearly wiping out the entire populace. Mononobe no Moriya reported this to the emperor. The emperor issued a decree, which stated, "Soga no Umako has been upholding Buddhism. Practice of this religion must cease."

In compliance with the imperial command, Moriya, together with Nakatomi no Katsumi,¹¹ marched upon the temple. There they demolished the hall and pagoda, burned and destroyed the Buddha image, and set fire to the temple. They stripped the priests and nuns of their surplices and punished them with whips. After this incident, the emperor as well as Moriya and Umako fell ill in an epidemic. All three said that they felt as though they were being burned alive or hacked to pieces. Moreover, boils called smallpox appeared all over their bodies. Umako, lamenting in anguish, said, "Still, we should worship the three treasures." The emperor commanded that Umako alone should do so, and that no one else must follow

suit. Overjoyed, Umako had a monastery built and there worshiped the three treasures.

The emperor [Bidatsu] finally died on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the year when Prince Shotoku was fourteen. Yomei became thirty-second emperor and reigned for two years. He was a son of Kimmei and the father of Shotoku. In the fourth month of the second year of his reign (587), cyclical sign *hinoto-hitsuji*, he fell ill in an epidemic. Thereupon he expressed a desire to embrace the three treasures. Soga no Umako insisted that the imperial wish be honored, and finally brought a priest called Toyokuni¹² into the imperial palace. Mononobe no Moriya and others flew into a rage, and in their fury, swore to invoke a curse upon the emperor. At length the emperor passed away.

In the fifth month of that year, Moriya and his clan entrenched themselves at his residence in Shibukawa and assembled a large number of troops there. Prince Shotoku and Umako advanced on the enemy's position and fought. The fifth, sixth, and seventh months saw a total of four encounters. The prince lost the first three. Before the fourth battle took place, he offered a prayer and vowed that he would build a stupa for the preservation of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni's ashes and also construct Shitenno-ji, temple of the four heavenly kings. Umako similarly pledged that he would erect a temple and enshrine the image of Shakyamuni Buddha that had been sent from Paekche.

When the fighting began, Moriya shouted at the prince, "It is not I but the god of my ancestors, the great deity¹³ enshrined at Futsu, who shoots this arrow." The arrow flew far and struck the prince's armor. The prince responded by calling out, "It is not I but the four heavenly kings who shoot this arrow." Then he had a courtier named

Tomi no Ichihito let fly the arrow. It traveled a great distance and struck Moriya in the chest. Hata no Kawakatsu¹⁴ rushed to the spot and severed Moriya's head from his body. This incident took place during the interval between Yomei's passing and Sushun's ascension to the throne.

After Sushun became thirty-third emperor, Prince Shotoku built Shitenno-ji temple, in which he placed the Thus Come One Shakyamuni's ashes. Umako erected a temple called Gango-ji, where he worshiped the image of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, which had been sent from Paekche. Here it must be pointed out in passing that the most appalling fraud in the world today is that of the statue of the Thus Come One Amida, allegedly the original object of devotion of Zenko-ji temple.¹⁵ It was because of their enmity toward Shakyamuni Buddha that the three emperors as well as the members of the Mononobe clan perished. Prince Shotoku had an image of Shakyamuni Buddha cast and enshrined it in Gango-ji. This is the object of devotion now enshrined in Tachibana-dera¹⁶ temple. It was the first statue of Shakyamuni Buddha ever to be made in Japan.

In China in the seventh year of Yung-p'ing (C.E. 64), the second emperor of the Later Han dynasty, Emperor Ming, dreamed of a man of gold.¹⁷ He thereupon dispatched eighteen emissaries, including the scholars Ts'ai Yin and Wang Tsun, to India to seek Buddhism. As a result, in the tenth year of Yung-p'ing, cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, two sages of central India, Kashyapa Matanga and Chu Fa-lan, were brought to China and accorded the highest esteem. Thousands of adherents of Confucianism and Taoism, schools that had up until then presided over all imperial rites, resented this and lodged a complaint with the emperor. The emperor decreed that an open debate be

held on the fifteenth day of the first month in the fourteenth year of Yung-p'ing. Overjoyed, the Taoists erected an altar for a hundred Chinese deities as their objects of devotion. The two sages from India had as their objects of devotion the Buddha's ashes, a painting of Shakyamuni Buddha, and five sutras.¹⁸

As was customary in their rituals performed before the emperor, the Taoists brought in the scriptures of their school, as well as the *Three Records*, the *Five Canons*, and the writings of the two sages¹⁹ and the Three Kings, piled some of them with firewood, and set them ablaze. In similar rites in the past these books had always withstood the flames, but this time they were reduced to ashes. Others, which were placed in water, had previously floated on the surface, but now sank to the bottom. The Taoists called out for demons to appear, but to no avail. Unbearably humiliated, Ch'u Shan-hsin, Fei Shu-ts'ai, and others died of shame. When the two Indian sages preached Buddhism, the Buddha's ashes ascended to heaven and there radiated a light so brilliant that it eclipsed the sun. The Buddha in the painting emitted a light from between his eyebrows. More than six hundred Taoists, including Lü Hui-t'ung,²⁰ finally capitulated and entered the Buddhist priesthood. Within thirty days of this confrontation they built ten temples of Buddhism.

Thus Shakyamuni Buddha is perfectly just in administering reward and punishment. As I mentioned earlier, because the three emperors and the two subjects²¹ became enemies of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, they lost their lives and fell into the evil paths in their next existence.

Our own age is not unlike theirs. The Taoists Ch'u and Fei of China, and Moriya in Japan, by relying on the major and minor deities of their respective countries, became enemies of Shakya-

muni Buddha. But since these gods themselves follow the Buddha, those practitioners were all brought to ruin. These present times are exactly like theirs. The image I mentioned earlier that came from Paekche is that of Shakyamuni Buddha. Nevertheless, priests of the other schools have deceived the Japanese people by calling it Amida Buddha. In other words, they have replaced Shakyamuni with another Buddha. There is a difference between the Taoists and Moriya on the one hand and our contemporary priests on the other in that the former preferred gods to a Buddha while the latter have replaced one Buddha with another. However, they are alike in that they all abandoned Shakyamuni Buddha. There is no doubt, therefore, that our country will be ruined. This is a teaching that has never yet been revealed. Keep it strictly to yourself.

If there are any among my followers who are weak in faith and go against what I, Nichiren, say, they will meet the same fate as did the Soga family. I will tell you the reason. It was due to the efforts of father and son, Soga no Iname and Umako, that Buddhism came to be established in Japan. They could have held the same position as Brahma and Shakra at the time of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni's appearance in this world. Because they had brought Mononobe no Okoshi and his son Moriya to ruin, they became the only influential clan in the country. They rose in rank and controlled the nation, and their family enjoyed high prosperity. But Umako grew so arrogant that he had Emperor Sushun assassinated and many princes killed. Moreover, his grandson, Iruka,²² had his retainers put twenty-three of Prince Shotoku's children to death. Thereupon Empress Kogyoku, following the advice of Nakatomi no Kamako, had a statue cast of Shakyamuni Buddha and prayed to it fervently. As a result, Iruka,

his father, and the entire Soga family all perished at once.

Draw your own conclusions from what I said above. Those among my followers who fail to carry through their faith to the end will incur punishment even more severe. Even so, they should not harbor a grudge against me. Remember what fate Sho-bo, Noto-bo,²³ and others met.

Be extremely cautious, and for the time being never submit yourself to writing a pledge, whatever it may concern. No matter how furiously a fire may rage, it burns out after a while. On the other hand, water may appear to move slowly, but its flow does not easily vanish. Since you are hot-tempered and behave like a blazing fire, you will certainly be deceived by others. If your lord coaxes you with soft words, I am sure you will be won over, just as a fire is extinguished by water. Untempered iron quickly melts in a blazing fire, like ice put in hot water. But a sword, even when exposed to a great fire, withstands the heat for a while, because it has been well forged. In admonishing you in this way, I am trying to forge your faith.

Buddhism is reason. Reason will win over your lord. No matter how dearly you may love your wife and wish never to part from her, when you die, it will be to no avail. No matter how dearly you may cherish your estate, when you die, it will only fall into the hands of others. You have been prosperous enough for all these years. You must not give your estate a second thought. As I have said before, be millions of times more careful than ever.

Since childhood, I, Nichiren, have never prayed for the secular things

of this life but have single-mindedly sought to become a Buddha. Of late, however, I have been ceaselessly praying for your sake to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, and the god of the sun, for I am convinced that you are a person who can inherit the soul of the Lotus Sutra. Be extremely careful not to come into conflict with others. Do not meet anyone at any place other than your own house. None of the night watchmen²⁴ are sufficiently dependable, but considering that they had their residences confiscated because of their faith in the Lotus Sutra, you should, under ordinary circumstances, maintain friendly relations with them. Then they will exercise extra caution on their nightly rounds and provide you with protection. Even should the people on your side make a slight error, pretend not to see or hear it.

Even if your lord should ask to hear the teachings of Buddhism, do not heedlessly rejoice and rush off to see him. Answer mildly that you are not sure that you can comply, and that you will consult with some of my disciples. If you betray great joy in your countenance and allow yourself to be drawn in by his desire to hear the teachings, you will bring everything to ruin as surely as fire consumes whatever will burn, or as rain falls from heaven.

If the opportunity arises, submit to your lord the petition²⁵ I have written on your behalf. Since it contains matters of great import, it will certainly create a stir.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

To Shijo Kingo



Background

Around the third year of Kenji (1277), when this letter was written, Shijo Kingo was in great personal danger, having incurred the wrath of his lord Ema. Lord Ema's antagonism toward Shijo Kingo dated back to the Kuwagayatsu Debate, which took place in the sixth month, 1277. Taking advantage of their discord, Kingo's colleagues were watching for a chance to do away with him. In response to Kingo's report on the plight in which he was placed, Nichiren Daishonin wrote a petition to Lord Ema on Kingo's behalf, explaining what had happened at the Kuwagayatsu Debate and the relative

superiority of the Buddhist teachings.

In the present letter, the Daishonin clarifies the difference between Buddhism and government. Reward and punishment are means that a government employs to pursue its goals, while there is no such conscious manipulation in the world of Buddhism. Buddhism, based on an absolute Law, means victory or defeat—in other words, happiness or unhappiness—depending on whether one supports it or opposes it. In the last part of the letter, the Daishonin strongly advises Kingo to take great care to avoid being attacked by his enemies.

Notes

1. The Hero of the World is another name for the Buddha, so called because he valiantly confronts all sufferings and leads all people to enlightenment. The "Parable of the Phantom City" chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads, "World hero without peer, you who adorn yourself with a hundred blessings, you have attained unsurpassed wisdom."

2. Land of the Moon: (Chin Yüeh-chih) A name for India used in China and Japan. In the late third century B.C.E., there was a tribe called Yüeh-chih who ruled a part of India. Since Buddhism was brought from India to China via this territory, the Chinese seem to have regarded the land of the Yüeh-chih (moon tribe) as India itself.

3. "The moon appears in the west" refers to the fact that the new moon is first seen in the west just after sunset. Of course, the moon rises in the east and sets in the west each day just as the sun and stars do, but because its orbital motion is from west to east, it appears to move incrementally in retrograde, from west to east, each day.

4. A kind of plantain. The ivory plant is so called because its petals are large and ivory in color. In the Nirvana Sutra, it is said to grow with the sound of thunder.

5. Paekche was one of three kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula. It flourished from the mid-fourth through the mid-seventh century. Though the Daishonin indicates

that Paekche was in a subordinate relationship to Japan, scholars today, with access to a greater variety of historical documents than were available in the Daishonin's time, believe that the relationship was actually one of cooperation and exchange. Paekche is perhaps best known for introducing Buddhism to Japan, but it was also responsible for providing much of the support that allowed Japan to successfully adopt continental civilization.

6. The Great Minister Iname is Soga no Iname (d. 570), a court official who engaged in a struggle for power with the Chief Minister Mononobe no Okoshi, leader of the conservative faction at court. Iname's daughters became consorts of Emperor Kimmmei, and one of them gave birth to Emperor Yomei, father of Prince Shōtoku.

7. Nakatomi no Kamako is thought to have been a leading figure of the Nakatomi clan. Details about him are unknown. (Different from his namesake mentioned in n. 22.)

8. A place in Asuka Village, Nara.

9. The imperial palace was struck by lightning.

10. Yuge no Moriya is Mononobe no Moriya (d. 587), a court official who continued the opposition to Buddhism. He was also called Mononobe no Yuge no Moriya because his mother's clan was Yuge.

11. Nakatomi no Katsumi (d. 587) was a military leader of the Yamato period and an opponent of Buddhism. He was killed by Tomi no Ichihi, a retainer of Prince Shotoku.

12. Toyokuni (n.d.) was a naturalized priest from the Korean kingdom of Paekche.

13. The great deity refers here to Futsu no Mitama no Okami, the deity of Isonokami Shrine at Futsu, Nara, who was revered by the Mononobe family as their clan deity.

14. Hata no Kawakatsu (n.d.) was a courtier who won the trust of Prince Shotoku. It is said that, after the prince's death, he built Hachioka-dera (also called Koryu-ji) temple in honor of his memory.

15. Zenko-ji is a temple affiliated with the Tendai and Pure Land schools in what is now Nagano Prefecture. According to the documents of this temple, the statue originally enshrined there was the one sent by King Syöngmyöng to Emperor Kimmei. The documents claim that this statue was transported to Nagano by Honda Zenko, and enshrined in 642 at a temple which was to become Zenko-ji. However, *The Chronicles of Japan* says that the image sent by the king was one of Shakyamuni. It is conceivable that, with the rise of the Pure Land school, the original image was replaced by a statue of Amida Buddha.

16. A temple in Asuka in Nara, said to have been built by Prince Shotoku. It is now affiliated with the Tendai school.

17. This refers to the tradition that Emperor Ming (28-75) dreamed of a golden man levitating above the garden. He awakened and asked his ministers about the dream. One of them said that he had once heard of the birth of a sage in the western region during the reign of King Chao of the Chou dynasty and that this sage had been called the Buddha. The emperor sent eighteen envoys to the western region in order to obtain the Buddha's teachings. And at the request of these envoys, two Indian Buddhist monks came to China in C.E. 67 with Buddhist scriptures and images

on the backs of white horses.

18. Sutras translated into Chinese by Chu Fa-lan and Kashyapa Matanga, including the Sutra of Forty-two Sections.

19. Two of the Five Emperors, T'ang Yao and Yü Shun.

20. Lü Hui-t'ung was a Taoist in the Later Han dynasty. According to *The Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs*, he and other Taoists converted to Buddhism when they were defeated in debate in the presence of Emperor Ming in 71.

21. The three emperors are Kimmei, Bidatsu, and Yomei. The two subjects are Mononobe no Moriya and Nakatomi no Katsumi.

22. Soga no Iruka (d. 645), a court official of the Yamato period. In the age of Empress Kogyoku (r. 642-645), he seized the reins of government and perpetrated various atrocities. In 643 he forced Prince Yamashiro no Oe, a son of Prince Shotoku, to commit suicide and thereafter was able to manage affairs of state as he pleased. However, he was finally killed by Naka no Oe, who was to become Emperor Tenji, and Nakatomi no Kamako (Fujiwara no Kamatari), whereupon his father, Emishi, set fire to his own house and burned to death.

23. Sho-bo and Noto-bo were disciples of Nichiren Daishonin who later abandoned their faith. Sho-bo is said to have begun doubting the Daishonin around the time of the Izu Exile in 1261, and finally turned against him. Noto-bo is said to have lost his faith around 1271.

24. The night watchmen are thought to have been Shijo Kingo's escorts, who lived in his residence. Their estates were confiscated because of their belief in the Daishonin's teachings.

25. The petition refers here to *The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto* written by the Daishonin on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, 1277, to Lord Ema on behalf of Shijo Kingo, explaining the falsity of the charges that had been made against him. This petition was kept by Kingo and in the end not submitted to the lord.

The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles



IF we examine the essential and the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra, we see that the theoretical teaching maintains, as [did the teachings that came] before, that the Buddha first attained enlightenment during his present lifetime; therefore, obstacles still beset the teaching. The essential teaching has freed itself from such impediments. However, compared with the

five characters of the daimoku, it is a doctrine unsuited to the capacity of the people of the Latter Day of the Law. The wonderful means of truly putting an end to the physical and spiritual obstacles of all living beings is none other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

While the year that this letter was written is not known with certainty, it is thought to date from around the third year of Kenji (1277). It was addressed to Shijo Kingo.

The Daishonin states that, because the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra does not reveal the eternity of Buddhahood, and since the view of life it offers is, therefore, a shallow one, it is lacking in the power to help people overcome obstacles and

impediments arising from life's fundamental darkness. Although the essential teaching (latter half) surpasses these limitations by explaining that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, it is still unable to help people of the Latter Day of the Law, who lack the capacity to benefit from this teaching. Only the five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can lead them to Buddhahood.

Reply to Matsuno



I HAVE received one thousand coins, one *sho* of oil, one robe, and ten writing brushes. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for the sincerity that you have always shown me, so I will leave it to the Lotus Sutra and to Shakyamuni Buddha.

As I have been saying for some time, in your situation as a lay believer, you should just single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo morning and evening, day and night, and observe what happens at the last moments of your life. At that time, hasten to the summit of perfect enlightenment, and look around you in all directions. The entire realm of phenomena will have changed into the Land of Tranquil Light, with the ground made of lapis lazuli, the eight paths¹ marked off by

golden ropes, the four kinds of flowers² raining down from the heavens, music resounding in the air, and Buddhas and bodhisattvas all being caressed by breezes of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. We, too, will surely be among their number. The Lotus Sutra is indeed such a splendid sutra!

I am pressed for time, so I will not go into detail.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The ninth day of the ninth month
in the third year of Kenji (1277),
cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

Reply to Matsuno

Postscript: Would you kindly send me about ten *ryo* of magnolia tree seeds?³



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, one of Nichiren Daishonin's followers, who lived in Matsuno of Suruga Province. In this letter, the Daishonin expresses his appreciation for Matsuno's offerings and

encourages him to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with earnest faith throughout his life. In this way, urges the Daishonin, Matsuno will be able to experience Buddhahood at the moment of his death.

Notes

1. The eight paths lead in eight directions, that is, toward the eight points of the compass.

2. Mandarava, great mandarava, manjushaka, and great manjushaka flowers. Fragrant red and white flowers that, according to ancient Indian tradition, bloom in heaven.

3. Magnolia is a deciduous tree native to China, which grows to a height of about ten meters. It has feather-shaped, compound leaves and produces small yellow flowers in summer. Its hard, round seeds were strung together to make prayer beads. "Ten *ryo*" would weigh about 1.6 kilograms.

A Father Takes Faith



AS I had not heard from you in a long time, I was feeling quite anxious. Nothing could be more wonderful than this matter between Tayu no Sakan¹ and yourself. It is indeed marvelous!

We read in the sutras that it is customary that, when an age begins to decline, sages and worthies all seclude themselves from the world, and only slanderers, flatterers, smiling backstabbers, and those of crooked principles fill the land. To illustrate, when the water level drops, the pond is disturbed, and when the wind blows, the sea is never still. We also read that, when the latter age begins, and when droughts, epidemics, and great rains and winds come in succession, even the large-hearted become narrow, and even those who seek the way adopt erroneous views. Consequently, the sutras say that father and mother, husband and wife, and elder and younger brothers will be at odds with each other, like hunter and deer, cat and mouse, or hawk and pheasant—to say nothing of relations with strangers. Priests possessed by the heavenly devil, such as Ryokan and the others, deceived your father, Saemon no Tayu, and tried to destroy you and your brother, but you, having a wise heart, heeded Nichiren's admonitions. Therefore, just as two wheels support a cart, or two legs carry a person, just

as two wings enable a bird to fly, or just as the sun and moon aid all living beings, the efforts of you brothers have led your father to take faith in the Lotus Sutra. It is wholly due to you, Hyoe no Sakan, that matters have worked out this way.

According to the teachings of the true sutra, when the latter age has begun and Buddhism has fallen into complete disorder, a great sage will appear in the world. For example, the pine tree, which withstands the frost, is called the king of trees, and the chrysanthemum, which continues to bloom after other plants have withered, is known as a sacred plant. When the world is at peace, worthies are hard to distinguish. It is when the age is in turmoil that both sages and fools come into view. How pitiful that Hei no Saemon and the lord of Sagami failed to heed me! If they had, they would surely not have beheaded the envoys from the Mongol empire who arrived a few years ago. No doubt they regret it now.

The great ruler Emperor Antoku, the eighty-first sovereign, commissioned several hundred teachers of the True Word school, including the Tendai chief priest, Myoun, to offer prayers in an attempt to subdue the General of the Right Minamoto no Yoritomo. But their curses “rebounded upon the originator,”² as the sutra says. Myoun

was beheaded by Yoshinaka,³ and Emperor Antoku drowned in the western sea.⁴ The eighty-second, eighty-third, and eighty-fourth sovereigns, that is, the Retired Emperor of Oki, the Retired Emperor of Awa, and the Retired Emperor of Sado, as well as the reigning emperor⁵—these four rulers had the Tendai chief priest and Administrator of Priests Jien, and forty or more other eminent priests, including those of Omuro⁶ and Mii-dera temples, offer prayers to subdue the Taira general Yoshitoki.⁷ But again, the curses “re-bounded upon the originator,” and the above-mentioned four rulers were banished to various islands.

Concerning this great evil teaching [of the True Word school]: The three great teachers—Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho—violated Shakyamuni Buddha’s golden words that the Lotus Sutra is supreme, interpreting them to mean that the Lotus Sutra ranks second or third and the Mahavairochana Sutra ranks highest. Because the rulers put their trust in these distorted views, they destroyed both the nation and themselves in this life and are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering in the next.

This next special prayer ritual will be the third. Those among my disciples

who have already passed away are probably now observing this with their Buddha eye. And those whose lives have been prolonged, watch with your own eyes! The ruler and other high-ranking officials will be captured and carried off to a foreign land, and those who conducted the prayer ritual will either die insane, or end up in a foreign land, or hide themselves in the mountains and forests. The messenger of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, has twice been paraded through the streets,⁸ and his disciples and other supporters have been thrown into prison, killed, injured, or driven from the provinces where they lived. Therefore, the guilt of those offenses will unfailingly extend to each one of the inhabitants of those provinces. Also, people will be afflicted with white leprosy, black leprosy, or all kinds of other terribly grave illnesses.⁹ My disciples, understand the reasons for this.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The ninth day of the ninth month

Although this letter is specifically intended for you, it should in general be shown to all my followers. Do not tell others about it.



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the ninth month of the third year of Kenji (1277)—1278 according to another source—to Ikegami Hyoe no Sakan Munenaga, the younger of the two Ikegami brothers, expressing his joy at the conversion of Munenaga’s father, Saemon no Tayu Yasumitsu. For many years, Yasumitsu had stubbornly opposed his sons’ belief, attempting to divide the two by twice disowning the

elder brother, Munenaka, and promising to make Munenaga his heir if he would forsake the Daishonin’s teaching. Throughout this ordeal, Munenaka stoutly refused to abandon his faith, but Munenaga wavered from time to time. However, thanks to the Daishonin’s repeated letters of encouragement, he was able to resist Yasumitsu’s demands and make a firm commitment in faith. Now that the two brothers have

at last overcome their father's opposition and persuaded him to embrace the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin warmly congratulates Munenaga in particular, praising his decision to remain true to his faith and to his elder brother.

As the postscript indicates, however, this letter was intended not only for Munenaga but for all the Daishonin's followers. Its more general content begins with the passage "According to the teachings of the true sutra, when the latter age has begun and Buddhism

has fallen into complete disorder, a great sage will appear in the world." This refers to the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, where Shakyamuni Buddha transfers the essence of the Lotus Sutra to Bodhisattva Superior Practices to be propagated in the Latter Day of the Law. The essence of the Lotus Sutra, or the Mystic Law, spreads and flourishes even in the evil Latter Day, when other Buddhist teachings fall into decline.

Notes

1. Tayu no Sakan is another name for Ikegami Munenaka, the elder of the Ikegami brothers.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 25. In the sutra, the sentence reads in the future tense. It was changed here to fit the context of this letter.

3. Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–1184), a general who assisted Yoritomo in his revolt against the Taira clan.

4. Antoku, still a child at the time, drowned in 1185 during a sea battle at Dannoura, where the Taira met their final defeat at the hands of the Minamoto.

5. In 1221, three retired emperors—Gotoba, Tsuchimikado, and Juntoku—together with the reigning emperor Chukyo, joined in an attempt, led by Gotoba, to overthrow the military government in Kamakura. Their forces were defeated by those of the Kamakura regent Hojo Yoshitoki, under the leadership of his eldest son, Yasutoki. Chukyo was deposed; Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki; Tsuchimikado, to Awa (a different Awa from the Daishonin's birthplace); and Juntoku, to Sado Island.

6. Omuro is another name for Ninna-ji temple in Kyoto.

7. Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224), the second regent of the Kamakura shogunate, who crushed Gotoba's uprising in 1221, thereby extending the power of the shogunate over all of Japan. Since the Hojo were descended from a branch of the Taira clan, he was called the Taira general, though both he and his father had supported Minamoto no Yoritomo in his campaign to overthrow Taira domination.

8. The Daishonin refers to the events of the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271, when he was arrested and nearly beheaded. Seized by Hei no Saemon's men at his dwelling in Matsubagayatsu, he was first led through the streets of Kamakura to the office of advisers to the regent, where he was sentenced to exile on Sado Island. Then, however, instead of placing him in the custody of the Sado governor, his captors led him across Wakamiya Avenue to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi.

9. Chapter 28 of the Lotus Sutra describes the karmic retribution that results from slander by stating that those who disparage a believer in the sutra will contract white leprosy in their present lifetime.

The Three Kinds of Treasure



I HAVE received various articles from your messenger, including a white quilted robe and a string of coins, and the goods mentioned in Toki's letter.¹ The persimmons, pears, and fresh and dried seaweed are particularly welcome.

I am most grieved over your lord's illness. Although he has not professed faith in the Lotus Sutra, you are a member of his clan, and it is thanks to his consideration that you are able to make offerings to the sutra. Thus, these may become prayers solely for your lord's recovery. Think of a small tree under a large one, or grass by a great river. Though they do not receive rain or water directly, they nonetheless thrive, partaking of dew from the large tree or drawing moisture from the river. The same holds true with the relationship between you and your lord. To give another example, King Ajatashatru was an enemy of the Buddha. But because Jivaka, a minister in the king's court, believed in the Buddha and continually made offerings to him, the blessings accruing from his actions are said to have returned to Ajatashatru.

Buddhism teaches that, when the Buddha nature manifests itself from within, it will receive protection from without. This is one of its fundamental principles. The Lotus Sutra says, "I have profound reverence for you."² The Nirvana Sutra states, "All living beings

alike possess the Buddha nature." Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha's *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* says, "Because the true abiding Law invariably permeates one's life and exerts its influence, illusions are instantly extinguished, and the Dharma body manifests itself." Bodhisattva Maitreya's *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* contains a similar statement. What is hidden turns into manifest virtue.

The heavenly devil knew about this from before, and he therefore possessed your colleagues, causing them to invent that preposterous lie³ in order to prevent you from making offerings to the Lotus Sutra. Since your faith is profound, however, the ten demon daughters must have come to your aid and caused your lord's illness. He does not regard you as his enemy, but since he once acted against you by giving credit to the false accusations of your colleagues, he has become seriously ill, and the malady persists.

Ryuzo-bo, whom these people count on as their pillar of strength, has already been toppled, and those who spoke falsely of you have contracted the same disease as your lord. Because Ryokan is guilty of a much graver offense, it is more than likely that he will meet with or cause a bad accident. Surely he will not escape unharmed.

As things stand now, I have a feeling

you are in danger. Your enemies are sure to make an attempt on your life. In backgammon, if two stones of the same color are placed side by side, they cannot be hit by an opposing stone. A cart, as long as it has two wheels, does not lurch all over the road. Likewise, if two men go together, an enemy hesitates to attack. Therefore, no matter what faults you may find with your younger brothers, do not let them leave you alone even for a moment.

Your face bears definite signs of a hot temper. But you should know that the heavenly gods will not protect a short-tempered person, however important they may think he or she is. If you should be killed, even though you might attain Buddhahood, your enemies would be delighted, but we would feel only grief. This would indeed be regrettable. While your foes busy themselves plotting against you, your lord places greater confidence in you than before. Therefore, although they appear to have quieted down, inwardly they are no doubt seething with hate. So you should at all times behave unobtrusively in their presence. Pay greater respect to the other retainers of the clan than you have in the past. For the time being, when the sons of members of the Hojo clan are visiting your lord, refrain from calling on him, even if he should summon you.

If the worst should happen and your lord should die, your enemies would become masterless and would have nowhere to turn, though they do not seem to consider that fact. Unreasoning as they are, when they see you report to work more and more frequently, their hearts are bound to be fired with jealousy and their breath to come in pants.

If those sons of the Hojo clan or the wives of those in power should inquire about your lord's illness, no matter who the person may be, get down on your knees, place your hands properly, and

reply thus: "His malady is entirely beyond my poor skill to cure. But no matter how often I decline, he insists that I treat him. Since I am in his service, I cannot help but do as he says." Leave your sidelocks uncombed, and refrain from wearing well-starched court dress, bright quilted robes, or other colorful clothing. Be patient, and continue in this way for the time being.

Probably you are well aware of it, but let me cite the Buddha's prediction about what the latter age will be like. In essence he states: "It will be a muddied age in which even sages will find it difficult to live. They will be like stones in a great fire, which for a while seem to endure the heat but finally char and crumble into ashes. Worthy persons will advocate the five constant virtues, but they themselves will find it hard to practice them." Thus the saying goes, "Do not remain in the seat of honor too long."

Many people have plotted to undo you, but you have avoided their intrigues and emerged victorious. Should you lose your composure now and fall into their trap, you will be, as people say, like a boatman who rows his boat with all his might only to have it capsize just before he reaches the shore, or like a person who is served no hot water at the end of his meal.

While you are in your lord's residence, if you stay in the room assigned to you, nothing will happen. But on your way to work at dawn or returning from it at dusk, your enemies are bound to be lying in wait for you. Also, be very careful in and around your house in case someone should be hiding beside the double doors, inside the family sanctuary, under the floor, or in the space above the ceiling. This time your foes will use even more cunning in their plots than before. In the end, no one will be more dependable in an emergency than the night watchmen of Egara⁴ in Kamakura. However

disagreeable it may be to you, you should associate with them amicably.

Yoshitsune found it utterly impossible to defeat the Heike until he won Shigeyoshi over to his side and in that way vanquished the rival clan.⁵ The shogun [Minamoto no Yoritomo] sought to take revenge on Osada for his father's death, but he would not behead the murderer until after he had conquered the Heike.⁶ It is even more vital for you to ally yourself with the four night watchmen. The dwellings they had earned by risking their lives were confiscated by their lord because of the Lotus Sutra, and more directly, because of Nichiren. Be considerate of those who believe in Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra, no matter what they may have done in the past. Moreover, if they frequent your house, your enemies will be afraid to attack you at night. It is not as if they were trying to avenge their father's murder; certainly they do not want their plot to come out into the open. Against those who seek to avoid the eyes of others, there are no warriors as dependable as they are. Always maintain friendly relations with them. But since you are hot-tempered by nature, you might not take my advice. In that case, it will be beyond the power of my prayers to save you.

Ryuzo-bo and your elder brother plotted evil against you. Therefore, the heavenly gods so contrived it that the situation would develop exactly as you wished. Then how can you now dare to go against the wish of the heavenly gods? Even if you had accumulated a thousand or ten thousand treasures, of what use would they be if your lord should forsake you? He already looks to you as if you were his own parent, following you as water follows the shape of its container, longing for you as a calf longs for its mother, and relying on you as an elderly person relies on his staff. Is not his regard for you

due to the aid of the Lotus Sutra? How envious your fellow retainers must be! You must hurry and talk with these four men and report to me how the matter goes. Then I will fervently pray to the heavenly gods for your protection. I have already informed them of how deeply you grieve over your deceased father and mother. They will surely receive the utmost consideration in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Over and over I recall the moment, unforgettable even now, when I was about to be beheaded and you accompanied me, holding the reins of my horse and weeping tears of grief.⁷ Nor could I ever forget it in any lifetime to come. If you should fall into hell for some grave offense, no matter how Shakyamuni Buddha might urge me to become a Buddha, I would refuse; I would rather go to hell with you. For if you and I should fall into hell together, we would find Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra there. It would be as if the moon were illuminating the darkness, as if cold water were pouring into hot, as if fire were melting ice, or as if the sun were dispelling the darkness. But if you depart from my advice even slightly, do not blame me for what may happen.

The plague that is raging at present will, as you predict, strike those in the higher ranks of society at the turn of the year. This is perhaps the design of the ten demon daughters. For the time being stay calm, and observe how things develop. And do not go around lamenting to others how hard it is for you to live in this world. To do so is an act utterly unbecoming to a worthy man. If a man behaves in this way, then after he dies, his wife, overcome with sorrow at losing her husband, will tell other people about the shameful things he did, though she has no real intention of doing so. And that will in no way be her fault, but solely the result of his own reprehensible behavior.

It is rare to be born a human being. The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail. Life as a human being is hard to sustain—as hard as it is for the dew to remain on the grass. But it is better to live a single day with honor than to live to 120 and die in disgrace. Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people. More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. From the time you read this letter on, strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!

I would like to relate an incident that is customarily kept secret.⁸ In the history of Japan, there have been two emperors who were assassinated. One of them was Emperor Sushun. He was a son of Emperor Kimmei and an uncle of Prince Shotoku. One day during his reign as the thirty-third sovereign, he summoned Prince Shotoku and said, "We hear that you are a man of sacred wisdom. Examine Our physiognomy and tell Us what you see there!" The prince declined three times, but the emperor insisted that he obey the imperial command. Finally, no longer able to refuse, the prince reverently examined Sushun's physiognomy and then reported, "Your Majesty's countenance indicates that you will be assassinated."

The emperor's complexion changed color. "What evidence do you have to support such a contention?" he asked. The prince replied, "I see red veins running over your eyes. This is a sign that you will incur the enmity of others." Thereupon the emperor asked, "How can We escape this fate?" The prince said: "It is difficult to evade. But there are soldiers known as the five

constant virtues. As long as you keep these warriors on your side, you will be safe from danger. In the Buddhist scriptures these soldiers are referred to as the 'practice of forbearance,' one of the six paramitas."

For some time after that, Emperor Sushun faithfully observed the practice of forbearance. But, being irascible by nature, he violated the precept one day when one of his subjects presented him with a young wild boar. He withdrew the metal rod that was attached to his sword scabbard and stabbed the boar in the eyes with it, saying, "One of these days this is what We will do to that fellow We hate!" Prince Shotoku, who happened to be present, exclaimed, "Ah, what a fearful thing to do! Your Majesty will surely arouse the enmity of others. These very words you have spoken will be the sword that wounds you." The prince then ordered articles of value to be brought out and divided among those who had heard the emperor's remark, [hoping to buy their silence]. One of them, however, told the Great Minister Soga no Umako about the episode. Umako, believing that he was the one the emperor hated, won over Atai Goma, the son of Azumanoaya no Atai Iwai, and had him kill the emperor.⁹

Thus even a ruler on a throne must take care not to give unreserved expression to his thoughts. The worthy man Confucius held to his belief "Nine thoughts to one word,"¹⁰ which means that he reconsidered nine times before he spoke. Tan, the Duke of Chou, was so earnest in receiving callers that he would wring out his hair three times in the course of washing it, or spit out his food three times in the course of a meal [in order not to keep them waiting]. Consider this carefully so that you will have no cause to reproach me later. What is called Buddhism is found in this behavior.

The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of

teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the “Never Disparaging” chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being.

Respectfully.



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the ninth month of 1277 and addressed to Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo Yorimoto, commonly known as Shijo Kingo, in Kamakura. Sometime around 1274, Shijo Kingo had begun making efforts to convert his lord, who was named Ema, to the Daishonin’s teachings. Lord Ema, however, did not respond positively. Instead, he reduced the size of Kingo’s landholdings and threatened to send him to the remote province of Echigo. Kingo’s colleagues spread scurrilous reports about him, and Kingo was accused of fomenting trouble at a debate in the sixth month of 1277, during which the Tendai priest Ryuzo-bo was bested by the Daishonin’s disciple Sammi-bo.

Nichiren Daishonin cautions Shijo Kingo and instructs him on the best course of behavior in his trying circumstances. Later that year Lord Ema fell ill, and Kingo, applying his medical skills, helped cure him. The lord was most grateful and in 1278 restored,

The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals.

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the ninth month in the third year of Kenji (1277), cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*

Reply to Shijo Saemon-no-jo

and later even increased, Kingo’s landholdings.

At the outset of this letter, the Daishonin tells Kingo that he should remember his debt of gratitude to his lord, and stresses the Buddhist teaching that fundamental changes within oneself inevitably result in changes in the environment. He mentions that when he was about to be executed at Tatsunokuchi Kingo vowed to die by his side. Now Kingo is undergoing a severe ordeal and the Daishonin is exerting all his powers to protect him. The Daishonin says that, since Kingo was fortunate enough to have been born human and encountered the true teaching, he should accumulate “the treasures of the heart” and win the respect of others. Finally, through historical references to Emperor Sushun and others, the Daishonin teaches Kingo that as a Buddhist he should conduct his daily life admirably and be considerate of others.

Notes

1. Toki refers to Toki Jonin, one of the Daishonin’s leading followers. He lived in Shimosa Province and served as a retainer to Lord Chiba, the constable of that province.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.

3. “That preposterous lie” refers to the report that Shijo Kingo’s colleagues are said to have made to Lord Ema that, in order

to embarrass the Tendai priest Ryuzo-bo, Kingo had attempted to forcibly disrupt the Kuwagayatsu Debate.

4. Egara is the name of a place in Kamakura where government buildings were located.

5. Shigeyoshi is Taguchi Shigeyoshi (n.d.), the head of a powerful family in Awa, a province on the island of Shikoku. Though he was a member of the Taira, or Heike, clan, he regularly passed information to Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189), a younger half brother of Minamoto no Yoritomo, about the internal conditions of the Taira army and the weak points in their positions.

6. In 1159 Minamoto no Yoshitomo, the father of Yoritomo, led a battle against the Taira army and was defeated. Fleeing, he hid in the house of Osada Tadamune, a samurai in Owari Province in central Japan. Acting on the Taira's orders, Osada led Yoshitomo into the bath where he killed him. When Yoritomo later raised an army to fight the Taira, Tadamune and his son

sided with him, but were killed at Yoritomo's command after the fall of the Taira.

7. Reference is to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution of 1271, when the Daishonin was almost beheaded.

8. This incident is recorded in *The Chronicles of Japan*. Presumably it was not referred to openly because it involved the assassination of an emperor by one of his retainers.

9. Emperor Sushun, whose claim to rule was supported by Soga no Umako, ascended the throne in 588. But Umako had the emperor assassinated in 592 and placed his own niece on the throne as Empress Suiko. Atai Goma is also known as Azumanoaya no Atai Goma. His ancestors came to Japan from China during the reign of Emperor Ojin (late fourth to early fifth century). Goma was responsible for supervising foreign artisans. His family had great economic and political power, and was allied with the Soga clan.

10. *Analects*.

The Third Doctrine



I HAVE read through your letter. In it, you report that you said, “The ninth volume of *The Annotations on ‘The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra’* states, ‘Freeing oneself from the [threefold] world by means of the provisional teachings is termed an ephemeral liberation.’” To which the priest Ryosho-bo¹ replied, “There is no such passage.” Yet (in the section that deals with the “Life Span” chapter), the ninth volume of *On “The Words and Phrases”* does indeed say: “From the passage ‘There is no one who emerges from the ephemeral . . .’ to the passage ‘The ephemeral teachings of the past were expounded for the sake of the truth,’² [the meaning of the text is that] freeing oneself from the world by means of the provisional teachings is termed an ephemeral liberation. There are no people of the three vehicles who have not freed themselves from the threefold world, and no beings of the human and heavenly realms who have failed to escape the three evil paths. Yet these are both termed ephemeral liberation.”

The ninth volume of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* reads, “There is no one who emerges from the ephemeral and yet fails to enter into the true. Therefore, we know that the ephemeral teachings of the past were expounded for the sake of the truth.”

The “Life Span” chapter states:

“Good men, the Thus Come One observes how among living beings there are those who delight in inferior teachings, meager in virtue and heavy with defilement. . . . Because living beings have [different natures, . . . I preach different doctrines. . . . This, the Buddha’s work], I have never for a moment neglected.”³ T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo are commenting on this passage. In this passage of the sutra, all the teachings, from the Flower Garland Sutra, which was expounded immediately after the Buddha’s enlightenment and which combines both specific and perfect teachings,⁴ to the fourteen chapters that comprise the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, are termed “inferior teachings.” Those who delight in them are called people “meager in virtue and heavy with defilement,” and the liberation achieved through them is shown to be an ephemeral liberation.

This being the case, concerning the Flower Garland school, which relies on the Flower Garland Sutra; the Dharma Characteristics school, which upholds the Profound Secrets Sutra; the Three Treatises school, which is based upon the Wisdom sutras; the True Word school, which relies on the Mahavairochana Sutra; the Pure Land school, which cherishes the Meditation Sutra; and the Zen school, which upholds the Lankavatara Sutra, as well as all

the other various schools, which rely on their respective sutras—even if their adherents read and recite the sutra their school relies on just as that sutra teaches, they will neither free themselves from the threefold world nor escape the three evil paths. Even less will those who term these sutras true teachings, or who claim that they surpass the Lotus Sutra! They are like people spitting at the heavens or pounding at the earth in rage.

With respect to this doctrine: After the passing of the Thus Come One, in India for more than fifteen hundred years, the Buddha's twenty-four successors such as Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu knew of it but did not reveal it. In China for more than a thousand years, others did not know of it; only T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo gave a rough account of it. However, it seems that they did not explain its true significance. And the same was true of the Great Teacher Dengyo. Now when I, Nichiren, consider the matter, I find that, in addition to the above passage of the Lotus Sutra, the Nirvana Sutra states: "If there are those who possess differing ideas concerning the three treasures, then truly you should know that these people can no longer hope to take refuge in, or rely upon, the three pure treasures. They will never gain benefit from any of the precepts, and in the end, they will fail to obtain the fruits of the voice-hearer, the cause-awakened one, or the bodhisattva."⁵ This passage is clearly referring to [the essential point of] the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It subsequently likens the "Life Span" chapter to a tree, and the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching, to its shade.⁶ This appears again in the Nirvana Sutra. It is saying that the benefits of the five periods and eight teachings, of the teachings that are still in a certain dimension and that extend beyond,⁷ and of the Mahayana and Hinayana are all like shade, while the doc-

trine of the essential teaching is like a tree. It is also saying that the benefits gained from the teachings expounded before the "Life Span" chapter by those who lived during the Buddha's lifetime are like a tree's shade in the darkness, for such benefits were obtainable only by those who had already heard the "Life Span" chapter in prior existences.⁸

As for your opponent's contention that disbelief does not in itself constitute slander, or his claim that those who disbelieve will not necessarily fall into hell, the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "If with regard to this sutra one should harbor doubt and fail to believe, one will fall at once into the evil paths."⁹

On the whole, you should bear the following in mind. In contrasting the Lotus Sutra with the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and evaluating their relative superiority and depth, the comparison between the teachings still in a certain dimension and those extending beyond may be carried out on three levels.¹⁰ Nichiren's teaching represents the third doctrine. Though the first and second doctrines have been spoken of in the world rather vaguely, like a dream, the third has never been spoken of at all. Though T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo explained it to some extent, they did not clarify it fully. In the end, they left it for now, the Latter Day of the Law. This is the time referred to as the fifth five-hundred-year period.

However, I was given no information about this doctrinal debate. Ryoshobo is a person of vast learning. If he had remarked, "I am sorry to have to say this, but I am already well aware of the existence of that passage," and had somehow managed to frustrate you, claiming that our side had been defeated, I wonder what you could have done about it. Anyway, setting aside the fact that he and his fellow priests were ignorant of that passage of commentary, his having said that it does not exist in any

of the sixty volumes¹¹ is due to the rep-
rimand of heaven. His offense of slan-
dering the correct teaching became
apparent when he encountered an emis-
sary of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, this
affair of the debate surely occurred for
some reason. Please find out in detail
what Ota Jiro Hyoe of Kajima, Daishin-
bo, and the chief priest of the main tem-
ple¹² are saying. Matters such as these
are described in detail in the sutra. The
votary of the Lotus Sutra is certain to
be obstructed by the devil king of the
sixth heaven. Among the ten objects of
meditation, this corresponds to the ob-
ject of diabolical functions.¹³ It is the
way of the devil to delight in obstruct-
ing good and in causing the production
of evil. Concerning those whom he
cannot force to perform evil acts, he is
helpless and is capable only of allowing
them to create good. Those who carry
out the practices of the two vehicles, he
hates unreservedly; he urges them to
perform a lesser good. Those who car-
ry out the practices of the bodhisattva,
he hinders by encouraging in the direc-
tion of the practice of the two vehicles.
And lastly, if there is someone who prac-
tices the pure and perfect teaching ex-
clusively, he will topple that person into
the perfect teaching that is combined
with the specific teaching.¹⁴ You may
refer to the eighth volume of *Great Con-
centration and Insight*.

You say that Ryosho-bo further
claimed that a practitioner of concen-
tration and insight should keep the pre-
cepts. However, the ninth volume of
Words and Phrases restrains practitioners
of the first, second, and third [of the
five stages of practice] from upholding
the precepts. This is also clear from the
text of the sutra itself.¹⁵ The discrep-
ancy in *Great Concentration and Insight* is
explained by Miao-lo in the form of
questions and answers.¹⁶ See volume
nine of *On "The Words and Phrases."*

There are two kinds of practitioners
at the initial stage of rejoicing. Practi-
tioners of keen faculties may keep the
precepts, while those of dull faculties
are restrained from doing so. Moreover,
there are differences among the For-
mer, Middle, and Latter Days of the
Law, and differences between the prac-
tices of shoju and shakubuku. You
should also take into account the Great
Teacher Dengyo's remark about a tiger
in the marketplace.¹⁷

From now on, you need not hold
debates in Shimosa. Having defeated
the priests Ryosho-bo and Shinen-
bo,¹⁸ were you to debate with others, it
would only dilute the effect. I hear that
these priests have been slandering me
for some years now. These mosquitoes
and gadflies, as it were, are such fools
that they groundlessly revile Nichiren,
who is like the lion king, when they
have neither listened to nor seen him.
For persons of the Tendai Lotus school
to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo them-
selves and yet give their approval when
others repeat the Nembutsu would be
strange enough. Yet not only do they
fail to remonstrate with them, but they
criticize one who does confront the
Nembutsu school, which is strange in-
deed! As for Daishin-bo, as I wrote you
before, please strongly admonish him by
letter. It would appear that he has been
brought back to our faith by the ten
demon daughters. It would also seem
that a messenger from the devil king had
possessed him, but now has parted com-
pany with him. It cannot possibly be a
lie when the sutra states that "evil de-
mons will take possession of others."¹⁹
There is much that I would like to say,
but the messenger is in a hurry, so I am
writing this at night.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The first day of the tenth month

Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the tenth month of the third year of Kenji (1277) to Toki Jonin, a leading figure among the believers in Shimosa Province, in response to Toki's report of his encounter in debate with Ryoshobo, a prominent local priest of the Tendai school. In his reply, the Daishonin comments on the points raised in the debate and provides additional clarification for future reference.

Evidently, Toki had gained an unexpected advantage in the debate when his opponent proved himself ignorant of a passage in Miao-lo's *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* to the effect that one cannot attain true liberation through the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. This passage represents Miao-lo's annotation on another passage from T'ien-t'ai's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, which in turn is commenting on a passage from the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In the first part of his reply, the Daishonin cites all three passages and explains their essential meaning. The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, he says, are all

expedient means preached solely in order to lead people to the Lotus Sutra, and the benefits of those teachings depend on the teaching of the sutra's "Life Span" chapter.

The Daishonin also draws on a traditional standard of doctrinal comparison, that of the teachings still in a certain dimension and the teachings extending beyond, to further illustrate his point. This comparison, he says, may be carried out on three levels. From the viewpoint of the third and final level of comparison, even the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra is considered to be a teaching still belonging to a certain dimension, while only the supreme Law implied in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter is viewed as extending beyond. This third level corresponds to the "third doctrine," from which this writing takes its name. The third doctrine also indicates the supreme Law, that is, the original seed of enlightenment, which the Daishonin revealed for the first time in the Latter Day as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Notes

1. Ryoshobo (b. 1213) was the head of a Tendai seminary in Shimosa Province. He is said to have contributed to the rise of interest in Tendai studies in the Kanto area.

2. The original text of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* as quoted here contains the parenthetical instruction that the Chinese character meaning "for the sake of" is to be pronounced in the falling tone. Read with a different tone in the Chinese language, it would yield a different meaning. This and similar instructions in the text have been omitted in translation.

3. In essence, in the passage designated, Shakyamuni Buddha declares that, because the beings were of limited capacity, he did not immediately reveal the eternity of his Buddhahood, but rather taught that he had

renounced the world in his youth and attained enlightenment later. In accordance with the varying dispositions of the beings, he preached expedient, provisional teachings, all aimed at leading people to realize the truth contained in the "Life Span" chapter.

4. According to the T'ien-t'ai system of doctrinal classification, the teachings of the Flower Garland period combine the specific teaching with the perfect teaching. Only the Lotus Sutra represents the pure perfect teaching.

5. This passage criticizes those who deny the eternity of the three treasures of the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist Order; it is in essence a restatement of the doctrine set forth in the "Life Span" chapter.

6. In the Nirvana Sutra, the tree is used to represent the eternal Buddha. Since the eternity of the Buddha's life is revealed in the "Life Span" chapter, the Daishonin compares the "Life Span" chapter to the tree.

7. Teachings still in a certain dimension are partial doctrines expounded in a particular context for people of a particular capacity, while those that extend beyond are more complete and profound.

8. Those who had already heard the "Life Span" chapter in past existences had thereby received the seed of enlightenment. Thus on their being reborn together with Shakyamuni Buddha in India and hearing the teachings he preached in preparation for the "Life Span" chapter, this seed was nourished and developed, and they received benefits.

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

10. The first level of comparison defines the Lotus Sutra as being superior to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings; the second defines the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra as being superior to the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra; and the third defines the Buddhism of the Mystic Law as being superior to the essential teaching. The third level corresponds to the "third doctrine," which also means the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

11. The sixty volumes refer to T'ien-t'ai's three major works, *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, consisting of ten volumes each, along with Miao-lo's commentaries on these works, *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,"* *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* and *The Annotations on "Great Con-*

centration and Insight," also consisting of ten volumes each.

12. The identity of the chief priest of the main temple is uncertain. This may refer to the chief priest of the temple where Ryosho-bo was residing temporarily.

13. The object of diabolical functions refers to the fifth of the ten objects. By meditating upon them, the practitioner gains insight into how they work to hinder enlightenment. See also ten objects in Glossary.

14. In other words, the devil will lure that person away from the Lotus Sutra and toward the Flower Garland Sutra.

15. The Daishonin refers here to the passages from the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter upon which the five stages of practice are based.

16. *Great Concentration and Insight* enjoins strict observance of the precepts and thus appears to contradict both the above-mentioned passage from *Words and Phrases* and the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter on which that passage is based. In his *On "The Words and Phrases,"* Miao-lo explains that *Words and Phrases* is referring to those believers in the Lotus Sutra who are in the initial stages of practice, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, to those who have advanced to later stages.

17. *The Treatise on the Lamp for the Latter Day of the Law.* It reads: "If in the Latter Day of the Law there should be persons who keep the precepts, that would be something rare and strange, like a tiger in the marketplace. Who could possibly believe it?"

18. Shinen-bo was a Tendai priest who lived in Shimosa Province. Little is known about him.

19. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

“This Is What I Heard”



I HAVE received the scroll of the entire Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law that you copied in small characters, as well as two quilted robes, ten thousand coins, and a hundred folding fans as offerings for consecrating the scroll.

In the first volume of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* we find a passage that states, “The word ‘this’ [of ‘This is what I heard’] indicates the essence of a doctrine heard from the Buddha.” And the first volume of *The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra”* states, “If ‘this’ is not the teaching that surpasses the eight teachings, then how can it be considered the teaching of this [Lotus] sutra?”

The Flower Garland Sutra begins: “The Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra. This is what I heard.” The Wisdom Sutra begins: “The Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra. This is what I heard.” The Mahavairochana Sutra begins: “The Mahavairochana’s Protection through Supernatural Powers Sutra. This is what I heard.” What does “this” indicate in these and all other sutras? It refers to the title of each sutra. When the Buddha expounded a sutra, he put a title to it, revealing its ultimate principle. After the Buddha’s passing, when his listeners such as Ananda, Manjushri, and Vajrasattva compiled the Buddha’s teachings, they first stated

the title of a sutra and then, “This is what I heard.”

The heart of each sutra is contained in its title. For example, the land of India has seventy states, and its borders measure ninety thousand *ri*, yet the people, animals, plants, mountains, rivers, and earth within them are all included in the single word, India. All things that exist on the four continents of the world are clearly reflected on the face of the moon without exception. In like manner, the teachings of a sutra are encompassed in its title.

The titles of the Agama sutras, for instance, explain the ultimate principle of these sutras, which is that all things are impermanent. These titles are a hundred, thousand, and ten thousand times superior to the two characters meaning existence and nonexistence used in the titles of non-Buddhist scriptures. Followers of all the ninety-five non-Buddhist schools, hearing the titles of the Agama sutras, abandoned their erroneous views and converted to the truth of impermanence. Those who hear the titles of the Wisdom sutras realize the three teachings that all things are non-substantial in themselves,¹ that the Middle Way is independent of non-substantiality and temporary existence,² and that it is inseparably united with them.³ Those who hear the title of the Flower Gar-

land Sutra perceive either of the last two of the above teachings.

Those who hear the titles of the Mahavairochana Sutra as well as the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom sutras understand that all things, when analyzed, prove to be without substance,⁴ or that all things are non-substantial in themselves; that non-substantiality is independent of the Middle Way and temporary existence,⁵ or that it is inseparable from them;⁶ that the Middle Way is independent of non-substantiality and temporary existence, or that it is inseparably united with them. However, those who listen to the titles of such provisional sutras are unable to realize the benefit of perfect enlightenment that arises from the teachings of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and three thousand realms.

The sutras other than the Lotus Sutra do not expound this ultimate doctrine, and so their followers are like ordinary persons at the stage of being a Buddha only in theory. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas who appear in those sutras do not reach the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth in the practice of the Lotus Sutra, let alone the stage of perception and action, for they do not even chant the title of the Lotus Sutra. This is why the Great Teacher Miao-lo stated in *On "The Words and Phrases,"* "If 'this' is not the teaching that surpasses the eight teachings, then how can it be considered the teaching of this [Lotus] sutra?" The titles of the various other sutras fall within the eight teachings. These titles are like the meshes of a fishing net, while the title of the Lotus Sutra is like the main cord of the net that gathers the meshes of the eight teachings. Those who chant Myoho-enge-kyo [the title of the Lotus Sutra] even without understanding its meaning realize not only the heart of the Lotus Sutra, but also the "main cord," or essen-

tial principle of the Buddha's lifetime teachings.

A crown prince who is only one, two, or three years old will, when he ascends the throne, reign over the empire and be obeyed by the imperial regent and ministers, although he is presently unaware of this. A baby has no conscious understanding but, taking the mother's breast, grows naturally. In contrast, an arrogant minister who belittles a young crown prince will bring about his own downfall, as did Chao Kao [of the Ch'in dynasty]. The scholars of the other sutras and schools, who look down upon the prince who chants only the title of the Lotus Sutra, will eventually cause their own ruin as Chao Kao did and fall into the hell of incessant suffering. However, if a votary of the Lotus Sutra who chants its title without knowing its meaning is frightened by the learned priests of other schools into forsaking his faith, then that person is like the young puppet emperor Hu Hai who [replaced the crown prince but] was intimidated and killed by Chao Kao.

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is not only the core of the Buddha's lifetime teachings, but also the heart, essence, and ultimate principle of the Lotus Sutra. Yet as wonderful as this teaching is, no one has spread it during the more than 2,220 years since the Buddha's passing. The twenty-four successors of the Buddha in India did not propagate it, nor did T'ien-t'ai or Miao-lo of China, nor Prince Shotoku or the Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan. Therefore, when I, an insignificant priest, expounded it, people refused to believe it, thinking that it must be a false teaching. This is perfectly understandable. For example, if a lowly soldier had announced that he had seduced the beautiful court lady Wang Chao-chün, no one would have believed it. Similarly, people cannot believe that a humble priest could expound Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the heart of the Lotus Sutra, which even

T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, who ranked as highly as ministers and court nobles, did not propagate.

You may not know this, but the crow, the most despised of birds, can recognize omens of good and evil events that will occur during the year, which the eagle and the hawk cannot. A snake is no match for a dragon or an elephant, but it can foresee the coming of a flood seven days in advance. Even if Nagarjuna and T'ien-t'ai had not known the teaching that I propagate, if it is clear in light of the sutra, one should not doubt it. One who holds me in contempt and does not chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like a baby who doubts its mother's milk and refuses the breast, or a sick man who is suspicious of his physician and rejects the medicine prescribed for him. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu realized this teaching but did not propagate it, perhaps because they knew that the time was not right, and that the people of their day had no capacity to understand it. Others most probably did not spread it because they were ignorant of it. Buddhism spreads according to

the time and the people's capacity. Although I may not be worthy of this teaching, I expound it because the time is right.

Our contemporaries think of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo only as a name, but this is not correct. It is the essence, that is, the heart of the Lotus Sutra. Chang-an stated, “Hence [T'ien-t'ai's explanation of the title in] the preface conveys the profound meaning of the sutra. The profound meaning indicates the heart of the text.”⁷ According to this comment, Myoho-enge-kyo is neither the scriptural text nor its meaning, but the heart of the entire sutra. Those who seek the heart of the sutra apart from its title are as foolish as the turtle who sought the monkey's liver outside the monkey,⁸ or the monkey who left the forest and sought fruit on the seashore.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the eleventh month in the third year of Kenji (1277), cyclical sign *hinoto-ushi*
To the lay priest Soya Jiro⁹



Background

“This is what I heard” is the phrase that appears at the beginning of many sutras. The sutras are records of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings that were committed first to memory and later to writing by his disciples. The above phrase, therefore, represents a testimony to the validity of what was about to be set down in writing in the form of a sutra, but here the Daishonin explains its more profound meaning. T'ien-t'ai said, “The word ‘this’ [of ‘This is what I heard’] indicates the essence of a doctrine heard from the Buddha.” The essence of each sutra is represented by

its title. And the title, or essence, of the Lotus Sutra, Myoho-enge-kyo, is Buddhism's supreme teaching. Hence Miaolo explained T'ien-t'ai's words, saying, “If ‘this’ is not the teaching that surpasses the eight teachings, then how can it be considered the teaching of this [Lotus] sutra?”

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin emphasizes that Myoho-enge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra, is the essence of not only the Lotus, but all the other sutras as well. He compares it to the main cord of a net, which gathers the “meshes of the eight teachings.” This

also means that, when viewed from the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra, all the other sutras and the teachings they contain have value and can be used to explain and propagate the Lotus Sutra's essence, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Finally he cites Chang-an's interpretation of T'ien-t'ai's statement in the preface to *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* and concludes: “Myoho-enge-kyo is neither the scriptural text nor its meaning, but the heart of the entire [Lotus] sutra.”

Notes

1. A view expounded in the connecting teaching, or introductory Mahayana, which holds that, because all things arise through dependent origination, their existence is in itself non-substantial.

2. A view expounded in the specific teaching, which holds that the three truths are separate from and independent of one another.

3. A view expounded in the perfect teaching, which sets forth the mutually inclusive relationship of the ultimate reality and all phenomena, and the unification of the three truths. In other words, the view that each of the three truths possesses all three within itself.

4. A view expounded in the Tripitaka teaching, which means that all phenomena are viewed as non-substantial when analyzed in terms of their constituent elements. This is in contrast to the view mentioned above (n. 1), that all phenomena are without substance in and of themselves. The teachings of this category were expounded primarily for persons of the two vehicles and secondarily for bodhisattvas.

5. The view of non-substantiality expounded in the Tripitaka teaching, meaning that it is the only reality and excluding all other views or truths.

6. A view expounded in the connecting teaching that everything is essentially with-

This letter also explains why the people refused to believe in the title of the Lotus Sutra, its most profound principle. They failed to grasp its significance based on the relative superiority of the various teachings, but instead judged it according to the status of priests who preached those teachings. It was not these exalted teachers of Buddhism but a humble priest, Nichiren Daishonin, who had expounded the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo.

out substance, yet manifests a temporary reality or phenomenal aspect.

7. This passage appears in Chang-an's preface to *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* and refers to T'ien-t'ai's own preface to the same work.

8. This story is found in the Storehouse of Various Treasures Sutra. There were once two turtles at the bottom of the sea. The female, being pregnant, had a desire to eat a monkey's liver. The male surfaced and deceived a monkey into mounting his back, saying that he would carry the monkey to the other shore where the fruit was more bountiful. When the turtle carried the monkey into the ocean and tried to take his liver, the monkey said that he had left his liver behind on the top of a tree, and that if he could return there he would give it to the turtle. The turtle then carried the monkey back to the shore. No sooner had the turtle reached the shore than the monkey jumped off his back and scurried up a tall tree, where he mocked the turtle for his foolishness.

9. Soya Jiro Hyoe-no-jo Kyoshin (1224–1291), who lived in Soya Village in Shimosa Province and was one of the leading believers in the area. He is thought to have been an officer of the high court of the Kamakura shogunate.

Letter to Shomitsu-bo



WITH regard to the Mahavairochana Sutra, Shan-wu-wei, Pu-k'ung, and Chin-kang-chih declared that the principle of the Mahavairochana Sutra is the same as the principle of the Lotus Sutra, but in the matter of mudras and mantras, the Lotus Sutra is inferior.¹ On the other hand, the priests Liang-hsü, Kuang-hsiu, and Wei-chüan² declared that the Mahavairochana Sutra cannot compare to the Flower Garland, Lotus, or Nirvana Sutra, but is merely one of the sutras of the Correct and Equal period.³

The Great Teacher Kobo of Japan states, "The Lotus Sutra is inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra, and so of course it cannot compare with the Mahavairochana Sutra."⁴ He also says: "The Lotus Sutra was preached by Shakyamuni, while the Mahavairochana Sutra was preached by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. These sutras were thus taught by two different Buddhas. In addition, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni is a mere messenger of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. He preached the exoteric doctrines, which represent no more than the first step toward the esoteric doctrines."⁵ And again he states: "The Buddha of the 'Life Span' chapter, which is the heart of the Lotus Sutra, is a Buddha in terms of the exoteric teachings; but from the point of view of the eso-

teric teachings, he is no more than a common mortal who is bound by and entangled in illusions and desire."⁶

I, Nichiren, after pondering the matter, have this to say: The Mahavairochana Sutra is one of the newer translations⁷ and was transmitted to China by the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei of India in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang, in the fourth year of the K'ai-yüan era (716). The Lotus Sutra is one of the older translations, transmitted to China by the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva in the time of the Later Ch'in (384-417). The two are separated by an interval of more than three hundred years.

More than a hundred years after the Lotus Sutra was brought to China, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che established in the realm of doctrinal studies the classification of the five periods and the four teachings. He refuted the doctrinal interpretations put forward by the scholars of the preceding five hundred years or more and, through his practice of meditation, awakened to the truth of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, realizing for the first time the principle of the Lotus Sutra. The Three Treatises school that had preceded the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai and the Dharma Characteristics school that appeared after his time both taught the doctrine of the eight

worlds⁸ but made no mention of the Ten Worlds. So these schools could not possibly have established the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

The Flower Garland school had its beginnings among the various teachers of northern and southern China before T'ien-t'ai's advent. These teachers declared that the Flower Garland Sutra was superior to the Lotus Sutra, but at that time they did not refer to themselves as the Flower Garland school. It was the Dharma teachers Fa-tsang and Ch'eng-kuan, men of the reign of Empress Wu, the consort of Emperor Kao-tsung of the T'ang, who first began using the term Flower Garland school.

This school, in its doctrinal interpretations, posits the five teachings and, in its meditational practices, sets forth the principles of the ten mysteries and the six forms. All these teachings appear to be extremely impressive, and one might think that by means of them Ch'eng-kuan would have been able to refute the teachings of T'ien-t'ai. But in fact what Ch'eng-kuan did was to borrow T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and define it as the true intent of the passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, "The mind is like a skilled painter." We might say, then, that the Flower Garland school was actually defeated by T'ien-t'ai; or perhaps we should say that it was guilty of stealing the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Ch'eng-kuan was, to be sure, a strict observer of the precepts. He did not violate a single precept of either the Mahayana or Hinayana codes in any way. And yet he stole the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, a fact that ought to be spoken of widely.

Whether or not the term "True Word school" was used in India is a matter of serious doubt. It may simply

be that, because there is a group of sutras known as the True Word sutras, Shan-wu-wei and others affixed the term school to the teachings based on these sutras when they introduced them to China. One should be well aware of this point.

In particular one should note that, when Shan-wu-wei came to judge the relative merits of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, he set forth the interpretation that the two are equal in principle but that the latter is superior in terms of practice. By this he meant that, although the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is the same in both the Lotus and the Mahavairochana sutras, the Lotus Sutra contains no mention of mudras and mantras, and is therefore inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra in terms of the practices to be carried out. So long as it lacks actual descriptions of formulas for practice, one cannot say that it represents the esoteric teachings in both theory and practice.⁹

Nowadays the people of Japan, and many scholars of the different schools, subscribe to this opinion of Shan-wu-wei, including even the scholars of the Tendai school, who should be the last to do so. In this regard they are just like the adherents of the other schools who, although jealous of the Nembutsu believers, have all begun themselves to call out the name of Amida and have completely abandoned the particular object of devotion revered in their own schools. So the Tendai priests have all sunk to the level of True Word believers.

I am very suspicious of the logic underlying Shan-wu-wei's argument. This Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei declares that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are equal in principle, but that the latter is superior in terms of practice. He is taking the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life first enunciated

by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, reading it into the Mahavairochana Sutra, and on that basis arbitrarily declaring that the two sutras are alike. But should we accept such an assertion?

For example, long ago, Hitomaro¹⁰ composed a poem that reads:

How I think of it—
dim, dim in the morning mist
of Akashi Bay,
that boat moving out of sight
beyond the islands.

Ki no Shukubo, Minamoto no Shitagō,¹¹ and others have praised this poem, declaring it to be “the father and mother of poetry.” Now suppose someone should announce that he had composed a poem and, without changing a single syllable, should proceed to recite this poem by Hitomaro and then boast that his talent was in no way inferior to that of Hitomaro. Would anyone be likely to agree with his claim? Uneducated people such as mountain folk and fishermen might just possibly do so.

This principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life that was first put forward by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai is the father and mother of the Buddhas. Yet, more than a hundred years later, the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei stole this doctrine and proceeded to declare in his writings that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra were equal in principle, and that the principle they had in common was this one of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Should any person of understanding give credence to such a claim?

He further asserts that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior in terms of practice because the Lotus Sutra contains no mention of mudras and mantras. Now is he speaking of the relative worth of the Sanskrit versions of the Mahavairochana and Lotus sutras? Or is he speaking of the relative worth of the

Chinese versions of these two sutras?

The Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung's translation of *The Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra* indicates that the Lotus Sutra does in fact contain mudras and mantras. Similarly, the translation of the Benevolent Kings Sutra by Kumarajiva contains no mudras or mantras, but a later translation of the same sutra by Pu-k'ung does contain mudras and mantras.

These various sutras as they existed in India no doubt had a countless number of such practices associated with them. But because India and China are far apart and it was difficult to transport everything, the sutras were abridged when they were brought to China.

Although the Lotus Sutra does not mention mudras and mantras, it has the merit of declaring that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood and even records the kalpas when this will happen, the lands where it will take place, and the names that they will bear when they become Buddhas. It also declares that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment in the distant past. The Mahavairochana Sutra may describe mudras and mantras, but it says nothing about the attainment of Buddhahood by those of the two vehicles, or the Buddha's original enlightenment in the far distant past.

If we compare this doctrine of the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles with the matter of mudras and mantras, we will see that they are as far apart in importance as heaven and earth. In all the various sutras that the Buddha preached in the more than forty years before the Lotus Sutra, persons of the two vehicles are described as rotten seeds that will never sprout. They are condemned not merely in a word or two but in innumerable passages in sutra after sutra. In the Lotus Sutra, however, all these passages are refuted; it is proclaimed that

persons of the two vehicles can in fact attain Buddhahood.

As for mudras and mantras, where in any sutra has one ever encountered a passage condemning them? And since they have never been condemned, the Mahavairochana Sutra, as with many other sutras, does not avoid mentioning mudras and mantras, and therefore teaches them.

A mudra is a gesture made with the hand. But if the hand does not become Buddha, how can mudras made with the hand lead one to Buddhahood? A mantra is a motion made with the mouth. But if the mouth does not become Buddha, how can mantras made with the mouth lead one to Buddhahood? If the persons of the two vehicles do not encounter the Lotus Sutra, then even though they may perform the mudras and mantras of the twelve hundred and more honored ones¹² for innumerable kalpas, they will never attain Buddhahood in body, mouth, or mind.

One who would declare as superior a text that contains no mention of the fact that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, though this is a highly superior teaching, but that instead describes mudras and mantras, though these are matters of inferior significance, must be a thief in terms of principle and a non-Buddhist who regards inferior things as superior in terms of practice. Because he committed this error, Shan-wu-wei was censured by Yama, the lord of hell. Later he repented of it, revered the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, and put his faith in the Lotus Sutra; so he escaped the path of evil.¹³

The Buddha's original enlightenment in the far distant past is not even hinted at in the Mahavairochana Sutra. And yet this original enlightenment is the source of all Buddhas. Thus if we take the vast ocean as a symbol of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the distant past, then the fish and birds that

inhabit it are comparable to the twelve hundred and more honored ones of the True Word teachings. Without the revelation of the Buddha's enlightenment countless ages ago, the twelve hundred and more honored ones would become like so many bits of floating weed that lack any root, or like the nighttime dew that lasts only until the sun rises.

People of the Tendai school fail to understand this matter and thus allow themselves to be deceived by the True Word teachers, and the True Word teachers themselves, unaware that their own school is in error, go on vainly accumulating distorted ideas that can only lead to the evil paths.

The Reverend Kukai not only failed to understand this principle, but in addition, borrowed a false interpretation of the Flower Garland school that had already been refuted in the past, and adopted the erroneous view that the Lotus Sutra is inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra. This is like talking about the length of turtles' fur or the existence of rabbits' horns. Since there is no fur on a turtle's shell, how can one argue over its length; since there are no horns on a rabbit's head, how can one debate their existence?

Even someone [like Shan-wu-wei] who declared that the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are the same in principle could not escape the censure of Yama. How then can someone who says that the Flower Garland Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra, and that the Lotus Sutra is in turn inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra, escape the charge of slandering the correct teaching? Though the individuals involved may differ, the slander is the same. From this we can discern the reason why Kukai's principal disciple, the Administrator of Priests Kakimoto no Ki, turned into a blue demon.¹⁴ Unless Kukai has repented of his mistaken opinions and rectified them, he no doubt still remains in the evil

paths. What then will be the fate of his followers?

Question: Why do you alone spew forth such evil words about other people?

Answer: I, Nichiren, am not condemning others. I am only pointing out the questionable places in their doctrines. If they want to get angry at me, then let them!

Long ago, the non-Buddhist doctrines spread throughout the five regions of India and prevailed there for eight hundred or a thousand years, so that everyone, from the wheel-turning kings on down to the common people, bowed their heads in reverence. And yet all its ninety-five schools were from first to last refuted by the Buddha. [In China,] the fallacious doctrines of the priests of the Summary of the Mahayana school flourished for more than a hundred years, but were later defeated;¹⁵ and the mistaken opinions of the Buddhist leaders of the north and the south, after being accepted for more than three hundred years, were likewise refuted. In Japan, the doctrines of the six schools of Nara were overturned after thriving for more than two hundred and sixty years. In fact, the Great Teacher Dengyo refutes them in some of his writings.¹⁶

In Japan, there are five schools that belong to Mahayana Buddhism, namely, the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, True Word, and Tendai schools. There are three Hinayana schools, the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools. Next, though the True Word, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics schools derive from Mahayana Buddhism, if one examines them closely, one will find that in fact they all belong to the Hinayana.

A school may be defined as something that encompasses all of the three types of learning, namely, precepts,

meditation, and wisdom. Leaving aside meditation and wisdom, we should note that, by means of the precepts they uphold, the various schools can be clearly divided into those of Mahayana and of Hinayana. Neither the To-ji branch of the True Word school nor the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, or Flower Garland school has its own ordination platform for administering the precepts, and therefore they must use the platform at Todai-ji temple.¹⁷ This means that they are binding themselves to the precepts put forth by the Precepts school, a Hinayana school, which are no better than donkey's milk or stinking excrement. In terms of the precepts that they observe, therefore, all these schools are to be classified as Hinayana.

The Great Teacher Dengyo received instruction in the teachings of the two schools of T'ien-t'ai and True Word in China and brought them back to Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei. But in urging the establishment of an ordination platform for administering the precepts, Dengyo referred to the perfect meditation, perfect wisdom, and perfect precepts of the perfect and immediate enlightenment of the T'ien-t'ai, or Tendai, school. So it appears that he did not think it proper to use the term "True Word school" alongside the name "Tendai school." In the memorial that he submitted to the imperial court, he refers to the concentration and insight and the Vairochana discipline practices of the Tendai Lotus school.¹⁸ And the oath concerning the precepts that Dengyo handed down to his disciple Jikaku in fact speaks of "the concentration and insight and the Vairochana discipline practices of the Tendai Lotus school," with the term "True Word school" clearly omitted.

The Tendai Lotus school is known as the Buddha-founded school, having been established by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. The True Word school

was the invention of ordinary persons, and its scholars and teachers of later times were the ones who began to use the term school to describe themselves. However, they ascribed the founding of their school to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana and Bodhisattva Maitreya. Nevertheless, only the single school devoted to the Lotus Sutra conforms to the true intent of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Hinayana teachings are divided into two schools, eighteen schools, or even twenty schools,¹⁹ but in essence they all expound a single principle, namely, the impermanence of all phenomena.

The Dharma Characteristics school teaches that all phenomena arise from the mind alone and have actual existence. There are countless different schools belonging to the Mahayana teachings, but insofar as they subscribe to this view—that the mind alone produces all phenomena, and that phenomena have actual existence—then they may be regarded as constituting a single school. The Three Treatises school teaches that all phenomena arise from the mind alone and are without real existence. Again, there are countless different Mahayana schools, but insofar as they subscribe to this view—that the mind alone produces all phenomena, and that phenomena have no real existence—then they may be regarded as constituting a single school. So all these schools stress one or the other of two partial truths of the Mahayana: that phenomena have actual existence, and that they are non-substantial in nature.²⁰

As for the Flower Garland and True Word schools, if we were to speak generously of them, we could say that they

represent the doctrine of the Middle Way that is independent of non-substantiality and temporary existence,²¹ while if we were to speak strictly of them, we would have to say that they are on a level with the two above-mentioned Mahayana views of phenomena. In terms of their content, the Mahavairochana Sutra cannot compare even with the Flower Garland or Wisdom sutras. But because so many distinguished persons still put their faith in the Mahavairochana Sutra, the situation is rather like that of a king who bestows his love on a woman of humble station. The Mahavairochana Sutra is like a woman of humble station because its principles do not go beyond the doctrine of the Middle Way that is independent of non-substantiality and temporary existence. And the scholars and teachers who have upheld the Mahavairochana Sutra are comparable to a king because they command respect and influence among the people.

Since we are now living in the latter age when people are shallow in wisdom and puffed up with pride, it is unlikely that anyone will heed the points I have made in the discussion above. But when a sage or worthy appears, then the full truth of the matter will no doubt become clear. Because I care about you, I have written this letter as a guide. I hope you will study it when you have time.

The points I have touched on here are very important matters of doctrine. When paying respect to Bodhisattva Space Treasury,²² you should make a regular practice of reading this aloud.

Sent to Shomitsu-bo.

Nichiren



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the third year of Kenji (1277) and addressed to Shomitsu-bo, thought to be one of Nichiren Daishonin's disciples living at Seicho-ji temple in the province of Awa. Another opinion regards Shomitsu-bo as a True Word priest living near Seicho-ji, who looked up to the Daishonin. Detailed information about Shomitsu-bo is lacking, but it appears that he was a priest of Seicho-ji temple who had become the Daishonin's follower and occasionally sought his instruction. The chief priest of Seicho-ji at that time is thought to have been Joken-bo (some sources say Gijo-bo), a priest senior to the Daishonin, who had later taken faith in his teachings. In another letter written to this chief priest, the Daishonin urges him to consult with Shomitsu-bo about any difficulties confronting the temple and describes Shomitsu-bo as knowledgeable in worldly affairs.

In this letter, the Daishonin emphasizes the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra, an important point for Shomitsu-bo, who was living at a temple where the original Tendai reverence for the Lotus Sutra had been distorted by True Word influence. The Daishonin first cites the erroneous views of the True Word priests of India, China, and Japan with respect to the Lotus Sutra. In particular, he attacks Shan-wu-wei's assertion that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are equal in terms of principle, but that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior in terms of practice. "Equal in principle" here refers to the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. But the Daishonin points out that this principle does not in any way derive from the

Mahavairochana Sutra; it was established by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai on the basis of the Lotus Sutra. Shan-wu-wei ordered this doctrine written into the True Word teachings. As for the Mahavairochana Sutra being "superior in terms of practice": by this Shan-wu-wei meant that the Mahavairochana Sutra mentions mudras and mantras, while the Lotus Sutra does not. The Daishonin asserts, however, that mudras and mantras are mere insignificant details when compared to the Lotus Sutra's two unprecedented revelations that even persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, and that Shakyamuni Buddha originally attained enlightenment in the far distant past.

In the latter part of the letter, the Daishonin explains that the Flower Garland and True Word schools, while nominally Mahayana, in fact should be considered Hinayana because they bind themselves to the Hinayana precepts. He points out that even the Great Teacher Dengyo, who introduced the True Word teachings to Japan, did not regard them as being in any way equal to the T'ien-t'ai teachings, which are based on the Lotus Sutra. As for how far they clarify the three truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence, and the Middle Way, the Flower Garland and True Word schools do not rise above the level of the specific teaching (a higher level of Mahayana addressed specifically to bodhisattvas). However, says the Daishonin, because so many distinguished scholars and teachers embrace the Mahavairochana Sutra, the True Word teachings have spread throughout Japan.

Notes

1. This opinion is stated in Shan-wu-wei's *Annotations on the Mahavairochana Sutra* and other commentaries on the esoteric sutras.

2. Liang-hsü (n.d.), Kuang-hsiu (771-843), and Wei-chüan (n.d.) were priests of the T'ien-t'ai school in China. Liang-hsü taught the T'ien-t'ai doctrines to Chisho (later the fifth chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Japanese Tendai school), when the latter visited K'ai-yüan-ssu temple in 851. Kuang-hsiu and his disciple Wei-chüan are said to have answered questions posed by Encho (the second chief priest of Enryaku-ji) concerning the T'ien-t'ai school's doctrines.

3. Source unknown.

4. Kobo makes this assessment in his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, though this is not an exact quotation.

5. This is a summation of views set forth in Kobo's *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*, which differentiates between the two Buddhas, and his *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, which identifies the exoteric teachings as an introduction to the True Word teachings.

6. This opinion is stated in *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*.

7. The newer translations refer to the sutras translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang (602-664) and others who came after him. In contrast, the translations produced before Hsüan-tsang—by, for example, Kumarajiva (344-413) and Paramartha (499-569)—are called "older translations." The older translations are freer, while the newer translations tend to be more literal.

8. The eight worlds refer to all of the Ten Worlds except those of the two vehicles, voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones. The Daishonin says that the Three Treatises and Dharma Characteristics schools uphold "the doctrine of the eight worlds" because they do not teach the attainment of Buddhahood by voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones.

9. Tendai esotericism views the three vehicles as exoteric teachings and the one vehicle as the esoteric teaching. It therefore defines the Lotus and Flower Garland sutras as esoteric sutras, but because they do not mention mudras and mantras, which constitute the concrete form of esoteric

practice, they are called esoteric teachings in theory, while the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras are called esoteric teachings in both theory and practice.

10. Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. c. 685-705), a major poet of *The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, the earliest anthology of Japanese verse ranging from the earliest days of Japanese history to the year 760. The poem quoted here appears in the first of the imperially sponsored anthologies, *A Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry*, where it is said that some people attribute it to Hitomaro.

11. Ki no Shukubo (d. 919) and Minamoto no Shitago (911-983) were court nobles and poets of the Heian period. Shitago was chosen to assist in compiling the second imperial anthology, *The Later Selection of Japanese Poetry*, and also devoted himself to the study of *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*.

12. The twelve hundred and more honored ones are Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others inscribed on the two mandalas of the Diamond and Womb realms.

13. The story of Shan-wu-wei's escape from hell appears in *The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei* (pp. 173-75).

14. Kakinomoto no Ki is Shinzei (800-860), a priest of the True Word school. In 856, he was appointed administrator of priests, the first True Word priest to receive this title. According to *The Rise and Fall of the Genji and the Heike*, when he conducted prayers for the recovery of the fifty-fifth emperor, Montoku, he fell in love with the emperor's consort and transformed himself into a blue demon after his death in order to approach her.

15. The Summary of the Mahayana school was one of the thirteen major schools of Buddhism in China. It is based on Asanga's *Summary of the Mahayana*, which expounds the Consciousness-Only doctrine. *Summary of the Mahayana* was translated into Chinese by Paramartha and propagated by his followers, and this school was formed as a result. In the early T'ang dynasty, however, Hsüan-tsang made a new translation of *Summary of the Mahayana*, and his disciple Tz'u-en founded the Dharma Characteristics school, which also expounded the Consciousness-Only doctrine. As a

result, the Summary of the Mahayana school gradually declined.

16. Dengyo refuted the doctrines of the six schools of Nara in several writings including *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-f'ai's Doctrine* and *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

17. Todai-ji is the head temple of the Flower Garland school. Ganjin established a Hinayana ordination platform at Todai-ji in 754.

18. In *The Regulations for Students of the Mountain School*, Dengyo specifies the regulations for those students who were annually appointed by the court to study the Tendai teachings on Mount Hiei, and sets forth the Mahayana precepts into which they were to be initiated when they were ordained. He says that, after their ordination, the students shall remain on Mount Hiei for twelve years and carry out two types of practice, the "concentration and insight" and the "Vairochana discipline."

19. The first schism in the Buddhist Order took place about one hundred years after Shakyamuni's death because of a dispute over five new interpretations of doctrine advanced by a monk called Mahadeva. As a result, the community split into the conservative Theravada school and the more liberal Mahasamghika school. These two schools later split into ten and eight schools, respectively. The twenty schools refer to the

Theravada and Mahasamghika schools and their eighteen derivative branches.

20. That is, among the three truths, they emphasize either the truth of temporary existence or the truth of non-substantiality. The former position is represented by the Dharma Characteristics school, which maintains that all phenomena arise solely from the alaya-consciousness but possess a temporary reality. The latter position is represented by the Three Treatises school, which stresses that because all things arise through dependent origination their existence is in itself non-substantial. These teachings both correspond to the connecting teaching, or introductory Mahayana, which does not yet reveal the truth of the Middle Way.

21. This indicates the doctrine of the specific teaching, a higher level of Mahayana addressed specifically to bodhisattvas. The teachings of this category reveal the three truths of the Middle Way, non-substantiality, and temporary existence, but show them as separate from and independent of one another.

22. Bodhisattva Space Treasury was the original object of devotion at Seicho-ji temple—where Nichiren Daishonin studied Buddhism in his boyhood—from the time of the priest Fushigi, who in 771 carved an image of the bodhisattva and enshrined it there.

How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra



QUESTION: Of the eight schools, the nine schools, or the ten schools,¹ which is the true school founded by Shakyamuni Buddha?

Answer: The Lotus school is the school founded by Shakyamuni. We know this because of the statement that, of all the sutras “I [Shakyamuni] have preached, now preach, and will preach,”² the Lotus Sutra is foremost. These words were spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. Therefore, [the school based on] the Lotus Sutra is known as the Buddha-founded school and is also called the Lotus school. It is also known as the Tendai school.

For this reason, the Great Teacher Dengyo states in his commentary, “The Lotus school, which T’ien-t’ai elucidated, represents the school founded by Shakyamuni, the World-Honored One.”³ In none of the sutras other than the Lotus does one find a passage concerning [the relative superiority of] all the sutras that “I have preached, now preach, and will preach.” Here, the sutras that the Buddha has preached refer to the various sutras expounded by the Buddha in the more than forty years before he preached the Lotus Sutra. Those he now preaches refer to the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. Those he will preach refer to the Nirvana Sutra.

The Buddha thus firmly decreed that, transcending these three categories of sutras, the Lotus Sutra alone constitutes the school that assures the attainment of Buddhahood.

The various other schools were founded by bodhisattvas or teachers in the period after the Buddha had entered nirvana. Should we now turn our backs upon the Buddha’s decree and follow the schools established by the bodhisattvas and teachers? Or should we ignore the words of the bodhisattvas and teachers and follow the school established by the Buddha? Or should we entrust ourselves to either course as the feeling strikes us, and uphold whatever sutra or doctrine suits our inclination? The Buddha knew long ago that we would have doubts of this kind, and therefore he clearly designated the sutra to be embraced by those who are truly aspiring to the way in this defiled and evil age of the Latter Day of the Law.

A sutra says: “Rely on the Law and not upon persons. Rely on the meaning of the teaching and not on the words. Rely on wisdom and not on discriminative thinking. Rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final.”⁴ The meaning of this passage is that one should not rely upon the words of the

bodhisattvas and teachers, but should heed what was established by the Buddha. It further means that one should not rely upon the teachings of the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu schools, which are based upon the sutras of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods,⁵ but should uphold the sutras that are complete and final. And by relying upon "sutras that are complete and final," it means upholding the Lotus Sutra.

Question: Observing Japan at the present time, we see that the obstacles presented by the five impurities are very grave, that quarrels and disputes occur incessantly,⁶ and that people's minds are consumed with anger and their thoughts filled with jealousy. In such a country and at such a time as this, what sutra ought to be propagated?

Answer: This is a country in which the Lotus Sutra should be propagated. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra itself says, "I will cause it to be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa and will see that it never comes to an end."⁷

The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice states that there is a small country situated to the northeast where the Mahayana teachings of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law should be spread.⁸ And the Reverend Annen states, "This refers to our country of Japan."⁹ From the point of view of India, Japan is indeed situated to the northeast.

Moreover, the Supervisor of Priests Eshin states in his *Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching*, "Throughout Japan, all people share the same capacity to attain Buddhahood through the perfect teaching. Whether at court or in the countryside, whether far or near, all alike turn to the single vehicle; and whether priests or lay believers, whether eminent or humble, all can hope to attain Buddhahood."

The meaning of this passage is that the people of Japan, whether they live

in Kyoto, Kamakura, Tsukushi, Chinzei, or Michinoku,¹⁰ whether they live nearby or far away, are endowed with the capacity to attain Buddhahood solely through the one vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and that Japan is therefore a country where high and low, eminent and humble, those who observe the precepts and those who break them, men and women alike, can all attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. Just as there are no ordinary stones in the K'un-lun Mountains and no poisons on the mountain island of P'eng-lai, so Japan is purely and wholly a country of the Lotus Sutra.

And yet we find people who, while declaring with their mouths that the Lotus is inherently a wonderful sutra and that no one could therefore refuse to take faith in it, nevertheless spend night and day, morning and evening, reciting the name of Amida Buddha. They are like people who sing the praises of a particular medicine and yet morning and evening dose themselves on poison.

Or there are those who declare that the Nembutsu and the Lotus Sutra are essentially one. They are like persons who claim that ordinary stones are the same as gems, senior monks identical to junior monks, and poison equivalent to medicine.

In addition, there are many who hate, envy, resent, slander, despise, and look down on the Lotus Sutra. The sutra says, "It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."¹¹ It also says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹² These predictions of the sutra have come about without the slightest deviation.

Therefore, the Great Teacher Dengyo writes in his commentary: "Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age

when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu. As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, 'Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?' There is good reason for this statement."¹³

From these passages of the sutra and commentaries, one should know the following: In Japan, in one mountain monastery after another, in temple after temple, at court and in the countryside, in both near and distant regions, though scriptural teachings other than the Lotus Sutra, such as those of the True Word, Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools, are being propagated, these are not teachings that suit the country, or that conform to the Buddha's true intention, nor can they free us from the sufferings of birth and death.

Question: The Flower Garland school propounds the doctrine of the five teachings¹⁴ and declares all the other sutras to be inferior, and the Flower Garland Sutra, superior. The True Word school puts forth the doctrine of the ten stages of the mind, declaring that all the other sutras, being exoteric teachings, are inferior, while the True Word school, because it represents the esoteric teachings, is superior. The Zen school rejects all the sutras as belonging to the realm of written teachings and asserts "a separate transmission outside the sutras, independent of words or writing." Because enlightenment, they say, is gained merely by sitting and facing the wall, the Zen school alone is superior. The Pure Land school sets forth two kinds of practices, correct and sundry.¹⁵ The Lotus Sutra and the various other sutras are rejected as

belonging to the category of sundry practices, and hence one is urged to "discard, close, ignore, and abandon"¹⁶ them. The three Pure Land sutras, on the other hand, they claim, are adapted to the people's capacity and are wonderful sutras belonging to the realm of correct practices. Thus each school in its conceit maintains its own biased attachment. But which one represents the true intention of Shakyamuni Buddha?

Answer: Each school declares its own sutra to be superior, all other sutras being dismissed as inferior, and on this basis labels itself the correct school. But their arguments are based merely upon the words of the teachers and not upon the Buddha's teaching. Only the Lotus Sutra was proclaimed superior by the Buddha himself when he expounded the simile of the five flavors, likening them to the teachings of the five periods. He also declared that of all the various sutras that he "has preached, now preaches, and will preach," in terms of the path of attaining Buddhahood, none could rival the Lotus Sutra. These statements are in truth the Buddha's own golden words.

Therefore, when people declare that their own sutra surpasses the Lotus Sutra, or that their own school is superior to the Lotus school, they are like persons of inferior rank calling someone of high rank a commoner, or retainers whose families have for generations been in the service of a certain lord turning against him and declaring him to be their servant. How can they escape grave retribution?

On the other hand, the assertion that the various other sutras rank below the Lotus Sutra is not based upon the words of the teachers, but is plainly stated in the text of the sutra itself. In this respect, it is like a ruler asserting that he is superior to his subjects, or a samurai calling a commoner a person of low rank. What penalty could this

possibly bring? This sutra, the Lotus, represents the true intention of the Buddha and the prime concern of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo.

Question: The teachings of the Buddha's lifetime were all intended to benefit the people. And because people differ from one another in their innate nature, he expounded the various teachings. Nevertheless, his basic intention in all cases was simply to enable everyone to attain the Buddha way. Therefore, [people reason that] the sutra that is pertinent to oneself may be quite irrelevant to others, while the sutra that is pertinent to them will be irrelevant to oneself. Thus, for example, for persons who can attain the way through the Nembutsu teachings of the sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, the Meditation and related sutras will be of greatest benefit while the Lotus Sutra will be of no help. Conversely, for those who can reach Buddhahood and achieve the way through the Lotus Sutra, the other sutras will be irrelevant while the Lotus Sutra will be of greatest benefit. When the Buddha said, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth";¹⁷ when he said, "Though they [the Buddhas] point out various different paths, in truth they do so for the sake of the Buddha vehicle";¹⁸ or when he said, "Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way,"¹⁹ he was addressing persons with the capacity to attain the way through the Lotus Sutra. Everyone in the world agrees that this argument is reasonable. How should we understand this? If this view is correct, then there is really no difference between the Mahayana and the Hinayana, and no dissimilarity between the provisional and true teachings. Thus I find myself in great doubt as to which sutra the Buddha defined as representing his true intention, and which in fact he proclaimed to be the teaching for attaining Buddhahood.

Answer: From the very beginning, the Buddha's intention in appearing in the world was to preach the wonderful Law. But because the people differed so greatly in their capacity and were not ripe to receive it, the Buddha first pondered for a period of three weeks, then spent the following forty years and more preparing and readying the people, and then finally preached this wonderful Law. The Buddha said: "If I merely praised the Buddha vehicle, then the living beings, sunk in their suffering, would be incapable of believing in this Law. And because they rejected the Law and failed to believe in it, they would fall into the three evil paths."²⁰ He also said, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."²¹

The meaning of these passages is that the Buddha from the very beginning intended to preach this doctrine of the Buddha vehicle. But he knew that the people, having no inclination to hear the Buddha's Law, would not put their faith in it, but on the contrary would undoubtedly slander it. Therefore, in order to develop the people's capacities to the same level, he first spent a period of forty or more years preaching the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras, and then at the very last preached the Lotus Sutra. At that time, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the others of the twelve thousand voice-hearers; Manjushri, Maitreya, and the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas; the ten thousands of millions of wheel-turning kings; as well as Brahma, Shakra, and the countless other heavenly beings, who had all been present during the Buddha's more than forty years of preaching, each exclaimed with regard to the teachings they had heard before, "We would never gain the immeasurable insight of the Thus Come One."²² But when they heard him preach the Lotus Sutra, they rejoiced,

exclaiming, "This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought."²³ Therefore, they said, "Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One's preaching, but we have never heard this kind of profound, wonderful, and superior Law."²⁴ They also said, "The Buddha preaches a rarely encountered Law, one never heard from times past."²⁵

The intent of these passages is to praise the Lotus Sutra by saying that, though those present at the assembly had heard the Buddha preach a considerable number of times during the preceding forty years and more, they had never heard anything like the Law of the Lotus Sutra, and that the Buddha had never before preached a doctrine such as this.

The doctrines heard by the assembly in the preceding forty-two years cannot in any way be compared with those of this sutra they were now hearing. Therefore, it is a grave error to assert that this sutra was preached for the sake of persons who can attain the way through the Lotus Sutra, but that it is useless for persons who can gain the way through the sutras preached earlier. In the case of the sutras preached during the previous forty-two years, since they were provided as expedient means for individuals each with a particular capacity or relationship, one can perhaps speak of them as being relevant to some persons but not to others. But in the case of the Lotus Sutra, the different capacities that had enabled individuals to benefit from hearing one or another of the earlier sutras were all drawn together and readied so that they became identical and pure; the sutra was preached to such people. Therefore, there can be no question of it being relevant to some persons and irrelevant to others.

How lamentable that the distinctions between Mahayana and Hinayana, or between provisional and true teachings,

should become confused in this manner, so that the purpose of the Buddha's advent has been lost, and people go about declaring that the Lotus Sutra is useless for persons with the capacity to attain the way through the earlier sutras. One should guard against and fear such errors! In past times there was a man known as the Great Teacher Tokuitsu who taught just this sort of doctrine to others and fully believed it in his own mind, reading the Lotus Sutra in the light of such an interpretation. But the Great Teacher Dengyo attacked him, saying that though he praises the Lotus Sutra he destroys its heart.²⁶ After that, the Great Teacher Tokuitsu's tongue split into eight pieces and he died.

Question: In a commentary by T'ien-t'ai, it is stated that the bodhisattvas had already gained entrance [to enlightenment] through the various sutras.²⁷ From this it must follow that the Lotus Sutra was preached merely for the sake of persons of the two vehicles and not for bodhisattvas, since the bodhisattvas had already gained enlightenment by the earlier sutras. If so, then one should understand that the words of the Buddha, "I have not yet revealed the truth," "Honestly discarding expedient means," and all the pronouncements found in the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, must have been spoken entirely for persons of the two vehicles and are not relevant to even a single bodhisattva. Is this correct?

Answer: The doctrine that the Lotus Sutra was preached solely for persons of the two vehicles and not for bodhisattvas was expounded in China before the time of T'ien-t'ai by the ten leading scholars representing the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north. But T'ien-t'ai refuted this doctrine and put an end to it, so that it is no longer propagated today. If you say that there are no bodhisattvas who profit from the Lotus Sutra, then how

do you account for the passage that says, "When the bodhisattvas hear this Law, they will be released from all entanglements of doubt"?²⁸ In view of this, can you possibly say that bodhisattvas derive no benefit from the sutra?

Or perhaps you will argue that the Lotus Sutra can benefit the bodhisattvas of dull faculties, as it does persons of the two vehicles, but that the bodhisattvas of keen faculties have already received sufficient benefit from the earlier sutras. If so, then how do you account for the passage in the sutra that says, "Those of keen capacity, of dull capacity—I cause the Dharma rain to rain on all equally,"²⁹ or the passage that says, "All bodhisattvas who attain supreme perfect enlightenment in all cases do so through this sutra"?³⁰ The meaning of these passages is that, regardless of whether their faculties are keen or dull, whether they abide by the precepts or break them, whether they are of exalted birth or humble, all bodhisattvas, all ordinary people, and all persons of the two vehicles shall become Buddhas and achieve the way through the Lotus Sutra.

If you say that those bodhisattvas who have received benefit from the Lotus Sutra are all persons of dull faculties, are you then prepared to say that Universal Worthy, Manjushri, Maitreya, Medicine King, and all the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas are of dull faculties? And if you maintain that the bodhisattvas of keen faculties had already attained the way through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, then just who are those bodhisattvas?

Moreover, this enlightenment attained by bodhisattvas through the earlier sutras—is it the same as the enlightenment described in the Lotus Sutra? If so, then it is in fact the enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra and not the result of the earlier sutras. And if it is an enlightenment other than that of the Lotus Sutra, then in which of the

sutras that the Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach" is it contained? In any event, if it is not the enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra, then it can only be a partial enlightenment and not true enlightenment.

Therefore, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra states, "Therefore the way living beings gained was not uniform but differed in different cases." It also says, "[As for those living beings who are unable to hear this sutra . . .] they will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment." In these passages the Buddha is saying that the people attained different degrees of enlightenment through the sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra, but in the end they did not attain the way of supreme enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra itself.

Question: Some 2,230 years have now passed since Shakyamuni Buddha passed away. Among all the sutras, which sutra is fitted for an age like this and will spread and benefit all living beings?

The Great Collection Sutra speaks of five successive five-hundred-year periods, of which our present age corresponds to the fifth period. This fifth of the five-hundred-year periods is described as an age of conflict when the pure Law will become obscured and lost. The Buddha here is saying that at that time people's hearts will be contentious and wicked, and they will be overwhelmed with greed and anger; because of this, strife and warfare alone flourish, and, among the various Buddhist doctrines, those that had earlier spread widely such as the pure Law of the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu schools and of the observers of the precepts will become obscured and lost.

On examining the first, second, third, and fourth of the five-hundred-year periods, we see that, although the Great Collection Sutra belongs to the teachings in which the truth had not yet been revealed concerning the way

of attaining Buddhahood, the state of affairs in the world did not differ in the slightest from the Buddha's predictions. Considered in this light, his golden words that our present time will be an age of conflict when the pure Law will become obscured and lost could not possibly be false.

Yet, if that is so, are we then to assume that, now in the Latter Day of the Law, none of the Buddhist doctrines are of any efficacy, or that none of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas can benefit the people? Are we then to do nothing and pay no homage to any Buddha or bodhisattva? Are we to practice no teaching whatsoever, to be left with no one at all to turn to? How are we to prepare our minds for the existences that are to come?

Answer: Now, the Latter Day of the Law, is the time when only the seven characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo—which is the heart of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra that Shakyamuni Buddha, who achieved enlightenment in the remote past, Bodhisattva Superior Practices, Bodhisattva Boundless Practices, and others must spread—will spread throughout this country; and there will be advantage and benefit for all people, and the blessings of Bodhisattva Superior Practices will flourish. This will happen because it is clearly stated in the sutra. Those who are firm in their aspiration for the way and sincere in their resolve should inquire about this matter in detail.

The people of the Pure Land school claim, "In the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law, all the other sutras will perish. Only this one teaching of Amida will remain."³¹ They also say, "This Latter Day of the Law we now face is an evil age stained by the five impurities. Only this doctrine of the Pure Land offers a road by which one can gain admittance."³² Though they falsely attribute these

statements to the Great Collection Sutra, no such passages appear in that sutra. Moreover, there is no reason why they should. It is logically apparent that while he was in the world the Buddha would have had no reason for declaring that, in the present, the Latter Day of the Law, an evil age stained by the five impurities, only the Pure Land teachings would offer a path to [rebirth in the Pure Land].

Their basic sutra states, "In the age to come, the scriptural path will perish . . . I [Shakyamuni] leave this one sutra, which shall endure a hundred years."³³ But nowhere does it state that those hundred years fall within the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. Moreover, if we examine the Universal and Impartial Enlightenment Sutra and the Larger Amida Sutra, it appears that the hundred-year period referred to represents the hundred years that follow the first millennium after the Buddha's passing. But people all regard Shan-tao's mistaken interpretation³⁴ as quite reasonable, though in fact they are all biased in their thinking.

Perceptive people should consider the matter in the light of everyday reason. In a time of severe drought, is it the great ocean that dries up first, or is it the little streams? The Buddha himself explained this, likening the Lotus Sutra to the great ocean, and the Meditation Sutra, Amida Sutra, and similar texts to little streams.³⁵ Therefore, the pure Law of the little streams that are the Nembutsu and similar teachings will surely disappear first, as a sutra passage³⁶ states. When the Great Collection Sutra says that, in the fifth five-hundred-year period, the pure Law will become obscured and lost, and when the Two-Volumed Sutra says that "the scriptural path will perish . . .," they are simply stating the same thing.³⁷ Therefore, we are to understand that, from the very beginning of the Latter Day of the

Law, the scriptural path that includes the Two-Volumed Sutra and sutras of that type will perish. "The scriptural path will perish" means that the sutras will lose their power to benefit living beings. It does not mean that the actual scrolls of the sutras will cease to exist. At present, more than two hundred years have passed since the time began when the scriptural path is to perish. In this period, the Lotus Sutra alone can benefit people and lead them to enlightenment.

This being the case, it becomes obvious that one ought to embrace this sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In the "Medicine King" chapter, the Buddha states, "In the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off." The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai comments on this by saying, "In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future."³⁸ And the Great Teacher Miao-lo further says, "It is the time when the great teaching will be propagated."³⁹ All these passages indicate that, during the last five-hundred-year period, the Lotus Sutra will be propagated, and thereafter will continue to exist throughout Jambudvīpa and never disappear.

The "Peaceful Practices" chapter refers to those who, "in the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, should accept and embrace, read and recite this sutra." And the "Supernatural Powers" chapter says: "At that time the Buddha spoke to Superior Practices and the others in the great assembly of bodhisattvas, saying: 'If in the process of entrusting this sutra to others I were [to employ these supernatural powers for immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of asamkhya kalpas] to describe the benefits of the sutra, I could never finish doing so. To put it

briefly, all the doctrines possessed by the Thus Come One, all the freely exercised supernatural powers of the Thus Come One, the storehouse of all the secret essentials of the Thus Come One, all the most profound matters of the Thus Come One—all these are proclaimed, revealed, and clearly expounded in this sutra.'"

The meaning of these various passages is that, whether one speaks of it as the fifth five-hundred-year period following Shakyamuni Buddha's passing, or calls it the future age, or the defiled and evil age, it is apparent that at the present time, when the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law have ended and we are more than two hundred years into the Latter Day, only the Lotus Sutra should be propagated. The reason for this is that in this age the people's minds have become twisted, and the teachings produce no actual effect. The Buddhas and gods no longer manifest their awesome powers, and prayers for this life and for future existences go unanswered. At such a time the heavenly devil, or Papiyas, will take advantage of the situation and come rampaging, and the nation will be troubled by constant famine and drought. Disease and plague will rage everywhere, and we will suffer the disasters of foreign invasion and internal strife, our nation being constantly at war within, and later assaulted by invading warriors from another country. In such an age of conflict, when the pure Law of the other sutras ceases to be effective, the wonderfully efficacious medicine of the Lotus Sutra will provide the cure for all these grave disasters.

If one uses the Lotus Sutra to pray for the welfare of the land, it will prove to be a great pure Law that will secure and protect the nation, insuring joy and prosperity to everyone from the ruler on down to the common people. King Ajatashatru and King Ashoka

started out as evil rulers. But the former heeded the counsel of his high minister Jivaka, while the latter put faith in the guidance of the Venerable Yasha,⁴⁰ and as a result each left behind a reputation as a worthy ruler. Likewise, the emperor of the Ch'en dynasty [in China], who cast aside the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north and relied on the Dharma Teacher Chih-i, and Emperor Kammu [of Japan], who spurned the eminent priests of the six schools and instead heeded the Dharma Teacher Saicho, are known to this day as worthy rulers. Chih-i is the man who was later honored with the title of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, while Saicho later became known as the Great Teacher Dengyo.

The present ruler of Japan is in a position to do the same. If he will put his faith in this great pure Law, which assures its believers of "peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences,"⁴¹ and propagate it throughout the nation, then he will be looked up to by the people of all the provinces, and his name will be handed down in later ages as that of a worthy man. Indeed, he may come to be regarded as a manifestation of Bodhisattva Boundless Practices. And the wise man who works to propagate the five characters of the Mystic Law, no matter how lowly his station, should be looked upon as a manifestation of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, or perhaps as an envoy of Shakyamuni Thus Come One.

The bodhisattvas Medicine King, Medicine Superior, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and Great Power, on the other hand, were envoys of the Buddha during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law. Because their turn has already passed, they can no longer benefit people as they did in those ancient times. Just observe what happens when

prayers are offered to them at present! All such prayers go unanswered. Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, it is the turn of the bodhisattvas Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, and the others.

Only when one understands all this clearly and believes in it can the Law manifest its power and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas bring benefit to the people. To illustrate, in kindling a fire, three things are needed: a good piece of steel, a good flint, and good tinder. The same is true of prayer. Three things are required—a good teacher, a good believer, and a good teaching—before prayers can be effective and disasters banished from the land.

A good teacher is a priest who is free from any fault in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate; a priest who reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra precisely as it teaches and also encourages and leads others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised among all priests as the finest teacher of the Law.

A good believer is one who does not depend upon persons of eminence or despise those of humble station; who does not rely on the backing of superiors or look down on inferiors; who, not relying upon the opinions of others, upholds the Lotus Sutra among all the sutras. Such a person the Buddha has called the best of all people.

As for a good teaching, the Buddha has told us that this sutra, the Lotus, represents the foremost among all doctrines. Among all the sutras the Buddha "has preached," among those he "now preaches," and among those he "will preach," this sutra is designated as foremost, and therefore it is a good teaching.

The scriptural doctrines of the Zen, True Word, and other schools stand in second or third place by comparison,

and indeed, the doctrines of the True Word school in particular deserve to be put in seventh place. And yet in Japan, these second-rate, third-rate, or even seventh-rate doctrines are used as the basis for prayers, though any proof of their efficacy has yet to be seen.

This wonderful Law, which is foremost and unexcelled, should in fact be the basis of prayers. The Buddha himself has declared that "honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way," and that "[the Buddhas appear in the world] solely for this one reason, which is true."⁴² Who, then, could have doubts in the matter?

Question: If ignorant persons should come and ask what path leads to emancipation from the sufferings of birth and death, what teachings of which sutras should one explain for them? What has the Buddha taught concerning this point?

Answer: You should teach them the Lotus Sutra. For example, the "Teacher of the Law" chapter says: "If someone should ask what living beings will be able to attain Buddhahood in a latter-day existence, then you should show him that all these people⁴³ in a latter-day existence are certain to attain Buddhahood." And the "Peaceful Practices" chapter says, "If he is asked difficult questions, he should not reply in terms of the teachings of the lesser vehicle. He should explain things solely in terms of the great vehicle." The meaning of these passages is that, if someone should ask what kind of persons are capable of attaining Buddhahood, you should reply that persons who embrace the Lotus Sutra are certain to attain Buddhahood. This represents the Buddha's true intention.

Here a question may arise: "People differ widely in their capacity and inclination. Some will want to hear the Nembutsu teachings, while others will want to hear the Lotus Sutra. If one expounds the Lotus Sutra to those who

want to hear about the Nembutsu, what benefit will they derive from it? If someone has come and specifically asked to hear about the Nembutsu, should one insist on teaching that person the Lotus Sutra? The true intention of the Buddha was to preach the Law in accordance with people's capacities so that they could gain benefit thereby, was it not?"

If someone should raise objections of this kind, you should explain as follows. As a matter of principle, in the world of the Latter Day of the Law, without considering whether or not it conforms to the capacity of ignorant people, one should go ahead and teach them the five characters that compose the title of the Lotus Sutra and enable them to embrace it.

As for the reason, when Shakyamuni Buddha spread the Lotus Sutra long ago as a bodhisattva named Never Disparaging, the laymen and laywomen, the nuns and monks, all refused to heed his words. On the contrary, he was cursed and reviled, beaten and driven away, being subjected to numerous types of persecution. But though he was hated and envied, he did not allow it to daunt him in the slightest, but kept on assertively preaching the Lotus Sutra, and for that reason he appeared in our present world as Shakyamuni Buddha. The people who had cursed Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did not find their mouths twisting out of shape, and those who had beaten him likewise suffered no stiffening of their arms.⁴⁴

The Venerable Aryasimha, who inherited Shakyamuni's teachings, was murdered by a non-Buddhist, and the Tri-pitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face and exiled to the region south of the Yangtze River. How much more so, in the Latter Day of the Law, will an insignificant monk who attempts to propagate the Lotus Sutra encounter such difficulties! Indeed, the sutra makes this very clear. Therefore, although the

people may not heed it or may say that it does not suit their capacity, one should nevertheless persist in expounding to them the five-character title of the Lotus Sutra, because there is no other way than this to attain Buddhahood.

Again, someone might object, saying: "Rather than insisting on preaching the Lotus Sutra when it does not accord with the people's capacity, and thus causing them to slander it so that they fall into the evil paths, it would be better to preach the Nembutsu, which does suit their capacity, and thus awaken in them the aspiration for enlightenment. If someone not only fails to bring benefit to others, but on the contrary causes them to commit slander and fall into hell, he is no votary of the Lotus Sutra but rather a person of false views."

In reply to such objections, you should point out that in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha states that, whatever the people's capacity may be, in the Latter Day of the Law one should persist in preaching the Lotus Sutra. Ask the questioner how he interprets that injunction. Does he claim that Shakyamuni Buddha, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo are persons of false views or non-Buddhists?

Then again, with regard to persons of the two vehicles, who have not fallen into the evil paths and have also escaped from rebirth in the threefold world, the Buddha declares that it is better to arouse in oneself the mind of a dog or a fox than to have the mind of the two vehicles. He also warns that it is better to commit the five cardinal sins or the ten evil acts and fall into hell than to have the mind of the two vehicles. Not falling into the evil paths might appear to be a considerable benefit, but the Buddha did not regard this as his true intention. Even if one should fall into hell, because one has heard the Lotus Sutra, which leads to

Buddhahood, with this as the seed, one will invariably become a Buddha.

Thus, T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, following this principle, state in their commentaries that one should persist in preaching the Lotus Sutra. For instance, a person who stumbles and falls to the ground pushes himself up from the ground and rises to his feet again. In the same way, though persons [who slander the Lotus Sutra] may fall into hell, they will quickly rise up again and become Buddhas.

The people of today in any event already turn their backs on the Lotus Sutra, and because of that error they will undoubtedly fall into hell. Therefore, one should by all means persist in preaching the Lotus Sutra and causing them to hear it. Those who put their faith in it will surely attain Buddhahood, while those who slander it will establish a "poison-drum relationship" with it and will likewise attain Buddhahood.

In any event, the seeds of Buddhahood exist nowhere apart from the Lotus Sutra. If it were possible to attain Buddhahood through the provisional teachings, then why would the Buddha have said that one should insist on preaching the Lotus Sutra, and that both those who slander it and those who believe in it will benefit? Or why would he say, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives [but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way]"?⁴⁵ Persons who have set their minds upon the way should clearly understand these matters.

Question: If ignorant persons put faith in the Lotus Sutra, can even they attain Buddhahood in their present form? And in what pure land will they be reborn?

Answer: In upholding the Lotus Sutra, of those who profoundly grasp the sutra's meaning, practice the seated meditation described in *Great Concentration and Insight*, and concentrate on

the meditative disciplines pertaining to the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the ten objects, and the ten meditations, there may be some who indeed attain Buddhahood in their present form and achieve enlightenment. As for other types of people, it would appear that, even if they do not understand the meaning of the Lotus Sutra and are ignorant but have earnest faith, then they will invariably be reborn in a pure land. For it says in the Lotus Sutra, "They will be born in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions,"⁴⁶ and "She will immediately go to the World of Peace and Delight."⁴⁷ These passages give clear proof that one who has faith in the Lotus Sutra will be reborn in a pure land.

Someone may raise objections, saying: "Since I am only one person, I do not understand how I can be reborn in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions. Surely I am limited to one direction. Therefore, in which direction should I trust and be reborn?"

To reply, there is a very good reason why the sutra speaks of ten directions and does not specify which one. This is because, when the life of one who believes in the Lotus Sutra comes to an end, among all the worlds of the ten directions, that person will be reborn in the land of a Buddha who is preaching the Lotus Sutra, and will never be reborn in a pure land where the other sutras, such as the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras, are being preached.

There are many pure lands in the ten directions. There are pure lands where the way of the voice-hearers is preached, pure lands where the way of the pratyekabuddhas is preached, and pure lands where the way of the bodhisattvas is preached. Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra will never be reborn in any of these, but will at once be reborn in a pure land where the Lotus Sutra is being preached. They will take their

seats among the assembly, listen to the Lotus Sutra, and as a result become Buddhas.

Yet in spite of this, there are those who urge others to set aside the Lotus Sutra in this lifetime, saying that it is not suited to their capacity, and that they will master its teachings when they are reborn in the western pure land. It is obvious, however, that such people will never master the Lotus Sutra even in Amida's Pure Land, nor will they be reborn in any of the other pure lands of the ten directions. Rather, because the offense of turning one's back upon the Lotus Sutra is grave, they will fall into hell and remain there for a long time. The sutra is referring to such a person when it says, "When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."⁴⁸

Question: The sutra states, "She will immediately go to the World of Peace and Delight where the Buddha Amida dwells." The meaning of this passage is that a woman who embraces the Lotus Sutra will be reborn in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. It is also said that by reciting the Nembutsu one will be reborn in Amida's Pure Land. Since one is reborn in the Pure Land in either case, may we not assume that the Nembutsu and the Lotus Sutra are equivalent?

Answer: The Meditation Sutra belongs to the provisional teachings, while the Lotus Sutra represents the true teaching. In no way are they equivalent. The reason is that when the Buddha appeared in the world, though he spent forty years and more preaching various doctrines, he had a great aversion to persons of the two vehicles, to evil persons, and to women, and said not a single word about the possibility of their attaining Buddhahood. In this one [Lotus] sutra, however, he stated that even those of the two vehicles, for whom the seeds of Buddhahood had rotted; Devadatta, who had committed three cardinal sins;

and women, who are ordinarily hindered by the five obstacles, could all become Buddhas. This is clearly stated in the text of the sutra.

The Flower Garland Sutra states, "Women are messengers of hell who can destroy the seeds of Buddhahood. They may look like bodhisattvas, but at heart they are like yaksha demons."⁴⁹ The Silver-Colored Woman Sutra says that, even though the eyes of the Buddhas of the three existences should come out and fall to the ground, no woman in the entire realm of phenomena could ever attain Buddhahood. Another sutra says, "Women are great evil spirits who devour all people."⁵⁰ Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says that just looking upon a woman once forms the karma to fall into hell for a long time. Thus, although I do not know if it is true or not, it is said that the Reverend Shan-tao, though he was a slanderer of the Law, spent his entire lifetime without ever looking at a woman.⁵¹ And Narihira⁵² was comparing women to demons in his poem:

My horror of that ruined,
Creeper-grown house
Is because, even briefly,
It swarms with demons!

Moreover, women are burdened with the five obstacles and the three obediences, and so their sins are said to be profound. The five obstacles mean that, first, a woman cannot become a Brahma; second, she cannot become a Shakra; third, she cannot become a devil king; fourth, she cannot become a wheel-turning king; and fifth, she cannot become a Buddha. The three obediences mean that, when a woman is young, she cannot follow her own mind, but must obey her parents. When she reaches maturity, she cannot do as she desires, but must obey her husband. And when she is old, she cannot do as she desires, but must obey

her sons. Thus, from the time she is a child until she becomes an old woman, she cannot do as she pleases, but must obey these three categories of persons. She cannot say what she thinks, she cannot see what she wants to see, she cannot hear what she wants to hear. This is what is meant by the three obediences.

For this reason, Jung Ch'i-ch'i⁵³ numbered among his three pleasures the fact that he had not been born a woman. Women are thus despised in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures. And yet, in the case of the Lotus Sutra, even though they neither read nor copy the text, women who receive and uphold it in body, mouth, and mind, and in particular chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with their mouths, will be able to attain Buddhahood readily, as did the dragon king's daughter, Gautami, and Yashodhara, who lived at the same time as the Buddha. This is the meaning of the passage you have cited from the sutra.

Moreover, concerning the phrase "the World of Peace and Delight," all the various pure lands are indicated by the words "Peace and Delight." And again, the Amida Buddha spoken of here is not the Amida Buddha of the Meditation Sutra. The Amida Buddha of the Meditation Sutra was originally a monk named Dharma Treasury, the master of forty-eight vows and a Buddha who attained the way ten kalpas in the past. In the Lotus Sutra, the Amida mentioned in the theoretical teaching was the ninth son among the sixteen princes who were sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, an Amida Buddha who made a great vow to propagate the Lotus Sutra. The Amida who appears in the essential teaching is an emanation of Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, a commentary says, "One should understand that this does not refer to [the Amida of] the Meditation and other sutras."⁵⁴

Question: The Lotus Sutra says, “[The door to this wisdom is] difficult to understand and difficult to enter.”⁵⁵ The persons of our time cite this passage to argue that the Lotus Sutra is not fitted to the capacities of the people, and this seems to me very reasonable. What is your opinion?

Answer: Such an assertion is quite unfounded. The reason is because it is put forward by persons who have not grasped the true meaning of this sutra.

The sutras that were preached prior to the Lotus Sutra were indeed difficult to understand and difficult to enter. But when we come to the assembly where the Lotus Sutra was preached, then we can say that the Buddha’s teaching became easy to understand and easy to enter. For this reason, the Great Teacher Miao-lo says in his commentary, “The sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra are incomplete teachings, and therefore it is said that they are difficult to understand. But in this present teaching, it is indicated that all persons whosever can in fact enter the realm of truth. Hence the teaching is easy to understand.”⁵⁶

This passage means that in the case of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, because the people’s capacity was inferior, these sutras were difficult to understand and difficult to enter. But by the time the Buddha preached the present sutra [the Lotus], the people’s capacity had become sharper, and therefore the teaching was easy to understand and easy to enter.

In addition, if those sutras that declare themselves to be difficult to understand and difficult to enter do not fit the people’s capacity, then you ought first of all to abandon the Nembutsu teaching. I say this because in the Two-Volumed Sutra we read, “[To embrace this sutra is] the most difficult of difficult things. Nothing is more difficult than this.” And the Amida Sutra speaks of itself as a doctrine that is “difficult to

believe.” The meaning of these passages is that to accept and uphold these sutras is the most difficult of difficult things, that nothing could in fact be more difficult, and that their doctrines are difficult to believe.

Question: The sutra reads, “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” It also reads, “[As for those living beings who are unable to hear this sutra . . .] though immeasurable, boundless, inconceivable *asamkhyā kalpas* may pass, they will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment.”⁵⁷ Just what are these passages saying?

Answer: The meaning of these passages is that, among the various doctrines that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded in the fifty years of his preaching life, he did not expound the truth in the Flower Garland Sutra, which represents his first teaching, nor did he expound the truth in the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom sutras, which he preached later on. For this reason, people who carry out the practice taught by the Zen and Nembutsu schools or who uphold the precepts will never attain Buddhahood, even though immeasurable and boundless *kalpas* may pass.

After the Buddha had spent forty-two years preaching, he then expounded the Lotus Sutra, and in that sutra he said, “The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth.” When they heard and understood these words of the Buddha, Shariputra and the others of the twelve hundred arhats; the twelve thousand voice-hearers; Maitreya and the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas; Brahma, Shakra, and the others of the ten thousands of millions of heavenly beings; and King Ajatashatru and the countless and innumerable other rulers said, “Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One’s preaching, but we have never heard this kind of profound,

wonderful, and superior Law.” Thus they declared that, although they had constantly attended the Buddha and heard him preach various doctrines over forty-two years, they had never heard anything like this precious Lotus Sutra.

How can the people of the world so misunderstand such clear passages as to think that the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras are equal? Not only that, but they say that the Lotus Sutra, because it does not suit the people’s capacity, is like brocade worn in the dark of night, or like last year’s calendar. When they happen to encounter someone who upholds the sutra, they look on that person with scorn and contempt, hate and envy, and purse their lips in disapproval. This is nothing less than slander of the Law. How, then, could they be reborn in the pure land or attain Buddhahood? It appears that such people will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Question: Generally speaking, people who have a correct understanding of the Buddhist teachings and who act in accordance with the Buddha’s will are looked up to by the world and respected by all. And yet in our present age, in the case of those who uphold the Lotus Sutra, the world joins in hating and envying them, treats them with contempt and scorn, sometimes driving them away, sometimes condemning them to exile, never dreaming of giving them alms but rather hating them as though they were deadly enemies. It would almost seem as though the followers of the Lotus Sutra were evil-minded people who were going against the Buddha’s will and interpreting the Buddhist teachings in a distorted manner. How do the sutras explain this?

Answer: According to the sutra text, the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who are so faithful in upholding the sutra that they are hated by others, are the true priests

of Mahayana. They are the teachers of the Law who will propagate the Lotus Sutra and bring people benefit. As for priests who are thought well of by others, who go along with other people’s desires and so come to be revered, one should regard them as the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and as evil influences to the world. A sutra passage likens persons of this type to a hunter who spies sharply about him as he stalks a deer, or to a cat who hides its claws as it creeps up on a mouse. In just such a way, we are told, do they flatter, deceive, and mislead the lay men and women.

In addition, the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter mentions three groups of people who are enemies of the Lotus Sutra. The first group consists of laymen and laywomen. These lay men and women will hate and curse the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, beat them, put them to the sword, drive them from their dwellings, or slander them to the authorities so that they are exiled to distant places. They behave toward them with pitiless enmity.

The second group consists of monks. These men are arrogant at heart, and though they have little true understanding, they pretend to be very wise and are looked upon by the people of the world as great authorities. When these men see the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, they hate and envy them, treat them with contempt and scorn, and speak evil of them to others as if they were inferior to dogs or foxes. In their opinion, they alone have truly understood the Lotus Sutra.

The third group is made up of monks living in secluded places. These monks have all the outward signs of being holy men. They possess only the prescribed three robes and one begging bowl, and live in seclusion in a quiet spot in a mountain forest, so that everyone looks up to them as though they were the arhats living at the time of

Shakyamuni Buddha, and all people revere them as though they were Buddhas. When these men see the monks who read and uphold the Lotus Sutra in accordance with its teachings, they hate and envy them, calling them great fools or holders of grave erroneous views, claiming that they are completely lacking in compassion, and that they preach non-Buddhist doctrines. And because the ruler looks up to such men and believes what they say, everyone down to the common people gives alms to them as though they were Buddhas. Thus the Buddha taught that persons who read and uphold the Lotus Sutra in accordance with its teachings will invariably be hated by these three types of enemies.

Question: Is there any evidence to indicate that one should embrace in particular the name of the Lotus Sutra in the same way that people embrace the name of a particular Buddha?

Answer: The sutra states, "The Buddha said to the demon daughters, 'Excellent, excellent! If you can shield and guard those who accept and uphold the mere name of the Lotus Sutra, your merit will be immeasurable.'"⁵⁸ The meaning of this passage is that, when the ten demon daughters made a vow to protect those who embrace the title of the Lotus Sutra, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment praised them, saying, "Excellent! Excellent! The blessings you will enjoy for protecting those who accept and uphold Nam-myoho-enge-kyo will be impossible to fathom! They will be splendid blessings! Truly wonderful!" This passage implies that we ordinary people, whether we are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

As for the meaning of Myoho-enge-kyo: The Buddha nature inherent in us, ordinary people; the Buddha nature of Brahma, Shakra, and the other deities; the Buddha nature of

Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the other voice-hearers; the Buddha nature of Manjushri, Maitreya, and the other bodhisattvas; and the Mystic Law that is the enlightenment of the Buddhas of the three existences, are one and identical. This principle is called Myoho-enge-kyo. Therefore, when once we chant Myoho-enge-kyo, with just that single sound we summon forth and manifest the Buddha nature of all Buddhas; all existences; all bodhisattvas; all voice-hearers; all the deities such as Brahma, Shakra, and King Yama; the sun and moon, and the myriad stars; the heavenly gods and earthly deities, on down to hell-dwellers, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, human and heavenly beings, and all other living beings. This blessing is immeasurable and boundless.

When we revere Myoho-enge-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of devotion, the Buddha nature within us is summoned forth and manifested by our chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. This is what is meant by "Buddha." To illustrate, when a caged bird sings, birds who are flying in the sky are thereby summoned and gather around, and when the birds flying in the sky gather around, the bird in the cage strives to get out. When with our mouths we chant the Mystic Law, our Buddha nature, being summoned, will invariably emerge. The Buddha nature of Brahma and Shakra, being called, will protect us, and the Buddha nature of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, being summoned, will rejoice. This is what the Buddha meant when he said, "If one can uphold it [the Mystic Law] even for a short while I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas."⁵⁹

All Buddhas of the three existences, too, attain Buddhahood by virtue of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. These five characters are the reason why the Buddhas of the three existences appear in the world; they

are the Mystic Law whereby all living beings can attain the Buddha way. You should understand these matters thoroughly and, on the path of attaining Buddhahood, chant Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo without arrogance or attachment to biased views.

Nichiren



Background

This letter is generally thought to have been written in the third year of Kenji (1277), though differing opinions assign it to as early as 1271 or even as late as 1282. Its recipient was a woman called the lay nun Myoho who lived at Okamiya in Suruga Province. Little is known about her, other than that she was widowed in 1278 and also lost an elder brother. She appears to have maintained steadfast faith throughout her life. She is the same lay nun who received *The One Essential Phrase* from Nichiren Daishonin in 1278.

“Those initially aspiring to the way” in the letter’s title refers to the people of this latter age, who were generally considered to have planted few roots of merit in prior lifetimes. Written in question-and-answer form, it first establishes that, among the various schools of Buddhism, only that based upon the Lotus Sutra represents the school founded by Shakyamuni Buddha himself, for this sutra alone expresses the Buddha’s true intention.

Through the first few sets of questions and answers, the Daishonin explains that, whether viewed in terms of the teaching, the people’s capacity, the time, or the country, the Lotus is the only sutra to be propagated in Japan during the Latter Day of the Law. Unlike the provisional teachings, which are suited to some people but not to others, the Lotus Sutra is unique in enabling all people to attain Buddhahood.

In Nichiren Daishonin’s time, the idea prevailed that the Lotus Sutra, be-

ing extremely profound, was far beyond the capacity of people born in the Latter Day of the Law, and that only the relatively easy Nembutsu teachings could save them by leading them to rebirth in Amida’s Pure Land. The Daishonin counters by asserting that, in this age, the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which represent the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra, can benefit all people. This is the Law to be propagated by Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

Referring to the many disasters then besetting Japan, Nichiren Daishonin points out that prayers for the nation’s welfare based on the provisional teachings no longer produce results. To make fire, he says, three things are needed: a good piece of steel, a good flint, and good tinder. Similarly, one needs three elements—a good teacher, a good believer, and a good teaching—before prayers can be answered and the nation restored to peace. The Lotus Sutra, being foremost among the Buddha’s teachings, is just such a “good teaching” that can answer prayers and end disasters.

A theme running through this writing is the Lotus Sutra’s universal power of salvation. The Daishonin says that, regardless of whether people do or do not possess the power of understanding, the most important thing is to let them form a bond with the Mystic Law. Thus he emphasizes that in the evil age of the Latter Day one should assertively teach Nam-myoho-renge-

kyo, the heart of the Lotus Sutra, rather than some lesser, provisional teaching, for even those who slander the Lotus Sutra will eventually attain Buddhahood by virtue of the “poison-drum relationship,” or the reverse connection that they thereby form with it. He also makes clear for the lay nun Myoho’s benefit that the Lotus Sutra, unlike the earlier teachings, guarantees Buddhahood for women as well as for men.

Notes

1. The eight schools are the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, and True Word schools. The nine schools comprise these eight plus the Zen school, and the ten schools are those nine plus the Pure Land school.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

3. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

4. Nirvana Sutra. These injunctions are termed the “four reliances,” but they are also known as the “four standards.”

5. Collectively, the provisional teachings preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, according to T’ien-t’ai’s classification of sutras. See five periods in Glossary.

6. The Great Collection Sutra describes the last five-hundred-year period, corresponding to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, as a time when quarrels and disputes will occur among rival schools and the pure Law, or Shakyamuni’s Buddhism, will be lost. This period is termed the “age of conflict.”

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.

8. No such passage appears in the extant version of *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*. However, Annen’s *Extensive Commentary on the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts* attributes a similar statement to this work.

9. *On the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts*.

10. Tsukushi is an ancient name for what is presently Fukuoka Prefecture or the entire island of Kyushu. Chinzei is also an ancient name for Kyushu. Michinoku is an ancient name for northeastern Japan. Also called Mutsu.

The conclusion explains that the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo, the five characters of the sutra’s title, is identical to the Buddha nature inherent in our own lives and in all things in the universe. When we revere this Law, the essence of our own life, and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we simultaneously manifest the Buddha nature, both in ourselves and in the world around us.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

12. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

13. *Outstanding Principles*.

14. A comparative classification of the Buddhist sutras. The five teachings are the Hinayana teaching, the elementary Mahayana teaching, the final Mahayana teaching, the sudden teaching, and the perfect teaching. The perfect teaching indicates the Flower Garland and Lotus sutras, between which the Flower Garland Sutra is assigned the higher place.

15. A classification established by Shantao of the Chinese Pure Land school. “Correct practices” are practices for attaining rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. The term is used in contrast to “sundry practices,” or all Buddhist practices not directed toward Amida Buddha.

16. Honen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* and put them together as a set.

17. *Immeasurable Meanings Sutra*.

18. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, chap. 3. In the text of the sutra, these words are spoken in the singular by Shariputra. The Daishonin interprets them here as expressing the thoughts of the entire assembly.

23. *Ibid.*, chap. 4. In the text of the sutra, these words are spoken by Mahakashyapa.

24. *Ibid.*, chap. 3. In the text of the sutra, these words are spoken by the sons of the gods.

25. *Ibid.*, chap. 17. In the text of the

sutra, these words are spoken by Maitreya.

26. *Outstanding Principles*.

27. This statement actually appears in Miao-lo's *Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

28. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

29. *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

30. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

31. *On Resolving Doubts regarding Rebirth in the Western Paradise* by Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school.

32. *The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight* by Tao-ch'o.

33. Buddha Infinite Life Sutra.

34. In his *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*, Shan-tao interprets the "hundred years" mentioned in the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra as referring to the period following the Latter Day of the Law. He says, "After the ten thousand years following the Buddha's passing, the three treasures will perish, and this sutra will remain for a period of a hundred years."

35. Chapter 23 of the Lotus Sutra states, "Just as the ocean is foremost among all bodies of water such as rivers and streams, so this Lotus Sutra will likewise be foremost."

36. A reference to a passage in the Brahma Excellent Thought Sutra. It states that, just as the rivers and streams will evaporate before the great ocean does in the fire at the kalpa's end, so the inferior way will die out before the bodhisattva teachings when Buddhism perishes.

37. Here the Daishonin interprets the passage of the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra as referring to conditions at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

38. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

39. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

40. Yasha was the chief monk of Kukkutarama Monastery of Magadha. He lived about one hundred years after Shakyamuni's death and headed the Second Buddhist Council in Vaishali.

41. Lotus Sutra, chap. 5.

42. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

43. Earlier the "Teacher of the Law" chapter speaks of "persons who embrace, read, recite, expound, and copy the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, even only one

verse, and look upon this sutra with the same reverence as they would the Buddha."

44. These persons suffered no immediate punishment in this life, but after death they fell into hell. Eventually, however, they were able to take faith in the Lotus Sutra.

45. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

46. *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

47. *Ibid.*, chap. 23. The full passage reads: "If in the last five-hundred-year period after the Thus Come One has entered extinction there is a woman who hears this sutra and carries out its practices as the sutra directs, when her life here on earth comes to an end, she will immediately go to the World of Peace and Delight where the Buddha Amida dwells surrounded by the assembly of great bodhisattvas and there will be born seated on a jeweled seat in the center of a lotus blossom."

48. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

49. This statement is not found in the extant Chinese versions of the Flower Garland Sutra. However, *A Collection of Treasures* cites it as a quotation from the Flower Garland Sutra.

50. Source unknown.

51. That Shan-tao never in his life looked at a woman is stated in *The New Biographies of Those Who Attained Rebirth in the Pure Land*, written by Wang-ku in 1084.

52. Ariwara no Narihira (825-880). One of the six poetic geniuses, or the six most renowned poets, in the Heian period (794-1185). The poem cited is from *Tales of Ise*.

53. Jung Ch'i-ch'i was a man of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.). According to *Lieh Tzu*, he told Confucius that he had obtained three pleasures in this world: the first was having been born a human being, the second was having been born a man, and the third was being able to enjoy a long life.

54. *On "The Words and Phrases."* This statement is commenting on the passage in the "Medicine King" chapter cited in n. 47.

55. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

56. *On "The Words and Phrases."*

57. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

58. Lotus Sutra, chap. 26.

59. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

No Safety in the Threefold World



I HAVE received the various articles you sent me. Concerned about my life in the mountains, you had your messenger make his way through the snow to call on me. Your sincerity has no doubt been recognized by the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters.

The Nirvana Sutra states, "Human life runs its course more swiftly than a mountain stream; the person here today will not likely be here tomorrow." The Maya Sutra reads, "Imagine, for instance, a flock of sheep being driven by a chandala to the slaughterhouse. Human life is exactly the same; step by step one approaches the place of death." The Lotus Sutra states, "There is no safety in the threefold world; it is like a burning house, replete with a multitude of sufferings, truly to be feared."¹

In these passages from the sutras, our compassionate father, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, admonishes us, the ordinary people of the latter age; it is his warning to us, his ignorant children. Nevertheless, the people do not awaken for even one instant; nor do they conceive a desire to attain the way for even a single moment. In order to decorate their bodies, which, if abandoned in the fields, would be stripped naked overnight, they spend their time striving to pile up articles of clothing.

When their lives come to an end,

within three days their bodies will turn into water that washes away, into dust that mixes with the earth, and into smoke that rises up into the sky, leaving no trace behind. Nevertheless, they seek to nurture these bodies and to amass great wealth.

This principle has been known since ancient times, but today the situation is pitiable. The country of Japan has been visited by continuous famine for the last several years, and supplies of food and clothing are exhausted. The domestic animals have all been consumed, and persons who eat human flesh are appearing. They tear flesh from the bodies of the dead, children, and the sick, mix it with fish or deer meat, and sell it. People purchase this mixture and eat it. Thus, this country has unwittingly become an abode of great evil demons.

Moreover, from the spring of last year through the middle of the second month of this year, epidemics have spread throughout the country. In five families out of ten, in fifty households out of a hundred, all the members have died from disease. Others have escaped illness but are suffering from great spiritual distress, and thus are in even greater agony than those who are ill. Even the people who managed to survive have lost the children who used to follow them as closely as shadows, or

the spouses from whom they had been as inseparable as a pair of eyes, or the parents upon whom they had relied as they would upon heaven and earth. For them, what meaning does life hold? How could sensible people not abhor this world? The Buddha taught that there is no safety in the threefold world, but the current state of affairs seems excessively tragic.

Although I myself am only an ordinary person, I informed the ruler that the Buddha had left behind teachings predicting such a situation. However, he did not heed my admonitions, but rather began to persecute me even more harshly, so there was nothing further I could do. This country has already become a slanderer of the Law, and by turning into an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, it has also made itself an enemy of the Buddhas and the gods of the three existences and the ten directions.

Please consider deeply. No matter what grave crimes I, Nichiren, have been charged with, I am a votary of the Lotus Sutra. No matter what grave crimes a person who chants *Namu Amida Butsu* may be guilty of, it cannot be denied that he is a follower of the *Nembutsu*. Because I chant *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* with my own mouth, I have been reviled, struck, exiled, and had my life threatened. However, in spite of all this, I have continued to exhort others to do like-

wise. Am I not then a votary of the Lotus Sutra?

In the Lotus Sutra, it is stipulated that those who bear a grudge against its votary are destined to fall into the Avichi hell. The fourth volume states that the offense of harboring malice toward a votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age is graver than that of reviling the Buddha for an entire medium kalpa.² The seventh volume teaches that people who disparage the votary will suffer in the Avichi hell for a thousand kalpas.³ The fifth volume states that after the Buddha's passing, when the Latter Day of the Law arrives, a votary of the Lotus Sutra will certainly appear, and that at that time, in that country, an immeasurably great multitude of monks who either uphold or violate the precepts will gather and denounce the votary to the ruler of the country, causing him to be banished and ruined.⁴

These passages from the sutra all coincide precisely with what has happened to me. I am therefore convinced that I will attain Buddhahood in the future. I will speak in more detail when we meet.

Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the second month in the fourth year of Kenji (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

Reply to Matsuno



Background

This letter was written from snow-bound Minobu and addressed to the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, a follower who lived in the village of Matsuno in Ihara District of Suruga Province.

Matsuno, Nanjo Tokimitsu's grand-

father, apparently was diligent in his practice. From the several letters addressed to him, the first of which was written in the second month of 1276, it is clear that he sent frequent gifts to the Daishonin. In these letters, the Daishonin often touched on the subjects

of death, the pure land of Eagle Peak, and enlightenment. This indicates that Matsuno was probably advanced in years, and reflects the Daishonin's desire to refute any attachment Matsuno may have had to the Nembutsu doctrine of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land, a concept that was prevalent in society at the time.

In this letter, the Daishonin first stresses the transience of life and the futility of pursuing only material wealth.

Next he graphically describes the famine and disease that plagued Japan at that time, citing the country's failure to heed his warnings regarding the causes of these catastrophes and its persecution of him instead. He notes that the persecutions to which he has been subjected accord exactly with the predictions of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he asserts, there can be no doubt that he will attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 20.
4. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

Letter to Misawa



PLEASE tell the people of Suruga that they should unite firmly in faith.¹

I have received your offerings of a hundred mandarin oranges, kelp, laver, dark green seaweed, and other produce that you took the trouble to send me in this remote mountainous place. I have also received the quilted robe made by the lay nun Utsubusa.

I have carefully examined the points you raised in your letter, and I understand. Although the people who study Buddhism outnumber the dust particles of the land, those who actually become Buddhas are fewer than the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. This the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment clearly states in the Nirvana Sutra. On reading it, I wondered why it should be so difficult, but after some thought I realized that indeed it must be so. Although people study Buddhism, it is difficult for them to practice it correctly either because of the ignorance of their minds, or because, even though wise, they fail to realize that they are being misled by their teachers.

Moreover, even though one may encounter a wise teacher and the true sutra and thereby embrace the correct teaching, when one resolves to break free from the sufferings of birth and death and attain Buddhahood, one will inevitably encounter seven grave mat-

ters known as the three obstacles and four devils, just as surely as a shadow follows the body and clouds accompany rain. Even if you should manage to overcome the first six, if you are defeated by the seventh, you will not be able to become a Buddha.

Let us leave the first six for now. The seventh is caused by the devil king of the sixth heaven. When an ordinary person of the latter age is ready to attain Buddhahood, having realized the essence of all the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime and understood the heart of the important teaching set forth in *Great Concentration and Insight*, this devil is greatly surprised. He says to himself, "This is most vexing. If I allow this person to remain in my domain, he not only will free himself from the sufferings of birth and death, but will lead others to enlightenment as well. Moreover, he will take over my realm and change it into a pure land. What shall I do?" The devil king then summons all his underlings from the threefold world of desire, form, and formlessness and tells them: "Each of you now go and harass that votary, according to your respective skills. If you should fail to make him abandon his Buddhist practice, then enter into the minds of his disciples, lay supporters, and the people of his land and thus try to persuade or threaten him.

If these attempts are also unsuccessful, I myself will go down and possess the mind and body of his sovereign to persecute that votary. Together, how can we fail to prevent him from attaining Buddhahood?"

I, Nichiren, have long been aware of all this and therefore know how difficult it is for an ordinary person of the latter age to become a Buddha in this lifetime. The sutras describe in many places how Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment, and the obstacles he suffered because of the devil king of the sixth heaven seem absolutely unbearable. The fiendish acts of Devadatta and of King Ajatashatru were due solely to the workings of that devil. The Lotus Sutra says, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"² An ordinary person like Nichiren would not be able to bear any of the tribulations the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment underwent for a single day or even for a single moment, let alone all the various persecutions that befell him during a period of fifty years or more. Moreover, it is taught that in the latter age persecutions will be a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than those in the Buddha's lifetime. I wondered how I could possibly withstand them. A sage, however, is said to be capable of predicting what will occur in the future. With regard to the three existences, an understanding of the future is the mark of a true sage. I may not be a sage, but I have for some time known that Japan would in our day bring ruin upon itself [because of its attachment to erroneous teachings].

I knew that, if I dared to say this openly, then surely I must be the votary of the Lotus Sutra who the Buddha prophesied would appear in the future age that he was describing when he said, "How much more will this be

so after his passing?" But if, though knowing what the future holds, I were to remain silent, I would be condemned to be born a mute or a stutterer in lifetime after lifetime. I myself would become a great enemy of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and a traitor to the ruler of Japan. After death, I would fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. For years, therefore, I have continually admonished myself that, even though I might lack food or clothing, or be rebuked by my parents, brothers, teacher, and colleagues, or be persecuted by the ruler and all the people, if I were going to waver even in the slightest on that account, I would have done better never to have spoken out in the first place.

During the past countless kalpas, I may have met the Lotus Sutra several times and aroused the aspiration for enlightenment. However, while I may have been able to bear one or two difficulties, I must have given up when faced with a succession of great obstacles. In this life, I knew that if I were truly resolved to withstand the harshest trials then I must speak out. This I did, and I encountered great persecutions one after another, just as the sutra predicts.

My resolution is now immovable. Determined to endure any hardship, I have fulfilled the Buddha's prediction, and I have not the slightest doubt. Now I am living here in this mountain forest. Even if you should abandon your faith in the Lotus Sutra, how could I regard as strangers the people who, if only for a day or even for a moment, have helped me survive? Never have I cared what happens to me personally. I promised that, no matter what might befall me, I would maintain my faith without regressing, and if I became a Buddha, I would lead all of you to enlightenment. You have less knowledge of Buddhism than I, and moreover, you are lay believers with lands, wives and

children, and retainers. Therefore, it may be extremely difficult for you to sustain your faith throughout life. This is why I have always told you that, because of your position, it would be better to feign ignorance of this teaching. No matter what may happen in the future, be assured that I will never forsake or neglect you.

As for my teachings, regard those before my exile to the province of Sado as equivalent to the Buddha's pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. I had thought that, if the ruler of this country desired to govern well, he would summon the priests of the True Word school for an open debate with me, and that on that occasion I would reveal a matter of truly supreme importance. Before my exile, I withheld this even from my disciples for fear that if I should tell them, even in confidence, they might inadvertently disclose it to the True Word priests, who would then avoid the debate. This is why I refrained from revealing it to each one of you as well.

Then on the night of the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), I was very nearly beheaded at Tatsunokuchi. From that time, I felt pity for my followers because I had not yet revealed this true teaching to any of them. With this in mind, I secretly conveyed my teaching³ to my disciples from the province of Sado. After the Buddha's passing, great scholars and teachers such as Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, Dengyo, and Gishin knew this teaching, but kept it in their hearts and did not express it in words. The reason was that the Buddha had forbidden them to spread it, stating, "After my passing, this great Law should not be revealed until the Latter Day of the Law arrives."⁴ I may not be an envoy sent by the Buddha, but my appearance in this world coincides with the age of the Latter Day. Moreover, quite unexpect-

edly, I came to realize this teaching, which I now expound to prepare the way for a sage.⁵

With the appearance of this teaching, all the teachings advocated by the scholars and teachers of Buddhism during the Former and Middle Days of the Law will be like stars after sunrise, or an awkward apprentice beside a skilled craftsman. It is stated that, once this teaching is revealed in this era, the Buddha images as well as the priests of the temples built in the Former and Middle Days will all lose their power to benefit people, and only this great teaching will spread throughout the entire land of Jambudvipa. Since all of you have a bond with this teaching, you should feel reassured.

Utsubusa came a long distance to visit me despite her advanced age, but since I was told that it was merely a casual visit on her way back from the shrine to the god of her ancestors, I would not see her, although I pitied her greatly. Had I permitted her to see me, I would have been allowing her to commit slander against the Lotus Sutra. The reason is that all gods are subjects, and the Lotus Sutra is their lord. It is against even the code of society to visit one's lord on the way back from calling on one of his subjects. Moreover, Utsubusa is a lay nun and should have the Buddha foremost in mind. Because she made this and other mistakes as well, I refused to see her. She was not the only one, however. I refused to see many others who stopped by to visit me on their return from the hot spring resort at Shimobe.⁶ Utsubusa is the same age that my parents would be. I feel deeply sorry to have disappointed her, but I want her to understand this point.

After you came here to see me the year before last, I received word—true or not, I do not know—that you were ill, and I wanted to send a messenger to inquire after you. But my disciples said

that, much as they understood how I felt, they advised against it, as it might embarrass you. Therefore, I abandoned the idea, acknowledging that such is the way of the world. I thought that if you were really ill you would inform me through a messenger, since you have always been sincere and faithful. I did not hear from you, however, so I myself deliberately refrained from inquiring after you, although I have been anxious about you all this time. Impermanence is the way of all things, but last year and this year the world has seen such great turmoil that I wondered if I could ever see you again. Just when I was longing to hear from you, your letter arrived. Nothing could have given me greater pleasure. Please tell the lay nun Utsubusa about all that I have written here.

I would like to explain further about my teaching, but this letter is already too long. Earlier I mentioned the Zen, Nembutsu, and Precepts schools. But of the many schools of Buddhism, the True Word is the very teaching that brought ruin upon China and will destroy Japan as well. Not only were six priests—the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung, and the great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho—confused as to the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the three True Word sutras such as the Mahavairochana, but the first three Tripitaka masters also made objects of devotion representing the two [Diamond and Womb] realms and misled people to believe that these mandalas had originated in India. Being so deceived, the three great teachers learned the True Word doctrines, brought them to Japan, and spread them throughout the land, to everyone from the ruler on down to the common people. Emperor Hsüan-tsung of China lost his empire because of the True Word

doctrines, and Japan is also steadily declining. The Retired Emperor of Oki, who served as the eighty-second emperor, was robbed of his power by the Kamakura government despite Great Bodhisattva Hachiman's oath⁷ to protect one hundred successive rulers. This misfortune was solely the result of prayers offered by eminent priests who followed the three great teachers mentioned above on behalf of the imperial court. These prayers "rebounded upon the originator."⁸

Because the Kamakura shogunate attacked this evil doctrine and the evil men who espoused it, it might have ruled our land for eighteen generations more, until its one hundredth ruler, in accordance with the oath of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. However, it has now turned to the men of the same evil doctrine it once opposed. Therefore, as Japan no longer has a ruler worthy of protection, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings have reached a decision and ordered a foreign country to threaten Japan. They have also dispatched the votary of the Lotus Sutra as their envoy. The ruler, however, does not heed his warnings. On the contrary, he sides with the priests, thus creating chaos in both the secular realm of government and the religious realm of Buddhism. As a result, he has become a formidable enemy of the Lotus Sutra. And as his slander has long continued, this country is on the verge of ruin.

Today's epidemic is no less than the harbinger of a great war that is to come. How pitiful, how tragic!

Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the second month

Letter to Misawa

Background

Written in the fourth year of Kenji (1278), this letter is also referred to as *Before and after Sado* because it makes a clear distinction between the teachings the Daishonin expounded before his exile to Sado Island and those during and after his Sado exile. He compares the former to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, which Shakyamuni preached as an expedient to lead his disciples to the Lotus Sutra. Concerning his true teaching, the Daishonin says, "I secretly conveyed my teaching to my disciples from the province of Sado." Quoting the Buddha's words, he refers to that teaching simply as "this great Law." More precisely, this teaching was explained in two of his most important

writings, *The Opening of the Eyes* and *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*.

The recipient of this letter is generally believed to be Misawa Kojiro, a lay follower of the Daishonin who was the lord of Misawa in Fuji District of Suruga Province, though some consider it given to Kojiro's grandson, Masahiro.

Misawa appears to have kept his distance from the Daishonin for fear of antagonizing and arousing the suspicions of the Kamakura shogunate. But the Daishonin expresses understanding of his position as the lord of a manor responsible for a fief, family, and retainers, and kindly encourages him.

Notes

1. It is somewhat unusual for an exhortation of this kind to appear at the very beginning of a letter. It may well have been that Nichiren Daishonin intended it as a postscript, but placed it here because of the lack of space at the end of the letter.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

3. This indicates two important writings, *The Opening of the Eyes*, completed in the second month of 1272, and *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, written in the fourth month of 1273.

4. This is not an actual quotation, but rather the expression of the Daishonin's view of what various passages in the Lotus Sutra mean.

5. A "sage" here indicates Bodhisattva Superior Practices, whom Shakyamuni Buddha entrusted with the mission of propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day, as stated in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In several of his writings,

the Daishonin refers to himself in humble terms as the forerunner of Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

6. A spa located about seven km north-east of Minobu in present-day Yamanashi Prefecture.

7. Hachiman is said to have made an oath during the reign of the fifty-first sovereign, Emperor Heizei (r. 806–809), to the effect that he would protect the nation until the reign of the hundredth sovereign.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 25. In the sutra, the sentence reads in the future tense. It was changed here to fit the context of this letter. The Daishonin cites this passage to indicate that the Retired Emperor of Oki, or the ex-emperor Gotoba (1180–1239), relied on the prayers of the True Word school to overturn the Kamakura government, but suffered a loss and was exiled to the island of Oki.

The Two Kinds of Faith



I HAVE received your offerings of yams, skewer-dried persimmons, parched rice, chestnuts, bamboo shoots, and bamboo containers of vinegar.

There was once a ruler in India named Ashoka the Great. He reigned over a quarter of the land of Jambudvīpa and, accompanied by the dragon kings,¹ controlled the rain at his will. He even used demons to do his bidding. At first he was a merciless ruler, but later he converted to Buddhism. He made offerings to sixty thousand monks each day and erected eighty-four thousand stone stupas. On inquiring into the previous lifetime of this great sovereign, we find that in the days of Shakyamuni Buddha there were two little boys called Virtue Victorious and Invincible who once offered the Buddha a mud pie. Because of this act of sincerity, the boy Virtue Victorious was reborn within one hundred years as King Ashoka.

The Buddha is of course respectable, but when compared with the Lotus Sutra he is like a firefly beside the sun or moon. The superiority of the Lotus Sutra to Shakyamuni Buddha is as great as the distance from heaven to earth. Presenting offerings to the Buddha produces benefits like that. How much more so is this true of the Lotus Sutra? If such a marvelous reward was brought about by the mere offering

of a mud pie, how much more will come about as a result of all your various gifts! He suffered no shortage of food, but now we are in a land where hunger prevails. Therefore how could Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the ten demon daughters possibly fail to protect you?

Today there are people who have faith in the Lotus Sutra. The belief of some is like fire while that of others is like water. When the former listen to the teachings, their passion flares up like fire, but as time goes on, they tend to discard their faith. To have faith like water means to believe continuously without ever regressing. Since you visit me constantly, regardless of the difficulties, your belief is comparable to flowing water. It is worthy of great respect!

Is it true that there is illness in your family? If so, it cannot be the work of demons. Probably the ten demon daughters are testing the strength of your faith. No demon worthy of the name would even think of troubling a votary of the sutra and having its head broken.² Persist in your faith with the firm conviction that both Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra are free from any falsehood.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fifth day of the second
month

Reply [to Ueno]



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in Suruga Province, in the second month of the fourth year of Kenji (1278). The previous year had been a time of turmoil. A serious drought had devastated crops, and the resulting famine brought countless hardships. In addition, an epidemic had swept the area, causing many deaths. At the same time, the threat of a second

invasion by Mongol forces contributed to a general feeling of unease.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin expresses his gratitude for Nanjo's offerings and praises him for his deep sincerity. He introduces the concept of the two kinds of faith: faith like ephemeral fire and faith like ever-flowing water. The Daishonin lauds Nanjo's faith as being like the latter.

Notes

1. Dragons are one of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings that protect Buddhism. Not only are they believed to bring rain, but also they are said to have supernatural powers and the ability to bring about miraculous phenomena.

2. "No demon worthy of the name . . ." refers to the episode in the "Dharani" chapter of the Lotus Sutra where the ten

demon daughters and others promise the Buddha that they will protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra from decline or harm. They also declare, "If there are those who . . . trouble and disrupt the preachers of the Law, their heads will split into seven pieces like the branches of the arjaka tree." Thus no demon would think of troubling a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Reply to the Followers



YOUR messenger, who left on the nineteenth day of the third month, arrived here with your letter at the hour of the dog (7:00–9:00 P.M.) on the twenty-first. Now Nichiren’s life-long prayer and desire will be achieved in an instant. And this fits the Buddha’s prediction regarding the fifth five hundred years,¹ just as one half of a tally matches the other. In the end, if the slanderous proponents of the True Word, Zen, and other schools are summoned and brought together to confront me, and right and wrong are decided, the people of Japan will all become my disciples and lay supporters.

Of my disciples, the priests will become teachers to the emperors and retired emperors, while the lay believers will be ranked as the ministers of the left and right. And moreover, everyone in the entire land of Jambudvipa will come to revere this teaching. What happiness! What happiness!

Nichiren

The twenty-first day of the third month in the first year of Koan (1278)

Reply to the followers



Background

This letter was addressed to the Daishonin’s followers living in Kamakura. It appears that preparations were under way in Kamakura for a public debate to determine which was correct, the

teaching of the Daishonin or the teachings of the True Word, Zen, and other schools. A report about this was conveyed with great haste to the Daishonin. This letter is his reply.

Note

1. This prediction is found in the “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Law] abroad widely through-

out Jambudvipa and never allow it to be cut off.” The “last five-hundred-year period” corresponds to the phrase “fifth five hundred years” in the text. Both indicate the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

The Teaching for the Latter Day



I HAVE received the one *to* of polished rice, the horseload of yams, and the five blocks of konnyaku¹ that you took the trouble to send me.

First of all, the young lady, the daughter of the lay priest Ishikawa no Hyoe, often sent me letters, and in one that reached me on the night of the fourteenth or fifteenth day of the third month, she wrote, "When I observe the world around me, it seems that even healthy people will be unable to survive this year. I have been ill for a long time, but my illness has suddenly worsened, and I imagine that this will be my last letter to you." Has she then passed away after all?

Most people believe that those who chant *Namu Amida Butsu* at the moment of death are sure to be reborn in the Pure Land, for those are the golden words of the Buddha. For some reason, however, the Buddha regretted and reversed his statement, saying, "[In these more than forty years], I have not yet revealed the truth,"² and "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]."³ I have been teaching as the Buddha advocated, but all Japan has become enraged and denounced my words as groundless fabrications.

There have been other occasions when the Buddha unexpectedly reversed an earlier teaching. In the Hina-

yana sutras he taught that there is no Buddha other than himself in any of the ten directions, and that living beings do not possess the Buddha nature. But in the Mahayana sutras he taught that there are Buddhas throughout the ten directions, and that the Buddha nature exists in every living being. How can there be anyone who still uses the Hinayana sutras? Everyone has since come to believe in the Mahayana sutras.

Moreover, we find that there are even more unfathomable distinctions that Shakyamuni Buddha drew between the sutras. In the Lotus Sutra, he suddenly refuted all the other sutras that he had preached, now preached, and would preach in the future, and declared that only the Lotus was true. But his disciples would not believe him. At that time, Many Treasures Buddha came to bear witness to what Shakyamuni Buddha had said, and the Buddhas of the ten directions added their testimony to his, extending their tongues until they reached the Brahma heaven.

After Many Treasures Buddha had closed the door of the treasure tower and the other Buddhas had returned to their original lands, not even Shakyamuni Buddha himself could have denied the Lotus Sutra, whatever other sutras he might have expounded in an effort to do so, because the other Bud-

dhas had all joined in affirming its truth. That is why in the Universal Worthy and Nirvana sutras, which follow the Lotus Sutra, the Lotus Sutra is praised but never disparaged.

Nonetheless, priests like Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school and the founders of the Zen school have repudiated the Lotus Sutra, and the entire Japanese nation has now taken faith in their teachings, just like those who were deceived by the rebels Masakado and Sadato. Japan is now on the brink of ruin because it has for many years been the archenemy of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, and in addition, the person who denounces these errors is persecuted. Because such offenses thus accumulate one atop another, our nation will soon incur the wrath of heaven.

Perhaps because of karma from past lives, or some other reason, this woman chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo at the moment of her death. This is as rare as the one-eyed turtle finding a suitable hollow in a floating sandalwood log, or a thread lowered from the heavens passing through the eye of a needle on earth. How wondrous!

The sutra passages clearly show that those who believe in the Nembutsu are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering, but since people are not aware of this, they all think that it is my own fabrication. That is what is meant by the saying that the heavens and one's eyelashes are alike. People can see neither their own eyelashes, which are so close, nor the heavens in the distance.⁴ If my teaching were false, surely this lay nun would not have had a correct and steadfast mind at the moment of death.

Among my disciples, those who think themselves well versed in Buddhism are the ones who make errors. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the heart of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the soul of a person. To revere another teaching as its equal is to be like a consort who is married to two emperors, or who secretly commits adultery with a minister or a humble subject. It can only be a cause for disaster.

This teaching was not propagated in the Former or Middle Day of the Law because the other sutras had not yet lost their power of benefit. Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, neither the Lotus Sutra nor the other sutras lead to enlightenment. Only Nam-myoho-enge-kyo can do so. This is not my own judgment. Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, the Buddhas of the ten directions, and the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds have so determined it. To mix other practices with this Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is a grave error. A lantern is useless when the sun rises. How can dewdrops be beneficial when the rain falls? Should one feed a newborn baby anything other than its mother's milk? No addition of other medicines is needed with a good medicine. Somehow this woman remained true to this principle, and continued to uphold her faith until the last moment of her life. How admirable, how worthy!

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The first day of the fourth month in
the first year of Koan (1278)

Reply to Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno in Suruga Province and a loyal follower of the Daishonin. Nichiren Daishonin thanks Tokimitsu for the food items he has received and expresses his distress at the news of the death of the lay priest Ishikawa no Hyoe's daughter. Ishikawa was the steward of Omosu in Fuji District in Suruga Province. His wife was an elder sister of Nanjo Toki-

mitsu, and he probably took faith in the Daishonin's teachings as a result of this relationship. Thus the daughter who had passed away was Tokimitsu's niece.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin declares that the teaching that enables people to attain Buddhahood in the Latter Day of the Law is not the Lotus Sutra itself but rather Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, which is implicit in the sutra's "Life Span" chapter.

Notes

1. A jellylike food made from the root of the konnyaku plant. It is believed to eliminate poisonous substances from the body.
2. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
4. This statement is based on a passage in *Great Concentration and Insight* that describes the ignorance of ordinary people.

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 hours¹ 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."²

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."

Unseen Virtue and Visible Reward



NOTHING is more fearsome in a human being than disloyalty. Since your elder brother and your younger brother have of their own accord become enemies of the Lotus Sutra, and cut themselves off from you, they are the disloyal ones, and you are not to blame. But failing to protect their wives will certainly be seen as disloyalty. If your fief is enlarged, provide for them out of your own stores, sparing no effort to support them. So long as you do this, your deceased parents will protect you without fail, and Nichiren's prayers will be answered at last. No matter how much your brothers' wives may be to blame, pretend not to notice. In view of this situation, it appears to me that, if you simply conduct yourself as I have advised, your lands will be increased still further and people's trust in you will be restored.

As I have often mentioned before, it is said that, where there is unseen virtue, there will be visible reward. Your fellow samurai all slandered you

to your lord, and he also has wondered if it was true, but because you have for some years now honestly maintained a strong desire for your lord's welfare in his next life, you received a blessing like this. This is just the beginning; be confident that the great reward also is sure to come.

Again, you must be on good terms with those who believe in this teaching, neither seeing, hearing, nor pointing out anything about them that may displease you. Calmly continue to offer prayers. What I mentioned above is not a matter of personal opinion. I have extracted and written down the main points of the three thousand volumes of non-Buddhist writings and the five thousand volumes of Buddhist scriptures.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the fourth month

Reply [to Shijo Kingo]



Background

This letter is thought to have been written to Shijo Kingo in the fourth month

of the first year of Koan (1278), while the Daishonin was living at Minobu. It

suggests that Kingo had begun to regain the trust and favor of his lord. Six months later, his lands were increased.

The original manuscript of this letter is thought to have been written on twelve sheets of paper, the first nine of which have been lost. Of the remaining three, the tenth page is preserved at one temple and the eleventh and twelfth at another. Only pages eleven and twelve were included in *The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin*, under the title *Unseen Virtue and Visible Reward*. Page ten was originally thought

to have been an independent fragment, called *On Disloyalty*, and was not included in *Complete Works*. More recent scholarship indicates, however, that page ten in fact contains the portion that immediately precedes *Unseen Virtue and Visible Reward*. All three pages have been translated here, with the addition running from the beginning of the text through the middle of the first paragraph: [Nothing is more fearsome . . . your deceased parents will protect you without fail, and].

Flowering and Bearing Grain



I HAVE not heard from either of you since that time. But I was very pleased to learn that you had read at Kasagamori the two documents¹ I wrote in the Kenji era in memory of the late Sage Dozen-bo.

If a tree is deeply rooted, its branches and leaves will never wither. If the spring is inexhaustible, the stream will never run dry. Without wood, a fire will burn out. Without earth, plants will not grow. I, Nichiren, am indebted solely to my late teacher, Dozen-bo, for my having become the votary of the Lotus Sutra and my being widely talked about now, in both a good and bad sense. Nichiren is like the plant, and my teacher, the earth.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have four leaders. The sutra says, "The first was called Superior Practices . . . and the fourth was called Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices."² If Bodhisattva Superior Practices appears in the Latter Day of the Law, so must Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices.

The rice plant flowers and bears grain, but its spirit remains in the soil. This is the reason the stalk sprouts to flower and bear grain once again. The blessings that Nichiren obtains from propagating the Lotus Sutra will always

return to Dozen-bo. How sublime! It is said that, if a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell.

If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything. I will elaborate on this point later.

You should always talk with each other to free yourselves from the sufferings of birth and death and attain the pure land of Eagle Peak, where you will nod to each other and speak in one mind.

The sutra reads, "Before the multitude they seem possessed of the three poisons or manifest the signs of distorted views. My disciples in this manner use expedient means to save living beings."³

Understand these matters in the light of what I have stated thus far.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The fourth month in the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

To Joken-bo and Gijo-bo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this message from Minobu in the fourth month of 1278 for the second memorial service for Dozen-bo. Dozen-bo had been a senior priest at Seicho-ji temple, where the Daishonin entered the priesthood. The Daishonin studied under him from the age of twelve. The letter was addressed to his former seniors at Seicho-ji, Joken-bo and Gijo-bo.

When Nichiren Daishonin first declared the teaching of Nam-myohorenge-kyo at Seicho-ji in 1253, he strongly refuted the dominant Pure Land

school. Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of the village and an ardent Pure Land believer, became enraged and ordered his arrest. Dozen-bo helped the Daishonin escape. However, fearing the others, Dozen-bo remained a priest of Seicho-ji to the end of his life, but the Daishonin never forgot his former teacher.

In the seventh month of 1276, having learned of Dozen-bo's death, the Daishonin wrote *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude* in honor of his memory and sent it to Joken-bo and Gijo-bo.

Notes

1. "Two documents" here refers to the work *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude*, written in the second year of Kenji (1276), and its cover letter.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

3. Ibid., chap. 8. In quoting this passage, the Daishonin encourages Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, who had become his disciples but remained at Seicho-ji temple, to convert the people there.

An Outline of the “Entrustment” and Other Chapters



I HAVE received your offering of seven thousand coins. The essence of the “Entrustment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra is as follows: [Rising from his seat in the treasure tower,] the Buddha stood in open space and, in order to transfer the Lotus Sutra, patted no fewer than three times the heads of Bodhisattva Superior Practices and his followers, Manjushri and his followers, the great Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the dragon kings, the ten demon daughters, and others. They had clustered before the Buddha as thickly as dewdrops, crowding four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of worlds, like the grasses of Musashino Plain¹ or the trees covering Mount Fuji. They knelt close to one another, bent their bodies so that their heads touched the ground, joined their palms together, and streamed sweat. Shakyamuni Buddha patted their heads just as a mother strokes the hair of her only child. Then Superior Practices, the gods of the sun and moon, and the others received the Buddha’s auspicious command and pledged to propagate the Lotus Sutra in the latter age.

As for the “Medicine King” chapter: In the past a bodhisattva called Gladly Seen² learned the Lotus Sutra from the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue. So deeply moved was he by this

favor received from his teacher and by the loftiness of the sutra that he exhausted all his precious treasures in offerings. Still unsatisfied, he anointed himself with oil and burned his body as an offering to the Buddha for a period of twelve hundred years, just as today we burn oil by inserting a wick and lighting it. Then, in his next lifetime he made torches of his arms and burned them for seventy-two thousand years as an offering to the Lotus Sutra. So if a woman makes offerings to the Lotus Sutra now in the last five-hundred-year period, this bodhisattva’s benefits will all be bequeathed to her without exception, just as a wealthy man transfers his entire fortune to his only son.

The “Wonderful Sound” chapter tells of a bodhisattva called Wonderful Sound who dwells in the land of the Buddha Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom in the east. In the past, in the age of the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound King, he was Lady Pure Virtue, the consort of King Wonderful Adornment. At that time, Lady Pure Virtue made offerings to the Lotus Sutra and was reborn as Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound.³ When the Thus Come One Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra in the saha world, this bodhisattva came to attend the ceremony and pledged to protect those women

who would embrace the Lotus Sutra in the latter age.

The "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter is also called the "Universal Gateway" chapter. The first part describes the merit of those who put faith in Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds; hence the title "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter. The latter part expounds the merit of those who embrace the Lotus Sutra, [the teaching of the Universal Gateway], which the bodhisattva upholds; hence the title "Universal Gateway" chapter.

The "Dharani" chapter describes how the two sages, the two heavenly gods, and the ten demon daughters will protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The two sages are Medicine King and Brave Donor, and the two heavenly gods are Vaishravana and Upholder of the Nation. The ten demon daughters are the ten major female demons, the mothers of all demons of the four continents. Moreover, these ten demon daughters have a mother, who is called the Mother of Demon Children.

It is the nature of demons to feed on human beings. Human beings are formed of thirty-six elements: excrement, urine, saliva, flesh, blood, skin, bone, the five solid internal organs,⁴ the six empty internal organs,⁵ the hair of the head, the hair of the body, energy, life, and so forth. Demons of inferior capacity feed upon excrement and the like. Demons of intermediate capacity eat bones and similar parts, while demons of superior capacity live on human vitality. As demons of superior capacity, the ten demon daughters subsist on human vitality. They are the powerful demons who bring about epidemics.

There are two kinds of demons, good and evil. Good demons feed upon enemies of the Lotus Sutra, while evil demons feed upon the sutra's votaries. How should we interpret the great epidemics that have spread throughout Japan both this year and last? From one

viewpoint, they are the work of good demons who are devouring enemies of the Lotus Sutra with the approval of Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings. Yet from another view, they are the work of evil demons who are feeding upon the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra at the urging of the devil king of the sixth heaven. Good demons devouring enemies of the Lotus Sutra are like government soldiers punishing enemies of the ruler. But evil demons eating votaries of the Lotus Sutra are like robbers and night thieves murdering government soldiers.

For example, when Buddhism was brought to Japan, the Chief Minister Mononobe no Moriya and others who opposed it were struck down by epidemics, but the Great Minister Soga no Umako and others [who espoused Buddhism] also fell ill.⁶ Three successive emperors, Kimmei, Bidatsu, and Yomei, believed in Buddhism and the Thus Come One Shakyamuni in their hearts, but outwardly honored the Sun Goddess and the Kumano shrines,⁷ abiding by the traditional rites of the nation. Because their faith in the Buddha and his teachings was weak, while their faith in the gods was strong, these three rulers were pulled by the stronger influence and succumbed to smallpox epidemics.

In light of these examples, you should ponder the two kinds of demons mentioned above, as well as the reasons why epidemics spread among the people of the world today and why some among my followers also fall ill and perish. It follows on the one hand that those who commit their lives for the sake of faith will not fall ill, or that, even if they should fall ill, they will recover. On the other hand, if they encounter great evil demons, they may be deprived of their lives. They might then be likened to Hatakeyama Shigetada,⁸ who was finally destroyed by the

sheer number of his enemies, though he was the most powerful general in Japan.

All the True Word teachers in Japan have turned into evil spirits, and evil demons are rampant throughout the country, inciting the Zen and Nembutsu priests to oppose Nichiren. On the other hand, the followers [good demons] of Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the ten demon daughters have also swarmed into Japan, each side battling fiercely to dominate over the other.

As the ten demon daughters pledged to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in general, one may think they should protect all those who embrace the sutra. But even among people who embrace the Lotus Sutra, some are True Word teachers who read and recite it while asserting the superiority of the Mahavairochana Sutra. Such people are actually slandering the Lotus Sutra. And the same principle applies as well to any other school [whose followers practice the Lotus Sutra while believing in the superiority of their own sutras].

Even among those who embrace the Lotus Sutra according to its words, there are some who resent the votary of the Lotus Sutra either because of their greed, anger, and foolishness, because of worldly matters, or because of his various actions. Although such people believe in the Lotus Sutra, they will not obtain the benefit of faith, but will instead incur retribution. To explain, if a son disobeys his father and mother, he will be acting in an unfilial manner, except in a case where his parents are plotting a rebellion. Though a father may take his own son's beloved wife, or a mother may steal her own daughter's beloved husband, if the son or daughter should deviate even in the slightest from the path of filial piety, they will create causes that will lead them to be abandoned by the heavenly gods in this

life and to fall into the Avichi hell in the next. Graver still is the act of going against a worthy ruler, who is superior to a father or mother. And even graver is that of going against a secular teacher, who is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times superior to one's parents or sovereign. How grave a matter must it be, then, to go against a Buddhist teacher who has forsaken the secular world; and even more so, the teacher of the Lotus Sutra!

It is said that the Yellow River becomes clear once in a thousand years, and that a sage likewise appears in the world once in a thousand years. A Buddha appears in the world once in countless kalpas. Yet even if one should meet a Buddha, it is far more difficult to encounter the Lotus Sutra. And even if one should encounter the Lotus Sutra, it is rarer still for an ordinary person of the latter age to meet the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The reason is that the votary who expounds the Lotus Sutra in the latter age surpasses [the Buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing in] the sutras of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods and the twelve hundred and more honored ones⁹ of the Mahavairochana and other sutras—who did not expound the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher Miao-lo states in his commentary, "Those who give alms [to the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra] will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles, while those who vex or trouble them will have their heads split into seven pieces."¹⁰

The epidemics that the Japanese nation has suffered since last year, as well as those of the past Shoka era (1257–1259),¹¹ are totally without precedent in the reigns of the more than ninety emperors who have ruled since the beginning of the imperial era. These calamities appear to stem from the fact that the people hate the presence of a sage in this country. This is

exactly what is meant when it is said that a dog that barks at a lion will have its bowels ripped open, and that an asura who tries to swallow the sun and moon will have his head broken. Two-thirds of all the people in Japan have already fallen ill in the epidemics, and half of these have perished. The remaining third may not be afflicted in body, but they are afflicted in mind. Visibly or invisibly, their heads have surely been broken.

There are four kinds of punishment: general and individual, inconspicuous and conspicuous.¹² If the people nurture hatred for a sage, general punishment will sweep across the entire country, extending to the four continents, the six heavens of the world of desire, and the four meditation heavens. When enmity is directed toward a worthy, only those who harbor it will suffer punishment. The epidemics now spreading in Japan are general punishment. Surely the people must have opposed a sage living in this country. Because a mountain contains a jewel, its plants and trees do not wither. Because a country has a sage, that country is protected from ruin. Ignorant people do not realize that plants and trees on a mountain do not wither because of the presence of a jewel. Nor do they realize that a country falls because of enmity toward a sage.

Though the sun and the moon shine, their light will not benefit the blind. Of what use is the sound of voices to the deaf? The people in Japan are all as though blind or deaf. How immense would be the benefit if one could open all these eyes and ears, causing all the eyes to see and the ears to hear! Who could possibly fathom this benefit? And I may add that, although parents may give birth to a child who is endowed with both sight and hearing, if there is no teacher to instruct that child, then its eyes and ears will be no better than those of an animal.

Among the ten directions, all the people in Japan aspire to the west.¹³ Among all Buddhas, they revere Amida Buddha, and among all practices, they invoke Amida's name. Some make these three concerns their basis yet engage in other practices, while others devote themselves to the Nembutsu alone. In the more than twenty years since the fifth year of the Kencho era (1253) up until the present, I have first clarified the Buddha's lifetime teachings in terms of their relative merit, sequence of preaching, and profundity, and upon that basis I have asserted the superiority of the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra over the invocation of the name of Amida Buddha. Yet no one, from the ruler on down to the common people, has heeded my words. They have questioned their teachers about me, appealed to their lords, talked with their companions, and spoken to their wives, children, and retainers, so that rumors concerning me have spread to every province, district, village, and hamlet, as well as to their temples and shrines. As a result, everyone has come to know my name, and they all say that, if one compares the Lotus Sutra with the Nembutsu, the Nembutsu is superior and the Lotus Sutra is no match for it, and that other priests are worthy of respect while I am contemptible. So, the ruler regards me with hostility, the people have come to hate me, and all Japan has become a great foe of both the Lotus Sutra and its votary. But if I say this, not only the people of Japan in general but also the ignorant among my followers will think that I am inventing groundless falsehoods in an attempt to make people believe me. I am saying all this, however, for the benefit of those men and women who believe in the principles of Buddhism, and I will leave it to them to judge for themselves.

The "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra is especially applicable to women, for it explains

how a wife encouraged her husband. In the latter age as well, though her name may differ, a wife who leads her husband to take faith will enjoy the same benefit as Lady Pure Virtue. All the more fortunate is a case like yours, in which both wife and husband have faith! It is like a bird possessing two wings, or a cart having two wheels. What is there that you two cannot achieve? Because there is a heaven and an earth, a sun and a moon, the sun shines and the rain falls, and the plants and trees of benefit will surely blossom and bear fruit.

Next, we come to the "Encouragements" chapter. Though there were many monks among the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, Mahakashyapa and Ananda always accompanied him on his right and left, just like the ministers of the right and left who attend the ruler. This was when the Buddha expounded the Hinayana sutras. Moreover, among all the innumerable bodhisattvas, Universal Worthy and Manjusri were distinguished as the ministers of the right and left of Shakyamuni Buddha. It was strange, therefore, that Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, one of Shakyamuni's two ministers, should be absent during the eight years when the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra, which surpasses all the other sutras of his lifetime teachings, in the ceremony where the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions gathered in numbers exceeding those of the dust particles of the land. But when the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter had been expounded and the preaching of the Lotus Sutra was drawing to a close, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy came hurrying belatedly from the land of the Buddha King Purity of Jeweled Dignity and Virtue¹⁴ in the east, accompanied by the sounds of ten thousand million musical instruments and leading a retinue of countless numbers of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings. Prob-

bly fearing the Buddha's displeasure at his tardy arrival, he assumed a serious expression and pledged in all earnestness to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age. The Buddha, no doubt pleased with Universal Worthy's extraordinary sincerity in vowing to spread the Lotus Sutra throughout the continent of Jambudvīpa, thereupon praised him—more warmly, in fact, than he had earlier praised the other bodhisattvas of higher rank.

It is no ordinary thing for a woman in the latter age to have resolved to make an offering to each of the twenty-eight chapters of this wonderful Lotus Sutra. At the ceremony of the "Treasure Tower" chapter, the Thus Come Ones Many Treasures and Shakyamuni, the Buddhas of the ten directions, and all bodhisattvas gathered together. When I ponder where this "Treasure Tower" chapter¹⁵ is now, I see that it exists in the eight-petaled lotus flower of the heart within the breast of Nichinyo. This is like the lotus seed containing the lotus flower within it, or a consort carrying a crown prince in her womb. When someone, having observed the ten good precepts, is destined to be born a crown prince and awaits his birth in the consort's womb, the heavenly gods will protect him. That is why a crown prince is called the Son of Heaven. Each of the 69,384 characters of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra is like a crown prince and is the seed of a Buddha.

There are shadows in the darkness, but people cannot discern them. There are trails in the sky where birds fly, but people cannot recognize them. There are paths in the sea along which fish swim, but people cannot perceive them. All people and things of the four continents are reflected in the moon without a single exception, but people cannot see them. But they are visible to the heavenly eye.¹⁶ In like manner, ordinary people cannot see that the

"Treasure Tower" chapter exists within the body of Nichinyo, but Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions perceive it. I, Nichiren, also presume this to be the case. How praiseworthy!

King Wen of the Chou dynasty was victorious in battle because he took care to provide for elderly people. During the thirty-seven reigns spanning eight hundred years in which his descendants ruled, there were some incidents of misgovernment, but on the whole the Chou dynasty prospered due to that fundamental virtue. King Ajatashatru, though a most evil man, was able to hold the throne for ninety years owing to the merit of his father, King Bimbisara, who had made offerings to the Buddha for several years. The same principle holds true today. I do not think the present regime will last long, as it opposes the Lotus Sutra. Yet, probably because of the excellent leadership of the late acting administrator and the former governor of Musashi¹⁷ who became a lay priest, it appears to be secure for the time being. But in this case, too, the present government will eventually collapse if it continues its enmity toward the Lotus Sutra. The government of-

ficials mistakenly think that, while the Nembutsu priests are friendly to the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren is hostile to the Nembutsu; and they claim to believe in both teachings. I, Nichiren, say in rebuttal: If nothing is vitally wrong with the present government, then why have such unprecedented epidemics, famines, and wars broken out? Why have the authorities twice subjected the votary of the Lotus Sutra to grave punishment without allowing him to confront the other schools in open debate? How pitiful, how unfortunate!

Even under such circumstances, as a woman you have inherited the life of the Lotus Sutra. In fact, you have inherited the life of the parents of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.¹⁸ Is there anyone else in the entire land of Jambudvipa who possesses such good fortune?

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fifth day of the sixth
month

Reply to Nichinyo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the sixth month of the first year of Koan (1278) to Nichinyo in response to her sincere offerings. In this letter, the Daishonin outlines each of the last seven chapters of the Lotus Sutra, from the twenty-second, or "Entrustment," chapter through the twenty-eighth, or "Encouragements," chapter, and describes the benefit of each chapter. Hence the title of this letter.

First, the Daishonin discusses the

"Entrustment" chapter, identifying as its heart the ceremony of the transfer of the Lotus Sutra. In the preceding "Supernatural Powers" chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha transfers the essence of the sutra specifically to Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth. In "Entrustment," he makes a general transfer of the Lotus Sutra to all the assembled bodhisattvas.

Next, the Daishonin summarizes the "Medicine King," "Wonderful Sound," and "Perceiver of the World's Sounds"

chapters, describing the benefit and protection conferred by the bodhisattvas Medicine King, Wonderful Sound, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds. These three chapters explain how these bodhisattvas, who have been entrusted with the Lotus Sutra in the preceding "Entrustment" chapter, will propagate the Buddha's teachings while manifesting their own powers to the fullest and thereby saving people.

Nichiren Daishonin then turns to the twenty-sixth, or "Dharani," chapter, in which the bodhisattvas Medicine King and Brave Donor, the two heavenly kings Vaishravana and Upholder of the Nation, and the ten demon daughters pledge to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra who will propagate the Buddha's teachings in an evil age to come. Here, the Daishonin clarifies the workings of two kinds of demons, good and evil.

The last portion of this letter addresses the twenty-seventh, or "King Wonderful Adornment," chapter and the final chapter, "Encouragements." The "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter tells how Lady Pure Virtue led her husband, King Wonderful Adorn-

ment, to take faith in the correct teaching. Because Nichinyo and her husband were both his followers, the Daishonin emphasizes how great are the benefits that a husband and wife can receive by devoting themselves together to faith. The "Encouragements" chapter describes the protection of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, who vowed to safeguard the Lotus Sutra and its votaries after the Buddha's passing.

Then, the Daishonin praises Nichinyo's faith in making an offering to each of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. He declares that the Ceremony in the Air, which begins in the middle of the "Treasure Tower" chapter, is to be found in Nichinyo's heart. The Daishonin depicted this Ceremony in the Air in the object of devotion. This passage corresponds to one in *The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon*, also written to Nichinyo a year earlier, which states, "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo" (p. 832).

Notes

1. A wide plain encompassing present-day Tokyo and Saitama Prefecture.

2. Bodhisattva Gladly Seen, or Gladly Seen by All Living Beings, is a previous incarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King.

3. In *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai, interpreting a passage of the "Wonderful Sound" chapter, explains that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound was Lady Pure Virtue in a past life.

4. The lungs, heart, spleen, liver, and kidneys.

5. The large intestine, small intestine, gallbladder, stomach, urinary bladder, and the "three organs." According to ancient Chinese medicine, the "three organs" are regarded collectively as one of the six empty internal organs. One is located below the heart and above the stomach, while an-

other is located inside the stomach. The third is located above the urinary bladder.

6. According to traditional accounts, in the fourteenth year of the reign of the thirty-first emperor, Bidatsu (538-585), Soga no Umako built a pagoda to enshrine the Buddha's relics. When an epidemic broke out, Moriya attributed it to the anger of the native gods at the respect shown to the new religion; and he destroyed the pagoda on the first day of the third month. After this incident, the emperor, Moriya, and Umako all fell ill in the epidemic. However, the supporters of Buddhism steadily gained ground over the anti-Buddhist faction. Moriya lost his allies and was eventually killed in a skirmish with Umako's soldiers in 587.

7. The Kumano shrines refer to the three

shrines dedicated to indigenous Japanese deities. They are located in an area called Kumano that encompasses part of present-day Wakayama and Mie prefectures.

8. Hatakeyama Shigetada (1164–1205) was a warrior who helped establish the Kamakura shogunate and enjoyed the confidence of its founder, Minamoto no Yoritomo. After Yoritomo's death, however, he was treated distantly by Hojo Tokimasa, who became the first Kamakura regent. In 1205 when Hatakeyama Shige-yasu, Shigetada's son, quarreled with Hiraga Tomomasa, a relative of the Hojo clan, Tokimasa accused Shige-yasu of treason and had him killed. Hojo Yoshitoki, Tokimasa's son, then led his forces against the Hatakeyama family. Shigetada resisted fiercely, but was too greatly outnumbered and was killed in battle.

9. The twelve hundred and more honored ones are venerable Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others inscribed on the two mandalas of the Diamond and Womb realms.

10. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* The Daishonin here reverses the order of the original sentence, which begins, "Those who vex or trouble . . ." This statement originally refers to the Lotus Sutra, but Nichiren Daishonin uses it in context to refer to the sutra's votary. The ten honorable titles are ten epithets for a Buddha.

11. The Daishonin refers here to the epidemics that broke out in the third year of the Shoka era (1259). At that time, the government ordered the priests of the various schools to offer prayers, but the epidemics continued unabated into the follow-

ing year, and a great number of people died.

12. General punishment is what falls upon the people as a whole, while individual punishment is what strikes only the individual. Inconspicuous punishment is karmic retribution that is not immediately recognizable, and conspicuous punishment is retribution that appears in clearly recognizable form.

13. This means that they aspire to rebirth in the western Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

14. In the "Universal Worthy" chapter, he is called the Buddha King Above Jeweled Dignity and Virtue.

15. The "Treasure Tower" chapter here indicates the Ceremony in the Air, which begins in this chapter. The eight-petaled lotus of the heart refers to the arrangement of the heart, lungs, and other organs in the chest cavity, which was thought to resemble an eight-petaled lotus blossom.

16. The heavenly eye is one of the five types of vision. It means the ability of heavenly beings to see beyond the physical limitations of darkness, distance, or obstruction.

17. The late acting administrator and the former governor of Musashi refer to Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224) and Hojo Yasutoki (1183–1242), the second and third regents of the Kamakura government, respectively. In the period from 1219 through 1238, Yasutoki was also the governor of Musashi Province.

18. "Parents" here indicates the Lotus Sutra, by which all Buddhas attain enlightenment.

The Two Kinds of Illness



THE illnesses of human beings may be divided into two general categories, the first of which is illness of the body. Physical diseases comprise one hundred and one disorders of the earth element, one hundred and one of the water element, one hundred and one of the fire element, and one hundred and one of the wind element, for a total of four hundred and four maladies.¹ These illnesses can be cured with the medicines prescribed by skilled physicians such as Water Holder, Water Carrier,² Jivaka, and Pien Ch'üeh.³

The second category is illness of the mind. These are the three poisons and the eighty-four thousand illnesses.⁴ Only a Buddha can cure them; thus they are beyond the healing powers of the two deities and the three ascetics,⁵ not to mention those of Shen Nung and Huang Ti.⁶

Illnesses of the mind differ greatly in severity. The three poisons and the eighty-four thousand illnesses that afflict ordinary people of the six paths can be treated by the Buddha of the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools, which derive from the Tripitaka teaching of Hinayana. However, if one tries to use the Hinayana teachings to cure the three poisons and eighty thousand illnesses that arise from slandering the Mahayana sutras, such as the Flower

Garland, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana sutras, these illnesses will merely become worse and never be cured. They can be treated only with the Mahayana teachings. Moreover, if one attempts to use the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana sutras, or the teachings of the True Word and Three Treatises schools to cure the three poisons and eighty thousand illnesses that arise when the practitioners of the various Mahayana sutras oppose the Lotus Sutra, those sicknesses will become all the more serious. To illustrate, the flames emitted by burning wood or coal can easily be extinguished by water, but if one pours water over a fire produced by burning oil, it will only burn more intensely, the flames mounting still higher.

The epidemics that have been raging in Japan since last year cannot be categorized within the four hundred and four illnesses of the body. Thus they are beyond the healing powers of Hua T'o⁷ and Pien Ch'üeh. Nor do they correspond to any of the eighty-four thousand diseases that can be treated with the Hinayana or provisional Mahayana teachings. For this reason, the prayers offered by the priests of the schools based on those teachings not only fail to end the epidemics, but rather aggravate them all the more. Even if the epidemics should subside this year,

they will surely break out again in years to come. Probably they will come to an end only after something dreadful has happened.

The Lotus Sutra says, "Though he might practice the art of medicine and by its methods cure someone's disease, the person would grow sicker from some other malady and perhaps in the end would die. . . . it would only make his condition worse."⁸ The Nirvana Sutra states: "At that time King Ajatashatru of Rajagriha . . . boils broke out over his entire body. . . . [The king said to his mother], 'These boils have their origin in the mind; they do not arise from the four elements. Though people say that there is a physician who can cure them, that could not possibly be.'" Miao-lo said, "Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes."⁹

The present epidemics are like the virulent boils of King Ajatashatru that could not be cured by anyone but the Buddha. They can only be eliminated by the Lotus Sutra.

I developed diarrhea on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month of last year, and up until the third or fourth day of the sixth month of this year, it grew more frequent by the day and more

severe by the month. Just when I was thinking that it must be my immutable karma, you sent me good medicine. Since taking it, my complaint has diminished steadily and is now a mere one-hundredth fraction of its former intensity. I wonder if Shakyamuni Buddha has entered into your body to help me, or perhaps the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have bestowed upon me the good medicine of Myoho-rence-kyo. Chikugo-bo¹⁰ will explain all this to you in more detail.

Postscript: Your messenger arrived at the hour of the dog (7:00–9:00 P.M.) on the twenty-fifth day of this month. The things you have sent me are beyond counting. Please convey my appreciation to Toki for his offering of a summer robe. Also please tell your wife how saddened I am at the passing of her grandfather.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the sixth month

Reply to Nakatsukasa Saemon-no-jo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu and sent to Shijo Kingo in Kamakura in the first year of Koan (1278). Its content closely resembles that of another letter, *The Treatment of Illness*, written to Toki Jonin on the same date. Indeed, the opening passage is virtually identical to the one in *The Treatment of Illness* (p. III).

The Daishonin's life at Minobu was by no means easy. Winters were bitterly cold, and his shelter was inadequate.

Food was another problem. Moreover, for nearly the entire first half of 1278, he had suffered from debilitating and chronic diarrhea. Shijo Kingo, who was well versed in the art of healing, had prescribed a medicine and sent it to the Daishonin, along with other offerings. This letter expresses the Daishonin's appreciation for Kingo's offerings.

The Daishonin refers to two kinds of illness: illness of the body, which arises primarily from physical causes, and ill-

ness of the mind, which arises from the three poisons. He explains that, although illness of the body can be cured by sufficiently skilled physicians, illness of the mind cannot; only Buddhism provides a remedy for such disorders. He also attributes the epidemics then

ravaging Japan to slander of the Lotus Sutra. Neither the Hinayana nor provisional Mahayana teachings will be able to stem them, he says. Faith in the Lotus Sutra alone will eradicate the offense of slander and remove the people's suffering.

Notes

1. Earth, water, fire, and wind were regarded by ancient Indians as the constituent elements of all things. In terms of the human body, earth corresponds to flesh, bone, skin, and hair; water, to blood and sweat; fire, to body temperature; and wind, to the function of breathing. The number "one hundred and one" indicates not an exact number of illnesses, but rather simply a great many.

2. Water Holder and Water Carrier are father and son, both excellent physicians mentioned in the Golden Light Sutra. At one time, an epidemic broke out and spread throughout their country. Water Holder was too old to provide treatment, but Water Carrier mastered the medical arts and, in his father's stead, saved the people from the ravages of the epidemic.

3. Pien Ch'üeh was a physician of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.) in China. In his boyhood he studied the medical arts and is said to have been skilled in treating almost any kind of disease.

4. "Eighty-four thousand illnesses" here simply means a great many. Hereafter these are referred to as either eighty-four thousand or eighty thousand illnesses. These ill-

nesses arise from the three poisons inherent in human life.

5. The two deities refer to Shiva and Vishnu, and the three ascetics to Kapila, Uluka, and Rishabha. For three ascetics, see also Glossary.

6. Shen Nung and Huang Ti are two of the Three Sovereigns, legendary ideal rulers of ancient China. According to *Records of the Historian*, they are also said to have been skilled in medical matters, and were revered as the patron deities and inventors of medicine.

7. Hua T'o was a physician of the Later Han (25-220), said to have been especially skilled in surgery. When acupuncture and medicine proved ineffectual, he would give the patient narcotics and perform surgery. He devised a system of physical exercises that he himself practiced. As a result, he is said to have been active and vigorous even at the age of one hundred.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

9. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

10. Chikugo-bo is another name for Nichiro (1245-1320), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples.

The One Essential Phrase



FOR you to inquire about the Lotus Sutra and ask its meaning is a rare source of good fortune. In this age of the Latter Day of the Law, those who ask about the meaning of even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra are far fewer than those who can hurl Mount Sumeru to another land like a stone, or those who can kick the major world system away like a ball. They are even fewer than those who can embrace and teach countless other sutras, thereby enabling the monks and lay believers who listen to them to obtain the six transcendental powers. Equally rare is a priest who can explain the meaning of the Lotus Sutra and resolve people's doubts concerning it. The "Treasure Tower" chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra sets forth the important principle of the six difficult and nine easy acts. Your asking a question about the Lotus Sutra is among the six difficult acts. This is a sure indication that, if you embrace the Lotus Sutra, you will become a Buddha in your present form.

Since the Lotus Sutra defines our body as the Dharma body of a Thus Come One, our mind as the reward body of a Thus Come One, and our actions as the manifested body of a Thus Come One, all who uphold and believe in even a single phrase or verse of this sutra will be endowed with the benefits of these three bodies. Nam-

myoho-rence-kyo is only one phrase or verse, but it is no ordinary phrase, for it is the essence of the entire sutra. You asked whether one can attain Buddhahood only by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, and this is the most important question of all. This is the heart of the entire sutra and the substance of its eight volumes.

The spirit within one's body of five or six feet may appear in just one's face, which is only a foot long, and the spirit within one's face may appear in just one's eyes, which are only an inch across. Included within the two characters representing Japan is all that is within the country's sixty-six provinces: the people and the animals, the rice paddies and the other fields, those of high and low status, the nobles and the commoners, the seven kinds of treasures and all the other precious gems. Similarly, included within the title, or daimoku, of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the entire sutra consisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters, without the omission of a single character. Concerning this, Po Chü-i¹ stated that the title is to the sutra as the eyes are to the Buddha. In the eighth volume of his *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* Miao-lo states, "When for the sake of brevity one mentions only the daimoku, or title, the entire sutra is by

implication included therein." By this he means that, although for the sake of brevity only the title of the sutra is spoken, the entire sutra is contained in the title alone.

Everything has its essential point, and the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, or the daimoku, of Nam-myohorenge-kyo. Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire Lotus Sutra. Chanting daimoku twice is the same as reading the entire sutra twice, one hundred daimoku equal one hundred readings of the sutra, and one thousand daimoku, one thousand readings of the sutra. Thus, if you ceaselessly chant daimoku, you will be continually reading the Lotus Sutra. The sixty volumes² of the T'ien-t'ai doctrines give exactly the same interpretation. A teaching this easy to uphold and this easy to practice was expounded for the sake of all living beings in the evil world of this latter age. A passage from the Lotus Sutra reads, "In the Latter Day of the Law . . ."³ Another reads, "If a bodhisattva or mahasattva in the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, should accept and embrace, read and recite this sutra . . ." A third states, "In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra . . ."⁴ A fourth reads, "In the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely."⁵ The heart of all these passages is the admonition to embrace and believe in the Lotus Sutra in this Latter Day of the Law. The learned authorities in Japan, China, and India have all failed to comprehend this obvious meaning and have slandered the sutra. They follow and practice the Hinayana and the provisional teachings upheld by the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools, thereby discarding the Lotus Sutra. They misunderstand the Buddha's teachings, but the people are ignorant of their mis-

takes. Because they appear to be true priests, the people trust them without the slightest doubt about what they preach. Therefore, without realizing it, the people who follow them have become enemies of the Lotus Sutra and foes of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is obvious from the sutra that not only will all their wishes remain unfulfilled, but their lives will be short, and after this life, they will be doomed to the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.⁶

Even though one neither reads nor studies the sutra, chanting the title alone is the source of tremendous good fortune. The sutra teaches that women, evil men, and those in the realms of animals and hell—in fact, all the beings of the Ten Worlds—can attain Buddhahood in their present form. [This is an incomparably greater wonder than] fire being produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, or a lantern lighting up a place that has been dark for a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years. If even the most ordinary things of this world are such wonders, then how much more wondrous is the power of the Buddhist Law! We ordinary beings are fettered by evil karma, earthly desires, and the sufferings of birth and death. But due to the three inherent potentials of the Buddha nature—innate Buddhahood, the wisdom to perceive it, and the actions to manifest it—we can without doubt reveal the Buddha's three bodies—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body. The Great Teacher Dengyo states, "Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form."⁷ He is referring to the example of the dragon king's daughter, who achieved Buddhahood in her reptilian form through the power of the Lotus Sutra. Do not doubt this in the least. Please tell your husband that I will explain this in detail when I see him.

Nichiren

cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

The third day of the seventh month
in the first year of Koan (1278),

Reply to the lay nun Myoho



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter from Minobu in the seventh month, 1278, to the lay nun Myoho, who lived in Okamiya Village in Suruga Province. Very little is known about Myoho. This letter was written in response to a letter she had sent the Daishonin, asking whether one can attain enlightenment by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo alone.

A later letter from the Daishonin to Myoho tells us that the lay nun's husband died shortly after the present letter was written, and that her inquiry was most likely made on behalf of her sick husband. She survived her husband and her elder brother. She was a sincere believer and received several letters from the Daishonin, who apparently placed great trust in her.

Notes

1. Po Chü-i (772–846) is a famed Chinese poet, much admired in Japan.
2. T'ien-t'ai's three major works, *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, and Miaolo's commentaries on them.
3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14. The next quotation is from the same chapter.
4. Ibid., chap. 17.
5. Ibid., chap. 23.
6. This statement is based on a passage of the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the

Lotus Sutra, which reads: "If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."

7. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*. The full passage reads, "Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form."

Reply to Tokimitsu



I HAVE received the horseload of polished wheat and the ginger that you sent me.

While he was still living a secular life, Aniruddha, the son of King Dronodana, was a descendant of the wheel-turning king who was the true ruler of India, a grandson of King Simhahanu, and a nephew of King Shuddhodana, as well as an heir to King Dronodana. He was a person of noble descent known throughout the whole land. Moreover, his house was visited by twelve thousand people each day: six thousand came to borrow from the wealth of his family, and the other six thousand came to pay back what they owed. Not only was he this wealthy, but he later became foremost in divine insight, and the Buddha prophesied in the Lotus Sutra that he would become the Thus Come One Universal Brightness.¹

If we examine what great goodness Aniruddha performed in past existences, we find that a long time ago there was a hunter who supported himself by capturing beasts in the mountains.² He also raised millet for food, but since he lived in a time of famine, there was almost nothing to eat. As he was eating the single bowl of millet that was his only food, a sage, a pratyekabuddha named Rida, appeared and begged him for it, saying, "I have not eaten for seven days. Let me have your food."

The hunter replied, "I have put it in a vessel defiled by a common person of the secular world, and moreover I have tainted the food by starting to eat it"; but the sage said, "Just let me have it. If I do not eat now, I shall die." Though ashamed of its unworthiness, the hunter offered him the food. After eating the millet, the sage returned the bowl to the hunter, having left just one grain of millet. This millet turned into a wild boar. The wild boar changed into gold and the gold was transformed into a corpse. The corpse then changed into a man made of gold. Whenever the hunter pulled off one of the golden man's fingers and sold it, a new finger would appear in its place. Thus, for ninety-one kalpas the hunter was reborn as a wealthy man, and in his present existence he was called Aniruddha and became a disciple of the Buddha. Although it was a paltry amount of millet, because it sustained the life of a sage in a famished country, he received a wonderful reward.

The Venerable Mahakashyapa was the worthiest of all the Buddha's disciples. In terms of lineage, he was the son of the wealthy Nyagrodha of the kingdom of Magadha. The floor of his house was covered with one thousand straw mats, each seven feet thick. Even those mats of lesser quality were each worth a thousand *ryo* of gold. The

household assets included 999 plows, each worth a thousand *ryo* of gold, and sixty storehouses, each with 340 *koku* of gold inside. Such was the immensity of his wealth. His wife had a gold-colored body, which shed light to a distance of sixteen *ri*. Her beauty exceeded even that of Lady Soto'ori Hime of Japan and surpassed even that of Lady Li of China. This husband and wife conceived a desire to seek the way and became disciples of the Buddha. In the Lotus Sutra, it was predicted that the husband would become the Thus Come One Light Bright.³ If we were to inquire into the past existences of these two people, we would find that, because one had offered a bowl of wheat to a pratyekabuddha, he was later born as the Venerable Mahakashyapa. The other was a poor woman who had a sculptor of Buddhist images [Mahakashyapa in a previous existence] beat a gold coin of hers into gilding for a statue of the Buddha Vipashyin,⁴ and who later became this person's wife.⁵

Although I, Nichiren, am not a sage, I have become known as the defender of the Lotus Sutra. For this, not only have I been hated and assailed by the ruler of the country, but my disciples and even those who visit me have been

reviled or struck, or have had their fiefs confiscated, or have been driven from their dwellings. Because they live under such a ruler, even people with seeking minds do not visit me. This has been the case for some time, but this year, in particular, because of epidemics and famine, very few people have come to visit.

Just as I was thinking that, even if I remained free from illness, I would surely die of starvation, the wheat that you sent arrived. It is more wonderful than gold and more precious than jewels. Rida's millet changed into a golden man. How, then, could Tokimitsu's wheat fail to turn into the characters of the Lotus Sutra? These characters of the Lotus Sutra will become Shakyamuni Buddha and then a pair of wings for your deceased father, flying and soaring to the pure land of Eagle Peak. On returning, they will cover your body and protect you.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eighth day of the seventh
month in the first year of Koan
(1278)

Reply to Ueno



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Nanjo Tokimitsu in 1278, while he was living at Minobu. It was written in response to an offering of wheat and ginger that Tokimitsu had sent him. From the contents of the numerous letters the Daishonin wrote to him, it is evident that Tokimitsu sent offerings every month.

During the year of this letter, Japan had been plagued by epidemics and famine. The Daishonin describes the

situation in a number of letters. In the intercalary tenth month of 1278, he spoke of this in a letter to Shijo Kingo: "I dwell in this remote mountain forest. This year was especially difficult, with widespread epidemics and famine in spring and summer, which worsened in autumn and winter" (p. 952).

In praising Tokimitsu's gift, the Daishonin cites the examples of Aniruddha and Mahakashyapa, two of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples, as well as that

of Mahakashyapa's wife, to illustrate the preciousness of sincere offerings, espe-

cially those made in times of famine and rampant disease.

Notes

1. The prophecy was made in the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

2. A slightly different version of this story is related in the Storehouse of Various Treasures Sutra.

3. This prediction appears in the "Bestowal of Prophecy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

4. Vipashyin is the first of the seven Buddhas of the past (Shakyamuni and the six Buddhas said to have preceded him). The seven Buddhas are discussed in the Long Agama Sutra.

5. The story of the meritorious deeds of Mahakashyapa and his wife in their previous existences is found in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

The Sutra of True Requitall



IN the first year of the Koan era (1278), with the cyclical sign *tsuchi-noe-tora*, on the sixth day of the seventh month, the lay nun Sennichi sent a letter via her husband, Abutsu-bo, from Sado Province to a mountain recess called Mount Minobu, in Hakiri Village, in Kai Province, in the same country of Japan.

In the letter she says that, though she had been concerned about the faults and impediments that prevent women from gaining enlightenment, since according to my teaching the Lotus Sutra puts the attainment of Buddhahood by women first, she relies upon this sutra in all matters.

One might ask, Who was the Buddha who preached the sutra known as the Lotus? To the west of this land of Japan, west again from China, far, far west beyond the deserts and the Pamirs, in a land called India, there was a crown prince, the son of a great king named Shuddhodana. When the prince reached the age of nineteen, he cast aside his rank, withdrew to Mount Dandaka, and took up the religious life. At the age of thirty he became a Buddha. His body took on a golden color, and his spirit reflected the three existences. The Buddha, who illuminated as though in a mirror all that had happened in the past and would happen in the future, taught all the various sutras of his

teaching life over a period of fifty years.

Even though all these sutras were gradually spread throughout the land of India during the first thousand years after the Buddha's passing, they had still not been introduced in China or Japan. Even though it is said that Buddhism was first brought to China 1,015 years after the demise of the Buddha, the Lotus Sutra had still not been introduced.

Some two hundred or more years after Buddhism was brought to China, a man known as the Tripitaka Master Kumarayana lived in a country called Kucha, located between India and China. His son, Kumarajiva, journeyed from Kucha to India, where he received instruction on the Lotus Sutra from the Tripitaka Master Shuryasoma. On entrusting Kumarajiva with the sutra, Shuryasoma said to him, "This Lotus Sutra has a deep connection with a country to the northeast."¹

With these words in mind, Kumarajiva set out to carry the sutra to the region east of India, to the land of China. Thus it was more than two hundred years after Buddhism had been introduced to China, during the reign of a ruler of the Later Ch'in dynasty, that the Lotus Sutra was first brought to that country.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan during the reign of the thirtieth sovereign, Emperor Kimmei, on the thir-

teenth day, a day with the cyclical sign *kanoto-iori*, of the tenth month in the thirteenth year of his reign, a year with the cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru* (552), by King Syōngmyōng of the kingdom of Paekche to the west of Japan. This occurred four hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism to China, and more than fourteen hundred years after the Buddha's passing.

Although the Lotus Sutra was among the texts introduced then, Prince Shōtoku, a son of the thirty-second sovereign, Emperor Yomei, sent an envoy to China for a copy of the Lotus and propagated it throughout Japan. Since then, more than seven hundred years have passed.

Already, over 2,230 years have passed since the demise of the Buddha. Moreover, the lands of India, China, and Japan are separated from each other by mountain after mountain, river after river, and sea after sea. Their inhabitants, their ways of thinking, and the character of their lands all differ from each other, and their languages and customs vary. How, then, can ordinary human beings like ourselves possibly understand the true meaning of the Buddhist teachings?

The only way to do so is to examine and compare the words of the various sutras. These sutras all differ from each other, but the one known as the Lotus is in eight volumes. In addition to these, there are the Universal Worthy Sutra, which urges the propagation of the Lotus, and the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which serves as an introduction to the Lotus, each consisting of one volume. When we open the Lotus Sutra and look into it, it is as though we were seeing our own face in a bright mirror, or as though the sun had come out and we were able to discern the colors of the plants and trees.

In reading the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which serves as an introduc-

tion, we find a passage that says, "In these more than forty years, I [Shakya-muni Buddha] have not yet revealed the truth." In the first volume of the Lotus Sutra, at the beginning of the "Expedient Means" chapter, we read, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth." In the fourth volume, in the "Treasure Tower" chapter, there is a passage that clearly states, "The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!" And the seventh volume contains the splendid passage that reads, "Their tongues reach to the Brahma heaven."²

In addition to these passages, we should note that the other sutras that precede or follow the Lotus have been compared to the stars, to streams and rivers, to petty kings, and to small mountains, and that the Lotus has been compared to the moon, to the sun, and to such things as the great ocean, a great mountain, and a great king.³

These statements are not my words. They are all the golden words of the Thus Come One, and they are the words that express the judgment of all the Buddhas in the ten directions. All of the bodhisattvas and persons of the two vehicles, Brahma, Shakra, and the gods of the sun and moon, which hang in the sky now like bright mirrors, watched and heard these statements being made. The words of the deities of the sun and moon also are recorded in this sutra. All the ancient gods of India, China, and Japan were also present in the assembly. The gods of Japan, such as the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the deities of Kumano and Suzuka,⁴ are unable to dispute these statements.

This sutra is superior to all other sutras. It is like the lion king, the monarch of all the creatures that run on the ground, and like the eagle, the king of all the creatures that fly in

the sky. Sutras such as the Devotion to Amida Buddha Sutra⁵ are like pheasants or rabbits. Seized by the eagle, their tears flow; pursued by the lion, fear grips their bowels. And the same is true of people like the Nembutsu adherents, the Precepts priests, the Zen priests, and the True Word teachers. When they come face to face with the votary of the Lotus Sutra, their color drains away and their spirits fail.

As for what sort of doctrines are taught in this wonderful Lotus Sutra, beginning with the "Expedient Means" chapter in the first volume, it teaches that bodhisattvas, persons of the two vehicles, and ordinary people are all capable of attaining Buddhahood. But as of yet no examples exist to prove this assertion. It is like a guest whom we meet for the first time. His appearance is attractive, his heart is brave, and on hearing him speak, we have no reason to doubt him. Yet because we have never seen him before and have no proof of the things he says, we find it difficult to believe him on the basis of his words alone. But if we repeatedly see evidence to support the major points he makes at this time, we will be able to trust what he says from now on as well.

For all those who wished to believe the Lotus Sutra and yet could not do so with complete certainty, the fifth volume presents what is the heart and core of the entire sutra, the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. It is as though, for instance, a black object were to become white, black lacquer to become like snow, an unclean thing to become clean and pure, or a wish-granting jewel to be placed into muddy water [to make it transparent]. Here it is told how the dragon girl became a Buddha in her reptilian form. And at that moment there was no longer anyone who doubted that all men can attain Buddhahood. This is why I say that the

enlightenment of women is expounded as a model.

For this reason, the Great Teacher Dengyo, the founder of Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei, who was the first to spread the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra in Japan, commented on this point as follows: "Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form."⁶ And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che of China, who expounded the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra first in that country, stated, "The other sutras only predict Buddhahood . . . for men, but not for women; . . . This sutra predicts Buddhahood for all."⁷

Do not these interpretations make clear that, among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, the Lotus Sutra is first, and that, among the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, that of women attaining Buddhahood is first? For this reason, though the women of Japan may be condemned in all sutras other than the Lotus as incapable of attaining Buddhahood, as long as the Lotus guarantees their enlightenment, what reason have they to be downcast?

Now I, Nichiren, was born as a human being, something difficult to achieve, and I have encountered the Buddha's teachings, which are but rarely to be met with. Moreover, among all the teachings of the Buddha, I was able to meet the Lotus Sutra. When I stop to consider my good fortune, I realize that I am indebted to my parents, indebted to the ruler, and indebted to all living beings.

With regard to the debt of gratitude owed to our parents, our father may be likened to heaven and our mother to the earth, and it would be difficult to say to which parent we are the more indebted. But it is particularly difficult to repay the great kindness of our mother.

If, in desiring to repay it, we seek to do so by following the non-Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Three Records*, the *Five Canons*, or *The Classic of Filial Piety*, we can provide for our mother in this life, but we cannot hope to do anything for her next life. Although we can provide for her physically, we will be unable to save her spiritually.

Turning to the Buddhist scriptures, we find that, because the more than five thousand or seven thousand volumes of Hinayana and Mahayana sutras teach that it is impossible for women to attain Buddhahood, it is impossible to repay the debt owed to our mother. The Hinayana teachings flatly deny that a woman can attain Buddhahood. The Mahayana sutras in some cases seem to say that a woman may attain Buddhahood or may be reborn in a pure land, but this is simply a possibility mentioned by the Buddha, and no examples of such a thing actually having happened are given.

Since I have realized that only the Lotus Sutra teaches the attainment of Buddhahood by women, and that only the Lotus is the sutra of true requital for repaying the kindness of our mother, in order to repay my debt to my mother, I have vowed to enable all women to chant the daimoku of this sutra.

The women of Japan, however, have all been led astray by priests like Shantao of China, or Eshin, Yokan, and Honen of Japan, so that throughout the entire country not one of them chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which should be their foundation. All they do is chant Namu Amida Butsu once a day, ten times, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million times a day, or thirty thousand or a hundred thousand times. All their lives, every hour of the day and night, they do nothing else. Both those women who are steadfast in their pursuit of enlightenment and those who are evil make the invocation

of Amida's name their foundation. And the few women who seem to be devoting themselves to the Lotus Sutra do so only as though whiling away time waiting for the moon to rise, or as though reluctantly spending time with a man who does not please them until they can meet their lover.

Thus among all the women of Japan, not one is in accord with the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. They do not chant the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, which is essential for their loving mothers, but instead devote their hearts to Amida. And because they do not base themselves on the Lotus Sutra, Amida extends no aid. Reciting the name of Amida Buddha is no way for a woman to gain salvation; rather it will invariably plunge her into hell.

In grieving over what is to be done if we wish to assist our mothers, [I have realized that] the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha creates karma that destines a person to the hell of incessant suffering. Such recitation is not included among the five cardinal sins, and yet it is worse than the five sins. A person who murders his father and mother destroys their physical bodies, but he does not condemn them to fall into the hell of incessant suffering in their next existence.

The women of Japan today, who could without fail attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra, have been deceived into reciting exclusively the formula Namu Amida Butsu. Since it does not appear to be evil, they have been misled. Since it is not the seed of Buddhahood, they will never become Buddhas. By clinging to the minor good of reciting Amida Buddha's name, they deprive themselves of the major good of the Lotus Sutra. Thus this minor good of the Nembutsu is worse in its effect than the great evil of the five cardinal sins.

It is like the case of Masakado, who during the Shohei era (931-938) seized

control of eight provinces in the Kanto region, or like Sadato, who during the Tengi era (1053–1058) took possession of the region of Oshu. Because these men caused a division between the people of their region and the sovereign, they were declared enemies of the imperial court and in the end were destroyed. Their plots and rebellions were worse than the five cardinal sins.

Buddhism in Japan today is exactly like this. It is merely plots and rebellions in a different form. The Lotus Sutra represents the supreme ruler, while the True Word school, Pure Land school, Zen school, and the Precepts priests, by upholding such minor sutras as the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, have become the deadly enemies of the Lotus Sutra. And yet women throughout Japan, unaware of the ignorance of their own minds, think that Nichiren, who can save them, is their foe, and mistake the Nembutsu, Zen, Precepts, and True Word priests, who are in fact deadly enemies, for good friends and teachers. And because they look upon Nichiren, who is trying to save them, as a deadly enemy, these women all join together to slander him to the ruler of the country, so that, after having been exiled to the province of Izu, he was also exiled to the province of Sado.

Here I, Nichiren, made a vow and declared: “There is absolutely no fault on my part. And even if I should be mistaken, the fact remains that I have made a vow to save all the women in Japan, and that sincerity cannot be ignored—especially since what I am saying is in complete accord with the Lotus Sutra.

“If the women of Japan do not choose to put faith in me, then they should let the matter rest there. On the contrary, however, they set about having me attacked. But am I in error?

“How will Shakyamuni, Many Treas-

ures, the Buddhas of the ten directions, the bodhisattvas, the people of the two vehicles, Brahma, Shakra, and the four heavenly kings deal with this? If I am in error, show me how! In particular, the gods of the sun and moon are right before me. And since, in addition to listening to the words of Shakyamuni Buddha, you also vowed to punish those who persecute the votary of the Lotus Sutra, saying, “Their heads will split into seven pieces,”⁸ what then do you intend to do?” Because Nichiren strongly called them to task in this manner, the heavenly gods have inflicted punishment on this land, and these epidemics have appeared.

By rights the heavenly gods should command another nation to punish our country, but too many people on both sides would perish. Thus, the design of the heavenly gods is to avoid a general conflict and instead to first destroy the people [in this epidemic]—which is in effect cutting off the ruler’s hands and feet—thereby compelling the ruler and high ministers of this nation [to honor the Lotus Sutra]. In this way they intend to wipe out the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and make way for the propagation of the correct teaching.

Nevertheless, when I was exiled to the province of Sado, the constable of the province and the other officials, following the design of the ruler of the nation, treated me with animosity. And the people went along with those orders. In addition, the Nembutsu, Zen, Precepts, and True Word priests in Kamakura sent word that by no means should I be allowed to return from the island of Sado, and Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji and others persuaded the former governor of the province of Musashi⁹ to issue his own letters of instruction, which were carried to Sado by Ryokan’s disciples, ordering that I be persecuted. Thus it seemed that I could not possibly escape with my life. Whatever the design of the heavenly gods in the

matter may have been, every single steward and Nembutsu believer worthy of the name kept strict watch on my hut day and night, determined to prevent anyone from communicating with me. Never in any lifetime will I forget how in those circumstances you, with Abutsu-bo carrying a wooden container of food on his back, came in the night again and again to bring me aid. It was just as if my deceased mother had suddenly been reborn in the province of Sado!

Once in China there was a man known as the governor of P'ei.¹⁰ Because there were signs indicating that he would become the ruler, the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty decreed that unparalleled rewards would be bestowed upon anyone who would kill him. The governor thought it would be too dangerous to try to conceal himself in the country villages, and so he entered the mountains, where he remained hidden for seven days, and then for another seven. At that time, he believed that his life was as good as lost. But the governor had a wife of the Lü family who went searching for him in the mountains and from time to time would bring him food to keep him alive.

Being the governor's wife, she could not help but feel compassion for him. But in your case, had you not been concerned about the life to come, would you have shown me such devotion? And that is also the reason why you have remained steadfast throughout, even when you were driven from your land, fined, and had your house taken from you. In the Lotus Sutra, it is said that one who in the past has made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas will, when reborn in a later existence, be unshakable in faith.¹¹ You, then, must be a woman who has made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas.

In addition, it is easy to sustain our

concern for someone who is before our very eyes, but quite a different thing when that person is far away, even though in our heart we may not forget him. Nevertheless, in the five years, from the eleventh year of the Bun'ei era (1274) to this year, the first year of the Koan era, that have already passed since I came to live here in the mountains, you have sent your husband from the province of Sado to visit me three times. How great is your sincerity! It is firmer than the great earth, deeper than the great sea!

When he was Prince Sattva in a previous existence, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni gained merit by feeding his body to a starving tigress, and when he was King Shibi, he gained merit by giving his flesh to a hawk in exchange for the life of a dove. And he declared in the presence of Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions that he would transfer this merit to those who believe in the Lotus Sutra as you do in the Latter Day of the Law.

You say in your letter that the eleventh day of the eighth month of this year marks the thirteenth anniversary of your father's passing. You also note that you are enclosing an offering of one thousand coins. It is extremely kind of you to do so. Fortunately, I happen to have a copy of the Lotus Sutra in ten volumes¹² that I would like to send you. When you think longingly of me, have Gakujo-bo¹³ read it and please listen to it. And in a future existence, you may use this copy of the sutra as a token of proof with which to search me out.

In view of the epidemics that raged the year before last, last year, and this year, I was so concerned about how all of you were faring that I prayed earnestly to the Lotus Sutra, but still I felt uneasy. Then, on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month, at the hour of the monkey (3:00–5:00 P.M.), Abutsu-bo appeared. I asked him first

how you were, and how the lay priest of Ko¹⁴ was. He told me that neither of you had fallen ill, and that the lay priest of Ko had set out along with him, but because the early rice was nearly ripe, and because he had no sons to help him harvest it, he had had no choice but to turn back.

When I heard all this, I felt as if I were a blind man who had recovered his sight, or as if my deceased father and mother had come to me in a dream from the palace of King Yama, and in that dream I had felt great joy. It is a strange and wonderful thing, but both here and in Kamakura, very few of my followers have died from this plague. It is as if all of us were riding in the same boat and, though it would be too much to expect that we should all survive, still, just when disaster seemed to be upon us, another boat came out to rescue us. Or it is as if the dragon deities were watching over us and making it possible for us to reach the shore in safety. It is indeed wondrous!

Concerning the lay priest Ichinosawa,¹⁵ please tell his wife, the lay nun, that I am grieved to hear of his death. But I have already told her quite clearly how matters stand with her husband,

and she will no doubt recall my words. Regardless of the fact that he had a hall in his house dedicated to Amida Buddha, Amida Buddha will never save an enemy of the Lotus Sutra. On the contrary, such a person renders himself a foe of Amida Buddha. After his death, he must have fallen into the evil paths of existence and been filled with deep regret. It is a great pity.

I am mindful, however, that the lay priest Ichinosawa on several occasions saved my life by hiding me in a corridor of his residence, and I have therefore tried to think of something that can be done for him. Will you please ask Gakujo-bo to read the Lotus Sutra regularly at his grave? Even so, I do not think that this will enable him to reach enlightenment. Please tell his wife, the lay nun, that I grieve at the thought of how desolate and lonely she must feel. I will write more at another time.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the seventh month

To the wife of Abutsu-bo, in the provincial capital of Sado



Background

This letter was written at Minobu on the twenty-eighth day of the seventh month of the first year of Koan (1278), the day after Abutsu-bo, a lay follower, arrived on his third journey from Sado Island to visit Nichiren Daishonin. This letter is the Daishonin's answer to one that Abutsu-bo had delivered from his wife, the lay nun Sennichi.

Some scholars maintain that the lay nun Sennichi served as an attendant to a court lady accompanying the Retired Emperor Juntoku during his banish-

ment to Sado after the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221, but it is more likely that she was a native of the island. She and her husband were devoted followers of the Daishonin and supplied him with food, writing materials, and other necessities for more than two years, until his pardon in 1274. After the Daishonin's move to Minobu, the lay nun sent her husband with offerings to visit him there at least three times.

In the first portion of this letter, the Daishonin emphasizes the superiority

of the Lotus Sutra from the standpoint of its teaching that women can attain Buddhahood. The provisional teachings, he says, deny that women can become Buddhas; only the Lotus Sutra clearly reveals that they are able to do so. The Daishonin declares that the enlightenment of women as taught in the Lotus Sutra shows that all living beings can attain Buddhahood in their present form.

He then takes up the subject of repaying one's debt of gratitude to one's parents, especially to one's mother. Since the Lotus is the only sutra that guarantees the enlightenment of women, he says, it is also the only one

that truly enables one to requite one's mother's kindness. Nevertheless, the women of Japan reject both the Lotus Sutra and its votary, and chant only the name of Amida Buddha. But, says the Daishonin, Amida will never protect an enemy of the Lotus Sutra. Thus he shows that the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra is the basis of all Buddhist teachings.

While in exile on Sado, the Daishonin was harshly treated by many of the islanders. The lay nun Sennichi and her husband, however, risked their personal safety to serve him and maintained their faith despite many hardships.

Notes

1. *The Afterword to the Lotus Sutra Translation*, a work written by Seng-chao (384–414), one of Kumarajiva's disciples, attributes this statement to Shuryasoma.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

3. These are among the ten comparisons set forth in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

4. Kumano refers to the three Shinto shrines located in the Kumano district of Wakayama Prefecture. They are Kumano Nimesu Shrine, which enshrines the god Ketsumiko no Kami; Kumano Hayatama Shrine, which enshrines the god Kumano Hayatama no Kami; and Kumano Nachi Shrine, which enshrines the god Kumano Fusumi no Kami. Suzuka refers to a district in Ise Province (now northern Mie Prefecture), the location of an important barrier station on the route connecting Yamato and Ise provinces. It is the site of many old temples, shrines, and archaeological remains.

5. Devotion to Amida Buddha Sutra: The Amida Sutra. The Daishonin may have referred to it this way to indicate its association with the Nembutsu, the chanting of Amida Buddha's name in the formula Namu Amida Butsu (Devotion to Amida Buddha), a practice that was widespread in his day.

6. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

7. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 26.

9. The former governor of the province of Musashi refers here to Hojo Nobutoki, the constable of Sado Province, who lived in Kamakura.

10. The governor of P'ei refers to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.E.), the founder of the Former Han dynasty. He and another warlord, Hsiang Yü, contended for power, taking advantage of the confusion following the death of the First Emperor of the Ch'in to raise troops and attempt to overthrow the dynasty. A protracted struggle between the two ended in the victory of Liu Pang, who founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C.E. The episode referred to in the text appears in *Records of the Historian*.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

12. "The Lotus Sutra in ten volumes" refers to the entire Lotus Sutra, consisting of eight volumes together with the one-volume Immeasurable Meanings Sutra and the one-volume Universal Worthy Sutra, which serve respectively as prologue and epilogue to the Lotus Sutra.

13. Gakujo-bo (d. 1301), a disciple of the Daishonin, is said to have lived at Ichinosawa on Sado Island. Originally a True Word believer, he converted to the Daishonin's teaching and devoted himself to propagating it, founding a temple called Jisso-ji.

14. The lay priest of Ko was a follower of the Daishonin. Ko means a provincial

office or its location; the lay priest was so called because he lived in Ko, the provincial seat of Sado Island. He and his wife made offerings to the Daishonin and helped protect him.

15. The lay priest Ichinosawa (d. 1278)

was a follower of the Pure Land school. The Daishonin lived for a large part of his exile on Sado at his residence. Ichinosawa never abandoned his Pure Land beliefs, but made efforts to protect the Daishonin.

The Good Medicine for All Ills



I HAVE received the two baskets of leached persimmons¹ and the basket of eggplants you sent. Concerning the matter of [your husband] the lay priest's illness, there were physicians in China named Huang Ti and Pien Ch'üeh,² and there were physicians in India named Water Holder³ and Jivaka. They were the treasures of their age and teachers to the physicians of later times. But the man called the Buddha was a superb physician who far surpassed them. This Buddha expounded the medicine of immortality. This is the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo we have today. Moreover, he specifically taught that these five characters are "good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvipa."⁴

The lay priest is a man of Japan, which lies within Jambudvipa, and furthermore he suffers from bodily illness. The sutra passage about good medicine for illness is clear. In addition, this Sutra of the Lotus is the greatest medicine. When a wicked ruler named King Virudhaka killed more than five hundred women of the Buddha's clan, the Buddha sent Ananda to Eagle Peak for blue lotus flowers that he then touched to the bodies of the women, who were restored to life and after seven days were reborn in the heaven of the thirty-three gods. Because the flower known as the lotus is a flower

possessing such excellent virtue, the Buddha likened it to the Mystic Law.

Also, a person's death is not determined by illness. In our own time, the people of Iki and Tsushima, though not suffering from illness, were slaughtered in an instant by the Mongols. It is not certain that, because one is ill, one will die. And could not this illness of your husband's be the Buddha's design, because the Vimalakirti and Nirvana sutras both teach that sick people will surely attain Buddhahood? Illness gives rise to the resolve to attain the way.

Among all the diseases, the Buddha worried that the five cardinal sins, incorrigible disbelief, and slander of the Law were especially grave ones. Without a single exception, the people of Japan today are afflicted with the most serious of all illnesses, the grave illness of major slander. I refer to the followers of the Zen, Nembutsu, and Precepts schools, and to the True Word teachers. Because their illness is so serious, neither do they recognize it in themselves, nor are others aware of it. And because this illness worsens, warriors from throughout the four seas will attack at any moment, and the ruler, his ministers, and the common people will all sink into the sea. To see this before one's very eyes is indeed a painful thing.

In his present life, the lay priest does

not appear to have had particularly strong faith in the Lotus Sutra. But due to the workings of his karma from the past, he has sunk into this long illness and now seeks the way day and night without cease. Any minor offenses he committed in this lifetime have probably already been eradicated, and the great evil of slander will also be extinguished because he has taken faith in the Lotus Sutra. If he were to go right now to Eagle Peak, he would be as delighted as if the sun had come out and he were able to see in all ten directions. He would rejoice, wondering how an early death could be so happy a thing. No matter what may happen on the road between this life and the next, he should declare himself to be a disciple of Nichiren. Although Japan is a tiny country, if one but announces that one is a vassal of the lord of Sagami, people will unaccountably fear one. I am the most unreasonable priest in Japan, but with regard to believing in the Lotus Sutra, I am the foremost sage in Jam-

budvipa. My name resounds throughout the pure lands of the ten directions, and heaven and earth no doubt know it. If your husband declares that he is Nichiren's disciple, I do not think that evil demons of any kind can claim ignorance of my name.

I have no words to express my thanks for your frequent sincere offerings.

With my deep respect.

Monkeys rely on trees, fish rely on water, and women rely on men. Being loath to part from your husband, you shaved off your hair and dyed your sleeves black.⁵ Thinking, "How could the Buddhas of the ten directions possibly not feel compassion for me?" and "How could the Lotus Sutra ever abandon me?" rely on them, rely on them!

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the eighth month

Reply to the lay nun Myoshin



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to the lay nun Myoshin. The most widely accepted view suggests that it was written in the first year of Koan (1278); another view is that it was written in the first year of Kenji (1275). Few details about Myoshin are known. One explanation identifies her as the wife of the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, and if this is correct, she would have been an aunt of Nikko Shonin. In any event, she lived in Fuji District of Suruga Province and was a follower of Nichiren Daishonin.

This letter was a reply to a report from Myoshin about her husband's illness. The Daishonin encourages her to view his illness as a manifestation of the

Buddha's compassion, since it has enabled him to arouse a determination to seek enlightenment—a determination that he previously lacked. He explains that, because of the sincerity of her husband's recently awakened faith, he will certainly be able to eradicate the bad karma of his misdeeds; and even if he were to die now, he would experience the boundless joy of the Law that transcends both life and death.

When her husband eventually died of his illness, Myoshin was left with a young child. She maintained her faith after her husband's death and visited the Daishonin often at Minobu to bring him offerings.

Notes

1. Persimmons from which the astringency has been removed by soaking them in a solution of lime or buckwheat chaff.

2. Huang Ti, or the Yellow Emperor, was one of the legendary Three Sovereigns of ancient China. According to *Records of the Historian*, among other major contributions to civilization, he initiated the art of medicine. Pien Ch'üeh was a physician of China's Spring and Autumn period (770–403 B.C.E.). He learned the medical arts in boyhood and is said to have been skilled in

treating virtually all forms of disease.

3. According to the Golden Light Sutra, a skilled physician who lived countless kalpas ago in the Middle Day of the Law of Treasure Excellence Buddha. When an epidemic broke out, Water Holder, then a very old man, taught the medical arts to his son, Water Carrier, enabling him to save the people.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

5. The Daishonin is referring here to Myoshin's having become a lay nun.

The Farther the Source, the Longer the Stream



I HAVE received one thousand coins and respectfully reported in the presence of the Lotus Sutra that this is an offering from Yorimoto.¹ I believe that, from afar, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, and, close at hand, the gods of the sun and moon in their heavenly palaces will certainly watch over you.

If someone excels in this world, then even those who are regarded as worthies and sages, to say nothing of ordinary people, will all become jealous and bear grudges against that person. Three thousand court ladies harbored jealousy against Wang Chao-chün, the favorite of the emperor of the Han dynasty. Shakra's consorts, who numbered ninety-nine million nayuta, all envied Kaushika.² Minister Fujiwara no Saneyori bore a grudge against Imperial Prince Kaneakira, and Fujiwara no Tokihira, jealous of Sugawara no Michizane, spoke falsely of him to the emperor, causing him to be exiled.³

Consider your own situation in light of these examples. [Your lord] the lay priest Ema's domain used to be vast, but has now diminished. He has many sons who could succeed him, and there are also many retainers who have long served him. His retainers must be possessed by growing envy, just as fish become agitated when the water of

their pond decreases, or as birds vie with one another to secure branches when autumn winds begin to blow. Moreover, since you have disobeyed your lord and gone against his wishes from time to time, the calumnies made to him against you must have been all the more numerous. However, even though you have been forced to relinquish your fief time and again, in your letter you said that he has now conferred an estate upon you. This is indeed wondrous. This is precisely what is meant by the statement that unseen virtue brings about visible reward. It must have happened because of your profound sincerity in trying to lead your lord to faith in the Lotus Sutra.

King Ajatashatru, though once the Buddha's enemy, came to take faith in the Lotus Sutra at the urging of his minister Jivaka, so that he was able to prolong his life and continue his rule. King Wonderful Adornment corrected his mistaken views at the exhortation of his two sons.⁴ The same is true in your case. Lord Ema has now softened probably as a result of your admonishment. This is solely because of your deep faith in the Lotus Sutra.

The deeper the roots, the more luxuriant the branches. The farther the source, the longer the stream. All sutras other than the Lotus Sutra have shallow roots and short streams, while the Lo-

tus Sutra has deep roots and a distant source. That is why the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai stated that the Lotus Sutra would survive and spread even in the evil latter age.

Many people have taken faith in this teaching. But because great persecutions, both official and otherwise, have repeatedly befallen me, though they followed me for a year or two, all of them later either abandoned their faith or turned against the Lotus Sutra. Or if they have not given way in their practice, they have done so in their heart. Or if they have not given way in their heart, they have done so in their practice.

Shakyamuni Buddha, the heir to King Shuddhodana, was a great king who reigned over Jambudvipa's 84,210 countries. All kings of this land bowed to him, and he had a hundred thousand million servants. Nevertheless, he left the palace of King Shuddhodana at the age of nineteen and entered Mount Dandaka, where he was to carry out ascetic practices for twelve years. At that time he was attended by five men:⁵ Ajnata Kaundinya, Ashvajit, Bhadraka, Dashabala Kashyapa, and Prince Kolita. Of these five, however, two left Shakyamuni during the sixth year, while the remaining three deserted him in the next six years. Alone, Shakyamuni continued his practice and became the Buddha.

The Lotus Sutra is even more difficult to believe in than Shakyamuni, and therefore the sutra itself states that it is "the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand."⁶ Moreover, in the Latter Day of the Law, persecutions are far more frequent and intense than in the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha. The sutra states that a votary who perseveres despite these adversities will gain benefits greater than those obtained by offering alms to the Buddha for the space of an entire kalpa.

It is now some 2,230 years since the Buddha's passing. Those who spread Buddhism in India for more than a thousand years thereafter are recorded in history without omission, and those who disseminated Buddhism in China for a thousand years and in Japan for seven hundred are also clearly listed. Very few of them, however, met persecutions as terrible as those of the Buddha. Many described themselves as sages or worthies, but not one has ever experienced the sutra's prediction: "[Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world], how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁷ Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo met great persecutions for the sake of Buddhism, but none as great as those the Buddha describes in the sutra. This is because they were born before the time when the Lotus Sutra is to be spread.

We have now already entered "the last five-hundred-year period," or the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. This time period is like the sun at the summer solstice on the fifteenth day of the fifth month, or the harvest moon on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo were born too early to see it; those born after will regret that they came too late.

The main force of the enemy⁸ has already been defeated, and the remainder is no match for me. Now is the very time that the Buddha predicted: "the last five-hundred-year period," or the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, and the age indicated by the passage, "How much more will this be so after his passing?" If the Buddha's words are not false, a sage must certainly have appeared in the land of Jambudvipa. According to the sutras, the greatest war the land has ever seen will break out as a sign of this sage's advent, and since such a war⁹ has already

occurred, the sage must already have appeared in Jambudvīpa. The appearance of a legendary beast called ch'i-lin told Chinese contemporaries that Confucius was a sage, and there is no doubt that the resounding of a village shrine heralds a sage's coming. When the Buddha made his advent in this world, the growth of sandalwood trees informed his contemporaries that he was a sage. Lao Tzu was recognized as a sage because at birth the sole of one foot was marked with the Chinese character "two" and the other with the character "five."¹⁰

Then how does one recognize the sage of the Lotus Sutra in this latter age? The sutra states that one who "can preach this sutra"¹¹ or who "can uphold this sutra"¹² is "the envoy of the Thus Come One."¹³ In other words, one who embraces the eight volumes, or a single volume, chapter, or verse, of the Lotus Sutra, or who chants the daimoku, is the Thus Come One's emissary. Also, one who perseveres through great persecutions and embraces the sutra from beginning to end is the Thus Come One's emissary.

Since I am but a common mortal, my mind may not be that of the Thus Come One's envoy. However, since I have incurred the hatred of the three powerful enemies and been exiled twice, I am like the Thus Come One's envoy. Though my mind is steeped in

the three poisons and my body is that of a common mortal, because my mouth chants Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, I am like the Thus Come One's envoy. If I seek an example in the past, I may be likened to Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. If I look at the present, I have been living the sutra's description of persecution "with swords and staves, tiles and stones."¹⁴ In the future, I will doubtless proceed to the place of enlightenment, and those who have sustained me will also dwell together in the pure land of Eagle Peak. I have many other things to tell you, but I will stop here and leave the rest for you to conclude.

The ailing acolyte has recovered, which makes me very happy. Acharya Daishin¹⁵ died exactly as you foresaw. Everyone here praises you, saying that even a latter-day Jivaka would be no match for you. I think they may well be right. We have been telling each other that your predictions about Sammi-bo and Soshiro¹⁶ have come true exactly, just as two tallies match precisely. I entrust my life to you and will consult no other physician.

Nichiren

The fifteenth day of the ninth month in the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

To Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the ninth month, 1278, to Shijo Kingo, a staunch follower who was well versed in both medicine and the martial arts. In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin states, "Even though you have been forced to relinquish your fief time and again, in your letter you said that he

[Lord Ema] has now conferred an estate upon you." In a letter addressed to Kingo the next month, the Daishonin states, "So your lord has granted you new fiefs! I cannot think it to be true; it is so marvelous that I wonder if it is a dream" (p. 945). It is reasonable to assume, then, that Shijo Kingo first

reported to the Daishonin an informal notice from his lord Ema and next conveyed the official announcement. This is why the Daishonin expresses his unreserved joy in the letter of the tenth month.

Lord Ema had for several years disapproved of Kingo's belief and, prompted by false accusations made against Kingo by jealous colleagues, eventually ordered him either to abandon his faith in the Daishonin's teaching or move to a remote province. In 1277, however, Ema fell ill, and Kingo's treatment effected a cure. Ema renewed his trust in him and, the next year, bestowed upon him a far larger fief than the one he already had.

Delighted with Kingo's victory, Ni-

chiren Daishonin says that unseen virtue brings about visible reward, meaning that Kingo's sincere faith and effort to lead his lord to faith in the Lotus Sutra were rewarded in this manner. He also describes the merit of the Lotus Sutra with the words, "The farther the source, the longer the stream." Hence the title of this letter. He says, "In the future, I will doubtless proceed to the place of enlightenment, and those who have sustained me will also dwell together in the pure land of Eagle Peak." The Daishonin implies that he is "the envoy of the Thus Come One" referred to in the Lotus Sutra, and that those who support him will attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Yorimoto is Shijo Kingo's given name. His full name and title are Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo Yorimoto. Kingo denotes his official position Saemon-no-jo.

2. Kaushika is the name of Shakra when he was once a Brahman, according to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, but in this context it would seem to indicate his wife.

3. Fujiwara no Saneyori (900–970), a court official, was apparently disappointed in his hopes that his son Yoritada would be appointed minister of the left, and so he bore a grudge against Imperial Prince Kaneakira, the son of the sixtieth emperor Daigo, who achieved that position. Though Fujiwara no Tokihira (871–909) was minister of the left and ranked above the minister of the right, he became jealous of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), another adviser of Emperor Uda, when Michizane was appointed minister of the right, since Michizane was a man of superior learning and character. Tokihira falsely accused him to the emperor, and as a result Michizane was demoted and sent to the westernmost part of Japan, where he died in despair. Michizane was deified after his death, and a shrine, Kitano Shrine in Kyoto, was dedicated to him. The Japanese persons, whose names appear in the text and are mentioned

here, are referred to in the Japanese text by their titles, except Michizane, who is referred to by his posthumous title.

4. A reference to chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra. The two sons are Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye.

5. The five men are known as the five ascetics. Prince Kolita is better known as Mahanama.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

7. Ibid.

8. "The main force of the enemy" refers here to the doctrines of the influential schools of the day, the True Word, Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts. These doctrines were refuted by Nichiren Daishonin on the basis of the Lotus Sutra.

9. This refers to the vast campaign of conquest then being waged by the Mongol empire. The better part of the Eurasian continent was under either the rule or direct influence of the empire, which had been founded by Genghis Khan. His grandson Khubilai Khan launched massive naval attacks against Japan in 1274 and 1281, but did not succeed.

10. According to ancient Chinese legend, when a sage is born, the sole of one foot is marked with the character "two" and the other with the character "five." This is mentioned in *Records of the Historian*.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.
12. Ibid., chap. 17.
13. Ibid., chap. 10.
14. Ibid.
15. Daishin was a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin who was born in Shimosa Province and is thought to have been a relative of the Soya family. He taught the believers in Kamakura and took responsibility for guiding them while the Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island.
16. Soshiro was probably a follower of the Daishonin who later turned against him.

The Receipt of New Fiefs



I HAVE received your one thousand coins. So your lord has granted you new fiefs! I cannot think it to be true; it is so marvelous that I wonder if it is a dream. I hardly know what to say in reply.

The reason is that people in Japan and throughout Kamakura, and even those in your lord's service, including the scions of his clan, disapproved of you because of your belief in Nichiren's teaching. So I marvel at your receiving the new fiefs. And I marvel at the fact that you are still in your lord's clan at all. Moreover, whenever your lord offered to grant you an estate, you invariably declined to accept it.¹ How strange your fellow samurai must have thought your refusals, how outrageous they must have seemed to your lord!

So I was anxious about how you would fare this time, and in addition, I learned that dozens of your fellow clansmen had slandered you to your lord. I therefore thought you could not possibly obtain a fief. I was concerned because your situation was so overwhelming. Moreover, even your own brothers had abandoned you. And yet, in spite of all this, you have been shown such favor. No honor could be greater than this.

You say that your new domains occupy an area three times the size of Tono'oka.² There is a man from the

province of Sado staying here now who knows that area well. He tells me that, of the three villages, the one called Ikada³ is best. Although its fields and paddies are few, its profits are immeasurable. Two sites each yield an annual harvest worth one million coins in land tax; another site, three hundred thousand coins. Such, he says, are their merits.

In any event, you had been forsaken by your fellow samurai and by the people close to you, and they mocked you for their own amusement. Under the circumstances, an official letter granting you any sort of fief, even one inferior to Tono'oka, would have been welcome. Yet, as it turned out, your new domains are three times as large. No matter how poor these estates might be, avoid complaining of it, either to others or to your lord. If you say, "They are excellent, excellent lands," your lord may add to your fiefs again. But if you say things like, "The lands are poor," or "There are no profits," you could very well be forsaken by both heaven and other people. You should bear this in mind.

King Ajatashatru was a worthy man, but because he killed his own father, immediately heaven should have abandoned him and the earth split open to swallow him up. However, because of the merit his father, the murdered king, had gained by making five hundred

cartloads of offerings to the Buddha every day for the space of several years, and because of the merit he himself would later gain by becoming a supporter of the Lotus Sutra, it was difficult for heaven to abandon him, and the earth remained whole. In the end, he avoided falling into hell and became a Buddha.

Your case is similar to his. You were forsaken by your brothers, resented by your fellow samurai, persecuted by the scions of the clan, and hated by people throughout Japan. Yet, on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.),⁴ when I had incurred the wrath of the government authorities, you accompanied me from Kamakura to Echi in Sagami Province, holding fast to my horse's reins. Since you thus proved yourself to be the foremost ally of the Lotus Sutra in all of Jambudvīpa, no doubt the heavenly gods Brahma and Shakra have found it difficult to forsake you.

The same is true of your attaining Buddhahood. No matter what grave offenses you might have committed, because you did not turn against the Lotus Sutra, but showed your devotion by accompanying me, you will surely become a Buddha. Yours is like the case of King Possessor of Virtue, who gave his life to save the monk Realization of Virtue and became Shakyamuni Buddha. Faith in the Lotus Sutra

acts as a prayer [to attain Buddhahood]. Strengthen your resolve to seek the way all the more and achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime.

No more gratifying thing has ever happened to any member of your lord's clan, whether priest or layman. When I say this, it may seem as if it is a desire of the present existence, but for ordinary people, that too is only natural, and moreover, a way exists to become a Buddha even without eradicating desires. Explaining the heart of the Lotus Sutra, the Universal Worthy Sutra says, "Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires. . ."⁵ And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight* reads, "Earthly desires are enlightenment; the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana." Explaining how the Lotus Sutra surpasses all the rest of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine." This passage means that while a lesser physician cures illness with medicine, a great physician cures grave illness with virulent poison.

Nichiren

The tenth month of the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoetora*

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Shijo Kingo. Lord Ema, whom Shijo Kingo served, had for some time opposed his retainer's belief in the Lotus Sutra and even harassed him by, for example, threatening to transfer him to a

remote province unless he abandoned his faith. Kingo's fellow samurai also treated him with hostility, and for a time it appeared that he might be ousted from the clan and lose his livelihood altogether. Kingo endured several years of

adversity until finally, in 1277, his circumstances changed for the better. This improvement came about partially because in his capacity as a physician he was able to cure Lord Ema of a serious illness. Around the first month of 1278 he was permitted to accompany his lord on official errands. And in the tenth month, when this letter was written, Kingo was granted no less than three new fiefs.

From the content of this letter, however, it appears that he was not altogether pleased with what he had received. The new estates are thought to have been located on Sado Island or in some other remote area, which may have caused his dissatisfaction. In this letter, the Daishonin admonishes him against such feelings and urges him instead to appreciate the fact that circumstances are now improving.

Notes

1. The Daishonin is referring to the fact that, whenever Shijo Kingo was ordered to move to a new estate, he refused to comply because the proposed transfer was actually an unreasonable demotion.
2. An area located in Igara Village of Shimoina District in Shinano Province (present-day Nagano Prefecture) and held in fief by Shijo Kingo.
3. Details unknown. From the text, Ika-da appears to be located on Sado Island.

4. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. After the failed attempt to behead him at Tatsunokuchi, the Daishonin was held in custody at Homma Rokuro Saemon's estate at Echi for one month. On the tenth day of the tenth month he was taken to Sado Island.
5. These words are followed by the phrase "they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses."

The Drum at the Gate of Thunder



I HAVE received one thousand blue-duck coins, one *to* of dried rice, and other articles. The boy Virtue Victorious who offered a mud pie to the Buddha was reborn as King Ashoka, and an old woman who offered the Buddha rice gruel was reborn as a pratyekabuddha.¹

The Lotus Sutra is the teacher of all the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences. The Buddhas of the ten directions are the Buddha Good Virtue in the east, the Buddha Sorrow-Dispelling Virtue in the southeast, the Buddha Sandalwood Virtue in the south, the Buddha Giver of Treasure in the southwest, the Buddha Infinite Brightness in the west, the Buddha Flower Virtue in the northwest, the Buddha Banner-like Virtue in the north, the Buddha Three Vehicle Practice in the northeast, the Buddha Vast Myriad Virtue of the zenith, and the Buddha Brilliant Virtue of the nadir.²

The Buddhas of the three existences are the thousand Buddhas of the past Glorious Kalpa,³ the thousand Buddhas of the present Wise Kalpa,⁴ and the thousand Buddhas of the future Constellation Kalpa,⁵ as well as all the other Buddhas depicted in the Mahayana and Hinayana, provisional and true, and exoteric and esoteric sutras, including the Flower Garland, Lotus, and Nirvana sutras. These Buddhas, as well as

the bodhisattvas in the worlds of the ten directions who are as numerous as particles of dust, all originate from the single character *myo*, or wonderful, of the Lotus Sutra [Myoho-rence-kyo].

Therefore, the Universal Worthy Sutra, the epilogue to the Lotus Sutra, says, "A Buddha's three types of bodies are born from this correct and equal sutra." The term "correct and equal" derives from an Indian word⁶ and was translated in China as "great vehicle." Great vehicle, or Mahayana, is another name for the Lotus Sutra. The Agama sutras, when compared with non-Buddhist scriptures, are regarded as Mahayana sutras, or sutras of the great vehicle. Similarly, the Flower Garland, Wisdom, Mahavairochana, and other sutras, when compared with the Agama sutras, are defined as Mahayana sutras; but they in turn fall within the category of Hinayana sutras, or sutras of the lesser vehicle, when compared with the Lotus Sutra. As no sutra surpasses the Lotus, it is the one and only Mahayana sutra.

To illustrate, each ruler of the eighty-four thousand countries in the southern continent of Jambudvīpa is called a great king within his country. But when compared with a wheel-turning king, he is called a minor king. In like manner, each of the kings of the six heavens of the world of desire and of the four meditation heavens may be

called either a great king or a minor king, [depending on whom he is compared with]; but the great heavenly king Brahma, who resides at the top of the world of form, is the one great ruler who can never be called a minor king.

A Buddha is a child, and the Lotus Sutra, its parents. If the parents of a thousand children are praised, those thousand children will rejoice. If one makes offerings to the parents, one makes offerings to their thousand children as well. Those who make offerings to the Lotus Sutra will receive the same benefit as they would by making offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, because all the Buddhas of the ten directions originate from the single character *myō*. Suppose a lion has a hundred cubs. When the lion king sees its cubs attacked by other beasts or birds of prey, he roars; the hundred cubs will then feel emboldened, and the heads of those other beasts and birds of prey will be split into seven pieces. The Lotus Sutra is like the lion king, who rules over all other animals.

A woman who embraces the lion king of the Lotus Sutra never fears any of the beasts of hell or of the realms of hungry spirits and animals. All the offenses committed by a woman in her lifetime are like dry grass, and the single character *myō* of the Lotus Sutra is like a small spark. When a small spark is set to a large expanse of grass, not only the grass but also the big trees and large stones will all be consumed. Such is the power of the fire of wisdom in the single character *myō*. Not only will all offenses vanish, but they will become sources of benefit. This is what changing poison into amrita means. For example, black lacquer will turn white when white powder is added. A woman's offenses are like the lacquer, and the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, like the white powder.

When one dies, if one is destined to fall into hell, one's appearance will darken, and one's body will become as heavy as a stone that requires the strength of a thousand men to move. But in the case of a good person, even if she should be a woman seven or eight feet tall and of dark complexion, at the hour of death, her countenance will become pure and white, and her body will be as light as a goose feather and as soft and pliable as cotton.

It is a thousand *ri*⁷ across the sea and mountains from Sado Province to this province. You, as a woman, have held fast to your faith in the Lotus Sutra; and over the years you have repeatedly sent your husband here to visit me in your place. Surely the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions know of your devotion. For example, though the moon is forty thousand yojanas high in the heavens, its reflection appears instantly in a pond on earth; and the sound of the drum at the Gate of Thunder⁸ is immediately heard a thousand, ten thousand *ri* in the distance. Though you remain in Sado, your heart has come to this province.

The way of attaining Buddhahood is just like this. Though we live in the impure land, our hearts reside in the pure land of Eagle Peak. Merely seeing each other's face would in itself be insignificant. It is the heart that is important. Someday let us meet at Eagle Peak, where Shakyamuni Buddha dwells. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The nineteenth day of the intercalary tenth month in the first year of Koan (1278)

Reply to the lay nun Sennichi

Background

This letter was written at Minobu to the lay nun Sennichi, the wife of Abutsu-bo, who lived on Sado Island. After Nichiren Daishonin left Kamakura for Mount Minobu, the lay nun's husband traveled all the way from Sado three times at least to visit him on her behalf.

In this letter, the Daishonin praises Sennichi for her sincerity in sending him offerings from so far away, and explains the benefits resulting from sincere offerings. Then he declares the Lotus Sutra to be the supreme teaching by revealing that all the Buddhas derive their enlightenment from it. Because the Lotus Sutra is the source of all Buddhas, he explains, the act of making offerings to the Lotus Sutra brings the same benefit as making offerings to all the Buddhas throughout the universe. He also says that the Lotus Sutra, ultimately the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, possesses the power to change poi-

son into medicine and is capable of transforming past offenses into sources of benefit and good fortune. The Daishonin goes on to discuss the moment of death, and encourages Sennichi, a woman advanced in years, to strengthen her faith in the Lotus Sutra even further.

In the last section, the Daishonin expresses admiration for Sennichi's faith and seeking mind that helped enable her husband to travel all the way from Sado to Minobu. Although the lay nun herself was unable to visit the Daishonin, he says to her, "Your heart has come to this province." Adding that "it is the heart that is important," he goes on to explain that believers in the Lotus Sutra, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, although dwelling in the mundane world, can enjoy supreme happiness without having to go elsewhere to find it.

Notes

1. This incident is said to have occurred when Shakyamuni Buddha, accompanied by his disciple Ananda, was begging in a Brahman city. An old woman offered rice gruel to the Buddha. Though the gruel had spoiled and smelled bad, because her intent was genuine, she was reborn a pratyekabuddha as a result of her sincerity.

2. These Buddhas of the ten directions are enumerated in *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*. However, since the expression "the Buddhas of the ten directions" is used here to indicate all Buddhas throughout the universe, these ten should be regarded as representing all the Buddhas in their respective directions.

3. One of the three kalpas, the Glorious Kalpa is the name of the past major kalpa. The present major kalpa is called the Wise Kalpa, and the next major kalpa, the Constellation Kalpa. Each major kalpa consists of four smaller kalpas—the kalpa of formation, the kalpa of continuance, the kalpa of decline, and the kalpa of disintegration. *The*

Record of the Three Thousand Buddhas of the Three Kalpas mentions the advent of a thousand Buddhas in succession, from the first, Flower Glow Buddha, to the last, Vishvabhu Buddha, in the Glorious Kalpa.

4. *Three Thousand Buddhas* says that in the Wise Kalpa a thousand Buddhas, from the first, Krakucchanda Buddha, to the last, Ruchika Buddha, will appear in succession.

5. *Three Thousand Buddhas* also refers to the advent in the Constellation Kalpa of a thousand Buddhas, beginning with Sunlight Buddha and ending with Sumeru Appearance Buddha.

6. The Indian or Sanskrit word is vaipulya. The vaipulya sutra literally means a sutra of great extension. In China it was translated as the "correct and equal" sutra or the "great vehicle" sutra. It is generally used to refer to Mahayana sutras but, in the quotation from the Universal Worthy Sutra here, indicates the Lotus Sutra. In this paragraph, the Daishonin gives the terms Mahayana (great vehicle) and Hinayana

(lesser vehicle) a flexible interpretation to indicate successive levels of comparison.

7. "A thousand *ri*" here simply indicates a very long distance.

8. A gate located at Hui-chi in Shao-

hsing of Chekiang Province in China. The sound of the drum from this place was said to reach all the way to the distant capital of Lo-yang.

General Stone Tiger



ON the twenty-second of this month I received all that you sent me from Shinano—three thousand coins, a sack of polished rice, fifty slabs of rice cake, one large and one small bamboo container of sake, five strings of dried persimmons, and ten pomegranates, as well as the list of items you enclosed with these offerings.

A sovereign is supported by the people, and they in turn live under his protection. Clothes protect us from a change of temperature, and food sustains us, just as oil keeps a fire burning and water enables fish to live. Birds nest high in the trees in fear that human beings will harm them, but they come down to feed and are caught in snares. Fish dwelling in the depths of the water fear that it is too shallow and dig holes to hide in, yet lured by bait, they take the hook. No treasure possessed by human beings is more precious than food and drink, clothing and medicine.

I am not as healthy as others, and in addition, I dwell in this remote mountain forest. This year was especially difficult, with widespread epidemics and famine in spring and summer, which worsened in autumn and winter. My sickness grew worse again, too, but you gave me various medicines and a quilted robe. Thanks to your remedies, I improved steadily; I have now recov-

ered and feel much better than before. *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* by Bodhisattva Maitreya and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna both state that, if one's illness is caused by fixed karma, even excellent medicine will turn to poison, but that, if one believes in the Lotus Sutra, poison will change into medicine. Although unworthy, I propagate the Lotus Sutra; hence heavenly devils have competed to deprive me of food. Understanding this, I have no complaint, but I believe that I survived this time only because Shakyamuni Buddha entered your body to help me.

So much for that. I was extremely concerned about your journey home last time, and I am overjoyed to hear that you have arrived safely in Kamakura. Such was my anxiety that I asked everyone who came here from Kamakura about you. One said that he had met you at Yumoto, another that he had encountered you farther on at Kozu, and when a third told me that he had seen you in Kamakura, I felt greatly relieved. From now on, you must not come to visit me in person unless absolutely necessary. When you have something urgent to tell me, send a messenger. Indeed, I was deeply worried about your last trip. An enemy will try to make you forget the danger so that he can attack. If you should

have to travel, do not begrudge the cost of a horse. Make sure that you ride a good horse. Bring along your best men to defend you against a surprise attack, and ride a horse that can easily carry you in your armor.

In the eighth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* and in the eighth volume of *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* it says, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods." This means that the protection of the gods depends on the strength of one's faith. The Lotus Sutra is a fine sword, but its might depends on the one who wields it.

Among those who propagate this sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who compares with Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Wonderful Sound, Manjushri, and Medicine King? Persons of the two vehicles [such as Shariputra] had destroyed all the illusions of thought and desire, thus freeing themselves from the six paths. Bodhisattvas [such as Perceiver of the World's Sounds] had eradicated forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance and were like the moon on the fourteenth night before it reaches fullness. Nevertheless, Shakyamuni Bud-

dha refused to entrust the mission of propagation to any of these people and gave it instead to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thus these bodhisattvas are the ones who had thoroughly forged their resolve.

The mighty warrior General Li Kuang, whose mother had been devoured by a tiger, shot an arrow at the stone he believed was the tiger. The arrow penetrated the stone all the way up to its feathers. But once he realized it was only a stone, he was unable to pierce it again. Later he came to be known as General Stone Tiger. This story applies to you. Though enemies lurk in wait for you, your resolute faith in the Lotus Sutra has forestalled great dangers before they could begin. Realizing this, you must strengthen your faith more than ever. It is impossible to say all I want to in one letter.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-second day of the intercalary tenth month in the first year of Koan (1278), cyclical sign *tsuchinoe-tora*

Reply to Shijo Saemon



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the intercalary tenth month of 1278 to Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon, commonly called Shijo Kingo. Kingo was accomplished in both the practice of medicine and the martial arts. For nearly the entire first half of 1278, Nichiren Daishonin had suffered from debilitating and chronic diarrhea. Evidently Kingo had sent the Daishonin various medicines that had helped alleviate his illness.

In the fall of 1277 a virulent epi-

demic swept Japan, and Kingo's lord became violently ill. Despite the lord's deep-seated antagonism toward the Daishonin's teachings, he turned to Kingo for help. Lord Ema was most grateful for Kingo's ministrations and rewarded him with an estate three times larger than the one he already had. Yet the Daishonin warns Kingo to be constantly on guard and to take particularly great care to protect himself from attack while traveling.

On Prolonging One's Life Span



THESE are two types of illness: minor and serious. Early treatment by a skilled physician can cure even serious illnesses, not to mention minor ones. Karma also may be divided into two categories: fixed and unfixed. Sincere repentance will eradicate even fixed karma, to say nothing of karma that is unfixed. The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa."¹ These words can be found in no other sutra. All the sacred teachings of Shakyamuni's lifetime are the golden words of the Thus Come One; for countless kalpas, they have never contained the slightest falsehood. The Lotus Sutra is the truth of all truths taught by the Buddha, for it includes his declaration of "honestly discarding expedient means."² Many Treasures Buddha confirmed the truth of the Lotus Sutra, and all the other Buddhas lent their tongues in testimony. How, then, could it be false? Moreover, this sutra contains the greatest of all secrets. It tells of a woman who suffers from illness in the last five-hundred-year period of the twenty-five hundred years following the Buddha's passing.

King Ajatashatru broke out in virulent sores all over his body on the fifteenth day of the second month of his fiftieth year. Not even the skills of the

great physician Jivaka were enough to cure him. It was fated that he would die on the seventh day of the third month and fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. All the pleasures of his fifty years suddenly vanished, and the sufferings of an entire lifetime were gathered into twenty-one days. His death was predetermined by his fixed karma. But then the Buddha reiterated the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, entitling it the Nirvana Sutra and conferring it on the king. The king immediately recovered from his illness, and the grave offenses that had burdened his heart vanished like dew-drops.

More than fifteen hundred years after the Buddha passed away, there lived a man [in China] called Ch'en Chen.³ It was prophesied that he would die at the age of fifty, but by following the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, he was able to prolong his life by fifteen years and lived to be sixty-five. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging also transformed his fixed karma and prolonged his life through his practice of the Lotus Sutra. The sutra says, "His life span was increased."⁴ The persons mentioned above were men, not women, but they prolonged their lives by practicing the Lotus Sutra. Ch'en Chen lived before the last five-hundred-year period, so his change of karma was as extraordinary as

rice ripening in winter or chrysanthemums blossoming in summer. In this age, it is as natural for a woman to change her fixed karma by practicing the Lotus Sutra as it is for rice to ripen in fall or chrysanthemums to bloom in winter.

When I prayed for my mother, not only was her illness cured, but her life was prolonged by four years. Now you too have fallen ill, and as a woman, it is all the more timely for you to establish steadfast faith in the Lotus Sutra and to see what it will do for you. In addition, you can go to Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo], who is not only an excellent physician but a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Life is the most precious of all treasures. Even one extra day of life is worth more than ten million *ryo* of gold. The Lotus Sutra surpasses all the other sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime because of the "Life Span" chapter. The greatest prince in the land of Jambudvipa would be of less consequence than a blade of grass if he died in childhood. If he died young, even a person whose wisdom shone as brilliantly as the sun would be less than a living dog. So you must hasten to accumulate the treasure of faith and quickly conquer your illness.

I could ask Shijo Kingo on your behalf, but, while some people would prefer to be approached by an intermediary, others may feel it reflects a lack of earnestness on the part of the individual concerned. It is extremely difficult to fathom another person's mind. I have experienced such difficulties on several occasions. Shijo Kingo is one who would feel offended if the request came from anyone but the person directly concerned, so in his case, it would not be advisable for me to intercede. Just ask his assistance yourself,

frankly and sincerely, without an intermediary. When he came to see me in the tenth month of last year, he told me how grieved he was about your illness. He said that you were probably not overly concerned then because your illness was not yet serious, but that it would surely become critical by the first or second month of this year. His words deeply saddened me. He also said that Toki depends on you as a staff to lean on and a pillar for support. He was very concerned about you. He is a man who never gives in to defeat and who greatly values his friends.

If you are unwilling to make efforts to heal yourself, it will be very difficult to cure your illness. One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the major world system, so first you must muster sincere faith. This is the meaning of the passage in the seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra that states that burning a finger as an offering to the Buddha and the Lotus Sutra is better than donating all the treasures of the major world system.⁵ A single life is worth more than the major world system. You still have many years ahead of you, and moreover you have encountered the Lotus Sutra. If you live even one day longer, you can accumulate that much more benefit. How truly precious your life is!

Write down your name and age yourself and send your messenger with it to me so that I can pray to the gods of the sun and moon. Your son Iyo-bo⁶ is also extremely worried about you, so he will offer the recitation of the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter to those gods.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

Reply to the lay nun

Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter in 1279 to the lay nun Toki, the wife of Toki Jonin, whom she had married after her first husband died. When Toki Jonin became a lay priest, she became a lay nun, calling herself Myojo (Wonderful Eternity).

This letter explains the principle of changing karma or destiny. Buddhism characterizes karma as either fixed or unfixed, depending on whether the time when one is to receive the reward or retribution from that karma is fixed. Both types may be either good or bad. Unfixed karma has a weaker influence and can be overridden through simple effort. Fixed karma is more deeply rooted and harder to change. It is the

determining force of the basic tendency of one's life. Fixed karma may also be interpreted as karma whose effects are destined to appear at a fixed time (Ajatashatru, for example, was destined to die on the seventh day of the third month).

While Buddhist scriptures describe a variety of causes of karma, the Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that the deepest causes are one's support or slander of the Mystic Law. These causes lie deep within one's life, beyond the ability to sense or conceive. Nevertheless, *On Prolonging One's Life Span* asserts positively that strong faith and sincere repentance can change even fixed karma.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.
2. Ibid., chap. 2.
3. Ch'en Chen (n.d.) was an elder brother of T'ien-t'ai and a general of the Ch'en dynasty.
4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20.
5. This statement is based on a passage

in chapter 23 of the Lotus Sutra.

6. Iyo-bo is another name for Nitcho (1252–1317), one of the Daishonin's six senior priest-disciples. He was either Toki Jonin's adopted son or his wife's son by her first husband.

The One-eyed Turtle and the Floating Log



THE “Peaceful Practices” chapter in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “Manjushri, as for this Lotus Sutra, throughout immeasurable numbers of lands one cannot even hear its name.”

This passage means that we living beings, transmigrating through the six paths of the threefold world, have been born sometimes in the world of heavenly beings, other times in the world of human beings, and still other times in the worlds of hell, hungry spirits, and animals. Thus we have been born in immeasurable numbers of lands where we have undergone innumerable sufferings and occasionally enjoyed pleasures, but have never once been born in a land where the Lotus Sutra has spread. Or even if we happened to have been born in such a land, we did not chant *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. We never dreamed of chanting it, nor did we ever hear others chant it.

To illustrate the extreme rarity of encountering this sutra, the Buddha likened it to the difficulty of a one-eyed turtle encountering a floating sandalwood log with a hollow in it. The essence of this analogy is as follows. Eighty thousand *yojanas* down, on the bottom of the ocean, lives a large sea-creature called a turtle. He has neither limbs nor flippers. His belly is as hot as heated iron, but the shell on his back

is as cold as the Snow Mountains. What this turtle yearns for day and night, morning and evening—the desire he utters at each moment—is to cool his belly and warm the shell on his back.

The red sandalwood tree is regarded as sacred and is like a sage among people. All other trees are regarded as ordinary trees and are like foolish people. The wood of this sandalwood tree has the power to cool the turtle’s belly. The turtle longs with all his might to climb onto a sandalwood log and place his belly in a hollow there in order to cool it, while exposing the shell on his back to the sun in order to warm it. According to the laws of nature, however, he can rise to the ocean’s surface once every thousand years. But even then it is difficult for him to find a sandalwood log. The ocean is vast, while the turtle is small, and floating logs are few. Even if he finds some floating logs, he seldom encounters one of sandalwood. And even when he is fortunate enough to find a sandalwood log, it rarely has a hollow the size of his belly. If [the hollow is too large and] he falls into it, he cannot warm the shell on his back, and no one will be there to pull him out. If the hollow is too small and he cannot place his belly in it, the waves will wash him away, and he will sink back to the ocean’s floor.

Even when, against all odds, the turtle comes across a floating sandalwood log with a hollow of the right size, having only one eye, his vision is distorted, and he sees the log as drifting eastward when it is actually drifting westward. Thus the harder he swims in his hurry to climb onto the log, the farther away he goes. When it drifts eastward, he sees it as drifting westward, and in the same way, he mistakes south for north. Thus he always moves away from the log, never approaches it.

In this way, the Buddha explained how difficult it is for a one-eyed turtle to find a floating sandalwood log with a suitable hollow, even after immeasurable, boundless kalpas. He employed this analogy to illustrate the rarity of encountering the Lotus Sutra. One should be aware, however, that, even if one should encounter the floating sandalwood log of the Lotus Sutra, it is rarer still to find the hollow of the Mystic Law of the daimoku, which is difficult to chant.

The ocean represents the sea of the sufferings of birth and death, and the turtle symbolizes us living beings. His limbless state indicates that we are poorly endowed with roots of goodness. The heat of his belly represents the eight hot hells of anger and resentment, and the cold of the shell on his back, the eight cold hells of covetousness and greed. His remaining at the bottom of the ocean for a thousand years means that we fall into the three evil paths and find it hard to emerge. His rising to the surface once every thousand years illustrates how difficult it is to be born as a human being from the three evil paths once in immeasurable kalpas at a time when Shakyamuni Buddha has appeared in the world.

Other floating logs, such as those of pine or cypress, are easy to find, but a sandalwood log is difficult to encounter. This illustrates that it is easy

to encounter all the other sutras, but difficult to encounter the Lotus Sutra. And even if the turtle should come across a floating sandalwood log, finding one with a suitable hollow is difficult. This means that, even if one should encounter the Lotus Sutra, it is difficult to chant the five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that are its essence.

The turtle mistakes east for west and north for south. Similarly, though we flaunt our knowledge and act as if we were wise, we ordinary people regard superior teachings as inferior and inferior teachings as superior. We regard powerless teachings as ones that lead to enlightenment, and declare teachings inappropriate for the people's capacity to be appropriate for them. Thus we believe that the teaching of the True Word school is superior and the Lotus Sutra is inferior, and that the former suits the people's capacity, but the latter does not.

So consider well what I have just related. The Buddha made his advent in India and preached various sacred teachings during his lifetime. In his forty-third year of preaching he began to expound the Lotus Sutra. For eight years thereafter, all his disciples embraced the Lotus Sutra, which is like a wish-granting jewel. But Japan is separated from India by two hundred thousand *ri* of mountains and seas, so that the people here could not even hear the name of the Lotus Sutra.

Twelve hundred and more years after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra had been brought to China, but still had not been transmitted to Japan. Fifteen hundred and more years after his passing, Buddhism was introduced for the first time to Japan from the Korean kingdom of Paekche during the reign of Emperor Kimmei, Japan's thirtieth ruler. Moreover, in the seven hundred years that have passed since Prince Jogu first had Buddhism intro-

duced from China, the Lotus Sutra and all the other sutras have been propagated widely, so that, from the ruler on down to the common people, those who are perceptive have come to embrace either the entirety, one volume, or one chapter of the Lotus Sutra in order to repay their debt to their parents. Thus they believe that they are truly embracing the Lotus Sutra. But they have never chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo aloud, and though they appear to believe in the Lotus Sutra, in fact, they are far from believing in it.

It is as if the one-eyed turtle, having found the sacred sandalwood that is difficult to encounter, were to fail to put his belly into the hollow. If he were to fail to do so, he would have encountered the sandalwood to no purpose, and he would instantly sink back to the bottom of the ocean.

In these more than seven hundred years, the Lotus Sutra has spread widely in our country, and those who read, teach, make offerings to, or embrace this sutra are more numerous than rice and hemp seedlings or bamboo plants and rushes. None of them, however, ever chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in the same way that they call on the name of the Buddha Amida, nor do any of them urge others to chant it. To read the various sutras or call upon the names of the various Buddhas is like the turtle encountering a log of ordinary wood. As long as it is not sandalwood, it fails to cool the turtle's belly. As long as it is not the sun, it fails to warm the shell on his back. Such teachings merely please the eye and gladden the heart, but bring no benefit. They are like plants that blossom but bear no fruit, or words that are never put into practice.

I alone first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in Japan. In the more than twenty years since the summer of the fifth year of the Kencho era (1253),¹ I alone have been chanting Nam-myoho-

enge-kyo day and night, morning and evening. Those who chant the Nembutsu number ten million. I have no support from anyone in authority, while the allies of the Nembutsu have power and are of noble birth. However, when a lion roars all the other beasts are silenced, and a dog is terrified by a tiger's shadow. When the sun rises in the eastern sky, the light of all the stars fades completely.

The invocation of Amida Buddha's name has exerted influence where the Lotus Sutra has not spread. But once the invocation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo has been raised, the Nembutsu will become like a dog cowering before a lion, or the light of the stars paling before the sun. The daimoku and the Nembutsu are as unlike as a hawk and a pheasant. That is why the four kinds of Buddhists all view me with jealousy, and why everyone, both high and low, feels hatred for me. Those who make groundless accusations against me fill the country, and the wicked abound in the land. Therefore, people choose what is inferior and detest what is superior. It is as though one were to assert that a dog is braver than a lion, or that the stars appear brighter than the sun. Thus my bad reputation as a man of erroneous views has spread far and wide, so that in one way or another I have been falsely accused, vilified, attacked by swords and staves, and exiled repeatedly. All these persecutions coincide perfectly with the passage in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra.² For that reason, tears spring to my eyes and joy fills my entire body.

Here I have neither clothing sufficient to cover my body nor provisions enough to survive. I live like Su Wu, who sustained himself by eating snow while he lived among the northern barbarians, or like Po I, who subsisted on ferns while living on Mount Shouyang. Who other than my parents would trouble to visit me in such a

place? Were it not for the protection of the three treasures, how could I sustain my life for a single day, or even for a moment? I can only marvel that you so frequently send a messenger to me, when we have never even met. The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra states that Shakyamuni Buddha will assume the form of an ordinary person in order to make offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra.³ Could it be that Shakyamuni Buddha has entered your body, or were your roots of goodness from the past aroused?

A woman known as the dragon

king's daughter achieved Buddhahood through faith in the Lotus Sutra; she therefore pledged to protect women who embrace this sutra in the latter age. Could it be that you are related to her? How admirable!

Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the third month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*

Reply to the wife of the late Matsuno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to the wife of the late lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon who lived at Matsuno in Ihara District of Suruga Province. Their daughter had married Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, and gave birth to nine children, among them Nanjo Tokimitsu. The lay priest and his wife are thought to have been converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism through their relationship with the Nanjo family. Matsuno Rokuro Saemon died in 1278, the year before this letter was written.

At that time, disasters were frequent, and in particular, the famine that persisted through the autumn and winter of 1278 created untold misery. Despite this hardship, however, Matsuno's wife made frequent offerings to the Daishonin. She appears to have done so even though she had not met him personally, and she continued to serve him in this way after her husband's death. In praise of her sincere faith the Daishonin says, "Could it be that Shakyamuni Buddha has entered your body, or were your roots of goodness from the past aroused?"

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin

first cites a passage from the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which states how difficult it is to encounter the Lotus Sutra. Then he relates the story of the one-eyed turtle. The Daishonin elaborates on the story, explaining in detail the difficulty of a one-eyed turtle finding a floating piece of sandalwood with a hollow in it the turtle can fit into perfectly. Through this story, he shows how rare it is to meet the Lotus Sutra, and even more so to encounter the Law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo that is the sutra's essence.

Next the Daishonin traces the introduction of the Lotus Sutra from India to China and then to Japan. Although many people in Japan claim to embrace the Lotus, he says, "None of them, however, ever chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo . . . nor do any of them urge others to chant it." Thus, although people think that they believe in the Lotus Sutra, they do not embrace it correctly.

The final part of this letter refers to the Daishonin's tenacious struggles during the more than twenty years since he first proclaimed Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

renge-kyo. The Daishonin himself underwent all the persecutions that the Lotus Sutra says its votary in the Latter Day will face. Few people made any attempt to understand his teachings and many harassed him in various ways. This opposition, however, served only to

strengthen his conviction that he was indeed the votary of the Lotus Sutra, whose activities are predicted in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter. The letter concludes with praise for the sincerity of Matsuno’s wife.

Notes

1. Nichiren Daishonin chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the first time at Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month, 1253, thus proclaiming the establishment of his teaching. According to the lunar calendar, the fourth month is the first month of summer.

2. The “passage in the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra” refers here to a passage from the verse section of the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter that predicts that the votaries of the Lotus Sutra will face the three powerful enemies.

3. This is based on a passage in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter.

Persecution by Sword and Staff



THE greatest of all the persecutions that I have suffered were the attempted beheading at Tatsunokuchi and the attack at Tojo.¹ None of the others were direct attempts on my life. I have been reviled, denounced, ousted, falsely accused, and struck across the face, but these were all comparatively minor incidents. I, Nichiren, am the only person in Japan to be abused in both body and mind [on account of the Lotus Sutra]. If anyone else has been slandered as I have, it was not because of the Lotus Sutra. One incident in particular I can never forget is how Sho-bo² seized the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra and struck me across the face with it. His attack on me stemmed from the three poisons.

Once in India there was a jealous woman³ who hated her husband so much that she smashed everything in the house. Her excessive rage completely altered her appearance; her eyes blazed like the sun and moon, and her mouth seemed to belch fire. She looked exactly like a blue or red demon.⁴ She seized the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra, which her husband had been reciting for some years, and trampled it savagely with both feet. Later she died and fell into hell, all of her except for her feet. Though the wardens of hell tried to force them down by beating them with iron staves, her

feet remained outside of hell as a result of the relationship, albeit a reverse one, that they had formed with the Lotus Sutra by trampling on it. Sho-bo struck me in the face with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra because he hated me. Thus he too has formed a reverse relationship with this sutra.

One incident occurred in India, the other in Japan; one was perpetrated by a woman, and the other by a man; in one, a pair of feet committed the violence, and in the other, a pair of hands; one happened because of jealousy, and the other because of the Lotus Sutra. However, the same fifth scroll of the sutra was involved in both instances. The woman's feet did not enter hell, so why should Sho-bo's hands fall into the hell of incessant suffering? The woman, however, hated only her husband and not the Lotus Sutra itself, whereas Sho-bo hated both the Lotus Sutra and me, Nichiren. Therefore, his entire body will enter the hell of incessant suffering. As the sutra states, "When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell."⁵ There is no mention of his hands being spared. How pitiful, how truly pitiful! Eventually, however, he will meet me again and be able to gain the fruit of Buddhahood, just as the four kinds of believers who arrogantly persecuted Bodhisattva Never Dispar-

aging were ultimately saved by him.⁶

The fifth scroll contains the very heart of the Lotus Sutra, for it reveals that the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood in her present form. Devadatta represents the spiritual aspect of enlightenment, and the dragon king's daughter, the physical aspect. The principle of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form can be found nowhere else in the Buddha's entire lifetime of teachings. The Great Teacher Dengyo enumerated ten outstanding points in which the Lotus Sutra surpasses all others.⁷ One of them is the sutra's "superiority in leading people to attain Buddhahood in their present form." This is the most important doctrine of the Tendai school, and a section of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* is devoted to this teaching of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. It is also a point of controversy between the True Word and Tendai schools. The dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood through the power of the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattva Manjushri stated, "I constantly expounded the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law alone."⁸ The words "alone" and "constantly" are the core of this statement. However, *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* reads, "Only in the True Word teachings [can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form]." Which is one to accept, "only" or "alone"? The word "only" in the treatise must be an error [in translation].⁹

The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra states, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth." The Lotus Sutra reads, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."¹⁰ Many Treasures Buddha affirmed that only the Lotus Sutra enables one to attain Buddhahood in one's present form when he said, "All that you have expounded [in the Lotus Sutra] is the truth!"¹¹ No matter how firmly the

sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra guarantee the attainment of Buddhahood, and no matter how much the believers in these provisional doctrines may wildly insist that this is so, it is as easy to refute these assertions as it is to smash a thousand earthen cooking dishes with a single hammer. This is what is meant by the statement "The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines."¹² The Lotus Sutra is indeed the most profound teaching.

Ever since Jikaku, scholars of the Tendai school have interpreted the passages from the three major works—*The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *Words and Phrases*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*—in one way or another, and have given plausible explanations. Their views, however, are as useless to us now as last year's calendar or yesterday's meal. You should pay no attention to a person who says that in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law there exists a way to enlightenment apart from the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, even if this were the Buddha's teaching. How much more so if it was the opinion of some teacher. The "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra states that Devadatta was the teacher of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni in some past existence. He who was once the teacher is now the disciple, and he who is now the disciple was formerly the teacher. In pondering this chapter, I, Nichiren, have realized that it reveals the profound meaning of the Lotus Sutra through the oneness of past and present, and the inseparability of the one who teaches and the one who learns. Therefore, the merciful Thus Come One Shakyamuni became the teacher of the wicked Devadatta, and the wise Manjushri became the teacher of the ignorant daughter of the dragon king. Certainly I can in no way be inferior to Manjushri or to the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. The men of Japan are

like Devadatta, and the women are like the dragon king's daughter. Whether by following it or opposing it, they will attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. This is the message of the "Devadatta" chapter.

Next, we come to the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter. Only I, Nichiren, have read with my entire being the twenty-line verse from this chapter, which the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas proclaimed in a single voice. Since the Buddha's passing, who else in the three countries of India, China, and Japan has ever read this verse as I have? No one even claims to have done so, nor do I believe that anyone has. The verse reads, "[There will be many ignorant people who will . . .] attack us with swords and staves." Perhaps others have been beaten with staves, but I have never heard of any who were injured by the sword.

We know that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was attacked with staves, as is written in the sutra, "Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones [and beat and pelt him]," but he was not persecuted by the sword. T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo also escaped persecution by sword and staff, as the sutra states, "Swords and staves will not touch him."¹³ I, Nichiren, have met with persecution by both sword and staff. As I mentioned before, I was attacked with a sword at Matsubara¹⁴ in Tojo and later at Tatsunokuchi. No one else has met with such persecution [for the sake of the Lotus Sutra] even once, but I have met with it twice. As for being attacked with staves, I have already been struck in the face by Sho-bo with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra. The fifth scroll was used as a staff to strike me, and it is this very scroll that carries the passage that [votaries of the Lotus Sutra] will be attacked with staves. What a mysterious passage of prediction! Sho-

bo hit me before dozens of people, and, though I knew it was for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, being an ordinary person, I felt miserable and ashamed. Had I had the strength, I would have wrestled it from him, trampled on and broken it, and thrown it away. However, it was in fact the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra.

This brings to mind a story.¹⁵ A father, anxious about his son's future, thrashed the boy with a bow made of zelkova wood because he refused to study. At the time, the son resented his father's action and hated the zelkova bow. However, he applied himself to his studies so much that eventually he [mastered Buddhism], thereby achieving emancipation himself and benefiting others. In retrospect, he saw that he owed his achievements to his father's thrashings. It is said that he erected a memorial tablet made from a zelkova tree for the repose of his deceased father.

It is the same with me. When I attain Buddhahood, how will I be able to forget my obligation to Sho-bo? Much less can I forget the thanks I owe to the scroll of the Lotus Sutra [with which he struck me]. When I think of this, I cannot restrain my tears of gratitude.

The "Emerging from the Earth" chapter also explains something about me, because it states that Bodhisattva Superior Practices and his followers will appear in the Latter Day of the Law to propagate the five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I, Nichiren, have appeared earlier than anyone else. How reassuring to think that I will no doubt be praised by bodhisattvas equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers! Be that as it may, commit yourself to the Lotus Sutra and have faith in its teachings. You must not only believe in them yourself, but also encourage others to do the same, so that you may save those who were

your parents in all your past existences.

From the time that I was born until today, I have never known a moment's ease; I have thought only of propagating the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra. I do not know how long I or anyone else may live, but without fail, I will be with you at the time of your death and guide you from this life to the next. All the Buddhas of the past, present, and future attain enlightenment during the hours of the ox and the tiger.¹⁶ In all three countries of India, China, and Japan, the place of Buddhist prayer is located to the northeast, in the direction of the demon gate.¹⁷ These are profound teachings of Buddhism, which are reverently transferred from teacher

to disciple. I will explain in more detail later.

With my deep respect.

As you crave food when hungry, seek water when thirsty, long to see a lover, beg for medicine when ill, or as a beautiful woman desires powder and rouge, so should you put your faith in the Lotus Sutra. If you do not, you will regret it later.

Nichiren

The twentieth day of the fourth month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*

Reply to Ueno



Background

This letter was written to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province, in the fourth month of 1279. The Daishonin's life at Minobu was entering upon its fifth year; Nikko Shonin was actively propagating the teaching in the Atsuhara area near Mount Fuji in Suruga.

In the body of this letter, Nichiren Daishonin explains the significance of the chapters, from the "Devadatta" (twelfth) through the "Emerging from the Earth" (fifteenth), contained in the fifth volume or scroll of the Lotus Sutra, in terms of his own enlightenment. He reveals the profound meaning of the persecutions "with swords and staves" that befell him, particularly when he

was struck with the fifth scroll of the Lotus Sutra just before the attempted execution at Tatsunokuchi. The "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) chapter, especially the twenty-line verse section, enumerates the types of persecutions that votaries of the Lotus Sutra will undergo in the fearful latter age after Shakyamuni Buddha's passing. Nichiren Daishonin declares that only he has lived out this chapter's predictions, thus identifying himself as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. By citing the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, the Daishonin equates himself with Bodhisattva Superior Practices, and also hints at his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

Notes

1. Tatsunokuchi was the name of the execution grounds in Kamakura where the deputy chief of military and police affairs, Hei no Saemon, attempted to behead the Daishonin in 1271. The attack at Tojo refers to the Komatsubara Persecution. On the

eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1264, the Daishonin was ambushed by Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of Tojo Village in Awa, and his men. He received a sword cut on his forehead and had his hand broken.

2. Sho-bo is a title indicating the deputy

or vice chief of a government ministry, and it is surmised that there were several individuals of the same title. Here reference is to a Sho-bo who was originally a follower of the Daishonin's teachings, but later abandoned his faith. When Hei no Saemon went to arrest the Daishonin on the twelfth day of the ninth month, 1271, he accompanied him as his retainer. The fifth scroll or volume, wrapped around a wooden staff, includes four chapters, from the twelfth through the fifteenth. Included therein is the so-called twenty-line verse section of the "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) chapter, which states that votaries of the Lotus Sutra will be attacked with swords and staves.

3. The source of this story is not known. A somewhat similar story, but involving a Chinese woman, appears in *The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions*.

4. A blue or red demon refers to the demons that punish the denizens of hell.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

6. This story is found in the "Never Disparaging" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging practiced the Lotus Sutra, and because of their slander of the sutra, the people—priests and nuns, laymen and laywomen—fell into the hell of incessant suffering. Eventually, however, due to the reverse relationship they had formed with the Lotus Sutra, they met Never Disparaging again and were able to attain enlightenment.

7. These are enumerated in the third volume of *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*. The following sentence refers to the eighth principle.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12. According to this chapter, the dragon king's daughter conceived the desire for enlightenment when she heard Bodhisattva Manjushri preach the

Lotus Sutra in the dragon king's palace. Later, she appeared before the assembly at Eagle Peak and attained enlightenment immediately, without changing her dragon form.

9. The Daishonin attributes this error to the translation of *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* done by Pu-k'ung of the True Word school. In *The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form*, the Daishonin asks if rejecting the above treatise does not amount to rejecting its author, Nagarjuna, and answers, "It is more likely that the translator distorted the meaning according to his personal views" (p. 1056). Obviously Nagarjuna could not have missed the Lotus Sutra's description of the dragon king's daughter attaining Buddhahood in her present form.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

11. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

12. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

14. This refers to what is now commonly known as Komatsubara.

15. The following story appears in *Tales from the Three Countries*. The son later became Ensho (883–967), a chief priest of Enryaku-ji.

16. The hours 1:00 to 5:00 A.M., which Buddhism traditionally regards as a crucial interval in which, according to Chinese tradition, life moves from the negative (yin) to the positive (yang), from sleep to waking, or from death to life.

17. The direction of the demon gate refers to the inauspicious direction, that is, northeast. In both Kyoto and Edo (now Tokyo) Buddhist temples were built to the northeast, the direction of the demon gate, to protect the cities against evil forces. Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, for instance, was built to the northeast of Kyoto.

The Teaching That Accords with the Buddha's Mind



YOU have kindly sent me three *koku* of rice. I immediately placed it as an offering before the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the single vehicle, and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo just once. I have done this so that your beloved son may “assuredly and without doubt”¹ be escorted to the pure land of Eagle Peak.

The nature of cause and effect is like the relationship of flower to fruit. Or it is like the case of a single flame, no bigger than the light of a firefly, which, when applied to a thousand-*ri* plain of dried grass, in the space of an instant burns first one blade of grass, then two, then ten, a hundred, a thousand, and ten thousand, so that the grass and trees over an area of ten or twenty *cho* are consumed all at once. A dragon who places one small drop of water in its claws and ascends to the heavens can cause rain to fall upon the major world system. When performed as an offering to the Lotus Sutra, even a small act of goodness produces benefits that are equal in magnitude to these.

One hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, there was a ruler in India known as Ashoka the Great, who reigned over one quarter of the eighty-four thousand states that make up the continent of Jambudvīpa. He was attended by the dragon kings and summoned the demons to serve him, and,

with sixty thousand arhats as his teachers, he vowed to erect eighty-four thousand stone stupas and make offerings of a hundred thousand million gold pieces to the Buddha. Such was the stature of this great ruler. But if we inquire as to what meritorious deeds from past existences allowed him to achieve such greatness, we find that he had done no more than offer a single mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha.²

Shakyamuni Buddha had an uncle named King Dronodana, and this king's son was known as Aniruddha. This prince was born with a bowl in his hand, and the bowl had rice in it. When the rice was eaten, more rice appeared in the bowl and kept on appearing, so that there was never a time when the bowl was empty of rice. As a result, when he was a child, the prince was given the name At Will, and through the power of the Lotus Sutra he became a Buddha known as the Thus Come One Universal Brightness.³ If we inquire what cause from a previous existence brought all this about, we find that it was because, in a time of famine, he offered a meal of millet to a monk who was a pratyekabuddha.⁴

If one can gain benefits such as these even from making an offering to a pratyekabuddha, then the benefits gained by giving alms to the votary of the Lotus Sutra are infinitely greater,

exceeding even those gained by making offerings to countless Buddhas.

Nichiren is an inhabitant of the country of Japan. Within the seven-thousand-yojana area that constitutes the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, there are eighty-four thousand states. Among these, there are sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, ten thousand small states, and countless smaller states scattered about like grains of millet. India is a major country, comprising five regions. In the midst of the ocean to the east of it there is a little island, which is the country of Japan. Japan is situated over a hundred thousand *ri* to the east of the central region of India.

During the thousand years following the passing of the Buddha, known as the Former Day of the Law, Buddhism remained within the confines of India and was not transmitted to other countries. But after the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law had ended and the world was fifteen years into the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism was transmitted to the land of China. Three hundred years after it was introduced to China, it was transmitted to the Korean kingdom of Paekche. And after it had been in Paekche for a hundred years and 1,415 years had elapsed since the passing of the Buddha, a bronze-gilt statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and copies of various scriptures were for the first time introduced to Japan in the reign of the thirtieth human sovereign, Emperor Kimmei.

Since that time, over seven hundred years have passed. The great collection of scriptures that has reached Japan during this period has increased to more than five thousand or seven thousand volumes, and the number of schools has grown to eight, nine, and then ten. In the country of Japan there are sixty-six provinces and two islands, over three thousand shrines dedicated to the gods, and over ten thousand

Buddhist temples. Half the men and women of the country are priests and nuns, and the Buddhist teachings flourish here in a manner that surpasses that of China and India.

But within the world of Buddhist teachings, various controversies have arisen. The adherents of the Pure Land school look upon Amida Buddha as their object of devotion, and the adherents of the True Word school worship the Thus Come One Mahavairocana, while the people of the Zen school, ignoring both sutras and Buddhas, take Bodhidharma as their object of devotion. As for the adherents of the other schools, they for the most part are influenced by and follow the Nembutsu proponents and the True Word advocates. And though they do not necessarily regard either of these schools as superior, they are swayed by the more powerful and influenced by the larger of the two, and hence take Amida Buddha as their principal object of devotion.

Rejecting Shakyamuni Buddha, who is the sovereign, teacher, and parent of our present world, they pray to escape to another world that is located a hundred thousand million worlds away and that belongs to Amida Buddha, a complete stranger. This Amida Buddha is neither our parent nor our sovereign nor our teacher, but merely a figure who, in a certain sutra, made forty-eight false vows. And yet foolish persons, believing these vows to be true, madly clang out a rhythm on bells and dance and leap about, reciting the name of Amida Buddha. But though they abandon the world of their parent in disgust, the messengers whom Amida Buddha has promised to send to welcome them do not appear, and they lose their way in the sky while in an intermediate state between death and rebirth. The karma that comes from slandering the Law pulls them downward, plunging them into the prison of

the three evil paths, where the fearful demon wardens of hell pounce upon them with delight, binding them and subjecting them to endless torments.

When, based on the sutras, I speak in general terms of such matters, only I, of all the 4,994,828 men and women in Japan, am thought strange, and the other 4,994,827 persons all regard me as their enemy. Strangely enough, they do not follow Shakyamuni, who is their sovereign, teacher, and parent. What is more, they curse and strike me, drive me away, and, by resorting to slander, cause me to be sentenced to exile or execution. It is the way of the world that the poor fawn upon the rich, the lowly revere the noble, and the few follow the many. So even those persons who chanced to put their faith in the Lotus Sutra are intimidated by society and fear others, and many of them fall into hell. This is most pitiful.

But, perhaps because of Nichiren's ignorant outlook or some past karma, when I read the statements that "the Lotus is the foremost,"⁵ that "among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand,"⁶ and that "I am the only person who can rescue and protect others,"⁷ I take them to be the golden words of the Thus Come One himself. They are not my own words at all.

The people of today, however, believe the pronouncements of their own teachers to be the golden words of the Thus Come One. Thus they place such pronouncements on the same level as the Lotus Sutra, considering the two to be of equal authority; or they regard these teachings as superior to the Lotus Sutra; or they reason that though their teacher's pronouncements are inferior they are well suited to the capacity of the people.

One should understand that, of the sacred teachings of the Thus Come

One, there are those that are preached "in accordance with the minds of others," and those that are preached "in accordance with the Thus Come One's own mind." Thus, when a parent yields to the will of his or her child, that is a case of the former. But when the child complies with the will of the parent, that is the latter. All the other sutras are examples of preaching in accordance with the minds of others, because, when expounding them, the Buddha adjusted himself to the minds of all other living beings. But the Lotus Sutra is an example of preaching in accordance with the Buddha's own mind, because in it the Buddha had all living beings comply with his own mind.

The various other sutras represent the teachings of the Buddha, but if one puts faith in them, then one is simply following the minds of ordinary people and will never be able to attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra is both the teaching of the Buddha and the embodiment of the Buddha wisdom. If one puts sincere faith in each character and brushstroke in it, then one will become a Buddha in one's present form. For example, a piece of white paper becomes black when dipped in black ink, and black lacquer turns white when white liquid is poured into it. Just as poison turns into medicine, so do ordinary individuals change into Buddhas. Accordingly we call it the wonderful Law.

And yet the people of today, of both high and low station, look with contempt upon Shakyamuni Buddha, their father in the present world, and instead revere Amida or Mahavairocana, strangers with whom they have no connection at all. In doing so, are they not lacking in filial piety? Are they not slanderers of the Law? When I say this, however, all the people of Japan join together in reviling me. And it is quite natural that they should, for the crooked piece of wood hates the

straightness of the inking line that marks it for cutting, and the dishonest man is not pleased with the honest administration of government.

During the reigns of the ninety-one human sovereigns of our country, there have been twenty-six persons who committed treason. Among them were men such as Prince Oyama and Oishi no Omaru, as well as Masakado, Sumitomo, and the Evil Minister of the Left.⁸ When these men concealed themselves in the mountain forests of Yoshino or of the Totsu River, or went into hiding in the waters around Tsukushi and Chinzei, the warriors in every nearby village and the natives of every island in the region set out to attack them. But the distinguished sages, as well as the priests, nuns, and women of the various mountains, temples, and shrines, did not regard them as their particular enemies. In the case of myself, however, men and women of high and low station, as well as nuns, priests, and distinguished sages, all look upon me as their particular enemy.

The reason is this: All people are concerned about their next lifetime, but the priests and nuns, who would appear to ponder more deeply about this than other men and women, in fact set aside the matter of rebirth in the pure land and merely act as guides in helping people get through this present lifetime. Wise persons and sages are also given to insisting that they are correct and superior to others, that they are heirs to the teachings of a certain founder, and that they have legitimate claim to a certain domain. They place great emphasis upon fame and personal gain, and give little thought to any kind of serious search for the way.

And so, when I, neither hesitating to speak out nor fearing others, tell them frankly that they are ignorant persons who have misunderstood the true meaning of the Buddhist teachings, and that they are slanderers of the Law;

when I deliver a sharp rebuke to them, mindful of the Thus Come One's golden words "You should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching"⁹ and trusting in the passage of scripture that reads, "We will be envoys of the World-Honored One, facing the assembly without fear";¹⁰ when I do this, censuring those who "suppose they have attained what they have not attained, being proud and boastful in heart,"¹¹ then how can they fail to turn upon me with hatred and jealousy?

Thus, throughout the seven reigns of the heavenly deities, the five reigns of the earthly deities, and the more than ninety reigns of the human sovereigns of Japan, no one can match me in the degree to which, for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, I am detested by the three types of enemies. It was no ordinary connection that led you to visit such a man, one who is hated by all persons of both high and low station. Perhaps it is because you were my parent in a previous existence or my brother sometime in the past that you were moved to visit me. Or perhaps it is because you established profound ties with the Lotus Sutra in the past, and the seeds that will lead you to become a Buddha have matured in this present age, that busy as you are in your capacity as a lay member of society you have found time from your public duties to give thought to me.

In addition, your journey from the province of Totomi to Mount Minobu here in the district of Hakiri in Kai Province is over three hundred *ri*, and the lodgings along the way must have been wretched. Ascending the ridges, you came out into the light of the sun or the moon, but descending into the ravines, you must have felt as though you were entering a pit. The currents in the rivers are as swift as an arrow, and the large stones carried along in them prevent men and horses from

crossing. Boats are as perilous as scraps of paper cast on the water. The men one encounters on such a journey are rough woodcutters, and the women are like female mountain demons. The trail is as narrow as a rope, and the trees are as dense as grass. What ties from past existences could have led you to pay me a visit in such a place as this? Shakyamuni Buddha must have led you by the hand, with Shakra as the horse you rode on, Brahma as your companion, and the sun and moon acting as your eyes along the way. Thank you,

thank you for your extraordinary efforts!

There are many other things I would like to say, but I have caught a cold and am feeling quite miserable, so I will end here.

Nichiren

The second day of the fifth month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*

Reply to Niike



Background

This letter, written at Minobu in the fifth month of 1279, was a message of thanks for the rice that a follower named Niike Saemon-no-jo had sent the Daishonin as an offering for the repose of his deceased son.

The details of Niike's life are not well known, though it is generally assumed that he lived in the village of Niike in Iwata District of Totomi Province and was a samurai who served the Kamakura shogunate. It also appears that he and his wife, the lay nun Niike, took faith in the Daishonin's teachings at the urging of Nikko Shonin, and that Nikko Shonin stayed at his residence for a short time during the Atsuhara Persecution.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin uses the examples of King Ashoka and Aniruddha to illustrate the great benefits that accrue to one who makes offerings to the Lotus Sutra. Next, he traces the transmission of Buddhism from India through China

and Korea to Japan, noting that Japan has become a slanderous country because all its people take Amida Buddha as their object of devotion and persecute the Daishonin when he attempts to correct their mistaken views.

The Daishonin then differentiates between those teachings wherein the Buddha speaks according to the varying capacities of the people and those teachings in which, irrespective of people's capacities, the Buddha reveals his enlightenment directly. He equates the former to those teachings of the Buddha expounded before the Lotus Sutra, and the latter to the Lotus Sutra. In conclusion, the Daishonin praises Niike for making the difficult and dangerous journey to visit him, even though he is hated throughout the country for his persistent criticism of the priests of erroneous schools, and assures his disciple that their connection must accordingly be truly profound.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21. The full passage reads: "Therefore a person of wisdom, hearing how keen are the benefits to be gained, after I have passed into extinction,

should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way."

2. According to *The Story of King Asho-*

ka, Ashoka made this offering to Shakyamuni Buddha as a sign of his respect in a previous existence, when he was a child named Virtue Victorious.

3. His enlightenment is prophesied in the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

4. This story is described in detail on p. 925.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 3. "But now this three-fold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others." This passage, including the section quoted in the text, refers to the three virtues—sovereign, teacher, and parent—of the Buddha.

8. The Evil Minister of the Left refers to Fujiwara no Yorinaga (1120–1156). A leading scholar and minister of the left, who, under the patronage of the Retired Emperor Toba, wielded great influence. He was called "Evil Minister of the Left" because of the excessively cruel and unforgiving attitude he displayed in the administration of his duties. He died of wounds sustained during an unsuccessful coup attempt led by him, known as the Hogen Disturbance.

9. Nirvana Sutra. The full passage reads: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching."

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

11. *Ibid.*

The Unmatched Blessings of the Law



I HAVE received a hundred bamboo shoots, followed afterward by an additional twenty.

The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law reads: "Even if a person were to fill the whole major world system with the seven treasures as an offering to the Buddha and the great bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas and arhats, the benefits gained by such a person cannot match those gained by accepting and upholding this Lotus Sutra, even just one four-line verse of it! The latter brings the most numerous blessings of all."¹ The tenth volume of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* states: "The statement that offering the seven kinds of treasures to the four types of sages² cannot equal upholding one verse [of the Lotus Sutra] indicates that the Law is the teacher of these sages. Nothing surpasses the Law in its ability to cause birth, nurturing, maturity, and prosperity. Therefore, the person is insignificant while the Law is supreme." The tenth volume of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* comments: "It is similar to the case of parents, who invariably protect their children through these four functions. To conceive a desire to seek the way through the power of the Law is to be born. To follow the Law from beginning to end is to be nurtured. To harvest the supreme fruit of Buddha-

hood is to reach maturity. To appear in various forms in the phenomenal world for the salvation of others is to prosper. Although these four stages differ from one another, they all take the Law as their basis."

What the Lotus Sutra, T'ien-t'ai, and Miao-lo intend to say is that the act of accepting and upholding or protecting and embracing one verse of the Lotus Sutra surpasses the act of making offerings to all living beings, of making offerings to arhats, or even of filling the entire major world system with the seven kinds of treasures as an offering to all Buddhas.

The sutra reads, "[The benefits gained by such a person] cannot match those gained by accepting and upholding this Lotus Sutra, even just one four-line verse of it! The latter brings the most numerous blessings of all." T'ien-t'ai states, "The person is insignificant while the Law is supreme." Miao-lo says, "Although these four stages differ from one another, they all take the Law as their basis." If we compare all the living beings of the nine worlds with the Buddha, then the good fortune of all living beings is as light as a single strand of hair, while the good fortune of the Buddha is as heavy as a huge mountain. And if the good fortune of all Buddhas is as light as Brahma's featherweight robe,³ then the good fortune of one character

of the Lotus Sutra is as weighty as the earth. The person in the phrase "the person is insignificant" is the Buddha; the Law that is supreme is the Lotus Sutra.

All the sutras preceding the Lotus Sutra and all the treatises based on them praise the blessings bestowed by the Buddha, and so are like the Buddha himself. The Lotus Sutra extols the blessings bestowed by the sutra, and therefore is like the father and mother of the Buddha. The inferiority of the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, and other sutras to the Lotus Sutra is like the difference in weight between a single strand of hair and a huge mountain, or between a featherweight robe and the earth. If we compare the lowest-ranking votary of the Lotus Sutra to the highest-ranking priests of the Flower Garland and True Word schools, the superiority of the former is like that of Shakra when compared to a monkey, or like that of a lion when compared to a hare.

When a subject declares himself king, it invariably costs him his life. When the practitioners of the other sutras claim to surpass the votary of the Lotus Sutra, the country will surely be ruined, and such persons will certainly fall into hell. When not confronted by enemies, one is free to speak as falsely and act as foolishly as one pleases. To illustrate, it is said that, before Sadamori and Yoriyoshi[†] appeared, Masakado and Sadato were able to govern their lands, and their wives and children were safe and secure. Without an opposing force to prevent them from doing so, the dew evaporates up into the sky and the rain falls to the earth. A strong wind, however, will blow the rain back into the sky, and the sunrise will bring the dew down to earth. Likewise, before Dengyo appeared, the six schools, including the Flower Gar-

land school, were like the dew [rising into the sky]. The True Word school is the same; therefore, you should understand that, once a strong enemy appears and attacks that school fiercely with the Lotus Sutra, the chief priest of Mount Hiei and the priests of To-ji and Omuro will all be like the dew at sunrise.

In the more than twenty-two hundred years since the Buddha's passing, no one has yet fully explained and spread the Lotus Sutra exactly as the sutra teaches. This is not to say that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo did not understand the truth of the sutra. But since the proper time had not yet arrived, and the capacity of the people was not suitable, they passed away without writing fully about it. Those who become Nichiren's disciples, however, can understand it without difficulty.

In the entire land of Jambudvipa, there has never before been a hall or pagoda that produced the image of Shakyamuni Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.⁵ How could such an image fail to appear now? An explanation would be lengthy, so I will stop here.

You have sent me 120 bamboo shoots, and the Lotus Sutra has appeared after over two thousand years. I have spoken of this matter because, while your gift may seem to be insignificant, your sincerity is indeed profound. Moreover, at the present time, because of farmwork and the building of the shrine, people have no spare time. Because your seeking mind is nonetheless so strong, I am certain that the Law has manifested itself to you.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eleventh day of the fifth month
Reply to Nishiyama

Background

This letter was written in the fifth month of the second year of Koan (1279) and sent in response to a gift of bamboo shoots received from a follower called the lay priest Nishiyama, who lived in the village of Nishiyama in Fuji District of Suruga Province. It appears that Nishiyama occasionally visited the Daishonin at Minobu, bringing gifts with him. A total of six extant letters are addressed to him, including this one, *Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain*, and *The Mongol Envoys*. It is generally thought that Nishiyama was the same person as Ouchi Tasaburo Taira no Yasukiyo, the steward of Nishiyama

Village, but another explanation holds that he was in fact a relative of this man.

Though this letter is quite short, it contains some important teachings. First, the Daishonin extols the benefits to be gained by upholding just one verse of the Lotus Sutra, explaining that they are superior even to those that accrue to one who presents the Buddha with enough of the seven kinds of treasures to fill an entire major world system. He then notes that he is propagating an unsurpassed Law that no one before him has spread.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.
2. The four types of sages refer to the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, and arhats.
3. Featherweight robe is the translation of the expression of “three-*shu* robe.” This expression often appears in Buddhist scriptures to indicate the robe of a heavenly being. *Shu* is a unit of weight, and three *shu* equals approximately one-tenth of an ounce.
4. Taira no Sadamori (n.d.) killed his

cousin Taira no Masakado (d. 940), when the latter rebelled against the imperial court. Minamoto no Yoriyoshi (n.d.), one of the leaders of the imperial army, defeated and killed Abe no Sadato (1019–1062), when he challenged imperial rule.

5. Here Shakyamuni Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter indicates Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō, or the Law implicit in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter.

On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion



I HAVE received one white quilted robe, one gray priest's robe, one surplice of the same color, and one thousand coins. I have no words to adequately express my gratitude for your long-standing devotion. I look forward to the day when we can meet and I can say all that is in my heart.

In your letter you asked: "You have told me that an object of devotion should be made of Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching, who attained enlightenment in the remote past, attended by the four bodhisattvas who sprang from the earth and who have been his disciples since that remote past. If this is correct, when is such an object of devotion to be established?"

To reply, more than two thousand years have already passed since the Buddha's demise. During this period, Buddhism has spread throughout the entire land of Jambudvīpa, especially in India, China, and Japan, to such an extent that monks are as numerous as rice and hemp plants, and doctrines as plentiful as bamboo and reeds. Not a single temple in those three countries, however, has ever made an object of devotion of Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching flanked by the bodhisattvas who are his original disciples. Such a thing has never been heard of before. Those who built the tens of thousands of temples in Japan did not

know that they should have made an object of devotion of the lord of teachings and his attendants in the essential teaching. Prince Jōgu founded Shintennō-ji, the first Buddhist temple in Japan, but he established as its object of devotion a statue of Amida Buddha, flanked by bodhisattvas such as Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and made images of the four heavenly kings. The Great Teacher Dengyō built Enryaku-ji temple, but he enshrined an image of the Buddha of the Eastern Region¹ in the main hall as the object of devotion. He made no object of devotion of the lord of teachings who attained enlightenment in the remote past and the attendants who have been with him since then. I have never heard of such an object of devotion in any of the seven major temples in Nara, let alone in the temples of the countryside.

Since I had doubts about the matter, I consulted passages of the Lotus Sutra, and they reveal why this object of devotion has not yet appeared. The sutra clearly states that it should not be established before the predicted age of quarrels and disputes² in the Latter Day of the Law. Those Buddhist scholars and teachers who appeared in this world during the Former and Middle Days of the Law did not establish this object of devotion because they honored the Buddha's prohibition. Had an object of

devotion of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who attained enlightenment in the remote past and his attendants ever been made during the Former and Middle Days, it would have been like the sun appearing at night or the moon shining during the day. Because Bodhisattva Superior Practices would certainly appear and establish this object of devotion in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day, those four ranks of scholars and teachers³ who appeared during the Former and Middle Days did not even describe it in words. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu knew of it in their hearts, but did not speak about it to others. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che also knew of it, but as he was a bodhisattva of the theoretical teaching,⁴ though he taught it in part, he did not expound its true meaning. He taught it indistinctly, like the cry of a cuckoo that one hears just before waking from a dream. Other Buddhist teachers did not say so much as a single word about it. For at Eagle Peak, Shakyamuni Buddha strictly prohibited those scholars and teachers who were bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, and who would appear during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, from disclosing prior to the Latter Day of the Law even indirectly anything about Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching, who attained enlightenment in the remote past, and the four Bodhisattvas of the Earth led by Superior Practices, who have accompanied him ever since.

Now that we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, an object of devotion should be made of the original Buddha flanked by his original attendants, since, according to the Buddha's golden words, this is the most appropriate time. Because this age corresponds to the predicted time, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear soon and establish an object of devotion of the four

bodhisattvas. Now is truly the proper time. That is why the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai longed for this age, saying, "In the last five-hundred-year period, the mystic way will spread and benefit humankind far into the future,"⁵ and why the Great Teacher Dengyo yearned for this time, saying, "The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people."⁶

From a mundane view, I am the poorest person in Japan, but in the light of Buddhism, I am the wealthiest person in all Jambudvīpa. When I consider that this is all because the time is right, I am overwhelmed with joy and cannot restrain my tears. It is impossible to repay my debt of gratitude to Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Perhaps even the rewards of the Buddha's twenty-four successors are inferior to mine, and even those of the great teachers such as T'ien-t'ai Chih-che and Dengyo cannot approach mine. That is because now is the time to establish the object of devotion of the four bodhisattvas.

Question: Have you any passages of proof that the four bodhisattvas should be established as an object of devotion?

Answer: The "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads, "Among these bodhisattvas were four leaders. The first was called Superior Practices, the second was called Boundless Practices, the third was called Pure Practices, and the fourth was called Firmly Established Practices."

Question: Are there any passages from the sutras that limit the establishment of this object of devotion to the last five-hundred-year period?

Answer: The "Medicine King" chapter reads, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad

widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off.”

You also mentioned in your letter that the people connected with Ōta Jomyō are apparently saying that the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sūtra can in no way lead to enlightenment. They are making a serious mistake. Remember this about the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sūtra: Which is shallow and which profound, which superior and which inferior, which lenient and which severe, and which subordinate and which primary must be judged in accordance with the time and the people’s capacity. There are three periods⁷ in which the sacred teachings of the Buddha’s lifetime should be propagated; the people’s capacity should be thought of in the same way.

In the first five hundred years of the Former Day of the Law following the Buddha’s passing, only Hinayana teachings spread, while in the next five hundred years, provisional Mahayana teachings spread. The thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law saw the rise of the theoretical teaching. In the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, only the essential teaching spreads, but even so, the theoretical teaching should not be discarded. Nowhere in the entire Lotus Sūtra do we find a passage suggesting that we should discard the first fourteen chapters, which comprise the theoretical teaching. When we distinguish between the theoretical and the essential teachings on the basis of the threefold classification of the entire body of the Buddha’s teachings, the pre-Lotus Sūtra teachings were to be spread in the Former Day, and the theoretical teaching, in the Middle Day, but the Latter Day is the time to propagate the essential teaching. In the present period the essential teaching is primary, while

the theoretical teaching is subordinate. But those who therefore discard the latter, saying it is not the way to enlightenment, and believe only in the former, have not yet understood the doctrine of Nichiren’s true intention. Theirs is a completely distorted view.

This doctrine concerning the theoretical and essential teachings is not my own [but was expounded by the Buddha]. Those who would distort it can only be possessed by the heavenly devil, or Papiyas, and will topple others along with themselves into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. How foolish they are! Teach this doctrine to others clearly as I have taught you these many years. Those who call themselves my disciples and practice the Lotus Sūtra should all practice as I do. If they do, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, Shakyamuni’s emanations throughout the ten directions, and the ten demon daughters will protect them. Yet, for all that, [some people associated with Ōta Jomyō distort the teaching]. I cannot fathom what could be in their minds.

The priest Nichigyo’s death⁸ was indeed pitiful. I recited the Lotus Sūtra and chanted Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō for him here in Minobu, sincerely praying to Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions to receive him on Eagle Peak. I have not yet recovered from my illness, so I have written only briefly. I will write to you again.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The seventeenth day of the fifth
month in the second year of Koan
(1279)

Reply to Toki



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Toki Jonin, a retainer of Lord Chiba, the constable of Shimosa Province.

The first part of this letter deals with a question Toki Jonin had asked about when the object of devotion composed of Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past, flanked by the four bodhisattvas, would be established. The Daishonin had referred to this object of devotion in *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, which he had addressed and sent to Toki in the fourth month of 1273. In this treatise the Daishonin describes the object of devotion as follows: “Myohorenge-kyo appears in the center of the tower with the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures seated to the right and left, and, flanking them, the four bodhisattvas, followers of Shakyamuni, led by Superior Practices” (p. 366), and “At this time the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear and establish in this country the object of devotion, foremost in Jambudvipa, that depicts Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching attending [the eternal Buddha]” (p. 376).

The object of devotion that the Daishonin describes in these quotations is the Gohonzon, on which Nam-myohorenge-kyo appears in the center, flanked by the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, who, in turn, are flanked by the four bodhisattvas. In *On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion*, however, the Daishonin refers to the Gohonzon as “an object of devotion should be made of Shakyamuni Buddha of the essential teaching,

who attained enlightenment in the remote past, attended by the four bodhisattvas who sprang from the earth and who have been his disciples since that remote past.”

Next, the Daishonin teaches that the Latter Day of the Law is the proper time to establish that object of devotion, and that the person who can establish it will appear without fail. In the light of Buddhism, he proceeds to say, he is the wealthiest person in the world. He makes this statement in terms of the time; that is, he has been born at exactly the time when the true object of devotion is to be established.

In the latter part of this letter, the Daishonin responds to news from Toki that some of the believers associated with Ota Jomyo have been saying that the theoretical teaching should be discarded. Apparently they thought that, since the theoretical teaching does not lead to enlightenment in the Latter Day, there was no need to recite the “Expedient Means” chapter. The Daishonin says that this is a serious misunderstanding, for the Lotus Sutra never repudiates the content of its first fourteen chapters. He explains that different teachings accord with different periods, and that the beginning of the Latter Day is the time when the essential teaching is to be spread. By this he means not the latter fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, but Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the essence of the “Life Span” chapter. In this letter, the Daishonin clearly indicates that both the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters should be read in prayer.

Notes

1. The Buddha of the Eastern Region is the Thus Come One Medicine Master.
2. The “predicted age of quarrels and disputes” refers to the last of the five five-

hundred-year periods following Shakyamuni Buddha’s death. In the Great Collection Sutra, the Buddha says, “Quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my

teachings, and the pure Law will become obscured and lost." This age corresponds to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.

3. The "four ranks of scholars and teachers" refers to the Buddhist leaders who embraced and propagated Buddhism after Shakyamuni's passing, and whom people could rely upon to lead them to enlightenment. The scholars included Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu; the teachers, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo.

4. T'ien-t'ai was regarded as the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King, the leader of the bodhisattvas who were taught by Shakyamuni as the historical Buddha born in India. This bodhisattva was entrusted with the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, but not with the essential teaching, which reveals Shakyamuni's original enlightenment. T'ien-t'ai expounded the doctrine of three thousand realms in a sin-

gle moment of life based on the theoretical teaching, which regards Shakyamuni's enlightenment as having occurred in India. He did not expound the doctrine based on the essential teaching, that is, the doctrine of the Buddha's eternally enlightened life.

5. *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.*

6. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

7. The Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law. These are three consecutive stages into which the time following a Buddha's death is divided.

8. Nichigyo was a disciple of the Daishonin, commonly known as Sammi-bo. Born in Shimosa Province, he was knowledgeable about Buddhism, but discarded his faith around the time of the Atsuhara Persecution. He died an untimely death.

Reply to the Wife of Matsuno



I AM deeply ashamed at having failed until now to respond to your gift of one chest of wheat, one basket of yams, one basket of melons, and various other items, which I received on the third day of the sixth month.

This place, the valley of Minobu, is located in the area of the three villages of Iino, Mimaki, and Hakiri of Kai Province, in the northwestern corner of the district of Hakiri. To the north, the peak of Mount Minobu pierces the heavens; to the south, Mount Takatori's crest merges with the clouds; to the east, Mount Tenshi rises as high as the sun; and to the west, great sheer mountains span across to the summit of Mount Shirane. The air above resounds with the screeching of monkeys, while the earth is filled with the chirring of cicadas.

I feel as if Eagle Peak in India had made its way here, or as if I were seeing Mount T'ien-t'ai in China right before my eyes. Although I am neither Shakyamuni Buddha nor the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, because each day I read the Lotus Sutra day and night and discuss *Great Concentration and Insight* morning and evening, this place is like the pure land of Eagle Peak and in no way different from Mount T'ien-t'ai.

Nevertheless, I am an ordinary person dependent on other things for my existence. If I were without clothes,

the wind would penetrate my body, and if I did not eat, my life could not be sustained. It would be like failing to replenish a lamp with oil, or failing to add wood to a fire. How could I continue to live? If my life should become difficult to maintain, if the provisions needed to sustain it were to be exhausted, in one to five days the voice that now reads and recites the Lotus Sutra would also be silenced, and weeds would grow up thick before the window from which discourses on *Great Concentration and Insight* are heard. Such are the conditions under which I live, but I wonder how you were able to perceive this.

Because a hare made offerings to a person walking about in exercise after meditation,¹ the heavenly lord Shakra took pity on it and placed it in the moon. Now, when we gaze up at the heavens, in the moon we see a hare.² In your position as a woman, you have made offerings to the Lotus Sutra in this defiled latter age. Therefore, the heavenly king Brahma will look after you with his divine eye, Shakra will press his palms together and pay obeisance to you, the earthly deities will delight in reverently holding up your feet, and Shakyamuni Buddha will extend his hand from Eagle Peak to pat your head. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twentieth day of the sixth

month in the second year of Koan
(1279), cyclical sign *tsuchimoto-u*

Reply to the wife of Matsuno



Background

Written in 1279, this letter was addressed to the wife of Matsuno Rokuro Saemon-no-jo, son of the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon.

Facts concerning Matsuno Rokuro Saemon-no-jo's wife, including her name, the dates of her birth and death, the province where she was born, and the identity of her parents, are unknown. She lived with her husband in the village of Matsuno in Ihara District

of Suruga Province. They are thought to have taken faith in the Daishonin's teachings at about the same time as her husband's father, although the exact year is not known. The two letters that the Daishonin addressed to her tell us that her gifts were varied and extremely thoughtful in content. She seemed to have taken great care to send items that would be especially useful to the Daishonin.

Notes

1. In ancient India, religious practitioners would often walk in circles around their place of meditation as a form of exercise. Shakyamuni and his followers engaged in this practice as well.

2. The original version of this story is found in *The Record of the Western Regions*. It tells of three friends—a fox, a hare, and a monkey—who lived in a densely forested area. One day, in order to test them, the heavenly lord Shakra appeared as an old man and asked them for food. After searching about, the fox brought back a fresh

carp, and the monkey returned with rare flowers and fruits. Only the hare returned empty-handed. He asked the fox and the monkey to prepare a fire. Then he flung his body into the fire, offering it to the old man. Moved by the hare's sincerity, the old man changed back to Shakra and said, "I will place the hare's body in the moon and convey his devotion to later generations." This story was used to explain the image of a hare that the people of ancient India saw in the moon.

King Rinda



I HAVE received the two sacks of parched rice you sent. Rice may seem like a very small thing, yet it is what sustains human life. And the Buddha says that life is something that cannot be purchased even for the price of an entire major world system.

Rice is what sustains life. It is like the oil that sustains the life of the lamp. The Lotus Sutra is a lamp, and its votary is the oil that sustains it. Or again, the lay supporters are the oil that sustains the lamp of the votary.

Among all the hundred flavors, the flavor of cow's milk is the finest. The seventh volume of the Nirvana Sutra says, "Of all flavors, the finest is that of milk." When milk is treated, it becomes cream, and when cream is treated, it eventually becomes ghee. Of the five flavors represented by this process, ghee is the finest.

If we employ these five flavors as similes for the various Buddhist teachings, we might say that the three thousand volumes of the Confucian school and the eighteen major scriptures of Brahmanism correspond to the flavors of ordinary foods. In comparison to these, even the Agama sutras are like the flavor of ghee.

[Among all the Buddhist teachings] the Agama sutras may be compared to the flavor of milk; the Meditation and the other sutras of the Correct and

Equal period may be compared to the flavor of cream; the Wisdom sutras may be compared to the flavor of curdled milk; the Flower Garland Sutra may be compared to the flavor of butter; and the Immeasurable Meanings, Lotus, and Nirvana sutras may be compared to the flavor of ghee.

Again, if the Nirvana Sutra is compared to the flavor of ghee, then the Lotus Sutra may be compared to a lord who rules over the five flavors. Thus the Great Teacher Miao-lo stated: "If we discuss the matter from the point of view of the doctrines taught, then the Lotus Sutra stands as the true lord of all the teachings, since it alone preaches 'opening the provisional and revealing the distant.' This is the reason that it alone is permitted the word *myō*, or 'wonderful' [in its title]." He also said, "Therefore, we understand that the Lotus Sutra is the true lord of the ghee."²

These passages of commentary point out quite rightly that the Lotus Sutra is not to be included among the five flavors. The main import of these passages is that the five flavors serve to nourish life, but life itself is lord over all the five flavors.

The T'ien-t'ai school puts forth two views on this matter. The first is that the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, Nirvana, and Lotus

sutras are all comparable to the flavor of ghee. This view would seem to be based on the opinion that the sutras preached previous to the Lotus Sutra and the Lotus Sutra itself are similar in nature. The scholars of the world are familiar only with this particular view, and are not familiar with the doctrine that the Lotus Sutra is the lord of the five flavors. Hence they are deceived and led astray by the other schools of Buddhism.

The view that, although the Lotus and other sutras differ with regard to whether or not they open up and incorporate the expedient means, they all represent the perfect teaching³—this is a doctrine that reflects the meaning of the theoretical teaching. However, the view that the various sutras mentioned above correspond to the five flavors, while the Lotus Sutra represents the lord of the five flavors—this is a doctrine that reflects the essential teaching. This doctrine was touched upon by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo in their writings, but it was not clearly enunciated. This is why there are few scholars who are aware of it.

In the passage of commentary by Miao-lo quoted above, the words "If we discuss the matter from the point of view of the doctrines taught" refer to the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra, which is what is meant by "the doctrines taught." The words "opening the provisional" correspond to the character *ge* in the five-character daimoku, Myoho-rence-kyo. The words "revealing the distant" correspond to the character *ren* in the five-character daimoku. The words "it alone is permitted the word *myo*" correspond to the character *myo*. And the words "This is the reason" refer to the fact that, when we speak of the Lotus Sutra as the essence of the lifetime teachings of the Buddha, we have in mind the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, one should understand that the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra repre-

sents the soul of all the sutras; it represents the eye of all the sutras.

The Lotus Sutra should by rights be employed in eye-opening ceremonies to ensure their effectiveness. But instead of that, the Mahavairochana and other sutras are employed in eye-opening ceremonies for all the various wooden or painted images of Buddhas. As a result, none of the Buddha images in the temples and pagodas of Japan, though their forms resemble that of the Buddha, are really Buddhas in mind. Rather they have the minds of ordinary beings who live in the nine worlds. The custom of revering ignorant teachers as though they were wise men began with this.

Such practices simply waste the funds of the nation; they do not produce effective prayers. On the contrary, the Buddhas are thereby transformed; they turn into devils and demons. This is what is causing distress to the ruler of the nation and the common people.

And now, because the votary of the Lotus Sutra and his lay supporters have appeared, people behave like the many kinds of ordinary beasts who hate the lion king, or like the plants and trees that tremble before the icy wind. But I will put that aside for now.

Why is the Lotus Sutra superior to other sutras? Why is it beneficial for living beings?

To illustrate, the plants and trees have the earth as their mother, the sky as their father, the sweet rains as their food, the wind as their spirit, and the sun and moon as their wet nurses, and in this way they grow to maturity, bring forth flowers, and bear fruit. In the same manner, all living beings have the true aspect [of all phenomena] as their earth, the aspect-free nature⁴ as their sky, the one vehicle as their sweet rain, and the pronouncement that the Lotus Sutra is foremost among all the sutras that the Buddha preached, now preaches, or will preach,⁵ as their great

wind. "Adorned with the power of meditation and wisdom"⁶ as their sun and moon, they nurture the blessings of perfect enlightenment, put forth the flowers of great pity and great compassion, and bear the fruit of peaceful Buddhahood. Such is the way that all living beings are nourished.

Then again, all living beings sustain life through the things they eat. There are many kinds of food. Some beings feed on dirt, some feed on water, some eat fire, and some eat wind. The insect called *kalakula* feeds on wind, while the creature called a mole feeds on dirt. Then there are some demons that eat human skin and flesh, bone and marrow, some that eat urine and dung, some that eat lives, and some that eat voices. There are fish that eat stones, and there is the *bakū*⁷ beast that eats iron. And the deities of the earth, the heavenly deities, the dragon gods, the gods of the sun and moon, the heavenly kings *Shakra* and *Brahma*, the beings of the two vehicles, the *bodhisattvas*, and the *Buddhas* taste and savor the Buddhist Law and make it their body and spirit.

Let me give another example. Once in the past there lived a great ruler named King Rinda, a worthy monarch who ruled over the entire land of *Jambudvīpa*. Now what was it that this king lived on? When he heard the sound of white horses neighing, his body would be nourished and thrive, and rested and serene in body and mind, he would rule over his kingdom. This occurred in the same way that the creatures called frogs listen to the cries of their mothers and are thus enabled to grow; that the autumn bush clover blooms when it hears the crying of the deer; that the ivory plant puts forth buds when it hears the sound of thunder; or that the pomegranate flourishes when it encounters a stone.

This being the case, King Rinda had gathered together and kept in his care a

number of white horses. And because these white horses would neigh only when they caught sight of white swans, he also gathered together a number of white swans, which he also kept in his care. As a result, not only did the king himself enjoy peace and tranquillity, but the hundreds of officials and the thousands of attendants who served him also prospered. Throughout the realm, the wind and rain came in their proper season, and other countries bowed their heads in submission. This situation continued for a number of years.

But, perhaps because of an error in his rule, or perhaps because the rewards accruing from his karma were exhausted, the thousands and ten thousands of white swans suddenly disappeared, and the countless white horses ceased their neighing. And because the king could no longer hear the neighing of the white horses, he was like a flower that wilts or the moon in eclipse. His skin changed color, his strength waned away, his six sense organs grew dull and clouded, and he became like a senile old man. His consort, too, became old and feeble. The hundreds of officials and the thousands of attendants lamented, not knowing what to do. The skies clouded over, the earth trembled, great winds and droughts appeared, and famines and pestilence occurred, until so many persons had died that their flesh piled up in mounds and their bones were like heaps of tiles. Moreover, the country was beset by attacks from other nations.

At this time the king, lamenting over what to do, concluded that the only recourse was to pray to the *Buddhas* and gods. From times past there had been believers in the non-Buddhist teachings in the kingdom, and they were numerous in many regions of the land. There were also many people who honored the teachings of the *Buddha* and regarded them as a treasure of the state. The king, declaring that he would honor the

teachings of whichever group was successful at attracting the white swans and causing the white horses to neigh, first commanded the non-Buddhist believers to try the effectiveness of their teachings. But though they carried out their efforts over several days, not a single white swan appeared, and the white horses failed to neigh.

Then the king ordered the non-Buddhists to cease their prayers and the Buddhists to make the attempt with theirs. At that time there was a young monk known as Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, or Horse Neigh. When he was summoned before the king, he said, "If Your Majesty will abolish the erroneous doctrines of the non-Buddhists throughout the kingdom and work to spread the teachings of the Buddha, it will be easy enough to make the horses neigh!"

The king issued an edict that this should be done. Then Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha addressed prayers to the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions, whereupon a white swan immediately appeared. When the white horses caught sight of the white swan, they whinnied in a single voice. No sooner had the king heard the single neigh of the horses than he opened his eyes. As two white swans, and then hundreds and thousands of them appeared, the hundreds and thousands of white horses were instantly filled with joy and began neighing. The king's complexion was restored to its original state, like the sun reemerging from an eclipse, and the strength of his body and the perceptive powers of his mind became many hundreds and thousands of times greater than they had been before. The consort was overjoyed, the great ministers and high officials took courage, the common people pressed their palms together in reverence, and the other countries bowed their heads.

The situation in the world today is no different from this. The period dur-

ing the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities, that is, the first twelve reigns in Japanese history, was like the kalpa of formation. The power of good fortune and the power derived from the keeping of the precepts that had been accumulated in previous existences were such that, although the people of the time made no great effort toward goodness, the country was still well governed, and people lived long lives.

Then came the period of human sovereigns. During the first twenty-nine reigns, the power derived from observing the precepts in past existences began to weaken. Government affairs proceeded poorly, and for the first time the country was visited by the three calamities and seven disasters. But because the texts describing how the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of antiquity had governed the world were introduced from China, these could be used in paying honor to the gods and overcoming the calamities and disasters that beset the nation.

When Emperor Kimmei, the thirtieth human sovereign, came to the throne, the power derived from good fortune and the observance of the precepts in past existences had further weakened in the country. There appeared many people whose minds were dominated by evil. Good minds were weakened, and evil minds prevailed. The teachings of the Confucian texts were so ineffectual, and the weight of people's offenses was so great, that as a result the Confucian texts were abandoned, and people turned instead to the Buddhist scriptures.

For example, Moriya paid honor to numerous gods who had appeared during the seven reigns of the heavenly deities and the five reigns of the earthly deities, praying that the Buddhist teachings would not spread, and that the Confucian texts would be honored as they had been before. Prince Sho-

toku, on the other hand, took Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, as his object of devotion, and adopted the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras as his scriptures. The two parties vied for supremacy, but in the end the gods were defeated, the Buddha emerged victorious, and just as had happened in India and China, the land of the gods for the first time became a land of the Buddha. The passage in the sutra that reads, "Now this threefold world is all my domain,"⁸ was in the process of being fulfilled.

During the twenty-some reigns from Emperor Kimmei to Emperor Kammu, a period of 260 or more years, the Buddha was looked up to as the sovereign, and the gods were regarded as his ministers. In this way the world was governed. But although the Buddhist teachings held a superior place and the gods an inferior one, the world was not well governed.

People began to question why this should be so; and in the reign of Emperor Kammu there appeared a sage known as the Great Teacher Dengyo who pondered over the problem. "The gods have been defeated, and the Buddha has emerged victorious," he asserted. "The Buddha is looked upon as the sovereign and the gods as his ministers; the relations between superior and inferior are correctly ordered in accordance with the rules of propriety, and therefore the nation should be well governed. How strange, then, that there is such unrest in the country! With this in mind, I began to examine all the sutras, and I realized that there is indeed a reason for such a state of affairs.

"The teachings of Buddhism have been guilty of a grave error. Among all the sutras, the Lotus Sutra ought to hold the position of sovereign, with the other sutras such as the Flower Garland, Larger Wisdom, Profound Secrets, and Agama sutras occupying the

position of minister or attendant or common person. And yet the Three Treatises school asserts that the Wisdom sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra, the Dharma Characteristics school holds that the Profound Secrets Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra, and the Flower Garland school holds that the Flower Garland Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra, while the Precepts school proclaims itself the mother of all the other schools. There is not a single votary of the Lotus Sutra, and those who do read and recite the Lotus Sutra have been, contrary to all expectations, derided and dismissed by the people of the world."⁹

He proclaimed that, because of this, heaven was angered, and the benevolent deities who would have guarded the nation found their powers weakened. And he declared that, even though people praise the Lotus Sutra, they destroy its heart.¹⁰

Then the priests of the seven major temples of Nara, of the fifteen great temples, and of all the temples and mountain monasteries throughout the country of Japan, hearing these words, were greatly incensed. "Mahadeva of India and the Taoist priests of China have appeared in our country!" they exclaimed. "They have taken on the form of this little monk known as Saicho! If anyone should encounter him, break his head in two and cut off his arms, beat him and curse him!"

But Emperor Kammu, being a worthy ruler, inquired into and clearly perceived the truth of the matter, and concluded that the six schools of Nara were in error. For the first time he established a temple on Mount Hiei, making it the headquarters of the Tendai Lotus school. And he not only founded an ordination platform for the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment, but declared the Lotus school to be superior to the six older schools connected with the seven ma-

lor temples of Nara and the fifteen great temples.

In effect, the six schools came to be regarded as mere expedient teachings leading to the Lotus Sutra. It was like the earlier instance in which the gods yielded to the Buddha and became mere doorkeepers of Buddhism. Something like the same situation prevailed in Japan. For the first time it was made clear in this country that, as the sutra says, "[Among those sutras] the Lotus is the foremost!"¹¹ A person who "is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person"¹² is the envoy of the Thus Come One, it declares, and for the first time such an envoy appeared in this country. For a period of twenty or more years during the reigns of the three emperors Kammu, Heizei, and Saga, throughout the entire country of Japan, everyone was a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.

But, just as the foul-smelling eranda tree exists in relation to the fragrant sandalwood, and just as Devadatta exists in relation to Shakyamuni, so at the same time as the Great Teacher Dengyo there appeared a sage known as the Great Teacher Kobo. He journeyed to China, studied the Mahavairochana Sutra and the teachings of the True Word school, and then returned to Japan.

While the Great Teacher Dengyo was still alive, Kobo did not forcefully assert his contention that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra. But after the Great Teacher Dengyo passed away on the fourth day of the sixth month in the thirteenth year of the Konin era (822), he apparently concluded that the time had come to do so. Thus, in the fourteenth year of the Konin era, on the nineteenth day of the first month, the Great Teacher Kobo produced a document in which he ranked the True Word teachings first, the teachings of the Flower Garland Sutra second, and those of the

Lotus Sutra third. He also asserted that the Lotus Sutra is a doctrine of childish theory, that Shakyamuni Buddha is in the region of darkness, and that the men of the Tendai school are thieves.

In this manner he attempted to deceive Emperor Saga by placing his own True Word school side by side with the seven older schools¹³ and asserting that the seven older schools represent mere expedient teachings, while the True Word school represents the ultimate truth.

In the period that followed, everyone throughout the country of Japan became a follower of the True Word school. In addition, a disciple of the Great Teacher Dengyo named Jikaku journeyed to China, where he made a thorough study of the secret doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools before returning to Japan. He wrote commentaries on two works, the Diamond Crown Sutra and the Susidhikara Sutra, and founded a temple called Zento-in on Mount Hiei. In his commentaries he asserted that the Mahavairochana Sutra should be ranked first and the Lotus Sutra second, and he put forth countless other erroneous statements, just as Kobo had done earlier. I have touched upon this matter somewhat in my earlier letters.

This eminent teacher was followed by another, the Great Teacher Chisho, who propagated his teachings from the temple known as Onjo-ji. Among all the temples today, this one appears to me to be causing the greatest damage to the nation.

Among the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei there were some who, if Jikaku and Chisho had not insisted upon the point, would never have acknowledged the superiority of the True Word teachings. But all of them had their mouths stopped and their minds deceived by Jikaku, also known as the Great Teacher Ennin, and no one was able to say a word in opposition.

Moreover, the support lent by the ruler and his ministers surpassed even what it had been in the time of Dengyo and Kobo, so that Mount Hiei, the seven temples of Nara, and indeed the whole country of Japan joined in declaring that the Lotus Sutra was inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. In the various temples where the Lotus Sutra had earlier been propagated, the teachings of the True Word school were now disseminated, and hailed as superior to the Lotus Sutra.

Four hundred years or more have passed since this situation developed. These erroneous opinions have continued to spread, and five sovereigns,¹⁴ from the eighty-first ruler of Japan to the eighty-fifth, have lost their thrones. Because the Buddhist way has fallen into decline, the way of the sovereign has likewise declined.

In addition, the major erroneous doctrine known as the Zen school and the minor erroneous doctrine called the Nembutsu school have joined the great evil doctrine called True Word, and these evil schools now stand side by side, holding sway over the entire country. The Sun Goddess has lost heart and no longer protects her charges; Great Bodhisattva Hachiman has been sapped of his power and authority and has ceased to guard and defend the nation. In the end we are doomed to become the prey of a foreign land.

I, Nichiren, viewing this state of affairs and fearful of the warning about one who "is betraying the Buddha's teaching,"¹⁵ and about one who "will fall into hell along with [those evil persons],"¹⁶ have attempted to inform the ruler of the nation of the general situation. But, led astray by erroneous doctrines, he refuses to believe me. On the contrary, he has become a deadly enemy.

Although I try to point out that this country is full of people who would like to do away with the Lotus Sutra,

no one understands me, and so they merely go on committing errors of foolishness. And now, in addition, a votary of the Lotus Sutra has made his appearance, so that the people of Japan, on top of their foolishness, give way to anger, favoring erroneous teachings and viewing the correct teaching with hatred. In a country where the three poisons [of greed, anger, and foolishness] prevail to such a degree, how can there be peace and stability?

In the kalpa of decline, the three major calamities will occur, namely, the calamities of fire, water, and wind. And in the kalpa of decrease, the three minor calamities will occur, namely, famine, pestilence, and warfare. Famine occurs as a result of greed, pestilence as a result of foolishness, and warfare as a result of anger.

At present the people of Japan number 4,994,828 men and women, all of them different persons but all alike infected by the three poisons. And these three poisons occur because of their relationship with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. So all of these people at the same moment set out to curse, attack, banish, and do away with Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is what leads to the appearance of the three minor calamities.

And now I wonder what karma from past existences has caused Nichiren and his associates to become the proponents of the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra? It seems to me that at present Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and all the major and minor gods of the 3,132 shrines throughout Japan are like King Rinda of past times, that the white horses are Nichiren, and the white swans are my followers. The neighing of the white horses is the sound of our voices chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. When Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly

kings, and the others hear this sound, how could they fail to take on a healthy color and shine with a brilliant light? How could they fail to guard and protect us? We should be firmly convinced of this!

In the memorial service held this last third month, you donated numerous strings of coins. As a result, this year we have been able to support over a hundred men at this mountain dwelling, and they are able to read and recite the Lotus Sutra and discuss its doctrines all day long. In this evil latter age, this represents the foremost Buddhist practice in all of Jambudvīpa. How pleased your departed ancestors must be! Shakyamuni Buddha said that a person who observes filial piety deserves to

be called a World-Honored One. Are not you yourself just such a World-Honored One?

The matter of the late Acharya Daishin¹⁷ was surely most regrettable. But we should consider that what has happened will serve to further spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

If my life is spared, there are many other things I want to write to you about on some future occasion.

Nichiren

The seventeenth day of the eighth month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*

Reply to Soya Doso



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eighth month of 1279, when Nichiren Daishonin was fifty-eight years old. It was addressed to Soya Doso, a son of Soya Kyoshin, one of the leading believers in Shimosa Province. As this letter describes, in the third month of the same year Doso had taken the opportunity of a Buddhist memorial service to make a large donation to the Daishonin. At the time the Daishonin was living in the wilderness of Mount Minobu. Doso's donation had supported over one hundred disciples in their practice at Minobu that year; thus it seems likely that Doso's determination to protect and support the Daishonin was quite strong.

The Daishonin opens his letter by referring to the two sacks of parched rice he has received from Doso. Parching was a method commonly used during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) to preserve rice, and parched rice was frequently taken along as food on journeys. Noting that rice is something

that supports life, the Daishonin praises the greatness of lay believers who support the life of the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

Then the Daishonin employs the metaphor of the five flavors, stating that, while the various sutras represent the five flavors, the Lotus Sutra is the "lord who rules over the five flavors." While the five flavors are something that nourishes life, he explains, the Lotus Sutra represents life itself. The Daishonin further reveals that the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the soul and the eye of all the sutras; through the Buddhist parable of King Rinda and his white horses, he teaches that the benevolent deities use the voices of people chanting daimoku as sustenance to increase their power and energy.

He continues by relating that the growing influence of misleading Buddhist schools, such as the True Word, Zen, and Nembutsu, has caused the various gods and deities to cease their

protective functions. Because the people of Japan, by practicing these teachings, slander the correct teaching and Nichiren Daishonin, the votary of the Lotus Sutra, the three disasters of famine, pestilence, and war occur. He teaches that those who chant daimoku should be confident that they will never fail to receive the protection of the benevolent deities.

The Daishonin thanks Doso for his generous contributions, which had made it possible for many of the Daishonin's followers to concentrate on the recitation and study of the Lotus

Sutra. Because this form of practice of the Lotus Sutra constitutes the greatest kind of Buddhist practice in the Latter Day of the Law, the Daishonin says that Doso's deceased ancestors would be extremely pleased with his act of benevolence. He suggests that Doso's actions therefore represent the highest form of filial piety. Citing Shakyamuni Buddha's statement that one who practices filial piety must be a World-Honored One, the Daishonin praises Doso highly, saying, "Are not you yourself just such a World-Honored One?"

Notes

1. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* "Opening the provisional and revealing the distant" refers to the two doctrines of "opening the provisional and revealing the true" and "opening the near and revealing the distant" (see Glossary). The Chinese character *myo* means not only wonderful, but mystic and unfathomable.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "Opening up and incorporating the expedient means" indicates incorporating the provisional teachings in the one vehicle teaching of Buddhahood. This teaching is contained in the Lotus Sutra. The perfect teaching, which sets forth the concept of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form, appears in both the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the Lotus Sutra. The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, however, introduce this concept without providing the principle required for its realization, while the Lotus Sutra not only provides this principle, but also offers examples of those who attain Buddhahood through its practice.

4. The aspect-free nature is here used synonymously with the true aspect of all phenomena. The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra reads, "These immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law, and this Law is without marks. What is without marks is devoid of marks and does not take on marks. Not taking on marks, being without marks, it is called the true mark [that is, the true aspect of all phenomena]." The Daishonin defines "the true aspect" as the Mystic Law.

5. This pronouncement appears in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

6. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. It reads, "The Buddha himself dwells in this great vehicle, and adorned with the power of meditation and wisdom that go with the Law he has attained, he uses it to save living beings."

7. An imaginary tapir-like beast, according to Chinese tradition, which is said to eat nightmares. The source of the "baku eating iron" is unknown.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

9. This quote is actually the Daishonin's summary, based on Dengyo's works, of what he thought Dengyo would have been likely to say.

10. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra.*

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

12. *Ibid.* It reads, "If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One's work."

13. The seven older schools refer to the six schools of Nara—the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, and Flower Garland—and the Tendai school.

14. Antoku, Gotoba, Tsuchimikado,

Juntoku, and Chukyo. During the Battle of Dannoura (1185), Antoku, at age eight, met his end at the final defeat of the Taira, when he drowned in the sea. In 1221, after the Jokyu Disturbance, the Kamakura shogunate exiled the retired emperors Gotoba, Tsuchimikado, and Juntoku, and deposed Emperor Chukyo.

15. Nirvana Sutra. The full passage reads: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should

realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching."

16. This phrase is found in a passage from Nan-yüeh's *On the Peaceful Practices of the Lotus Sutra*, which reads, "If there should be a bodhisattva who protects evil persons and fails to chastise them . . . then, when his life comes to an end, he will fall into hell along with those evil persons."

17. Daishin was a disciple of the Daishonin who is believed to have been a relative of the Soya family. The acharya was a rank in the priesthood.

Letter to Jakunichi-bo



I DEEPLY appreciate your sending a letter to this distant place. It is extremely rare to be born as a human being. Not only are you endowed with human form, but you have had the rare fortune to encounter Buddhism. Moreover, out of the Buddha's many teachings you have encountered the daimoku, or the title, of the Lotus Sutra and become its votary. Truly you are a person who has offered alms to a hundred thousand million Buddhas in his past existences!

Nichiren is the supreme votary of the Lotus Sutra in Japan. In this land only he has lived the twenty-line verse of the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter.¹ The eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas pledged with this verse to propagate the Lotus Sutra, but not one of them fulfilled the pledge. The parents who gave life to this extraordinary person, Nichiren, are the most blessed of all people in Japan. It is no doubt because of karmic forces that they became my parents, and I, their child. If Nichiren is the envoy of the Lotus Sutra and the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, then his parents must also share this relationship. They are like King Wonderful Adornment and Lady Pure Virtue with their sons, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye. Could the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures have been reborn as

Nichiren's parents? Or if not, could his parents have been among the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas or the four bodhisattvas led by Bodhisattva Superior Practices? It is beyond comprehension.

Names are important for all things. That is why the Great Teacher T'ient'ai placed "name" first among the five major principles. My giving myself the name Nichiren (Sun Lotus) derives from my own enlightenment regarding the Buddha vehicle. This may sound as though I think I am wise, but there are specific reasons for what I say. The sutra reads, "As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings."² Consider carefully what this passage signifies. "This person as he advances through the world" means that the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law will witness the advent of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who will illuminate the darkness of ignorance and earthly desires with the light of the five characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. In accordance with this passage, Nichiren, as this bodhisattva's envoy, has urged the people of Japan to accept and uphold the Lotus Sutra. His unremitting efforts never slacken, even here on this mountain.

The sutra then goes on to say, “After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way.”³ Therefore, those who become Nichiren’s disciples and lay believers should realize the profound karmic relationship they share with him and spread the Lotus Sutra as he does. Being known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra is a bitter, yet unavoidable, destiny.

Fan K’uai, Chang Liang, Masakado, and Sumitomo never acted cowardly because they cared so deeply about their honor and abhorred disgrace. But disgrace in this life is nothing. Of far greater concern is the disgrace that appears in the next life. Proceed to the place of practice of the Lotus Sutra, bearing in mind the time when you must face the wardens of hell, and the garment-snatching demoness and the garment-suspending demon will strip off your clothes on the bank of the river of three crossings. The Lotus Sutra is the robe that will keep you from dis-

grace after this life. The sutra reads, “It is like a robe to one who is naked.”⁴

Believe in the Gohonzon with all your heart, for it is the robe to protect you in the world after death. No wife would ever leave her husband unclothed, nor could any parents fail to feel pity for their child shivering in the cold. Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra are like one’s wife and parents. You have helped me and thereby saved me from disgrace in this life; in return, I will protect you from disgrace in the next. What one has done for another yesterday will be done for oneself today. Blossoms turn into fruit, and brides become mothers-in-law. Chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and be always diligent in your faith.

I cannot thank you enough for your frequent letters. Jakunichi-bo, please convey all these teachings in detail to that believer.

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the ninth month



Background

This letter was written to a young disciple named Jakunichi-bo Nikke, the son of the lord of Okitsu, Kazusa Province. It is dated the sixteenth day of the ninth month, with no year indicated, though it is believed to be 1279. Early in the Bun’ei era (1264–1275) Jakunichi-bo and his family had become followers of the Daishonin, who was then propagating his teachings in their area. Jakunichi-bo became a priest and later founded Tanjo-ji temple in Kominato to commemorate the place of the Daishonin’s birth. It is also thought that this letter may have been addressed, through Jakunichi-bo, to a woman believer who lived in Kazusa Province.

In this letter, the Daishonin discloses the meaning of his name, Nichiren, implying that it signifies the Buddha who will bring enlightenment to all people in the Latter Day of the Law. He declares that his disciples must also exert themselves to convey the supreme teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to all humankind. Then the Daishonin explains that the demons who, according to legend, strip one of one’s garments at the time of death symbolize death’s stripping one of all pretensions and superficial attainments, whether wealth, power, or knowledge.

In conclusion, the Daishonin encourages Jakunichi-bo, pledging to protect

him in the next life since the latter protected the Daishonin in this life. Thus the Daishonin suggests the profound

and timeless nature of the teacher-disciple relationship.

Notes

1. The twenty-line verse of the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter of the Lotus Sutra enumerates the types of persecutions that will be met when the Lotus Sutra is propagated in the fearful latter age after Shakyamuni’s death. These persecutors were

later defined by Miao-lo of China as the three powerful enemies (*see* Glossary).

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, chap. 23.

On Persecutions Befalling the Sage



NOW, in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*, it has been twenty-seven years since I first proclaimed this teaching at Seicho-ji temple. It was at the hour of the horse [noon] on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253), cyclical sign *mizunoto-ushi*, on the southern side of the image hall in the Shobutsu-bo of Seicho-ji temple in Tojo Village. Tojo is now a district, but was then a part of Nagasa District of Awa Province. Here is located what was once the second, but is now the country's most important center founded by Minamoto no Yoritomo, the general of the right, to supply provisions for the shrine of the Sun Goddess. The Buddha fulfilled the purpose of his advent in a little over forty years, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai took about thirty years, and the Great Teacher Dengyo, some twenty years. I have spoken repeatedly of the indescribable persecutions they suffered during those years. For me it took twenty-seven years, and the great persecutions I faced during this period are well known to you all.

The Lotus Sutra reads, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"¹ The Thus Come One Shakyamuni suffered innumerable persecutions: For ninety days

he was forced to eat horse fodder; a huge boulder was dropped on him, and though it missed him, his toe was injured and bled; a group of eight monks led by Sunakshatra, in their conduct appearing to be the Buddha's disciples, but in spirit siding with the non-Buddhist teachers, watched every moment of the day and night for a chance to kill him; King Virudhaka killed countless members of the Shakya clan; and King Ajatashatru had innumerable disciples of the Buddha trampled to death by mad elephants and subjected the Buddha to a series of severe trials. Such are the minor persecutions that correspond to the time "when the Thus Come One is in the world."

Neither Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai, nor Dengyo encountered any of the still greater persecutions that the Buddha had predicted would occur "after his passing." If one were to say that they were not votaries of the Lotus Sutra, how could they not have been? On the other hand, if one were to say that they were its votaries, without their having shed any blood—as the Buddha did—and even more so, without trials greater than the Buddha's, it would be as if the sutra passages were empty, and the Buddha's teachings would have already become great lies.

In these twenty-seven years, how-

ever, Nichiren was exiled to the province of Izu on the twelfth day of the fifth month in the first year of Kocho (1261), cyclical sign *kanoto-tori*, and was wounded on the forehead and had his left hand broken on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in the first year of Bun'ei (1264), cyclical sign *kinoe-ne*. He was led to the place of execution on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), cyclical sign *kanoto-hitsuji*, and in the end was exiled to the province of Sado. In addition, countless numbers of disciples have been murdered or wounded, banished or heavily fined. I do not know whether these trials equal or surpass those of the Buddha. Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo, however, cannot compare with me in what they suffered. Had it not been for the advent of Nichiren in the Latter Day of the Law, the Buddha would have been a teller of great lies, and the testimony given by Many Treasures and by the Buddhas of the ten directions would have been false. In the 2,230 and more years since the Buddha's passing, Nichiren is the only person in the entire land of Jambudvīpa who has fulfilled the Buddha's words.

In the past, and in the present Latter Day of the Law, the rulers, high ministers, and people who despise the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seem to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they are all doomed to fall. The same is true in the case of Nichiren. There seemed at first to be no signs of protection for me. The gods who vowed to protect the Lotus Sutra, however—Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings—by now have realized in terror that if they leave their oath to the Buddha unfulfilled, as they have done for these twenty-seven years, they will fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. Consequently each of them is now striving to carry out

his vow. The deaths of Ota Chikamasa, Nagasaki Jiro Hyoe-no-jo Tokitsuna, and Daishin-bo,² who were all thrown from their horses, can be seen as punishment for their treachery against the Lotus Sutra. There are four kinds of punishment: general and individual, conspicuous and inconspicuous. The epidemics and famines that have attacked Japan, as well as the strife within the ruling clan and the foreign invasion, are general punishment. Epidemics are a form of inconspicuous punishment. The deaths of Ota and the others are both conspicuous and individual.

Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion king fears no other beast, nor do its cubs. Slanderers are like barking foxes, but Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions. The lay priest of Saimyo-ji, now deceased, and the present ruler³ permitted my return from my exiles when they found that I was innocent of the accusations against me. The present ruler shall no longer take action on any charge without confirming its truth. You may rest assured that nothing, not even a person possessed by a powerful demon, can harm Nichiren, because Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the Sun Goddess, and Hachiman are safeguarding him. Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage.

We common mortals are so foolish that we do not fear either the warnings in the sutras and treatises, or those things that seem somewhat removed from us. When Hei no Saemon and Akitajo-no-suke,⁴ in their anger, wreak havoc upon us, you must demonstrate a firm resolve. Men are now being sent to Tsukushi [to fight the Mongols]; consider yourselves in the same position as those who are on their way or are already at the fortifications. So

far our believers have not experienced sorrows of that sort. The warriors in Tsukushi, however, now face a dreadful fate, and if they are killed in battle, they are doomed to fall into hell. Although at present we are encountering the severe trials of persecution, in our next life we will become Buddhas. Our present tribulations are like moxibustion; at the time, it is painful, but because it has beneficial aftereffects, the pain is not really pain.

Urge on, but do not frighten, the ones from Atsuhara who are ignorant of Buddhism. Tell them to be prepared for the worst, and not to expect good times, but take the bad times for granted. If they complain of hunger, tell them about the sufferings of the world of hungry spirits. If they grumble that they are cold, tell them of the eight cold hells. If they say they are frightened, explain to them that a pheasant sighted by a hawk, or a mouse stalked by a cat, is as desperate as they are. I have been repeating these things in detail day after day, month after month, year after year. Yet with the lay nun of Nagoe, Sho-bo, Noto-bo, Sammi-bo,⁵ and the like, who are cowardly, unreasoning, greedy, and doubting, my words have no more effect than pour-

ing water on lacquer ware or slicing through air.

There was something very strange about Sammi-bo. Nevertheless, I was concerned that any admonition would be taken by the ignorant as mere jealousy of his wisdom, and so I refrained from speaking out. In time his wicked ambition led to treachery and, finally, to his doom. If I had scolded him more strictly, he might have been saved. I have not mentioned this before because no one would have understood it. Even now the ignorant will say that I am speaking ill of the deceased. Nevertheless, I mention it so that others can use it as their mirror. I am sure that our opponents and the renegades are frightened by the fate of Sammi-bo.

If there is an attempt to take up arms and persecute my followers on the pretense that people are uneasy about us, please write to me immediately.⁶

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The first day of the tenth month

To my followers

This letter should be kept by Saburo Saemon.⁷



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu on the first day of the tenth month of the second year of Koan (1279) to his followers in general. It reviews some of the outstanding incidents in his life. But more importantly, it contains the sole allusion to his inscription of the object of devotion for all humanity as the purpose of his life, a task that he accomplished on the twelfth day of the same month.

Around 1275, propagation efforts in

the Fuji area began to produce significant results under the leadership of Nikko Shonin. There were a number of converts among both priests and laity, but as the number of new believers increased, so did official pressures. In Atsuhara, a village in Fuji District of Suruga Province, believers were subjected to a series of threats and harassments known collectively as the Atsuhara Persecution. Twenty believers, all farmers, were arrested on the twenty-

first day of the ninth month, 1279, on false charges, and three of them were later beheaded. In spite of these persecutions, not one of the twenty farmers abandoned their faith.

Seeing that his followers were now ready to give their lives if necessary to protect the Law, the Daishonin realized that the time had come to fulfill the purpose of his life, as is described in the first paragraph: "For me it took twenty-seven years." "It" here means the reason for his appearance in the world—that is, the inscription of the object of devotion for the sake of all humankind.

Next, details concerning the persecutions encountered by Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Daishonin are presented. The important prophecies in the Lotus Sutra for the Latter Day of the Law are also outlined.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.
2. Ota Chikamasa, Nagasaki Jiro Hyoe-no-jo Tokitsuna, and Daishin-bo were followers of the Daishonin, but they renounced their faith and plotted against other believers during the Atsuhara Persecution.
3. The lay priest of Saimyo-ji refers to Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263), the retired fifth regent of the Kamakura government, and the present ruler, to Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent.
4. Akitajo-no-suke is another name for Adachi Yasumori (1231–1285), the leader of an influential clan under the Hojo regency who vied with Hei no Saemon for power.

The types of ill effects suffered by slanderers are explained to show the impact of the strict law of cause and effect on individuals and on society. The Daishonin states that the miserable fate of several treacherous disciples, as well as the crisis facing Japan at the time, is retribution for hostility shown toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra.

At the same time the Daishonin tells his disciples that they must now "summon up the courage of a lion king." Furthermore, he urges believers in the Atsuhara area to be prepared for the worst.

In the last section, the Daishonin cites the example of Sammi-bo, one of his earliest disciples, who was highly esteemed for his debating skill and great learning, but forsook his faith and died a tragic death during the Atsuhara Persecution.

5. The lay nun of Nagoe, Sho-bo, Noto-bo, and Sammi-bo were disciples of the Daishonin who renounced their faith.

6. The original language here is compact and abbreviated. Another possible translation of this sentence is: "As society becomes more chaotic, if any of my followers are dispatched to fight, please send me their names immediately."

7. Saburo Saemon is another name for Shijo Kingo, a samurai and follower of the Daishonin. Kingo's full name and title are Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo Yorimoto.

The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra



I HAVE carefully read your letter, in which you described the recent skirmish with powerful enemies. So they have finally attacked you. It is a matter of rejoicing that your usual prudence and courage, as well as your firm faith in the Lotus Sutra, enabled you to survive unharmed.

When one comes to the end of one's good fortune, no strategy whatsoever avails. When one's karmic rewards are exhausted, even one's retainers no longer follow one. You survived because you still have both good fortune and rewards. Moreover, in the "Entrustment" chapter,¹ the heavenly gods and benevolent deities pledged to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. Of all the guardian deities in heaven, it is the gods of the sun and moon who visibly protect us. How can we doubt their protection? The heavenly deity Marichi in particular stands in service before the god of the sun. When the god of the sun protects the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, how could the honorable one of heaven Marichi, who is his vassal, possibly abandon them? The "Introduction" chapter of the sutra reads, "[At that time Shakra with his followers, twenty thousand sons of gods, also attended.] There were also the sons of gods Rare Moon, Pervading Fragrance, Jeweled Glow, and the four heavenly kings, along with their followers, ten

thousand sons of gods." Marichi must be among the thirty thousand sons of gods who were present at the ceremony. Otherwise, this deity could only abide in hell.

You must have escaped death because of this deity's protection. Marichi gave you skill in swordsmanship, while I, Nichiren, have bestowed on you the five characters of the title of the Lotus Sutra. There can be no doubt that Marichi protects those who embrace the Lotus Sutra. Marichi also upholds the Lotus Sutra and helps all living beings. Even the words "Those who join the battle are all in the front lines"² derive from the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by the passage "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."³ Therefore, you must summon up the great power of faith more than ever. Do not blame the heavenly gods if you exhaust your good fortune and lose their protection.

Masakado was renowned as a brave general who had mastered the art of war, yet he was defeated by the armies under the emperor's command. Even Fan K'uai and Chang Liang had their failures. It is the heart that is important. No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will

be like trying to set fire to wet tinder. Spur yourself to muster the power of faith. Regard your survival as wondrous. Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other. "All others who bear you enmity or malice will likewise be wiped out."⁴ These golden words will never prove false. The heart of strategy and swordsmanship derives from the Mystic Law. Have profound

faith. A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-third day of the tenth month

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

In the tenth month of the second year of Koan (1279), this letter was written in reply to a letter to Nichiren Daishonin from Shijo Kingo, informing him that Kingo had been ambushed by enemies among his fellow samurai, but

had managed to escape unharmed.

The Daishonin teaches Kingo that faith must always come first, before any other tactic or strategy, and that faith in the Mystic Law is the ultimate factor that determines victory or defeat.

Notes

1. Possibly a reference to a passage in the "Entrustment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which reads: "We will respectfully carry out all these things just as the World-Honored One has commanded."

2. A quote from the fourth-century Taoist work *Pao-p'u Tzu*. Chinese soldiers believed that reciting this phrase while drawing four vertical and five horizontal lines in the air with their fingers would protect them from harm. This practice later spread

to Japan and was widely adopted among the samurai of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Here the Daishonin indicates that the heavenly gods and benevolent deities form ranks to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in all their activities.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, chap. 23. In the sutra, the sentence reads in the past tense. It was changed here to fit the context of this letter.

The Dragon Gate



A WATERFALL called the Dragon Gate exists in China. Its waters plunge a hundred feet, swifter than an arrow shot by a strong warrior. It is said that a great many carp gather in the basin below, hoping to climb the falls, and that any that succeeds will turn into a dragon. Not a single carp, however, out of a hundred, a thousand, or even ten thousand, can climb the falls, not even after ten or twenty years. Some are swept away by the strong currents, some fall prey to eagles, hawks, kites, and owls, and others are netted, scooped up, or even shot with arrows by fishermen who line both banks of the falls ten *cho* wide. Such is the difficulty a carp faces in becoming a dragon.

There were once two major warrior clans in Japan, the Minamoto and the Taira. They were like two faithful watchdogs at the gates of the imperial palace. They were as eager to guard the emperor as humble mountain folk are to admire the full moon on the fifteenth night of the eighth month as it rises from behind the mountains. They marveled at the elegant parties of the court nobles and their ladies, just as monkeys in the trees are enraptured by the sight of the moon and the stars glittering in the sky. Though of low rank, they longed to find some way to mingle in court circles. But even

though Sadamori of the Taira clan¹ crushed the rebellion of Masakado, he was still not admitted to court. Nor were any of his descendants, including Masamori. Not until the time of Masamori's son, Tadamori, were any of the Taira clan granted permission to enter the court. The next in line, Kiyomori, and his son Shigemori, not only enjoyed life among court nobles, but saw the moon rise when Kiyomori's daughter became the emperor's consort, and the sun appear when his grandson became emperor.

Attaining Buddhahood is no easier than for men of low status to enter court circles, or for carp to climb the Dragon Gate. Shariputra, for example, practiced bodhisattva austerities for sixty kalpas in order to attain Buddhahood, but finally could persevere no longer and slipped back into the paths of the two vehicles.² Even some of those who formed ties with the Lotus Sutra in the days of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence sank into the sufferings of birth and death for the duration of major world system dust particle kalpas. Some others who received the seeds of Buddhahood in the even more remote past suffered for the length of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas. All these people practiced the Lotus Sutra, but when harassed in one way or another

by the devil king of the sixth heaven, who had taken possession of their rulers and other authorities, they backslid and forsook their faith, and thus wandered among the six paths for countless kalpas.

Until recently these events seemed to have had no bearing on us, but now we find ourselves facing the same kind of ordeal. My wish is that all my disciples make a great vow.³ We are very fortunate to be alive after the widespread epidemics that occurred last year and the year before. But now with the impending Mongol invasion it appears that few will survive. In the end, no one can escape death. The sufferings at that time will be exactly like what we are experiencing now. Since death is the same in either case, you should be

willing to offer your life for the Lotus Sutra. Think of this offering as a drop of dew rejoining the ocean, or a speck of dust returning to the earth. A passage from the third volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, “We beg that the merit gained through these gifts may be spread far and wide to everyone, so that we and other living beings all together may attain the Buddha way.”⁴

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixth day of the eleventh month

Reply to Ueno the Worthy

I write this letter in deep gratitude for your dedication throughout the events at Atsuhara.



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eleventh month of the second year of Koan (1279) to young Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in Suruga Province. Tokimitsu embraced the Daishonin’s teaching quite early in life and revered Nikko Shonin as his personal teacher.

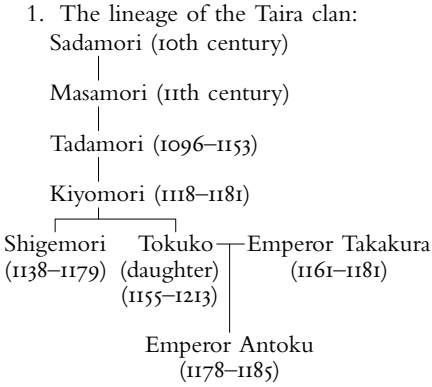
It is a reply to a report by Tokimitsu about his role in protecting the Daishonin’s followers in the Atsuhara area, who were being persecuted by authorities associated with the Kamakura government. Tokimitsu used his influence to protect other believers, sheltering some in his own home and negotiating for the release of others who had been imprisoned. The Daishonin honored him for his courage by calling him “Ueno the Worthy.” In the ninth

month of 1279, the government arrested on false charges twenty farmer believers, who all refused to recant their allegiance to the Daishonin, and on the fifteenth of the tenth month three of these farmers were beheaded.

The last paragraph of this letter hints at the anxiety gripping Japan in the wake of epidemics and rumors of war. The Daishonin emphasizes that, since death is inevitable, life should be devoted only to the loftiest ambition—enlightenment.

The Dragon Gate mentioned in this letter appears in Chinese folklore and, though it has not been conclusively identified, is thought to refer to a waterfall or rapids on the middle reaches of the Yellow River.

Notes



2. This story is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. Once when Shariputra was practicing the bodhisattva way, a Brahman begged him for his eye. Shariputra gave it to him, but the Brahman was so revolted by its smell that he dropped and crushed it. Seeing this, Shariputra discontinued his bodhisattva practice, fell back to the Hinayana practice, and therefore was unable to attain Buddhahood.

3. This means the vow to attain Buddhahood oneself and at the same time to lead others to Buddhahood.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 7.

Letter to the Lay Priest Nakaoki



I HAVE received the one thousand coins that you sent me and respectfully reported it in the presence of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.

The country of Japan is located in Jambudvīpa to the south of Mount Sumeru. Jambudvīpa measures seven thousand yojanas in both length and breadth. In it there are eighty-four thousand countries, namely, the five regions of India, sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, and ten thousand small states, as well as countless smaller states scattered about like grains of millet and islands like particles of dust. All of these lands lie in the great ocean like fallen leaves floating here and there on a pond. Our country of Japan is a small island in the great sea. It was once so small that it would disappear from sight when the tide rose—becoming barely visible only when the tide ebbed—until the two deities¹ enlarged it to its present size. Its first human ruler was a great emperor named Jimmu. For some thirty reigns after him, neither a Buddha nor sutras nor priests existed in this country, only ordinary people and gods. Because there was no Buddhism, the people neither knew of hell nor aspired to the pure land. Even when death parted them from their parents or siblings, they had no idea what would become of the deceased. They

must have thought of death as something like the vanishing of dew, or like the setting of the sun and moon.

Then, during the reign of the thirtieth ruler, the great emperor Kimmei, King Syōngmyōng of Paekche, a state northwest of Japan, sent to this country a gilded bronze image of Shakyamuni Buddha, a set of sutras expounded by that Buddha, and several priests who were to read them to the people. However, the Buddha was a statue and not a living person, and the sutras bore no resemblance to non-Buddhist writings. The priests spoke, but no one could understand what they preached. Moreover, their appearance was neither that of men nor that of women. For all these reasons, the people were doubtful and dismayed. The ministers of the left and right met in the emperor's presence and discussed the matter from various angles. The opinion prevailed that Buddhism should not be adopted, so the statue of the Buddha was discarded and the priests were imprisoned.

Then, on the fifteenth day of the second month in the second year of Emperor Bidatsu's reign, Prince Shōtoku, son of Emperor Yomei, faced east and chanted "Namu Shakyamuni Buddha," whereupon the Buddha's relics materialized in his hand.² In the sixth year of Emperor Bidatsu's reign, the

prince read and recited the Lotus Sutra. Since then more than seven centuries have passed and more than sixty emperors have reigned, and Buddhism has gradually spread throughout Japan. Among the sixty-six provinces and the two islands,³ there is no place where it has not reached. In every province, every district, and every town, village, and hamlet, Buddhist halls, pagodas, and temples have been built, and Buddhism now dwells in 171,037 places. Persons of wisdom as brilliant as the sun and moon have spread Buddhism in generation after generation, and worthies who shine like the myriad stars fill every province. For their own sakes, they practice the True Word doctrines, the Wisdom sutras, or the Benevolent Kings Sutra, or chant the name of Amida Buddha, or believe in Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Bodhisattva Earth Repository, or the three thousand Buddhas,⁴ or read and recite the Lotus Sutra. But when they encourage the practice of ignorant priests and lay people, they merely say: "Just chant 'Namu Amida Butsu.' Suppose a woman has a child. If the child falls into a moat or a river, or if it is lonely, it will cry 'Mother! Mother!' Hearing this, the mother will never fail to set everything else aside and come to her child's aid. The same holds true with Amida Buddha. We are infants and he is our mother. So, if you fall into the pit of hell or the moat of hungry spirits, just chant 'Namu Amida Butsu,' and he will never fail to come save you—just as an echo follows a sound." This is what all these men of wisdom have always taught. Therefore, our country of Japan has long since followed the custom of chanting that phrase.

Now I am neither a resident of the capital, the center of the country, nor the son of a general on the frontiers. I am merely the son of a commoner from a remote province. But I chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, which not a

single person in Japan has ever chanted during the past more than seven hundred years. Moreover, I have declared that to chant the name of Amida Buddha as people do, revering him as they would their parents, the sun and moon, or their lords, feeling as though they had found a ship on which to make a crossing, water when they were thirsty, or food when they were hungry, creates the karma that will cause them to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. They were therefore as startled and resentful as if stones had been cooked in with their food; as if their horse had stumbled over a rock and bolted; as if a gale had begun to blow while they were crossing a body of water; as if a great fire had broken out in a populated area; as if they had suddenly been attacked by an enemy; or as if a courtesan had become an emperor's consort.

However, for twenty-seven years, from the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253) until now, the eleventh month of the second year of Koan (1279), I have not once retreated, but have continued to speak out all the more strongly—just as the moon waxes or as the tide rises. At first, when I alone chanted the daimoku, those who saw me, met me, or heard me covered their ears, glared at me with furious eyes, contorted their mouths, clenched their fists, and ground their teeth. Even my parents, brothers, teachers, and friends became my enemies. Then the steward and the lord of the manor⁵ where I lived turned against me. Later the whole province was in an uproar, and eventually the entire populace grew alarmed. Meanwhile, some people began to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo either to mimic or to mock me, or seemingly out of faith or seemingly to disparage me. Now one-tenth of the people in Japan chant only Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The remaining nine-tenths are those who chant both the

daimoku and Amida Buddha's name, those who are wavering between the two, and those who chant only the Nembutsu. People of this last group revile me as though I were an enemy of their parents or their lord, or a sworn foe from a past existence. Heads of villages, districts, and provinces hate me as though I were a traitor.

As I continued to proclaim my teachings in this way, I was driven out of place after place, forced to move on throughout Japan like a log adrift on the sea at the wind's mercy, or like a tiny feather that soars high into the air and then hovers about, now rising, now falling. At times I was struck, arrested, wounded, or exiled far away. At times my disciples were killed, or I myself was banished. Then, on the twelfth day of the ninth month in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271), I incurred the wrath of the government and was subsequently exiled to the northern island province of Sado.

Though I had never violated the secular laws even in the slightest, the authorities accused me, saying, "This priest has gone so far as to declare that the late lay priests of Saimyo-ji and Gokuraku-ji⁶ have fallen into hell. He is worse than a traitor." They were about to behead me at a place called Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura in Sagami Province, but then they apparently reconsidered, thinking: "True, his crime is indeed heinous, but he is a votary of the Lotus Sutra nonetheless. If we kill him rashly, there is no telling what disaster might befall us. On the other hand, if we leave him on a remote island, he will surely perish of some cause or other. Not only is he hated by the ruler, but the common people all regard him as they would an enemy of their parents. He will probably be killed or die of hunger either on his way to Sado or after he has arrived there." Thus they decided to dispose of me in this way.

However, possibly due to the protection of the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters, or perhaps because the heavenly gods realized my innocence, and although many of the islanders hated me, there was an old man called the lay priest Nakaoki no Jiro [who befriended me]. He was as wise as he was advanced in years, and he enjoyed robust health and commanded the esteem of the local people. Probably because this venerable man said of me, "This priest can be no ordinary person," his sons did not strongly resent me. Since most of the other people were in the service of the retainers of the Nakaoki family, they too made no attempt to harm me on their own authority and carefully obeyed the government's instructions.

Though water may be muddied, it will again become clear. Though the moon may hide behind the clouds, it will surely reappear. Similarly, in time my innocence became apparent, and my predictions proved not to have been in vain. Perhaps on that account, although the members of the Hojo family and influential lords insisted that I should not be pardoned, I was finally released from my sentence of exile at the sole decision of the lord of the province of Sagami⁷ and returned to Kamakura.

I, Nichiren, am the most loyal subject in all of Japan. I do not believe that there has ever been, nor ever will be, anyone who can equal me in this respect. The reason I say so is as follows: When the great earthquake struck during the Shoka era (1257–1259) and the huge comet appeared in the first year of Bun'ei (1264), a number of wise persons, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, performed divinations, but they could neither determine the causes of these disasters nor foretell what was to come. As for me, I secluded myself in a scripture library, and after pondering the matters based on the Buddhist

teachings, I concluded that, because the people revere the priests of provisional Mahayana and Hinayana teachings, such as True Word, Zen, Nembutsu, and Precepts, and make light of the Lotus Sutra, the heavenly kings Brahma and Shakra would rebuke them by ordering a country in the west to attack Japan. I submitted a written warning to this effect to the lay priest of Saimyo-ji, now deceased. People of all religions scoffed at it and dismissed it, but nine years later, in the fifth year of Bun'ei, an official letter arrived from the great Mongol empire announcing its intention to attack Japan. Because my prediction had thus come true, the Nembutsu priests, True Word teachers, and others resented me and plotted against my life.

To give an analogy, in China, among the concubines of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, there was a beautiful woman known as the Lady of Shang-yang Palace. She was the greatest beauty in the empire. The emperor's consort, Yang Kuei-fei, saw her and thought, "If she is allowed to serve near the emperor, she will surely steal his favor away from me." So she forged an imperial edict and had the Lady's parents and brothers either banished or executed. The Lady herself was imprisoned and tortured for no less than forty years.

My own case is similar to this. "If Nichiren's warnings become widely known, the government will have to ask him to pray for the defeat of the great Mongol empire. And if Japan should in fact be victorious, he will become the foremost priest in this country. We, on the other hand, will lose our influence and prestige." So thinking, perhaps, the priests of the other schools brought false charges against me. Unaware of their motives, the regent believed their words and is now about to bring the nation to ruin.

In a similar way, the Second Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty of China,

instigated by Chao Kao's slanderous tongue, had Li Ssu executed, and later he himself perished at the hands of Chao Kao. And the emperor of Engi, prompted by the slanderous words of the minister Fujiwara no Tokihira, banished the minister Sugawara no Michizane.⁸ Afterward the emperor fell into hell.

The present regent is just like these two emperors. He believes the words of the True Word teachers, the Zen school, the Precepts priests, the observers of the precepts, and the Nembutsu priests, all of them enemies of the Lotus Sutra, and treats me, Nichiren, with animosity. Although I am of lowly birth, I embrace the Lotus Sutra, which Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, the Buddhas of the ten directions, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the dragon deities, the Sun Goddess, and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman protect and treasure, just as people cherish their own eyes, as the heavenly gods revere Shakra, or as a mother loves her child. Therefore, all these Buddhas and gods will punish those who persecute the votary of the Lotus Sutra, even more severely than one would chastise an enemy of one's parents, or than the ruler punishes rebels.

Now you two are the late lay priest Jiro's son and daughter-in-law. It is perhaps because you are the son and daughter-in-law of so profoundly wise a man that, following in his footsteps, you not only believe in the Lotus Sutra, which the ruler of the country himself rejects, but also provide for the votary of the Lotus Sutra, each year bringing me offerings and traveling a thousand ri⁹ to see me. Moreover, on the thirteenth anniversary of the death of your infant daughter,¹⁰ you erected a sixteen-foot wooden grave tablet with the seven characters Nam-myohorenge-kyo inscribed on it. When the north wind blows, it is said, fish in the

southern sea who are touched by it will be released from their sufferings; and when the wind comes from the east, birds and deer in the western mountains who come in contact with it will escape from the realm of animals and be born in the inner court of the Tushita heaven. How much greater still will be the blessings of those human beings who rejoice at this tablet, touch it with their hands, or gaze upon it with their eyes! I believe that because of the benefit derived from your erecting this wooden tablet, your deceased parents must be illuminating the path to the pure land as brilliantly as would the sun and moon in the heavens. Furthermore, you yourselves, their filial son and his wife, as well as your children, will live to be 120 in this existence,¹¹

and after death you will be with your parents in the pure land of Eagle Peak. You should consider this to be as certain as the fact that the moon is reflected in clear water, or that a drum produces a sound when struck. Should you erect any wooden tablets in the future, be sure to have the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra inscribed on them as well.

Written at Mount Minobu.
Nichiren

The thirtieth day of the eleventh month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*

To the wife of the lay priest
Nakaoki



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to the lay priest Nakaoki and his wife, believers who lived at Nakaoki on the island of Sado. Though the present work is traditionally titled *Letter to the Lay Priest Nakaoki*, it is addressed to Nakaoki's wife. It would seem that Nichiren Daishonin wrote it for both of them when Nakaoki came to visit him at Minobu.

Nakaoki's father, the lay priest Nakaoki no Jiro, had already passed away when this letter was written. Despite his own long-standing faith in the Nembutsu, he had apparently embraced the Daishonin's teachings when they met during his exile and had protected him during his stay on the island. Later, one of his sons, the Nakaoki of this letter, also became the Daishonin's follower, along with his wife. After the Daishonin was pardoned and went to live at Minobu, the young Nakaoki repeatedly made the journey from Sado

to see him and bring him offerings.

In the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin describes how Buddhism was first introduced to Japan, and how erroneous teachings such as those of the Nembutsu and True Word have spread throughout the country. Because the Daishonin pointed out the errors of the various schools, he met with repeated persecutions, culminating in an abortive attempt to behead him at Tatsunokuchi and his subsequent exile to Sado Island. He continues, however, that he alone has made clear the underlying cause of recent disasters affecting the nation, urging people to abandon mistaken teachings and instead chant the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he is "the most loyal subject in all of Japan." Though the people may despise him and the authorities persecute him, because he embraces the Lotus Sutra, which all Buddhas cherish, he is certain to be

protected. In conclusion, the Daishonin praises the faith of the Nakaokis in supporting the votary of the Lotus

Sutra, and assures them of great blessings in this life and the life to come.

Notes

1. The two deities refer to Izanagi and Izanami, male and female deities appearing in *The Records of Ancient Matters* and *The Chronicles of Japan* as the mythological creators of Japan and its gods.

2. This episode is said to have occurred when Prince Shotoku (574–622), famous for his application of the spirit of Buddhism to government, was a very small child and appears in *The Biography of Prince Shotoku*.

3. Reference is to the whole of Japan. Japan was divided into sixty-six provinces, excluding Hokkaido. The two islands are Iki and Tsushima.

4. The three thousand Buddhas are said to appear in the past Glorious Kalpa, the present Wise Kalpa, and the future Constellation Kalpa. They are listed in *The Record of the Three Thousand Buddhas of the Three Kalpas*.

5. The steward and the lord of the manor refers to Tojo Kagenobu, the steward of Tojo Village in Nagasa District, and Hojo Tomotoki, the lord of Nagasa District in Awa Province, respectively. Hojo Tomotoki was a younger brother of Hojo Yasutoki, the third regent of the Kamakura government.

6. The lay priest of Saimyo-ji is Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263), the fifth regent of the Kamakura government, and the lay priest

of Gokuraku-ji, Hojo Shigetoki (1198–1261), another high official of the government.

7. The lord of the province of Sagami is Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

8. The emperor of Engi is the sixtieth emperor Daigo (r. 897–930). Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) was a court scholar, poet, and official. He served as a counterbalance to the power of the Fujiwara family, who held most of the important government posts. Falsely accused by the Fujiwara of plotting against the throne, Michizane was sent into exile in Kyushu, where he died.

9. “A thousand *ri*” here simply indicates a very long distance.

10. The thirteenth anniversary is the memorial service held on the twelfth anniversary of a person’s death. In Japanese tradition, the second year following a person’s death is commemorated as the third. Japanese tradition also places importance on the 7th, 49th, and 100th days after the death, and on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 23rd, 27th, 33rd, and 50th anniversaries of the death, and at such times people observe special memorial services for the deceased.

11. According to Buddhist tradition, 120 is the maximum possible life span attainable by human beings.

“This Person Advances through the World”



JUST when I had not heard from you for some time, your letter arrived. In addition, I have received a quilted robe with a blue lining, a hat, a sash, one thousand coins, and a basket of chestnuts.

The present time corresponds to the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law. Passages of the sutra clearly state that at this time Bodhisattva Superior Practices will appear and bestow the five characters of Nammyoho-rence-kyo on all the people of Japan. And they reveal that he will face exile and execution. I am also like the envoy of Bodhisattva Superior Practices because I spread this teaching.

The “Supernatural Powers” chapter states, “As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the

darkness of living beings.” In this passage from the sutra, in the five-character phrase “this person as he advances through the world,” to whom do you think “this person” refers? I believe that it must be the person who is the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Superior Practices. The sutra states, “After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way.”¹

I am sure that you, too, are one who assists Bodhisattva Superior Practices in his propagation efforts.

Nichiren

The third day of the twelfth month in the second year of Koan (1279),
cyclical sign *tsuchimoto-u*

Reply to Uemon no Tayu



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Ikegami Uemon no Tayu Munenaka, the elder of the Ikegami brothers. Nichiren Daishonin indicates here that he is Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who, according to predictions made in the Lotus Sutra, will appear in the world

in the Latter Day of the Law and propagate the Mystic Law. The sutra says that Bodhisattva Superior Practices “as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings.” Also, the sutra predicts in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter that

Superior Practices will be subjected to persecutions such as exile and execution. “Exile” indicates the Daishonin’s banishment to Izu from 1261 to 1263, and to Sado Island from 1271 to 1274. “Execution” refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271, when the

Daishonin was nearly beheaded.

In concluding, the Daishonin encourages Ikegami Munenaka in faith by praising him as one who is helping Bodhisattva Superior Practices spread the doctrine of the Lotus Sutra.

Note

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 21.

The Third Day of the New Year



I HAVE received the sixty slabs of steamed rice cake, the container of refined sake, the fifty yams, the twenty mandarin oranges, and the string of dried persimmons that you so kindly sent. I placed these various articles before the Lotus Sutra and presented them as offerings to the sutra on the third day of spring.¹

Just as flowers open up and bear fruit, just as the moon appears and invariably grows full, just as a lamp becomes brighter when oil is added, and just as plants and trees flourish with rain, so will human beings never fail to

prosper when they make good causes.

Moreover, the sincerity you showed in celebrating the third day of the new year exceeds even the sincerity you showed in commemorating the first day. The steamed rice cakes are like the full moon. I will write of other matters later.

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the first month in the third year of Koan (1280),
cyclical sign *kanoe-tatsu*

To Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu, when the Daishonin was fifty-nine years old, and addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu, also known as Ueno. The letter

is in reply to the offerings Tokimitsu sent to the Daishonin to mark the third day of the new year.

Note

1. According to the lunar calendar, spring begins with the first month; that is, on New Year's Day, which falls somewhere

between January 21 and February 19 on the Gregorian calendar.

Letter to Akimoto



I HAVE received the thirty cylindrical vessels and the sixty plates that you were kind enough to send.

A vessel is a kind of utensil. Because the great earth is hollowed out, water collects on it; and because the blue sky is pure, the moon shines in it. When the moon rises, the water glows with a pure light; and when the rain falls, the plants and trees flourish.

A vessel is hollowed out like the earth, and water can be collected in it the way water is stored in a pond. And the reflection of the moon floats on the surface of the water in the same way that the Lotus Sutra pervades our being.

But a vessel is susceptible to four faults. The first is being upset or covered, which means that the vessel can be overturned or covered with a lid. The second is leaking, which means that the water leaks out. The third is being defiled, which means that the contents can be contaminated. Though the water itself may be pure, if filth is dumped into it, then the water in the vessel ceases to be of any use. The fourth is being mixed. If rice is mixed with filth or pebbles or sand or dirt, then it is no longer fit for human consumption.

The vessel here stands for our bodies and minds. Our minds are a kind of vessel, and our mouths too are vessels,

as are our ears. The Lotus Sutra is the Dharma water of the Buddha's wisdom. But when this water is poured into our minds, then we may jar and upset it. Or we may shut it out by placing our hands over our ears, determined not to listen to it. Or we may spit it out of our mouths, determined not to let our mouths chant it. In such cases, we are like a vessel that has overturned or has had a lid placed on it.

Again, although we may have a certain amount of faith, we may encounter evil influences and find our faith weakening. Then we will deliberately abandon our faith, or, even though we maintain our faith for a day, we will set it aside for a month. In such cases, we are like vessels that let the water leak out.

Or we may be the kind of practitioners of the Lotus Sutra whose mouths are reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo one moment, but Namu Amida Butsu the next. This is like mixing filth with one's rice, or putting sand or pebbles in it. This is what the Lotus Sutra is warning against when it says, "Desiring only to accept and embrace the sutra of the great vehicle and not accepting a single verse of the other sutras."¹

The learned authorities in the world today suppose that there is no harm in mixing extraneous practices with the practice of the Lotus Sutra, and I,

Nichiren, was once of that opinion myself. But the passage from the sutra [that I have just quoted] does not permit such a view. Suppose that a woman who had been the consort of a great king and had become pregnant with his seed should then turn round and marry a man of common stature. In such a case, the seed of the king and the seed of the commoner would become mixed together, and as a result, the aid and assistance of heaven and the protection of the patron deities² would be withdrawn, and the kingdom would face ruin. The child born from two such fathers would be neither a king nor a commoner, but someone who belongs not to the human realm.

This is one of the most important points in the Lotus Sutra. The doctrine of the sowing of the seed and its maturing and harvesting³ is the very heart and core of the Lotus Sutra. All the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions have invariably attained Buddhahood through the seeds represented by the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. The words Namu Amida Butsu are not the seeds of Buddhahood, nor can the mantras or the five precepts act as such seeds. One must be perfectly clear about this point, because this is the fault referred to as being mixed.

If a vessel is free of these four faults of overturning, leaking, being defiled, and being mixed, then it can be called a perfect vessel. If the embankments around a moat do not leak, then the water will never escape from the moat. And if the mind of faith is perfect, then the water of wisdom, the great impartial wisdom, will never dry up.

Now these vessels that you have sent me are sturdy and thick, and in addition they are coated with pure lacquer. They symbolize the firmness and sturdiness of the power of your faith in the Lotus Sutra.

It is said that the heavenly king

Vaishravana presented four bowls to the Buddha, and as a result, became known as the foremost deity of good fortune in all the four continents of the world. Lady Pure Virtue presented eighty-four thousand bowls as an offering to the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound King, and as a result, became Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound. And now, since you have presented these thirty vessels and sixty plates, is there any doubt that you will become a Buddha?

The country of Japan is known by ten different names, such as Fuso, Yamato, Mizuho, and Akitsushima. In addition, it may be described as a country of sixty-six provinces and two islands that measures over three thousand *ri* in length and varies in width from a hundred *ri* to five hundred *ri*. It is divided into the five regions around the capital and the seven marches, and it has 586 districts and 3,729 villages. In terms of fields it includes 11,120 *cho* of superior lands and 885,567 *cho* of other kinds. The population numbers 4,989,658 persons. There are 3,132 shrines and 11,037 temples. Men number 1,994,828 and women 2,994,830.

Among all these men, Nichiren alone deserves to be regarded as the foremost. In what sense is he the foremost? He is foremost in being hated by men and women. The reason is that, although the provinces of Japan are numerous and their inhabitants are likewise numerous, they are alike at heart and their mouths all utter Namu Amida Butsu. They look upon Amida Buddha as their object of devotion and, hating all the other nine directions, long only for the west.⁴ Thus those who practice the Lotus Sutra, those who carry out True Word practices, those who observe the precepts, those who are wise, and those who are foolish all look upon these practices as secondary and upon the Nembutsu as their primary practice, and, hoping in this way to expiate their offenses, they

recite this Buddha's name. Hence some of them recite it sixty thousand times, eighty thousand times, or four hundred eighty thousand times, while others recite it ten times, a hundred times, or a thousand times.

But I, Nichiren, one man alone, declare that the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha is an action that leads to rebirth in the hell of incessant suffering, that the Zen school is the invention of the heavenly devil, that the True Word school is an evil doctrine that will destroy the country, and that the Precepts school and the observers of the precepts are traitors to the nation.

Because I do so, from the sovereign on down to the common people, all people fear me more than they would an enemy of their parents, an enemy from a past existence, a plotter of treason, a night raider, or a bandit. They rage, they curse, they strike at me. Those who slander me are given grants of land, while those who praise me are driven from their areas or fined, and the people who desire to kill me are singled out for rewards. And on top of all this, I have twice incurred the wrath of the authorities.⁵

I am not only the strangest person alive in the world today; in the ninety reigns of human sovereigns,⁶ in the more than seven hundred years since the Buddhist teachings were first introduced to Japan, there has never been such a strange person. I, Nichiren, am like the great comet of the Bun'ei era (1264), a disorder of the heavens such as had never happened in Japan before that time. I, Nichiren, am like the great earthquake of the Shoka era (1257), a freak of the earth that had never before occurred in this land.

In Japan since the history of this country began, there have been twenty-six perpetrators of treason. The first was Prince Oyama, the second was Oishi no Yamamaru, and so on down

to the twenty-fifth, Yoritomo, and the twenty-sixth, Yoshitoki. The first twenty-four of these men were struck down by the imperial forces and had their heads put on display at the prison gate, or their corpses left to rot in the mountain fields. But the last two succeeded in overthrowing the sovereign and gaining complete control of the nation, and at that time the imperial rule came to an end.

And yet these various perpetrators of treason are less hated by the mass of people than is Nichiren. If you ask why that should be, I will tell you. The Lotus Sutra contains a passage declaring that that sutra is first among all the sutras.⁷ However, the Great Teacher Kobo declares that the Lotus Sutra ranks third,⁸ while the Great Teacher Jikaku declares that the Lotus Sutra ranks second,⁹ and the Great Teacher Chisho agrees with Jikaku. Hence at present, when the priests of Mount Hiei, To-ji, and Onjo-ji look upon the Lotus Sutra, they read the passage that says the Lotus Sutra is first, but what they understand when they read it is that the Lotus Sutra is second or third in standing.

Neither the nobility nor the warrior clans have any detailed information about this matter. But since the eminent priests in whom they place their faith all subscribe to this opinion, the laity share the same view as their teachers.

With regard to other groups, the Zen school describes itself as a teaching transmitted apart from the sutras,¹⁰ and hence speaks with scorn of the Lotus Sutra. The Nembutsu school asserts that "not even one person in a thousand" can be saved through the other teachings¹¹ and that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood"¹² through them, by which it means that, in comparison to the Nembutsu, the Lotus Sutra is too lofty to practice and therefore ought to be rejected. The

Precepts school is composed of Hinayana doctrines. Even in the Former Day of the Law the Buddha would not condone the spread of such teachings, so surely he would never approve of them being propagated in the Latter Day of the Law, causing the ruler of the nation to be confused and misled.

Three women of antiquity—Ta Chi, Mo Hsi, and Pao Ssu—misled the rulers of the three dynasties¹³ and caused them to lose their thrones. And in the same way, these evil doctrines are propagated throughout the nation and cause the Lotus Sutra to lose its proper place. As a result, the great sovereigns Antoku, Takahira, and the others were cast aside by the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman and drowned in the sea or were exiled to distant islands. They were overthrown by families who for generations in the past had been their followers, and this was because they had lost the protection of the heavenly deities. They put their faith in those who are enemies of the Lotus Sutra. But because there was no one who understood this, they had no way to learn of their error. This is illustrated in the statement that wise men can perceive the cause of things, just as snakes know the way of snakes.¹⁴

I, Nichiren, am no wise man. But just as a snake can understand the mind of a dragon and crows can foretell the coming of good or bad fortune in the world, so I was able to fathom the course that events would take. And I knew that, if I spoke out on the matter, I would instantly meet with punishment, while if I did not speak out, I would fall into the great Avichi hell.

In practicing the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, there are three principles that must be understood. The first is that regarding slanderers. The monk Superior Intent, the monk Shore of Suffering, the Scholar Vimalamitra, and the Great Arrogant Brahman are exam-

ples. These men dressed their bodies in the three robes, lifted a single begging bowl up before their eyes,¹⁵ and meticulously observed the two hundred and fifty precepts, and yet they were in fact enemies of the Mahayana and in the end fell into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

In recent times in Japan there have been men like Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho who observed the precepts just as those earlier monks did and who did not differ from them in wisdom. But because they asserted that the True Word teaching of the Mahavairochana Sutra ranked first and the Lotus Sutra ranked second or third, if my view of the matter should by any chance be correct, they are now in the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

It is a fearful thing to utter such words, and still more does one hesitate to put them into writing. But when the Buddha himself has declared that the Lotus Sutra is foremost, if one learns of a person who ranks it second or third and, out of fear of other people or of government authorities, fails to speak out, then "one is in fact his enemy,"¹⁶ that is, one is acting as a fearful enemy to all living beings. This is stated in both the sutras and the commentaries, and so I speak out.

To speak out without fearing others and without flinching before society—this is what the sutra means when it says, "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way."¹⁷

It is not that one does not recall the calumny, the staves and stones that were suffered by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. It is not that one is unafraid of the world. It is just that the censure of the Lotus Sutra is even more severe. It is like the case of Sukenari and Tokimune,¹⁸ who acted as they did even though they found themselves in the camp of the shogun, because they longed to avenge themselves upon

their enemy and were ashamed at the thought of failing to do so.

The above is the principle relating to individual slanderers.

As for the families of slanderers, the family members may pass their entire lives without slandering the Lotus Sutra. But even though they practice it every hour of the day and night, the fact that they were born into the family of a slanderer means that they will invariably be reborn in the hell of incessant suffering.¹⁹ For example, those persons who were born into the family of the monk Superior Intent or the monk Shore of Suffering and became their disciples or lay supporters all fell, against their will, into the hell of incessant suffering. Or it is like the family members of Yoshimori. Setting aside those who gave their lives in battle, even the children still in their mothers' wombs, torn from their mothers' bellies, were killed before birth.

Now I, Nichiren, have mentioned the three great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, who boldly state in their writings that the Lotus Sutra represents the region of darkness, that it is a false and deluded doctrine. If what the Lotus Sutra itself says is correct, then what do you suppose will become of the priests at Mount Hiei, To-ji, Onjo-ji, the seven major temples of Nara—at all the 11,037 temples throughout Japan? If the examples cited earlier are any indication, they will without a doubt fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering.

Such is the principle relating to the families of slanderers.

Next, we come to the country of slanderers. Those persons who happen to live in a country where there are slanderers of the Law will all—everyone in the entire country—be condemned to the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. Just as all the various waters gather in the great ocean, so all kinds of misfortune gather about

such a country. They will abound in the way that grass and trees abound on a mountain.

When the three calamities pile up month after month and the seven disasters appear day after day, then hunger and thirst will prevail and the country will be changed into a realm of hungry spirits. When plague and disease sweep over the land, the country will become a realm of hell. When warfare breaks out, it will be transformed into a realm of asuras. And when parents, brothers, and sisters, ignoring the fact that they are kin, begin taking each other for a husband or wife, the country will become a realm of animals. Under such circumstances, one does not have to wait until death to fall into the three evil paths. While one is still alive, the country in which one lives will be changed into these four evil realms.

Such is the principle relating to a country where slanderers live.

The people in such a country will be like those who lived in the Latter Day of the Law of the Buddha Great Adornment, or in the defiled age of the Buddha Lion Sound King. Or if what the Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra tells us is true, people will eat the flesh of their own deceased parents or brothers or sisters or of any other dead person, and they will eat live creatures as well.

Japan at present is just such a country. The entire nation is full of people who eat human flesh such as the teachers of the True Word school, priests of the Zen school, and observers of the precepts. And this has come about wholly as a result of the false doctrines of the True Word school.

Ryuzo-bo is merely one of the countless eaters of human beings whose case has happened to come to light. In a spirit similar to his, people procure human flesh and mix it with boar or deer meat, or cut it up and blend it with fish or fowl, pound it or pickle it, and then

sell it. It is impossible to tell how many people have eaten it. All this has happened because the country has been cast aside by the heavenly gods and abandoned by the benevolent deities who watch over and protect it. In the end, this country will be attacked by other nations, its inhabitants will fall to fighting among themselves, and it will be transformed into a veritable hell of incessant suffering.

Because I, Nichiren, have for some time been able to see the great error of its ways, because I wish to avoid the offense of complicity in slander, because I fear the accusations of the Buddha, and because I understand my obligations and wish to repay the debt of gratitude I owe my country, I have announced and made known all of this to the ruler of the country and to all its inhabitants.

The precept against the killing of living beings is the first among all the various precepts. The five precepts begin with the precept against taking life, and the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the two hundred and fifty precepts, the five hundred precepts, the ten major precepts of the Brahma Net Sutra, the ten inexhaustible precepts of the Flower Garland Sutra, and the ten precepts of the Jeweled Necklace Sutra, all begin with the precept against killing. And among the three thousand penalties prohibited by the Confucian school, capital punishment stands in first place.

The reason is that "even the treasures of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one's body and life,"²⁰ which means that even the jewels and treasures that fill the major world system are no substitute for life. One who kills a mere ant will fall into hell, to say nothing of those who kill fish or birds. One who cuts a mere blade of green grass will fall into hell, to say nothing of those who cut up dead bodies.

And yet, grave as are these prohibi-

tions against taking life, it is stated that, if a person acts as an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, then to put such a person to death is to perform an act of outstanding merit. And if this is so, then how could it possibly be right to offer alms and support to that person? This is why King Sen'yo put to death five hundred Brahman teachers, why the monk Realization of Virtue put to death a countless number of slanderers of the correct teaching, and why the great monarch Ashoka put to death 108,000 non-Buddhists.

These rulers were looked upon as the most worthy kings in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, and the monk as the wisest of all among the observers of the precepts. King Sen'yo was later reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha, the monk Realization of Virtue was reborn as Kashyapa Buddha, and the great monarch Ashoka was recognized as a man who had attained the way.

Today Japan resembles the countries of these leaders. It is a country where, whether they are observers of the precepts, breakers of the precepts, or persons without precepts, whether they are rulers, ministers, or common people, everyone joins together as one in slandering the Lotus Sutra. The situation is such that, even if a person should peel off his own skin and transcribe the Lotus Sutra on it, or should offer his own flesh as alms,²¹ the country would still be certain to perish, and that person himself would fall into hell, so great is his offense. The only remedy is to bar the way to the True Word school, the Nembutsu school, the Zen school, and the observers of the precepts, and to devote oneself to the Lotus Sutra.

Those persons who can recite from memory the sixty volumes of the Tendai school, and who are thought by the ruler of the nation and the other authorities to be persons of wisdom: is it because their wisdom fails them, or

because, though they understand the true situation, they fear the world, that they praise the True Word school and join forces with the Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts followers? Their guilt is a hundred, a thousand times greater than that of these followers. They may be compared to Shigeyoshi or Yoshimura.²²

The Great Teacher Tz'u-en wrote the ten-volume *Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, in which he extolled the Lotus Sutra, and yet he fell into hell. This man was a leading disciple of the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang, who was the teacher of Emperor T'ai-tsung, and was said to have been a reincarnation of the eleven-faced Perceiver of the World's Sounds.²³ The subject matter of his writings resembled the Lotus Sutra, but at heart it was identical with the sutras preached previous to the Lotus, and that was the reason he fell into hell.

The Great Teacher Chia-hsiang wrote the ten-volume *Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, and that would under ordinary circumstances have condemned him to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. But he set aside his own manner of reading the Lotus Sutra and served the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, and thus was able to escape the pains of hell.

The men of the Lotus school today are like these men. Mount Hiei should be a stronghold of the Lotus Sutra, and Japan should be a country devoted to the teachings of the single vehicle. And yet the Great Teacher Jikaku stole the post of chief priest of the school that should have been devoted to the Lotus Sutra and instead made himself into a chief priest of the True Word teachings, and all the three thousand priests of the mountain became his followers.

The Great Teacher Kobo stole the allegiance of Emperor Saga, who earlier had been a lay supporter of the Lotus school, and turned the imperial

palace into a temple of the True Word school.

Emperor Antoku, who relied on the chief priest Myoun as his teacher, had him pray with incantations for the defeat of the court minister Yoritomo. However, not only were these men punished by the General of the Right Yoritomo, but in the end Emperor Antoku drowned in the western sea and Myoun was put to death by Yoshinaka.

The sovereign Takahira summoned the Administrator of Priests Jien, the Tendai chief priest, and other eminent priests of To-ji, Omuro, and other temples, forty-one men in all, and had them erect a great altar in the imperial palace and perform incantations to overpower Yoshitoki, the acting administrator of the western sector of the capital. But on the seventh day, which fell on the fourteenth day of the sixth month, the capital was overwhelmed by Yoshitoki's forces, the sovereigns²⁴ were exiled to the province of Oki and to the island of Sado, and the chief priest and the prelate of Omuro²⁵ and the others were severely reprimanded, and in some cases worried themselves to death.

The people of our time fail to understand the true origin of these events. This is entirely because they are confused as to the relative merit of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra.

And now, when Japan faces the threat of an attack from the great empire of the Mongols, we are told that the authorities are employing these same inauspicious doctrines in an attempt to overpower the Mongols through incantations. The daily records also make it clear that this is so. Can anyone who understands the true situation fail to sigh in sorrow?

How tragic that we should be born in a country where people slander the correct teaching and should encounter such great hardships! Though we may escape being slanderers ourselves, how

can we escape censure for belonging to a family of slanderers or a country of slanderers?

If you would escape censure for being a member of a family that includes slanderers, then speak to your parents or your brothers about this matter. Perhaps they will hate you for it, but perhaps they will put faith in your words.

If you would escape censure for living in a country where slanderers exist, then you should remonstrate with the sovereign, though you may be condemned to death or to exile. "We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way," says the Lotus Sutra. And the commentary states, "One's body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one's life in order to propagate the Law."²⁶

The reason you have not succeeded in attaining Buddhahood from countless distant kalpas in the past down to the present is that when a situation such as this has arisen you have been too fearful to speak out. And in the future as well, this principle will prevail.

Now I, Nichiren, understand these things because of what I myself have undergone. But even if there are those among my disciples who understand them, they fear the accusations of the times; believing that their lives, which are as frail as dew, are in fact to be relied upon, they backslide, keep their beliefs hidden in their hearts, or behave in other such ways.

A passage in the Lotus Sutra says that the sutra is "the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand,"²⁷ and I have learned the value of this passage through my own experience. Slanderers are as numerous as the dust particles of the land; believers are as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. Slanderers are a huge sea, and upholders, one drop of water.

On Mount T'ien-t'ai there is a place called the Dragon Gate, which is a waterfall a thousand feet in height. At the beginning of spring the fish gather there and attempt to ascend the waterfall. If there is one fish in a hundred or a thousand that succeeds in ascending the waterfall, it will become a dragon.

The current of this waterfall is swifter than an arrow or a flash of lightning. Not only is it difficult to ascend, but at the beginning of spring fishermen gather by the waterfall and spread hundreds and thousands of nets to catch the fish, or shoot arrows at the fish, or scoop them up. Eagles, hawks, kites, owls, tigers, wolves, dogs, and foxes gather there as well, day and night snatching up the fish and devouring them. Thus ten or twenty years may go by without a single fish changing into a dragon. It is like a person of common and humble station dreaming of being admitted to the palace of the emperor, or a woman of humble birth hoping to become consort.

And you should understand that taking faith in the Lotus Sutra is even more difficult than this.

The Buddha has constantly warned us, saying that, no matter how great an observer of the precepts one may be, no matter how lofty in wisdom and well versed in the Lotus Sutra and the other scriptures, if one sees an enemy of the Lotus Sutra but fails to rebuke and denounce him or report him to the ruler of the nation, instead keeping silent out of fear of others, then one will invariably fall into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. Suppose, by way of analogy, that one commits no treasonable act oneself, but knows of someone who is plotting treason. If one fails to inform the ruler, then one is guilty of the same crime as the person who is plotting treason.

The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh has stated, "If one sees a foe of the Lotus Sutra and yet fails to censure him, one

becomes a slanderer of the Law and will fall into the hell of incessant suffering.”²⁸ Even a man of great wisdom, if he sees such a person and fails to speak out, will fall into the depths of the hell of incessant suffering, and as long as that hell shall endure, he will never escape.

I, Nichiren, fearing these admonitions of the Buddha, accordingly accused all those throughout the nation who were deserving of it, and more than once I was condemned to exile or to death. Believing that my past offenses had now been eradicated, and that I was blameless of any fault, I left Kamakura to take up residence on this mountain, and since then seven years have passed.

Let me describe this mountain. In Japan there are seven marches, and it is in the march called the Tokaido, which is made up of fifteen provinces. Within these is the province of Kai, where there are three village districts called Iino, Mimaki, and Hakiri, and it is in the one called Hakiri. It is a remote mountain region that stretches over an area of more than twenty *ri* in the northwestern part of the district.

The northern part is Mount Minobu, the southern, Mount Takatori, the western, Mount Shichimen, and the eastern, Mount Tenshi. They are like boards set up on all four sides. Around the outside of this area are four rivers. The Fuji River runs north to south and the Haya River runs west to east behind this area. In front is the Hakiri River, which runs west to east, and its tributary, which has a waterfall and is called the Minobu River. You might suppose that Eagle Peak had been moved from central India and set down here, or that Mount T'ien-t'ai had been brought from China.

In the midst of these four mountains and four rivers is a flat area no broader than the palm of one's hand, and here I

have built a little hut to shield me from the rain. I have peeled bark off trees to make my four walls, and wear a robe made of the hides of deer that died a natural death. In spring I break off ferns to nourish my body, and in autumn I gather fruit to keep myself alive. But since the eleventh month of last year the snow has been piling up, and now, into the first month of the new year, it goes on snowing. My hut is seven feet in height, but the snow outside is piled up to a depth of ten feet. I am surrounded by four walls of ice, and icicles hang down from the eaves like a necklace of jewels adorning my place of religious practice, while inside my hut snow is heaped up in place of rice.

Even in ordinary times people seldom come here, and now, with the snow so deep and the roads blocked, I have no visitors at all. So at the moment I am atoning for the karma that destines me to fall into the eight cold hells, and, far from attaining Buddhahood in this present life, I am like the cold-suffering bird. I no longer shave my head, so I look like a quail, and my robe gets so stiff with ice that it resembles the icy wings of the mandarin duck.

To such a place, where friends from former times never come to visit, where I have been abandoned even by my own disciples, you have sent these vessels, which I heap with snow, imagining it to be rice, and from which I drink water, thinking it to be gruel. Please let your thoughts dwell on the effects of your kindness. There is much more I would like to say.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the first month in the third year of Koan (1280)

Reply to Akimoto Taro Hyoe

Background

This letter was sent from Minobu to Akimoto Taro Hyoe-no-jo, who lived in Imba District of Shimosa Province. In 1260, after the Matsubagayatsu Persecution, the Daishonin had left Kamakura to stay at Toki Jonin's residence in Katsushika District of Shimosa Province. Here the Daishonin delivered the so-called hundred-day lecture at the Lotus hall built on Toki Jonin's estate. And it was around this time that Akimoto is believed to have converted to the Daishonin's teachings. It is also thought that he may have been a relative of Toki Jonin. Akimoto was on friendly terms with Soya Kyoshin and Ota Jomyo, both lay believers, who lived in the same area and took faith around the same time.

The Atsuhara Persecution had taken place three months before the Daishonin wrote this letter; in addition, the Mongol forces were preparing for a second invasion of Japan, and people's hearts were heavy with foreboding. Winter at Minobu, where the Daishonin's hut stood, was extraordinarily cold, and there was a great scarcity of food and provisions. It was in this atmosphere of unspeakable hardship, cut off from civilization and visitors, that the Daishonin received Akimoto's gifts.

The Daishonin begins this letter by referring to the cylindrical vessels to illustrate the importance of cultivating a perfect attitude in faith. He notes that vessels have four inherent faults—overturning, leaking, being contaminated, and having their contents mixed—that correspond to obstacles blocking a person's path to enlightenment.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. "The patron deities" refers to the tutelary god of a clan. The Minamoto clan, for example, revered Great Bodhisattva Hachiman as their tutelary deity.
3. Reference is to the three phases of

In the next section, the Daishonin clarifies the importance of rebuking slander. He asserts that his refutations of the Nembutsu and other schools have made him the most hated man in Japan, bringing upon him persecutions that have threatened his life. He points out that it is he alone who has endured this kind of unparalleled persecution.

The Daishonin next touches on three principles, regarding slanderers, the families of slanderers, and the country of slanderers, that one must understand when practicing the Lotus Sutra, and explains what one must do to avoid the consequences of inclusion in any of these three groups. He also reveals the benefits to be obtained from refuting slander and the way to ensure peace and tranquillity in one's country.

The Daishonin introduces the story of the waterfall known as the Dragon Gate in order to illustrate the extreme difficulty of believing in the Lotus Sutra and achieving Buddhahood. He then explains the strict Buddhist principle of admonishing slanderers. It stipulates that, no matter how learned one may be, if one sees an enemy of the Lotus Sutra but fails to admonish that person out of fear, one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. He states that because he has acted in accord with this unequivocating principle he has endured great persecution, mistreatment, and slander; and he writes that now, believing his past offenses to have been eradicated, he has settled in Mount Minobu.

the process by which a Buddha leads people to Buddhahood, corresponding to the growth and development of a plant. First the Buddha plants the seeds of Buddhahood in people's lives, then he nurtures them by helping them practice the Law,

and finally he enables them to fully manifest Buddhahood.

4. According to the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, the Pure Land of Amida Buddha is located in the western region of the universe. The other nine directions are north, south, east, northwest, northeast, southeast, southwest, up, and down.

5. This refers to the exiles to Izu and Sado.

6. The successive emperors from the legendary first emperor, Jimmu (r. 660–585 B.C.E. according to *The Chronicles of Japan*), through the ninetieth emperor, Kameyama (r. 1259–1274).

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10. It reads, "I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!"

8. This statement is found in Kobo's *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*.

9. This statement is found in Jikaku's annotations on the Susiddhikara Sutra.

10. The Zen school asserts that the essence of Buddhism is transferred from mind to mind rather than via the sutras.

11. This statement appears in Shan-tao's *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*.

12. This statement appears in Tao-ch'o's *Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight*.

13. The rulers of the three dynasties refer to King Chou (c. eleventh century B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Yin dynasty, King Chieh (c. seventeenth–sixteenth century B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Hsia dynasty, and King Yu (d. 771 B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Western Chou dynasty. The three kings doted on their consorts, Ta Chi, Mo Hsi, and Pao Ssu, respectively, to the detriment of their official duties, leading to the downfall of their dynasties.

14. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

15. The "three robes" and the "begging bowl" symbolize the austere life of a monk. These were the only possessions permitted to a monk.

16. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* by Chang-an. The full passage reads: "One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy."

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 13.

18. Sukenari (1172–1193) and Tokimune (1174–1193), also known as the Soga broth-

ers, were warriors whose father was killed in 1176 by Kudo Suketsune, later a henchman of the shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo. In 1193, they avenged their father by murdering Kudo Suketsune at a hunt hosted by Yoritomo. Sukenari was killed by Kudo's subject, while Tokimune was captured and executed.

19. Emphasis here is placed on the importance of refuting slander and avoiding the offense of complicity in slander. Even though one does not commit slander oneself, if one either fails to rebuke members of one's family who slander the Law or acts in concert with slanderers, one will be subject to the same fate as they.

20. In *The Commentary on the Brahma Net Sutra*, a similar passage is cited as a quotation from *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

21. Here the Daishonin cites examples that describe the bodhisattva austerities practiced by the ascetic Aspiration for the Law and the boy Snow Mountains; such practices, teaches the Daishonin, not only bring no benefit to the people of the Latter Day of the Law, but have no power to prevent people from slandering the Law.

22. Taguchi Shigeoyoshi (twelfth century) and Miura Yoshimura (d. 1239). Shigeoyoshi was the head of a powerful warrior family in Awa, a province in southern Japan. Though ostensibly a supporter of the Taira clan, he informed the rival Minamoto clan about the internal affairs of the Taira army, including their weak points. This helped bring about the Taira's downfall. Yoshimura was a general from a powerful warrior family in Sagami Province who was known for his shrewd political judgment. He promised to assist Wada Yoshimori, also a member of the Miura clan, during the latter's revolt against the ruling Hojo clan in 1213, but changed sides in favor of the Hojo at the last moment, helping ensure Yoshimori's defeat.

23. Because Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds was thought to assume various forms in order to save living beings, he is depicted in a number of ways. Several esoteric sutras make reference to different forms of Perceiver of the World's Sounds, such as the eleven-faced Perceiver of the World's Sounds and thousand-armed Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

24. The sovereigns refer to Takahira, or the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239),

and to Morihira, or the Retired Emperor Juntoku (1197–1242).

25. The prelate of Omuro refers to Prince Dojo, a son of Emperor Gotoba who had entered the priesthood. This generally means the title of a retired emperor or prince who entered the priesthood and lived at

Ninna-ji, a True Word temple in Kyoto. Omuro is another name for Ninna-ji.

26. *Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

28. Source unknown. A similar passage is found in *On the Peaceful Practices of the Lotus Sutra*.

Letter to Niike



WHAT a joy it is for us to have been born in the Latter Day of the Law and to have shared in the propagation of the Lotus Sutra! How pitiful are those who, though born in this time, cannot believe in this sutra!

No one can escape death once born as a human being, so why do you not practice in preparation for the next life? When I observe what people are doing, I realize that, although they profess faith in the Lotus Sutra and clasp its scrolls, they act against the intent of the sutra and are thereby doomed to the evil paths. To illustrate, a person has five internal organs,¹ but should even one of them become diseased, it will infect all the others, and eventually the person will die. The Great Teacher Dengyo states that though they praise the Lotus Sutra they destroy its heart.² He means that, even if people embrace, read, and praise the Lotus Sutra, if they betray its intent, they will be destroying not only Shakyamuni Buddha but all the Buddhas in the ten directions.

Our worldly misdeeds and evil karma may have piled up as high as Mount Sumeru, but when we take faith in this sutra, they will vanish like frost or dew under the sun of the Lotus Sutra. Nevertheless, if one commits even one or two of the fourteen slanders set forth in this sutra, one's offense will be extremely difficult to expiate. Killing a

single Buddha would be a far greater offense than destroying all the sentient beings in the major world system, and to violate the sutra's intent would be to commit the sin of taking the lives of all the Buddhas in the ten directions. One who commits any of these fourteen is a slanderer.

Hell is a dreadful dwelling of fire, and the realm of hungry spirits is a pitiful place where, driven by starvation, they devour their own children. The realm of asuras consists of strife, and that of animals is to kill or be killed. The hell of the crimson lotus is so called because the intense cold of this hell makes one double over until one's back splits open and the bloody flesh emerges like a crimson lotus flower. And the hell of the great crimson lotus is even more horrible. When one falls into such an evil place, the fact that one was a ruler or a general means nothing. Tormented by the wardens of hell, one is no different than a monkey on a string. What use are fame and fortune then? Can one still be arrogant and persist in false beliefs?

Stop and ponder! How rare is the faith that moves one to give alms to the priest who knows the heart of the Lotus Sutra! One will not stray into the evil paths if one does so even once. Still greater are the benefits arising from ten or twenty contributions, or from

five years, ten years, or a lifetime of contributions. They are beyond even the measure of the Buddhas' wisdom. The Buddha taught that the blessings of a single offering to the votary of this sutra are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than those of offering countless treasures to Shakyamuni Buddha for eighty million kalpas. When one encounters this sutra, one will overflow with happiness and shed tears of joy. It seems impossible to repay one's debt to Shakyamuni Buddha. But by your frequent offerings to me deep in this mountain you will repay the merciful kindness of both the Lotus Sutra and Shakyamuni Buddha. Strive ever harder in faith, and never give in to negligence. All the people appear to believe sincerely when they first embrace the Lotus Sutra, but as time passes, they tend to become less devout; they no longer revere or make offerings to the priest, giving themselves up to arrogance and forming distorted views. This is most frightening. Be diligent in developing your faith until the last moment of your life. Otherwise you will have regrets. For example, the journey from Kamakura to Kyoto takes twelve days. If you travel for eleven but stop with only one day remaining, how can you admire the moon over the capital? No matter what, stay close to the priest who knows the heart of the Lotus Sutra, keep learning from him the principles of Buddhism, and continue your journey of faith.

How swiftly the days pass! It makes us realize how few are the years we have left. Friends enjoy the cherry blossoms together on spring mornings, and then they are gone, carried away like the blossoms by the winds of impermanence, leaving nothing but their names. Although the blossoms have scattered, the cherry trees will bloom again with the coming of spring, but when will those people be reborn? The companions with whom we enjoyed compos-

ing poems praising the moon on autumn evenings have vanished with the moon behind the shifting clouds. Only their mute images remain in our hearts. Though the moon has set behind the western mountains, we will compose poetry under it again next autumn. But where are our companions who have passed away? Even when the approaching tiger of death³ roars, we do not hear and are not startled. How many more days are left to the sheep bound for slaughter?

Deep in the Snow Mountains lives a bird called the cold-suffering bird that, tortured by the numbing cold, cries that it will build a nest in the morning. Yet when day breaks, it sleeps away the hours in the warm light of the morning sun without building its nest. So it continues to cry vainly throughout its life. The same is true of human beings. When they fall into hell and gasp in its flames, they long to be reborn as humans and vow to put everything else aside and serve the three treasures in order to gain enlightenment in their next life. But even on the rare occasions when they happen to be reborn in human form, the winds of fame and profit blow violently, and the lamp of Buddhist practice is easily extinguished. Without a qualm they squander their wealth on meaningless trifles, but begrudge even the smallest contribution to the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist Order. This is very serious, for then they are being hindered by messengers from hell. This is the meaning of "good by the inch and evil by the foot."⁴

Furthermore, since this country is a land whose people slander the correct teaching, the benevolent gods who should be protecting the nation have been deprived of the flavor of the Law and have ascended to heaven, forsaking their shrines. The empty shrines have been occupied by demons who are misleading the worshipers. The

Buddha, having finished preaching, has returned to the Land of Tranquil Light. Halls and pagodas, and temples and shrines have been abandoned to become the dwellings of devils. These imposing structures stand in rows, built at state expense and through compulsory labor imposed on the people. This is not merely my own opinion; it is found in the sutras, so you should study them well.

Neither Buddhas nor gods would ever accept contributions from those who slander the correct teaching. Then how can we human beings accept them? The deity of Kasuga Shrine⁵ proclaimed through an oracle that he would accept nothing from those with impure hearts, though he should have to eat the flames of burning copper; that he would refuse to set foot in their homes, though he should have to sit on red-hot copper. He would rather come down to a miserable hut with weeds choking the passageway, or to a poor thatched house. He declared that he would never visit persons lacking in faith, even if they hung sacred festoons for a thousand days to welcome him, but that he would go to a house where the people have a mind of faith, even though they might be in mourning for a parent. Lamenting that slanderers have overrun this country, the benevolent gods have abandoned it and ascended to heaven. "Those with impure hearts" means those who refuse to embrace the Lotus Sutra, as is stated in the fifth volume of the sutra. If the gods themselves regard alms from slanderers as more abominable than the flames of burning copper, how could we human beings possibly accept them? If someone were to kill our parents and then try to offer us some gift, could we possibly accept it? Not even wise persons or sages can avoid the hell of incessant suffering if they accept offerings from slanderers. Nor should you associate with slanderers, for if you do,

you will share the same guilt as they. This you should fear above all.

Shakyamuni Buddha is the father, sovereign, and teacher of all the other Buddhas and all the gods, of the whole assembly of human and heavenly beings, and of all living beings. How could the heavenly gods and benevolent deities rejoice if the Buddha were killed? Today all the people of our country have proved to be enemies of Shakyamuni Buddha, but more than laymen or laywomen, it is the priests with perverse wisdom and hearts who are the Buddha's worst enemies. There are two kinds of wisdom, correct and perverse. No matter how wise a person may appear, if his assertions are warped you should not listen to him. Nor should you follow priests merely because they are venerable or of high rank. But if a person has the wisdom to know the true meaning of the Lotus Sutra, no matter how lowly he may appear, pay respect to him and make offerings to him as though he were a living Thus Come One. Thus it is written in the sutra.⁶ That is why the Great Teacher Dengyo says that the men and women who believe in this sutra, even if they lack knowledge or violate the precepts, should be seated above priests who observe all two hundred and fifty precepts of the Hinayana teachings, and never be seated in a humble position, and that this is all the more true of the priests of this Mahayana sutra.

The priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple is thought to be a living Thus Come One, but the men and women who believe in the Lotus Sutra should be seated high above him. It seems extraordinary that this Ryokan, who observes the two hundred and fifty precepts, should become angry and glare at me, Nichiren, whenever he sees me. The learned man has been possessed by a devil. It is like the case of a generally even-tempered person who, when

drunk, reveals his evil side and causes trouble. Prior to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha taught that those who gave alms to Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, [and Subhuti] would fall into the three evil paths. He said that the minds of these voice-hearers were inferior to those of dogs or foxes. These four great voice-hearers adamantly upheld the two hundred and fifty precepts, and their observance of the three thousand rules of conduct was as perfect as the full moon on the fifteenth night. Nevertheless, until they embraced the Lotus Sutra, they were bitterly criticized by the Buddha. How much more would this be so in the case of the priests today who are inferior to them!

So flagrantly do the priests of Kencho-ji and Engaku-ji temples⁷ break the code of ceremonies and the precepts, that they seem like a mountain that has collapsed into rubble. Their wanton behavior is like that of monkeys. It is utterly futile to look for salvation in the next life by giving alms to such priests. The benevolent gods who lend their protection have no doubt abandoned our land. Long ago the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, bodhisattvas and voice-hearers pledged in a single voice in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha that, if a land hostile to the Lotus Sutra should exist, they would appear in the form of frost and hail in the sixth month to drive the land into famine; or turn into insects and devour the five kinds of grain;⁸ or cause droughts or floods to ruin the fields and farms; or become gales and sweep the people to their deaths; or transform themselves into demons and cause suffering for the people. Great Bodhisattva Hachiman was among those present. Does he not fear breaking the oath made at Eagle Peak? Should he break his promise, he would surely be doomed to the hell of incessant suffering—a fearful, ter-

rible thing to contemplate. Until the envoy of the Buddha actually appeared in the world to propagate the Lotus Sutra, the rulers of the land were not hostile to it, for they revered all the sutras equally.

Now that I am spreading the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha's envoy, however, everyone from the ruler on down to the common people has become a slanderer of the correct teaching. So far Hachiman has done everything possible to prevent hostility toward the Lotus Sutra from developing among the people of this country, as reluctant to abandon them as parents would be to abandon an only child, even if it were unfilial. But now in fear of breaking the pledge he made at Eagle Peak, he has burned down his shrine and ascended to heaven. Even so, should there be a votary of the Lotus Sutra who would give his body and life for it, Hachiman would dwell upon his head. But since both the Sun Goddess and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman have gone, how could the other gods remain in their shrines? Even if they did not wish to leave, how could they stay another day if I reproached them for not keeping the promise they made at Eagle Peak? A person may be a thief, but as long as no one knows, he can live wherever he wishes. But when denounced as a thief by someone who knows him, he is forced to leave his dwelling against his will. In the same way, because I know of their vow, the gods are compelled to abandon their shrines. Contrary to popular belief, this country has become inhabited by evil demons. How pitiful!

Many have spread the various teachings put forth by the Buddha in his lifetime, but until now, no one, not even T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo, has taught the most important of all.⁹ That is as it should be, for that teaching spreads with the advent of Bodhisattva Superior Practices during the first five

hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law.

No matter what, always keep your faith in the Lotus Sutra steadfast. Then, at the last moment of your life, you will be welcomed by a thousand Buddhas, who will take you swiftly to the pure land of Eagle Peak where you will experience the boundless joy of the Law. If your faith weakens and you do not attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, do not reproach me. If you do, you will be like the sick man who refuses the good medicine his physician prescribes and takes poison instead. He does not recover, but it never occurs to him that it is his fault, and he blames the physician. Faith in this sutra means that you will surely attain Buddhahood if you are true to the entirety of the Lotus Sutra, adhering exactly to its teachings without adding any of your own ideas or following the arbitrary interpretations of others.

Becoming a Buddha is nothing extraordinary. If you chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo with your whole heart, you will naturally become endowed with the Buddha's thirty-two features and eighty characteristics. As the sutra says, "hoping to make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us,"¹⁰ you can readily become as noble a Buddha as Shakyamuni. A bird's egg contains nothing but liquid, yet by itself this develops into a beak, two eyes, and all the other parts, and the bird soars into the sky. We, too, are the eggs of ignorance, which are pitiful things, but when nurtured by the chanting of Nam-myohorenge-kyo, which is like the warmth of the mother bird, we develop the beak of the thirty-two features and the feathers of the eighty characteristics and are free to soar into the sky of the true aspect of all phenomena and the reality of all things. This is what is meant by the sutra passage that says in essence: "All people dwell in the shell of ignorance, lack-

ing the beak of wisdom. The Buddha comes back to this world—the land where sages and common mortals live together, the latter undergoing transmigration with differences and limitations¹¹—just as a mother bird returns to her nest, and cracks the shell of ignorance so that all people, like fledglings, may leave the nest and soar into the sky of the essential nature of phenomena and the reality of all things."¹²

"Knowledge without faith" describes those who are knowledgeable about the Buddhist doctrines but have no faith. These people will never attain Buddhahood. Those of "faith without knowledge" may lack knowledge but have faith and can attain Buddhahood. This is not merely my own opinion; it is stated clearly in the Lotus Sutra. In the second volume, the Buddha says, "Even you, Shariputra, in the case of this sutra were able to gain entrance through faith alone, not because of any wisdom of your own."¹³ This shows that even Shariputra, unsurpassed in his wisdom, was able to attain Buddhahood only by embracing and firmly believing in this sutra, and that his wisdom alone did not enable him to become a Buddha. If Shariputra could not attain Buddhahood through his wisdom, how can we ordinary people, with limited knowledge of the doctrines, dare to dream that we may attain Buddhahood when we do not have faith? The Buddha explains that people in the latter age will be arrogant, though their knowledge of the doctrines is trifling, and will show disrespect to the priests, neglect the Law, and thereby fall into the evil paths. If one truly understands the Buddhist teachings, one should show this in one's respect for the priests, reverence for the Law, and offerings to the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha is not among us now, so you must respect the teacher with enlightened wisdom as you would the Buddha himself. How, then, could you not receive blessings? If one wish-

es for happiness in one's next existence, one should renounce one's desire for fame and fortune and respect the priest who teaches the Lotus Sutra as one would a living Thus Come One, no matter how humble that priest's station. Thus it is written in the sutra.

The Zen school today generally violates the five constant virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and good faith. To honor the wise and virtuous, to respect the elderly, and to protect the young are recognized universally as humane conduct in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures. But the Zen priests were until yesterday or the day before no more than uneducated rabble, unable to distinguish black from white. But now that they have donned priestly robes, they have become so conceited that they belittle the learned and virtuous priests of the Tendai and True Word schools. They observe none of the proper manners and think they rank higher than all others. These people are so insolent that even animals are better behaved. The Great Teacher Dengyo states that the otter shows its respect by offering up the fish it has caught,¹⁴ the crow in the forest carries food to its parents and grandparents, the dove takes care to perch three branches lower than its father, wild geese keep perfect formation when they fly together, and lambs kneel to drink their mother's milk. He asks: if lowly animals conduct

themselves with such propriety, how can human beings be so lacking in courtesy? Judging from the words of Dengyo, it is only natural that the Zen priests should be confused about Buddhism when they are ignorant even of how people should behave. They are acting like Papiyas, the heavenly devil.

Understand clearly what I have taught you here, and continue your practice without negligence, reverently believing in the single sutra consisting of eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters. When you long to see me, pray to the sun every day, and once a day my image will be reflected there. Have the priest who is my messenger read this letter to you. Trust him as a teacher with enlightened wisdom, and ask him any questions you may have about the doctrines. If you do not question and resolve your doubts, you cannot dispel the dark clouds of illusion, any more than you could travel a thousand miles without legs. Have him read this letter again and again, and listen attentively. In anticipation of speaking with you at our next meeting, I will conclude here.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The second month in the third year
of Koan (1280)

To Niike



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in the second month of 1280 to Niike Saemon-no-jo, an official in the Kamakura shogunate. Niike was from Niike Village in Iwata District of Totomi Province. He and his wife had been converted to the Daishonin's teachings

by Nikko Shonin and had maintained their faith despite government pressure.

First, Nichiren Daishonin tells Niike what great fortune it is to have been born in the Latter Day of the Law with the mission to spread the correct teaching of Buddhism throughout the

world. Yet it would be foolhardy to profess faith in the Lotus Sutra and then commit slander. The consequence is to descend into an evil path of existence, regardless of one's role or status. Using the example of the cold-suffering bird, the Daishonin admonishes his believers never to lapse into negligence, or be tempted by fame or fortune.

After mentioning the deplorable state

of the country and the degradation of Buddhist priests, he depicts the purpose of the Lotus Sutra by comparing an ordinary person to an egg. Like the fluids in an egg that develop into a bird, enlightenment exists as a potential within human life. Lastly, he says that the key to enlightenment is faith in the Gohonzon.

Notes

1. The liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, and spleen.

2. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*.

3. The "tiger of death" image is derived from a passage in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* that states that, no matter how sweet the water or lush the grass, sheep will go hungry for fear of the ferocious tiger.

4. Here the Japanese word *ma*, or 'devil,' is being translated as 'evil' for clarity of expression. In this case it means what obstructs a greater good.

5. An important shrine in Nara, associated with the Fujiwara family.

6. The "Teacher of the Law" chapter reads, "In the evil world following my extinction if there are those who can embrace this sutra, you should press your palms together in reverence and offer alms to them as you would to the World-Honored One."

7. Two of the five major Zen temples in Kamakura. Kencho-ji was founded by Regent Hojo Tokiyori in 1253, and Engaku-ji, by Regent Hojo Tokimune in 1278.

8. Wheat, rice, beans, and two types of millet. Also a generic term for all grains, which is its meaning here.

9. "The most important of all" refers to the teaching that Shakyamuni transferred to Bodhisattva Superior Practices in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra and defined in the "Medicine King" chapter as the Law that would spread in the last five-hundred-year period after his passing.

10. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

11. This refers to the transmigration of unenlightened beings through the six paths. Living beings are said to repeat the cycle of rebirth amid the six lower worlds, which are characterized by delusion, with limited life spans and in different forms in accordance with their karma.

12. Source unknown.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

14. The Chinese believed that, when the otter left part of a fish uneaten, it was in fact presenting the remains as a religious offering. This story is found in the Confucian *Book of Rites*.

On Filial and Unfilial Conduct



I HAVE received your gift of a sack of rice, sent in donation for a memorial service on the anniversary of Ueno's passing. I will offer it in the presence of the Buddha and recite the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

As for the meaning of filial piety, only by first knowing about unfilial behavior can we know what it means to be filial. As an example of unfilial conduct, a person called Yu-meng¹ once struck his father, and as a result was felled by a bolt of lightning. Because he cursed his mother, a person called Pan-fu² was attacked and devoured by a poisonous snake. King Ajatashatru killed his father, and as a result contracted white leprosy. And because he killed one of his parents, King Virudhaka was trapped in a burning boat on a river and fell alive into the hell of incessant suffering. In no case have such things befallen someone for killing an unrelated person. By considering the results of unfilial conduct, we can understand how great the benefit of filial conduct must be.

The more than three thousand volumes of non-Buddhist scriptures³ concern no other matters; they teach nothing but filial conduct toward one's father and mother. Yet though with these teachings one may fulfill one's duties to one's parents in the present

life, one will be unable to help them in their life to come. The debt of gratitude owed to one's father and mother is as vast as the ocean. If one cares for them while they are alive but does nothing to help them in their next life, it will be like a mere drop of water.

The more than five thousand volumes of Buddhist scriptures likewise concern nothing else; they simply set forth the merits of filial piety. However, though the Thus Come One's first forty years and more of teachings may seem to be about filial conduct, he did not reveal in them the true teaching on this matter. Therefore, though they appear to fall within the realm of teachings on filial conduct, they are in fact unfilial.

The Venerable Maudgalyayana rescued his mother from the suffering of the realm of hungry spirits.⁴ However, he was only able to lead her to the worlds of human and heavenly beings, and could not enable her to enter the path of attaining Buddhahood. The Thus Come One Shakyamuni, at the age of thirty, expounded a teaching to his father, King Shuddhodana, enabling him to reach the fourth and highest level of attainment.⁵ And at the age of thirty-eight, he enabled his mother, Lady Maya, to attain the stage of arhat.⁶ Yet while such deeds may resemble filial conduct, the Buddha was in fact

guilty of unfilial behavior, for though he freed his parents from the six paths, he caused them to enter a path that would never lead to Buddhahood.⁷ This is like reducing a crown prince to the status of commoner, or like marrying a princess to a man of lowly birth.

For this reason, the Buddha said, “[If I used a lesser vehicle to convert even one person], I would be guilty of stinginess and greed, but such a thing would be impossible.”⁸ Having given his parents a meal of boiled barley while begrudging them amrita, and having offered them unrefined spirits while denying them fine wine, the Buddha had become the most unfilial of persons. Like King Virudhaka, he should have fallen alive into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering, and like King Ajatashatru, his body should have been afflicted with white leprosy. However, forty-two years [after he attained enlightenment], he expounded the Lotus Sutra, saying: “Those disciples, though they have conceived an idea of extinction and entered into what they take to be nirvana, will in that other land seek the Buddha wisdom and will be able to hear this sutra.”⁹ Because Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra to repay the debt of gratitude he owed to his father and mother, Many Treasures Buddha, who had come from the World of Treasure Purity, praised him as a Buddha of true filial piety. And the Buddhas of the ten directions assem-

bled and declared him to be the most filial among all the Buddhas.

Considering matters in this light, we can see that the people of Japan are all unfilial. In a passage of the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha taught that unfilial persons would be more numerous than the dust particles of the land.¹⁰ Thus, the sun, the moon, and the eighty-four thousand stars in heaven each grow enraged and glare down furiously at the country of Japan. This is what today’s divination masters are reporting to the ruler as frequent disturbances in the heavens. And with strange happenings on earth occurring day after day, the country is like a small boat tossed about on the great sea. This is the reason why the children of Japan have lost their vitality, and why the women are vomiting blood.¹¹

You are the most filial person in all of Japan. Brahma and Shakra will descend from heaven to serve you as left and right wings, and the gods of the earth in the four directions will support your feet, revering you as their father and mother. There is still much that I would like to say, but I will conclude here.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The eighth day of the third month
in the third year of Koan (1280)

Reply sent to Ueno.



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Nanjo Tokimitsu in response to his request that Nichiren Daishonin offer memorial prayers on the anniversary of the death of his father, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro. Tokimitsu’s father died on the

eighth day of the third month, the same date that this letter was written, in 1265. In this letter, the Daishonin explains the true meaning of filial conduct. First, by citing examples from the Chinese and Indian traditions of the

retribution befalling notoriously unfilial people, he suggests the great merit that accrues from acting with filial piety.

The Daishonin then considers which teaching enables one to fulfill one's obligation to one's parents. The doctrines of Confucianism, he says, teach how one should care for one's parents while they are alive. But because these doctrines do not penetrate to the true eternal nature of life, they give no indication of how to benefit one's parents after

they have died. Thus, they do not teach filial piety in the deepest sense.

Next, even the Buddhist teachings of Hinayana and provisional Mahayana do not fully reveal the ultimate truth. The Daishonin says that they cannot enable one's deceased parents to attain Buddhahood, and concludes that only through faith in the Lotus Sutra, which leads all people equally to Buddhahood, can one enable one's deceased parents to attain Buddhahood and so fully repay one's filial obligations to them.

Notes

1. A figure in Chinese legend.
2. Another figure in Chinese legend.
3. Here, those of Confucianism and Taoism.
4. According to the Service for the Deceased Sutra, Maudgalyayana perceived with his divine eyesight that his deceased mother was suffering in the realm of hungry spirits. He tried to send her food by means of his transcendental powers, but it turned into flames and burned her. Accordingly, he sought the advice of Shakyamuni, who urged him to make offerings to the monks for her sake on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Maudgalyayana made offerings of food to the Buddhist Order as instructed, and his mother was relieved of her agony.
5. This refers to the highest of the four stages that the voice-hearers of Hinayana Buddhism aim to attain. In ascending order, they are the stages of the stream-winner, the once-returner, the non-returner, and the arhat.
6. Lady Maya was the wife of King

Shuddhodana and mother of Shakyamuni. The source alluding to her having attained the stage of arhat when Shakyamuni was thirty-eight years old is uncertain. According to the Maya Sutra, Shakyamuni used his mystic powers to ascend to the heaven of the thirty-three gods where he expounded his teachings to his mother Maya, who had been reborn there.

7. This statement reflects the viewpoint, set forth in the provisional Mahayana teachings, that people of the two vehicles can never attain Buddhahood.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. "A lesser vehicle" here refers to the provisional teachings.

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 7.

10. The Daishonin probably refers to a passage in the Nirvana Sutra that likens those who believe in the correct teaching to the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail, and those who practice erroneous teachings, to the dust particles of the land.

11. Probably a reference to epidemics.

The Meaning of Faith



WHAT is called faith is nothing unusual. Faith means putting one's trust in the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, and the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, and chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo as a woman cherishes her husband, as a man lays down his life for his wife, as parents refuse to abandon their children, or as a child refuses to leave its mother.

Not only that, but one should ponder the sutra passages "Honestly dis-

carding expedient means"¹ and "Not accepting a single verse of the other sutras"² without the slightest thought of casting them away, as a woman refuses to part with her mirror, or as a man wears his sword.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The eighteenth day of the fifth month

Reply to the lay nun Myoichi



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the fifth month of the third year of Koan (1280). The lay nun Myoichi was a relative of Nissho, one of Nichiren Daishonin's six senior disciples, and lived in Kamakura. She was an earnest believer and fairly well educated, but

suffered from poor health. Her husband was also a believer, and their fief was confiscated because of their faith. After her husband died, the lay nun was left with two small children, but despite her many difficulties, she remained loyal to the Daishonin.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. Ibid., chap. 3.

A Comparison of the Lotus and Other Sutras



QUESTION: The “Teacher of the Law” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, “[This Lotus Sutra is] the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” What is the meaning of this passage?

Answer: More than two thousand years have passed since the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra in India. It took a little more than twelve hundred years before this sutra was introduced to China, and two hundred more years before it was brought from China to Japan. Since then, more than seven hundred years have already passed.

After the demise of the Buddha, there were only three persons who realized the true meaning of this passage of the Lotus Sutra. In India, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna said in his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*: “[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who can change poison into medicine.” This is the way he explained the meaning of the passage, “the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” In China, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai Chih-che interpreted it in the light of its context: “Among all those I [Shakyamuni Buddha] have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.”¹ And in Japan, the Great

Teacher Dengyo elaborated on it as follows: “All the sutras of the first four periods preached in the past, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra now being preached, and the Nirvana Sutra to be preached in the future are easy to believe and easy to understand. This is because the Buddha taught these sutras in accordance with the capacity of his listeners. The Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and to understand because in it the Buddha directly revealed what he had attained.”²

Question: Can you explain what he meant by that?

Answer: The ease of believing and understanding in the one case is due to the fact that the Buddha taught in accordance with the capacity of the people. And the difficulty of believing and understanding in the other case is due to the fact that he taught in accordance with his own enlightenment.

The Great Teacher Kobo and his successors at To-ji temple in Japan hold that, of all the exoteric teachings, the Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand, but that, in comparison to the esoteric teachings, it is easy to believe and easy to understand. Jikaku, Chisho, and their followers contend that both the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra are among the most difficult to believe and the most difficult

to understand, but that, of these two, the Mahavairochana Sutra is by far the more difficult to believe and to understand.

All the people in Japan agree with both of these contentions. However, in interpreting this passage, I say that the non-Buddhist scriptures are easier to believe and understand than the Hinayana sutras, the Hinayana sutras are easier than the Mahavairochana and other [Correct and Equal] sutras, the Mahavairochana and other sutras are easier than the Wisdom sutras, the Wisdom sutras are easier than the Flower Garland Sutra, the Flower Garland is easier than the Nirvana Sutra, the Nirvana is easier than the Lotus Sutra, and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus is easier than the essential teaching.³ Thus there are many levels of comparative ease and difficulty.

Question: What is the significance of knowing them?

Answer: The great lantern that illuminates the long night of the sufferings of birth and death, the sharp sword that severs the fundamental darkness inherent in life, is none other than the Lotus Sutra. The teachings of the True Word, Flower Garland, and other schools are categorized as those expounded in accordance with the people's capacity. They are, therefore, easy to believe and understand. The teachings expounded in accordance with the people's capacity are the sutras that the Buddha preached in response to the wishes of the people of the nine worlds, just as a wise father instructs an ignorant son in a way suited to the child's understanding. On the other hand, the teaching expounded in accordance with the Buddha's enlightenment is the sutra that the Buddha preached directly from the world of Buddhahood, just as a sage father guides his ignorant son to his own understanding.

In the light of this principle, I have carefully considered the Mahavairo-

chana, Flower Garland, Nirvana, and other [provisional] sutras, only to find that all of them are sutras expounded in accordance with the people's capacity.

Question: Is there any evidence to support this contention?

Answer: The Shrimala Sutra says: "The Buddha brings to maturity those who have only practiced non-Buddhist teachings by revealing the practice of good causes for the realms of human and heavenly beings. To those who seek to become voice-hearers, the Buddha imparts the vehicle for voice-hearers. To those who seek to become cause-awakened ones, the Buddha expounds the vehicle for cause-awakened ones. To those who seek the great vehicle, the Buddha reveals the great vehicle [for bodhisattvas]." This statement refers to those teachings that are easy to believe and easy to understand, such as the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, Wisdom, Nirvana, and other sutras.

In contrast, the [Lotus] sutra says: "At that time the World-Honored One addressed Bodhisattva Medicine King, and through him the eighty thousand great men, saying: 'Medicine King, do you see in this great assembly the immeasurable number of heavenly beings, dragon kings, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings, as well as monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, those who seek to become voice-hearers, who seek to become pratyekabuddhas, or who seek the Buddha way? Upon these various kinds of beings who in the presence of the Buddha listen to one verse or one phrase of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law and for a moment think of it with joy I will bestow on all of them a prophecy that they will attain supreme perfect enlightenment.'"⁴

In the various other sutras we find that the five precepts were taught for human beings, the ten good precepts for heavenly beings, [the four infinite

virtues of] pity, compassion, joy, and impartiality for the god Brahma, the practice of almsgiving for the devil king, the two hundred and fifty precepts for monks, the five hundred precepts for nuns, the four noble truths for voice-hearers, the twelve-linked chain of causation for cause-awakened ones, and the six paramitas for bodhisattvas. This method of teaching is comparable to water that assumes the round or square shape of its container, or to an elephant that exerts just enough strength to subdue its enemy.

The Lotus Sutra is entirely different. It was preached equally for all, including the eight kinds of nonhuman beings and the four kinds of believers. This method of teaching is comparable to a measuring rod that is used to eliminate uneven places, or to the lion king that always exerts its full power in attack, regardless of the strength of its opponent.

When one examines all the various sutras in the clear mirror of the Lotus, it is evident that the three True Word sutras, including the Mahavairochana, and the three Pure Land sutras⁵ are teachings expounded in accordance

with the people's capacity. And yet because the people have made the teachings of Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho their basis, this truth has been obscured in Japan now for more than four hundred years. It is like exchanging a gem for a pebble or trading sandalwood for ordinary lumber. Because Buddhism has gradually been turned upside down, the secular world also has been plunged into corruption and chaos. Buddhism is like the body, and society like the shadow. When the body bends, so does the shadow. How fortunate that all of my disciples who follow the Buddha's true intention will naturally flow into the ocean of comprehensive wisdom! But the Buddhist scholars of our time put their faith in teachings expounded according to the people's capacity, and are therefore doomed to sink into the sea of suffering. I will explain in more detail on another occasion.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the fifth month

Reply to Toki



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Toki Jonin in Shimosa in the fifth month of the third year of Koan (1280). Nichiren Daishonin explains to Toki the meaning of the passage from the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that describes the sutra as "the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand." In the beginning of the letter, the Daishonin introduces the three Buddhist scholars who correctly interpreted this passage—Nagarjuna of India, T'ien-t'ai of China, and Dengyo of Japan. Next, he

distinguishes two types of teachings—the provisional teachings, which Shakyamuni Buddha taught according to the people's capacity, and the Lotus Sutra, which was a direct statement of Shakyamuni's own enlightenment. The Daishonin says that, while the former type of teaching is easy to believe and understand, only the Lotus enables one to overcome the fundamental darkness inherent in life.

Finally, the Daishonin asserts that, because the Japanese people have embraced the misleading doctrines of

Kobo and other priests, confusion reigns in the world of Buddhism, and society has consequently been thrown into chaos. He declares that the correct teaching of Buddhism provides a basis

for the peace and prosperity of the country, and concludes by saying that his followers are able to attain enlightenment because they believe in the Buddha's correct teaching.

Notes

1. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.*
2. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra.*
3. The wording of the original text is expanded here for the sake of clarity.
4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

5. The three True Word sutras are the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. The three Pure Land sutras are the Buddha Infinite Life, Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life, and Amida sutras.

The Treasure of a Filial Child



I WAS deeply grieved to hear the news about the wife of the lay priest of Ko.¹ Please tell her that I think very fondly of her.

I have received your various gifts of fifteen hundred coins, laver, seaweed, and dried rice, and have respectfully reported this in the presence of the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra says, "If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."² Although this passage consists of but ten characters, to read even a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra is to read without omission all the sacred teachings preached by the Thus Come One Shakyamuni during his lifetime. Therefore, the Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "If, in propagating the Lotus Sutra, one is to interpret even one of its doctrines, one must take into consideration all the Buddha's lifetime of teachings and master them from beginning to end."³

By "beginning" he means the Flower Garland Sutra, and by "end" he means the Nirvana Sutra. The Flower Garland Sutra was preached at the time when the Buddha had first attained the way, when the great bodhisattvas Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, and others, responding to the request of a bodhisattva called Moon of Deliverance, preached in the Buddha's pres-

ence. I do not know in what form this sutra may exist in India, in the dragon king's palace,⁴ or in the Tushita heaven, but it has been brought to Japan in a sixty-volume version, an eighty-volume version, and a forty-volume version.⁵ In the case of the last of the teachings, the Nirvana Sutra, I again do not know in what form it may exist in India or in the dragon king's palace, but in our country it exists in a forty-volume version, a thirty-six-volume version, a six-volume version, and a two-volume version.⁶

In addition to these sutras, there are the Agama sutras, the Correct and Equal sutras, and the Wisdom sutras, which run to five thousand or seven thousand volumes. But even though we may not see or hear of any of these various sutras, if we read so much as a single word or phrase of the Lotus Sutra, it is just as though we were reading every word of all these various sutras.

It is like the two characters that compose the name for India, Gasshi,⁷ or the name for Japan, Nihon. The two characters that make up the name Gasshi encompass the five regions of India, the sixteen great states, the five hundred middle-sized states, the ten thousand small states, and the countless smaller states like scattered grains of millet, all with their great land areas,

great mountains, their plants and trees, and their people and animals. Or it is like a mirror, which may be only one inch, two inches, three inches, four inches, or five inches in size, but which can reflect the image of a person, whether that person is one foot or five feet tall, or of a mountain, whether it is ten feet, twenty feet, a hundred feet, or a thousand feet high.

Thus when we read the above passage from the Lotus Sutra, we know that all people who hear the sutra will, without a single exception, attain Buddhahood.

All living beings in the nine worlds and the six paths differ from one another in their minds. For example, two persons, three persons, a hundred, or a thousand people all may have faces about a foot in length, but no two look exactly alike. Their minds differ, and therefore so do their faces. How much greater still is the difference between the minds of two persons, of ten persons, and of all the living beings in the six paths and the nine worlds! So it is that some love the cherry blossoms and some love the moon, some prefer sour things and some prefer bitter, some like little things and some favor big. People have varied tastes. Some prefer good and some prefer evil. There are many kinds of people.

But though they differ from one another in such ways, once they enter into the Lotus Sutra, they all become like a single person in body and a single person in mind. This is just like the myriad different rivers that, when they flow into the ocean, all take on a uniformly salty flavor, or like the many kinds of birds that, when they approach Mount Sumeru, all assume the same [golden] hue. Thus Devadatta, who had committed three cardinal sins, and Rahula, who observed all of the two hundred and fifty precepts, both alike became Buddhas. And both King Wonderful Adornment, who held erro-

neous views, and Shariputra, who held correct views, equally received predictions that they would attain Buddhahood. This is because, in the words of the passage quoted earlier, "not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."

In the Amida and other sutras expounded during the first forty and more years of the Buddha's preaching life, Shariputra is said to have achieved great merit by reciting the name of Amida Buddha a million times in the space of seven days.⁸ But since these sutras were repudiated as teachings belonging to the period when the Buddha had "not yet revealed the truth,"⁹ such recitation is in fact as meaningless as if one were to boil water for seven days and then throw it into the ocean.

Lady Vaidehi,¹⁰ by reading the Meditation Sutra, was able to reach the stage known as the realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena. But since the Buddha cast this sutra aside when he said that he would now "honestly discard expedient means,"¹¹ unless Lady Vaidehi were to believe in the Lotus Sutra, she must revert to her former status as an ordinary woman.

One's acts of great good are nothing to rely on. If one fails to encounter the Lotus Sutra, of what avail can they be? Nor should one lament having committed acts of great evil. For if only one practices the one vehicle, then one can follow in the footsteps of Devadatta [in attaining Buddhahood]. All this is because the sutra passage that declares, "not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood," was not spoken in vain.

Some may wonder where the spirit of the late Abutsu-bo may be at this moment. But by using the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra to reflect his image, I, Nichiren, can see him among the assembly on Eagle Peak, seated within the treasure tower of Many Treasures Buddha and facing toward the east.¹²

If what I say is not true, then it is no error of mine. Rather the tongue of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who said, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth";¹³ along with the tongue of Many Treasures Buddha, who declared, "The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth";¹⁴ as well as the tongues of all the various Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, in four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands,¹⁵ who are as numerous as hemp or rice plants, as stars or stalks of bamboo, lined up side by side with never a gap between them, and who, without a single exception, extended their long broad tongues up to the palace of the great heavenly king Brahma—all these tongues, I say, will in one moment rot away like a whale that has died and decayed, or like a heap of sardines that have rotted. All the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, in the worlds of the ten directions will be guilty of the offense of speaking great falsehoods; the earth of the pure land of Tranquil Light, which is made of gold and emeralds, will suddenly split open, and all these Buddhas will, like Devadatta, plunge headlong into the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering. Or, as happened to the nun Dharma Lotus Fragrance,¹⁶ fierce flames will shoot out of their bodies because of the great lies they have told, and the flower garden of the Lotus Treasury World, a Land of Actual Reward, will in one instant be reduced to a place of ashes. But how could such things be possible?

If the late Abutsu-bo alone were not admitted to the pure land of Tranquil Light, then all these Buddhas would fall into a realm of great suffering. Leaving all else aside, you should consider things in this light. On this basis, you may judge the truth or falsehood of the Buddha's words.

A man is like a pillar, a woman like the crossbeam. A man is like the legs of a person, a woman like the trunk. A man is like the wings of a bird, a woman like the body. If the wings and the body become separated, then how can the bird fly? And if the pillar topples, then the crossbeam will surely fall to the ground.

A home without a man is like a person without a soul. With whom can you discuss matters of business, and though you may have good things to eat, with whom can you share them? Merely to be separated from your husband for a day or two is cause for uneasiness. Yet you were parted from your husband on the twenty-first day of the third month of last year, and passed the remainder of the year without seeing his return. Now it is already the seventh month of this year. Even though he himself does not return, why does he not send you some word?

The cherry blossoms, once scattered, have again come into bloom, and the fruit, once fallen, has formed again on the trees. The spring breezes are unchanged, and the scenes of autumn are just as they were last year. How is it that, in this one matter alone, things should be so different from what they were, never to be the same again?

The moon sets and rises again; the clouds disperse and then gather once more. Even heaven must regret and earth lament that this man has gone away and will never come again. You yourself must feel the same. Rely upon the Lotus Sutra as nourishment for your journey, and quickly, quickly set out for the pure land of Eagle Peak so that you can meet him there!

There is a sutra passage that says that children are one's enemies. "People in this world commit many sins because of their children,"¹⁷ it states. Although the birds known as the crested hawk and the eagle raise their young with compassion, the young turn around and

eat their parents. And the bird known as the owl, after it is hatched, invariably devours its mother. Such is the case among the lowly creatures.

Even among human beings, King Virudhaka seized the throne from his father, whom he resented, and King Ajatashatru murdered his father. An Lu-shan killed his foster mother, and An Ch'ing-hsü killed his father, An Lu-shan. An Ch'ing-hsü was killed by Shih Shih-ming [who was like a son to him], and Shih Shih-ming was in turn killed by his son, Shih Ch'ao-i.¹⁸ Thus there is good reason why children are spoken of as enemies. The monk named Sunakshatra was a son of Shakyamuni Buddha. But he conspired with a follower of the non-Buddhist teaching who was called Painfully Acquired, and attempted time and again to kill his father, the Buddha.

There is also a sutra passage that says that children are a treasure. It states: "Because of the blessings their sons and daughters accumulate through religious practice, a great bright light appears, illuminating the realm of hell, and the parents suffering in hell are thereby able to awaken a believing mind."¹⁹ But even if the Buddha had not taught [that children are a treasure], you could tell as much simply from the evidence before your eyes.

In India there was once a great ruler, the king of the country called Parthia.²⁰ This king was inordinately fond of horses and horse-raising. In time, he became so expert in raising them that he could not only turn a worthless horse into an outstanding one, but could also transform an ox into a horse. Eventually, he even turned people into horses and rode them. The citizens of his own state were so grieved at this that he began to turn only people from other lands into horses. Thus, when a traveling merchant came to his kingdom from another country, he gave the merchant a potion to drink, trans-

formed him into a horse, and tied him up in the royal stables.

Even under ordinary circumstances the merchant yearned for his homeland and in particular thought longingly of his wife and child. Thus he found his present lot very difficult to bear. But since the king would not allow him to go home, he could not do so. Indeed, even had it been possible, what could he have done there in his present form? So all he could do was bewail his fate morning and evening.

This man had a son who, when his father failed to return at the expected time, began to wonder if he had been killed or had perhaps fallen ill. Feeling that, as a son, he must find out what had happened to his father, he set out on a journey to do so. His mother lamented, protesting that her husband had already gone off to another land and failed to return, and that, if she were now to be abandoned by her only son as well, she did not know how she could carry on. But the son was so deeply concerned about his father that he nevertheless set off for the country of Parthia in search of him.

Upon his arrival, he put up for the night at a small lodging. The master of the house said: "How sad! You are still so young, and I can see from your face and bearing that you are a person of distinction. I had a son once, but he went off to another country and perhaps has died there. At least I do not know what has become of him. When I think of the fate of my own son, I can scarcely bear to look at you. I say this because here in this country we have a cause for great sorrow. The king of this country is so inordinately fond of horses that he ventures to make use of a strange kind of plant. If he feeds one of the narrow leaves of this plant to a person, the person turns into a horse. And if he feeds one of the broad leaves of the plant to a horse, the horse turns into a person. Not long ago

a merchant came here from another country. The king fed him some of this plant, turned him into a horse, and is secretly keeping him confined in the first of the royal stables.”

When the son heard this, he thought that his father must have been transformed into a horse, and he asked, “What color is this horse’s coat?”

The master of the house replied, “The horse is chestnut, with white dappling on the shoulders.”

After the son had learned all these things, he contrived to approach the royal palace, where he was able to steal some of the broad leaves of the strange plant. When he fed these to the horse that his father had become, his father changed back into his original human form.

The king of the country, marveling at what had happened, handed the father over to the son, since the latter had shown himself to be such a model of filial concern. After that he never again turned people into horses.

Who but a son would have gone to such lengths to search for his father? The Venerable Maudgalyayana saved his mother from the sufferings of the world of hungry spirits, and the brothers Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye persuaded their father to give up his erroneous views. This is why it is said that a good child is a parent’s treasure.

Now the late Abutsu-bo was an inhabitant of a wild and distant island in the northern sea of Japan. Nevertheless, he was anxious about his future existence, so he took religious vows and aspired to happiness in the next life. When he encountered the exile Nichiren, he embraced the Lotus Sutra, and in the spring of last year he became a Buddha. When the fox of Mount Shita encountered the Buddha’s teaching, he grew dissatisfied with life, longed for death, and was reborn as the god Shakra.²¹

In the same way, the Honorable Abutsu grew weary of his existence in this impure world, and so he became a Buddha.

His son, Tokuro Moritsuna, has followed in his footsteps and become a wholehearted votary of the Lotus Sutra. Last year, on the second day of the seventh month, he appeared here at Mount Minobu in Hakiri in the province of Kai, having journeyed a thousand *ri*²² over mountains and seas with his father’s ashes hung around his neck, and deposited them at the place dedicated to the practice of the Lotus Sutra. And this year, on the first day of the seventh month, he came again to Mount Minobu to pay respects at his father’s grave. Surely, there is no treasure greater than a child, no treasure greater than a child! Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nichiren

The second day of the seventh month

Reply to the wife of the late Abutsu-bo

POSTSCRIPT:²³ I am sending a priestly robe of dyed silk. Please inform Bungo-bo.²⁴ The teachings of the Lotus Sutra are already spreading throughout the country of Japan. Bungo-bo should undertake to propagate them in the Hokuriku region,²⁵ but he cannot do so unless he becomes well learned. Tell him to make haste and come here no later than the fifteenth day of the ninth month.

Please send me the various sacred texts as soon as possible by way of Tamba-bo,²⁶ as you did with the daily records. Please send Yamabushi-bo²⁷ here to me as I instructed earlier. I am delighted to hear that you have been treating him with such kindness.

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the seventh month of the third year of Koan (1280) to the lay nun Sennichi, who lived on Sado Island. Sennichi was the wife of Abutsu-bo Nitto-ku, who had passed away the year before.

Abutsu-bo had originally been a Nembutsu believer, but soon after encountering the Daishonin, together with his wife, became his sincere follower and helped provide him with food and supplies during his stay on Sado.

After the Daishonin was pardoned from his exile and had taken up his residence at Minobu, Abutsu-bo, despite his advanced age, made at least three journeys to see him. He died on the twenty-first day of the third month, 1279, at the age of ninety-one. His son, Tokuro Moritsuna, visited the Daishonin at Minobu later that year with his father's ashes and laid them to rest there.

The lay nun Sennichi was concerned about the privations of the Daishonin's life at Minobu, and in 1280 sent Tokuro with various offerings for him. Tokuro arrived at Minobu on the first day

of the seventh month, and Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to the lay nun in acknowledgment of her sincere offerings, entrusting it to her son on his return journey.

In the beginning portion, the Daishonin declares that to read even one phrase of the Lotus Sutra is equivalent to reading all the teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha during his lifetime. He assures the lay nun Sennichi that all persons who embrace the Lotus Sutra will attain Buddhahood, and therefore, in the light of the "clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra," there can be no doubt that her late husband, Abutsu-bo, has attained Buddhahood as well.

In the remaining portion of the letter, the Daishonin encourages the lay nun in the face of her loneliness following her husband's death, and also praises the filial devotion of her son, Tokuro. Especially touched by Tokuro's two visits to Minobu for his father's sake, the Daishonin concludes his letter by exclaiming, "Surely, there is no treasure greater than a child, no treasure greater than a child!"

Notes

1. No definite information is available as to the exact nature of the news concerning the wife of the lay priest of Ko, but it is clear that she had experienced some suffering, and that the Daishonin wished to console her. Ko means a provincial office and its location. The lay priest of Ko was so called because he lived in the provincial capital of Sado.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. This passage, in the Chinese text, consists of ten characters.

3. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra."*

4. A legendary palace located under the sea, which was filled with great treasures and beautiful ornaments. It is said that Nagarjuna obtained the Flower Garland Sutra here.

5. There are three Chinese versions of

the Flower Garland Sutra, translated respectively by Buddhahadra of the Eastern Chin dynasty, Shikshananda of the T'ang dynasty, and Prajna of the same dynasty.

6. There are four Chinese versions of the Mahayana Nirvana Sutra, translated respectively by Dharmaraksha of the Northern Liang dynasty; by Hui-kuan, Hui-yen, and Hsieh Ling-yün of the Liu Sung dynasty; by Fa-hsien and Buddhahadra of the Eastern Chin dynasty; and by Jnanabhadra and Hui-ning of the T'ang dynasty.

7. Gasshi (Chin Yüeh-chih) was a name for India used in China and Japan. In the latter part of the third century B.C.E., a Central Asian tribe called the Yüeh-chih ruled a part of India. Since Buddhism was brought to China via this territory, the name came to be applied to India itself.

8. In the Amida Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, addressing Shariputra as the representative of the assembly, taught that one can obtain the blessing of rebirth in the Pure Land by meditating single-mindedly upon the name of Amida Buddha for seven days. *The Treatise on the Pure Land*, written by Vasubandhu, interprets this to mean reciting the name of Amida Buddha a million times in seven days.

9. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

10. Vaidehi was the wife of King Bimbisara of Magadha and the mother of Ajatashatru. According to the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, when Ajatashatru killed his father and confined Vaidehi to the interior of the palace, she faced Eagle Peak where Shakyamuni was preaching and prayed to him. Out of compassion, he appeared in her chamber and taught her how to reach the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

12. According to ancient Indian custom, kings and high dignitaries were seated facing east. One may assume, therefore, that, when Shakyamuni Buddha began to preach the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak, he sat facing east, and his disciples were facing west, toward him. Later, the treasure tower emerged from beneath the earth, facing west in the presence of Shakyamuni, and ascended into space. Shakyamuni then seated himself beside Many Treasures Buddha, who was inside the tower. Thus Shakyamuni was facing west during the Ceremony in the Air, and the rest of the assembly were facing east. "Facing toward the east" in the text would mean that Abutsu-bo is seated within the treasure tower, facing the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures.

13. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, chap. II.

15. According to T'ien-t'ai's *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, Shakyamuni's emanations gathered in the four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands that he had purified in order to accommodate them.

16. According to the Shurangama Sutra, raging flames emanated from every part of the body of the nun Dharma Lotus Fragrance, because of the offense of speaking great falsehoods, and she fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

17. Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra.

18. An Lu-shan (705-757) was a regional commander during the T'ang dynasty. He won power at court through the patronage of Hsüan-tsung's favorite consort, Yang Kuei-fei, who adopted him as her legal son. Later he contended with Yang Kuei-fei's brother for control of the central government and led a rebellion in 755, capturing the capital. The fleeing emperor Hsüan-tsung was forced by his discontented soldiers to order the execution of Yang Kuei-fei and her brother, who were blamed for the catastrophe. An Lu-shan was eventually killed by his own son, An Ch'ing-hsü, in the course of a succession dispute concerning the imperial family. Shih Shih-ming was one of the leaders of the An Lu-shan rebellion, and after killing An Ch'ing-hsü, was in turn killed by his own son, Shih Ch'ao-i.

19. Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra. The Daishonin slightly modifies the wording of the original.

20. Parthia was an ancient kingdom extending from northwestern India to Persia. Founded in 248 B.C.E., it fell in C.E. 226. The story of the king who turned people into horses appears in *A Collection of Treasures*, written by Taira no Yasuyori during the Jisho era (1177-1181).

21. This story appears in *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* Chased by a lion, a fox accidentally fell into a dry well and remained there for three days. On the brink of starvation, he resolved to dedicate himself to the Buddhist Law and recited a verse expressing his desire to expiate his past offenses. When the fox's voice reached the god Shakra on the summit of Mount Sumeru, Shakra rescued him and asked him to preach the Law to him and the other heavenly gods.

22. "A thousand ri" is not intended as an exact figure but simply indicates a great distance.

23. On the original manuscript, probably having run out of space, the Daishonin inserted this postscript at the beginning of the letter. In preparing the translation, we have moved it to the end, following a more recent editing of the Japanese manuscript.

24. Bungo-bo was a disciple of the Daishonin who seems to have instructed Abutsu-bo and other followers in the province of Sado.

25. The area including Sado and the six

mainland provinces bordering on the Sea of Japan.

26. Tamba-bo was a disciple of the Daishonin. He is said to have taken part in the Daishonin's funeral procession and was among those who served in the rotation

system for attending the Daishonin's grave. He lived at Myoko-ji temple in Kazusa Province.

27. Yamabushi-bo was one of the Daishonin's disciples on Sado Island, probably under the patronage of Abutsu-bo.

The Sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye



I HAVE received one sack of unpolished rice, one basket of melons, some yams, and various other gifts.

Once there was a person who exerted himself in the service of a wealthy man named Pleasure Virtue. Day and night he, his wife, and their children were treated harshly and driven hard. Unable to bear the excessive ill-treatment, he hid himself and fled to another country. After serving for a time in the court of a great king in that country, he became an influential retainer and eventually the chief minister to the king. Later, employing the might of this country, he defeated the country where his former master resided. At that time, seeing this chief minister, the former master was greatly frightened and regretted his ill-treatment. Placing himself in the service of the chief minister, he brought him various treasures. And, with no thought for the defeat he had experienced, he now strove only to ensure that his life would be spared.¹

The case of the Lotus Sutra is the same. The Lotus Sutra is the master of Medicine Master Buddha in the east, as well as the master of all Buddhas in the south, west, north, and the worlds above and below. Shakyamuni Buddha and the other Buddhas revere the characters of the Lotus Sutra in the same way that people fear their sovereign and the stars venerate the moon.

We ordinary people, however, have long been under the reign of the devil king of the sixth heaven. We have been forced into confinement in the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals, and, without a moment of relief, day and night we are tortured by the wardens of hell. Even so, if we could somehow place ourselves under the protection of the Lotus Sutra, then Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions would treat us as their children, and thus even the heavenly kings Brahma and Shakra would refrain from approaching us out of fear. How much more, then, would the devil king of the sixth heaven fear us! Even though the devil king had formerly been our master, he would now stand in reverential awe of us. And, terribly fearful that should he cause trouble for us, his situation would worsen when he presented himself to the Lotus Sutra and the Buddhas of the ten directions, he would make us offerings. For this reason, he spares no effort whatsoever to prevent all the living beings in the six paths from accepting the Lotus Sutra.

Therefore, how could this be? You have taken pity on Nichiren, who is hated by all people, sending various articles all the way to him in these mountains on more than just one or two occasions. This is no ordinary matter. Indeed, Shakyamuni Buddha

himself may have entered your body. Or perhaps your deceased son has become a Buddha and, in order to guide his father and mother, has entered your hearts.

The king Wonderful Adornment² was an evil king. However, because his two sons, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, guided him to the way, he and his wife were both able to place their trust in the Lotus Sutra and become Buddhas. Mysteriously enough, your own circumstances are much the same.

Kai-ko³ said: "He [the deceased son] was above the ordinary in both features and form. In addition, he was honest at heart and rich in wisdom. I felt it a terrible pity that someone such as he, outstanding in every respect, should die so young. Reconsidering the matter, however, I realized that it was because of this boy's death that his mother became a seeker of the way and his father began to practice, praying for his repose. How marvelous, I thought.

Moreover, the fact that they have put their trust in the Lotus Sutra, which all people detest, must mean that their deceased son has been at their side and encouraged them to do so." I also believe this to be the case.

Before, I had thought that your sincerity was just an ordinary matter, but now, for the first time, I have sensed the depth of your faith. If anything should happen to you, just as the moon emerges to shine in the dark night, so the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo will appear as a moon for you. Be convinced that Shakyamuni Buddha, the Buddhas of the ten directions, and the son who preceded you in death will appear in this moon. I will explain in greater detail on another occasion.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The seventh day of the seventh
month



Background

This letter was written in the seventh month of the third year of Koan (1280), but it is not certain to whom it was addressed. One view holds that the recipient was Matsuno Rokuro Saemon-no-jo, who lived in Matsuno Village in Ihara District of Suruga Province, while another says that it was sent to Niike Saemon-no-jo. The Daishonin's priest-disciple Kai-ko Nichiji's description of the son's appearance and character suggests that he knew him personally, thus supporting the notion that the letter was meant for Matsuno Rokuro Saemon-no-jo, Nichiji's elder brother.

In this letter, the Daishonin uses the example of the wealthy man Pleasure

Virtue to illustrate how even the devil king of the sixth heaven fears and is subservient to a votary of the Lotus Sutra. He expresses joy that the recipient of the letter has persevered in his faith despite the opposition of the people of Japan to the Daishonin's teachings.

Next, the Daishonin mentions the story of the king Wonderful Adornment, who was introduced to the correct teaching by his sons, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye. In conclusion, he assures the recipient and his wife that their son has indeed attained enlightenment and encourages them in their faith.

Notes

1. The source of this story is unknown.

2. A king who appears in the “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. He lived in the age of the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom. Though originally a believer in Brahmanism, King Wonderful Adornment went at the urging of his wife Pure Virtue and his two sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye to see the Buddha, and made various offerings to him. The Buddha prophesied that the king would in the future attain enlightenment as a Buddha called Sal Tree King. King Wonderful

Adornment then abdicated the throne in favor of his brother and joined the Buddhist Order together with his wife, two sons, and followers. He devoted himself tirelessly to the practice of the Lotus Sutra. In the assembly on Eagle Peak, Shakyamuni Buddha identified the king with Bodhisattva Flower Virtue, and his sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye with the bodhisattvas Medicine King and Medicine Superior.

3. Kai-ko is another name for Nichiji (b. 1250), one of the Daishonin’s six senior disciples.

The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form



QUESTION: In Japan, there are the six schools, the seven schools, and the eight schools. Among these, which school teaches the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form?

Answer: According to the Great Teacher Dengyo, this doctrine is found only in the Lotus Sutra, while according to the Great Teacher Kobo, it is found only in the True Word teachings.

Question: What proof can you show to support this?

Answer: The Great Teacher Dengyo states in his *Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*: "You should understand that, among the sutras that the other schools rely upon, there are none that teach the doctrine of entering [Buddhahood] in one's present form. Although a few of them appear to teach this doctrine, they limit such attainment to those who have reached the eighth of the ten stages of development or higher. They do not acknowledge [the attainment of Buddhahood in] the form of an ordinary person. Only the Tendai Lotus school clearly teaches this doctrine of entering [Buddhahood] in one's present form."

Outstanding Principles also declares, "Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood.

Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form."

It also says, "You should understand that this passage¹ is inquiring whether there are any persons who have attained Buddhahood, and so intends to manifest the great power and authority of this sutra."

The purpose of these passages of commentary is to clarify that the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form is limited to the Lotus Sutra alone.

Question: What evidence can you show that would indicate the opinion of the Great Teacher Kobo?

Answer: In his *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*, the Great Teacher Kobo states, "*The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* says: 'Only in the True Word teachings can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form, because these teachings expound the practice of samadhi meditation. No such exposition is to be found in the other types of teachings.' I would like to point out that this treatise represents the secret storehouse, the heart and core, of all the thousand treatises written by the great sage Nagarjuna. In the passage just quoted, the phrase 'other types of teachings' refers to the various doctrines expounded by the body of beneficence and by the

various transformation bodies.² These are all doctrines of the exoteric teachings. But the words 'these teachings expounded the practice of samadhi meditation' refer to the teaching expounded by the body whose nature is the Dharma and to the samadhi practice carried out in the esoteric teachings of the True Word school. These are set forth in the hundred thousand verses of praise in the Diamond Crown Sutra and in other texts."

Question: The opinions put forward by these two great teachers are as incompatible as water and fire. Which one are we to believe?

Answer: These two great teachers were both outstanding sages. They went to China in the same year, and there both alike received instruction in the True Word esoteric teachings. The Great Teacher Dengyo had as his teacher of the two mandalas³ the Reverend Shun-hsiao. The Great Teacher Kobo had as his teacher of the two mandalas the Reverend Hui-kuo.

Both Shun-hsiao and Hui-kuo were disciples of Pu-k'ung. And the Tripitaka Master Pu-k'ung was sixth in a direct line of succession from the Thus Come One Mahavairohana.⁴ From the standpoint of both the transmission they had inherited and their own accomplishments, the great teachers Dengyo and Kobo were valued by the people of the time as though they were the sun and moon. They were looked up to as if they were the minister of the left and the minister of the right. For a person of shallow learning to try to decide what is right and what is wrong is difficult indeed. [Were I to do so,] I would surely get a bad reputation throughout the land and call down great difficulties upon myself. Nevertheless, I will attempt to examine their doctrines with a critical eye and clarify their truth or falsehood. [To that end, allow me to ask you something.]

Question: When the Great Teacher Kobo says that the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form is found only in the True Word teachings, on what sutras or treatises is he relying?

Answer: The Great Teacher Kobo is relying on *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna.

Question: What proof do you have of this?

Answer: In his *Exoteric and Esoteric*, the Great Teacher Kobo cites the passage from *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* that reads, "Only in the True Word teachings [can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form] . . . No such exposition is to be found in the other types of teachings."

Question: Is there any sutra text to support this view?

Answer: In his *Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form*, the Great Teacher Kobo states: "The six great elements⁵ interpenetrate without obstruction and are always united. The four types of mandalas⁶ are not dissociated from one another. When the Buddha bestows the three mysteries and one responds with one's own three mysteries, Buddhahood will become manifest immediately. The aspect that is infinitely and mutually reflecting, like the jewels of Indra's net, is what is referred to as 'present form.' The Buddha is naturally endowed with all-embracing wisdom. More numerous than dust particles are those possessing the fundamental entity of the mind and its attendant mental functions. Each is endowed with the five kinds of wisdom, that is, boundless wisdom. When the power of the round-mirror wisdom⁷ functions perfectly, this is the true wisdom of awakening."

Question: I am somewhat in doubt as to what sutra passages this commentary is based on.

Answer: It is based on the Diamond Crown and Mahavairohana sutras.

Question: May I ask what sutra passages these are?

Answer: The Great Teacher Kobo cites as his proof this passage: "The person who practices this samadhi can actually attain the Buddha's enlightenment."⁸ He also cites this passage: "Without casting off this body, one can attain the supernatural power of being anywhere at will. Strolling in the realm of the Great Void, one masters the mystery of the body."⁹ And this passage: "I [Mahavairochana] realized that I am originally unborn."¹⁰ And this: "All phenomena are from the beginning unborn."¹¹

Question: I would like to make an objection. These passages are indeed from the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras. But one refers to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana's attainment of enlightenment; another asserts that the True Word practitioner can acquire the five transcendental powers¹² in his present body; and another describes how a bodhisattva in the ten stages of devotion may in his present body move on to the next stage, the stage of joy.¹³ But these still do not explain how in one's present life one can gain awareness of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena, much less how one can attain Buddhahood in one's present form.

Moreover, *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment* [on which Kobo bases his argument] is not even a sutra. To base one's arguments on a treatise is to commit the error of turning one's back on what is superior and following what is inferior. It also violates the Buddha's teaching that one should "rely on the Law and not upon persons."¹⁴

[The hypothetical questioner retorts:] But the True Word priests of To-ji temple speak ill of Nichiren, saying, "You are only an ordinary man, whereas the Great Teacher Kobo was a bodhisattva who had reached the third

stage of development."¹⁵ You have not yet reached the state of realizing the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena in your present form, while the Great Teacher Kobo attained Buddhahood in his present form before the emperor's very eyes.¹⁶ And moreover, because you have not yet received any imperial edict [bestowing such a title upon you], you are not a Great Teacher.¹⁷ Therefore, you do not qualify as a teacher of the country of Japan. (This is their first point.)

"The Great Teacher Jikaku was a disciple of Dengyo and Gishin; the Great Teacher Chisho was a disciple of Gishin and Jikaku; and the Reverend Annen was a disciple of the Reverend An'ne. These three men have declared that the Lotus Tendai school represents the esoteric doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form, while the True Word school represents the esoteric doctrine of and practice for attaining Buddhahood in one's present form."¹⁸ The great teachers Dengyo and Kobo were neither of them foolish men. In addition, sages show no partiality, and thus the three teachers Jikaku, Chisho, and Annen, though they lived in the mountain temple founded by Dengyo, concurred in their teachings with the intent of Kobo of To-ji temple. Accordingly, in Japan for the past four hundred years or more, no one has disputed their doctrines. Now, what do you, an unworthy person, mean by coming forward with these evil doctrines of yours?" (This is their second point.)

Answer: If you simply speak rudely and adopt an abusive attitude, I will not discuss the matter with you. I will discuss it only if you sincerely desire to hear the truth. But with people like you, if one makes no reply, then you suppose one to be incapable of responding. Therefore, I will answer you. But rather than adopting an abusive attitude or using rude language, you had better

produce some clear passage from the sutras to support the assertions of the Great Teacher Kobo in whom you put such trust. In view of your abusive language and attitude, it would seem that in fact there is no sutra passage [substantiating the True Word doctrine] of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.

As for the matter of Jikaku, Chisho, and Annen, the great teachers Jikaku and Chisho embraced the doctrines of the Great Teacher Dengyo while they were still in Japan. But after they journeyed to China, they adopted the doctrines of such teachers as Yüancheng and Fa-ch'üan, and in their hearts discarded the doctrines of the Great Teacher Dengyo. Thus, although they lived in the mountain temple founded by Dengyo, they proved unfaithful to his teaching.

Question: What led you to this conclusion?

Answer: The commentary by the Great Teacher Dengyo states, "You should understand that this passage is inquiring whether there are any persons who have attained Buddhahood, and so intends to manifest the great power and authority of this sutra." This section is related to a passage he quoted earlier in this commentary from the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra [in which Manjushri says], "When I was in the ocean [I constantly expounded the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law alone]."¹⁹ The point of Dengyo's comment is that, no matter how much people may talk about attaining Buddhahood in one's present form, unless there are actual examples of persons who have done so, one should not heed their doctrine. It stands to reason that there can be no attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form unless it is based on the sutra of the single truth that is pure and perfect. And in the True Word scriptures such as the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras,

no examples of such persons are to be found.

Moreover, when we examine these True Word sutras, we see that they clearly belong to the categories of "combining, excluding, corresponding, and including." They do not teach that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, nor do they even suggest anywhere that Shakyamuni actually attained Buddhahood in the inconceivably remote past.

Were Jikaku and Chisho perhaps deceived by the commentaries of the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chinkang-chih, and Pu-k'ung? Jikaku and Chisho appear to have been worthy men and sages, and yet they tended to honor what was distant and to despise what was close at hand.²⁰ They were bewitched by the fact that the three True Word sutras contained mudras and mantras, and completely forgot about the all-important path of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.

Thus, although the persons on Mount Hiei today seem to be propounding the Lotus Sutra's doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form, they are in fact propounding the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form as put forward by the Great Teacher Jikaku, Annen, and the others. The attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form put forward by these persons is an attainment of Buddhahood in name but not in reality. The doctrines of such people are utterly at variance with those of the Great Teacher Dengyo.

According to the Great Teacher Dengyo, regardless of whether or not one has cast aside the body subject to transmigration through delusion with differences and limitations,²¹ the intent of the Lotus Sutra is that one attains Buddhahood in one's present form. But according to the doctrines of the Great Teacher Jikaku, if one casts aside the body subject to transmigration

through delusion with differences and limitations, it is thought that one has failed to attain Buddhahood in one's present form. People who propound such a view, however, have no understanding of what attaining Buddhahood in one's present form really means.

Question: The Great Teacher Jikaku knew the Great Teacher Dengyo personally, studied directly under him, and inherited his teachings. You, on the other hand, are separated [from Dengyo] by more than four hundred years. Is this not so?

Answer: Are those who have received the teachings directly from their teacher invariably free from error, while those who appear in later ages and examine and clarify these teachings are to be regarded as worthless? If so, then should we throw away the sutras and instead rely upon the four ranks of bodhisattvas? Should a person throw away the deed of transfer received from his father and mother and instead depend upon oral transmissions? Are the written commentaries of the Great Teacher Dengyo so much trash, and the oral traditions handed down from the Great Teacher Jikaku the only guide to truth?

In *Outstanding Principles*, the Great Teacher Dengyo lists ten points that are not found in any sutra [other than the Lotus]. As the eighth of these, it names the sutra's "superiority in leading people to attain Buddhahood in their present form." Later on, the commentary states: "You should understand that this passage is inquiring whether there are any persons who have attained Buddhahood, and so intends to manifest the great power and authority of this sutra. . . . You should understand that, among the sutras that the other schools rely upon, there are none that teach the doctrine of entering [Buddhahood] in one's present form."

Are we to turn our backs upon this passage of commentary and accept the attainment of Buddhahood in one's

present form that the Great Teacher Jikaku says derives from the esoteric doctrines and practices of the Mahavairochana Sutra?

Question: Among the commentaries of the Great Teacher Dengyo, are there any that do not accept the word "only" in *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment's* statement [that "only in the True Word teachings can one attain Buddhahood in one's present form"]?

Answer: *Outstanding Principles* states, "Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form." Thus, as you can see, this commentary does not accept the word "only" in *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment's* statement.

Question: If one rejects *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*, is not one then rejecting Nagarjuna?

Answer: It is more likely that the translator distorted the meaning according to his personal views.

Question: If you reject any translator, then should you not also reject Kumarajiva, the translator of the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: In the case of Kumarajiva, there is actual proof [attesting to the validity of his translations]. But no such proof exists in the case of Pu-k'ung.

Question: May I ask what proof you refer to?

Answer: I refer to the fact that Kumarajiva's tongue remained unburned.²² You should inquire about the details.

Question: Were Jikaku and Chisho ignorant of this matter?

Answer: These two men put their trust in the doctrines of the Tripitaka masters such as Shan-wu-wei. That is probably the reason they rejected the correct teachings of the Great Teacher Dengyo. They are examples of men who relied upon persons and turned their backs upon the Law.

Question: Up until now, there has never been anyone in Japan who disputed the teachings of Jikaku, Chisho, and Annen. How do you explain that?

Answer: Do the followers of the Great Teacher Kobo accept the teachings of Jikaku and Chisho? Do the followers of Jikaku and Chisho accept the teachings of the Great Teacher Kobo?

Question: Although the two teaching lines may differ somewhat, they are not, as your teachings would be, as incompatible as water and fire. And neither do they criticize others as slanderers of the correct teaching, do they?

Answer: But how exactly should we describe slander of the correct teaching? When the followers of non-Buddhist religions attack the Buddhist teachings, when followers of Hinayana attack Mahayana, when followers of provisional Mahayana look down on the teachings of true Mahayana, or when true Mahayana attempts to join forces with provisional Mahayana—when, in the final analysis, what is superior is designated inferior—such acts go against the Law and are therefore termed slander of the Law.

Where is there any scriptural evidence to support the Great Teacher Kobo's contention that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus and Flower Garland sutras? The Lotus Sutra, on the other hand, contains passages clearly stating that it surpasses the Flower Garland and Mahavairochana sutras. This is the meaning, for example, of the statement that, among all the sutras the Buddha has preached, now preaches, and will preach, [the Lotus Sutra stands supreme].²³ Though Kobo is highly honored, he can hardly escape the grave charge of contradicting Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions.

Now, rather than appealing to the authorities in an attempt to brow-

beat me, why do you not simply produce some reliable passage of scriptural proof? You people look to human beings to be your allies. But I, Nichiren, make the gods of the sun and moon, Shakra and Brahma, my allies.

Gods of the sun and moon, open your heavenly eyes and look at what is happening! In the palaces of the sun and moon surely there are copies of the Lotus, Mahavairochana, and Flower Garland sutras. Compare them and see! Whose teachings deserve the higher place, those of Kobo, Jikaku, Chisho, and Annen, or those of Nichiren?

If in the doctrines I put forth there is even one part in a hundred or a thousand that accords with the truth, then how can you withhold your aid from me? And if the teachings of Kobo and the others are in fact false, then all the people in Japan will suffer the retribution of being born without eyes.²⁴ Will you not then regard them with great pity?

I, Nichiren, have twice been banished, and at one point was almost beheaded.²⁵ Those responsible were in effect attempting to cut off the heads of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

There is only one god of the sun and one god of the moon, but you are the eyes and the life of all the living beings of the four continents. It is written in the sutras that you gods of the sun and moon feed upon the Law of the Buddha and thereby increase your brilliance and power. Persons who destroy the flavor of the Buddhist Law are in effect depriving you gods of your strength. They are enemies of all living beings. How can you gods of the sun and moon go on shining upon the heads of such persons, giving them long life, and sustaining them with clothing and food?

When the disciples of those three great teachers [Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho] slander the Lotus Sutra, is it sim-

ply because the minds of you gods of the sun and moon have entered into them and are causing them to commit slander? Or if that is not the case and I myself am at fault, then you, the god of the sun, must show me so! Let those disciples be summoned to debate with me, and if I am bested in the argument and yet refuse to change my views, then you gods may take away my life!

But that is not what happens. Instead, you unreasonably hand me over to my enemies, like a baby monkey entrusted to a dog, or a baby mouse presented to a cat, to be attacked and tortured without mercy, and yet mete out no punishment to my tormentors. That is what I cannot countenance! As far as you gods of the sun and moon are concerned, I suppose I am a deadly foe. When I find myself in the presence of

Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, I will surely press charges against you. At that time, you gods must bear me no resentment!

You gods of the sun and moon, as well as you gods of the earth and sea, hear my words! And you gods who protect and guard Japan, hear me! I have not the slightest ill intention. Therefore, you must hasten to respond in an appropriate manner. And if you delay until it is too late, you must bear me no grudge! Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the seventh month

Reply to Myoichi-nyo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the seventh month of the third year of Koan (1280) to a woman called Myoichi-nyo, about whom very little is known. One theory identifies her with the lay nun Myoichi, a relative of Nissho, one of the Daishonin's senior disciples. Employing a question-and-answer format, the Daishonin addresses the issue of whether it is the Lotus Sutra or the esoteric True Word teachings that represents the doctrine that enables one to attain Buddhahood in one's present form; hence the writing's title.

This letter reflects the Daishonin's conviction that explanations of doctrine should rest firmly on the authority of the Buddha's own words as recorded in the sutras and not on the arbitrary opinions of later teachers.

The Daishonin states that the True

Word priests heap abuse upon him for his criticism of their founder's doctrines, a reaction that, in itself, he says, betrays the weakness of their doctrinal position. The Daishonin also refers to the True Word priests' objection that Dengyo's own successors in the Tendai school, men such as Jikaku, Chisho, and Annen, held the True Word teachings to be superior to the Lotus Sutra. In response to this point the Daishonin asserts that the True Word sutras do not begin to approach the profundity of the Lotus Sutra, with its unique doctrines of the attainment of Buddhahood by people of the two vehicles and the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the distant past. Citing scriptural evidence, the Daishonin reiterates that only the Lotus Sutra enables all people to attain Buddhahood in their present form. To

claim otherwise, he asserts, is to hold a superior doctrine to be inferior, which amounts to slander of the Law. He

concludes by calling on all the deities to bear him witness and lend him their aid.

Notes

1. This refers to a passage of the "Devadatta" chapter, in which Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated asks Manjushri if, among those to whom he has taught the Lotus Sutra, there is anyone who has put the sutra into practice and gained Buddhahood. Manjushri replies that the dragon king's daughter has attained the stage of non-regression and is capable of achieving the supreme Buddha wisdom. Then she appears and, in the presence of the assembly, attains Buddhahood in her dragon form.

2. "The body of beneficence" refers to the Buddha who appears in accordance with the wish of human beings, and who enables them to enjoy the benefits of the Law accordingly. "The transformation bodies" refers to the various bodies that Buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest in order to instruct and save people.

3. The two mandalas refer to the mandalas depicting the Diamond and Womb realms, described in the Diamond Crown Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, respectively.

4. According to True Word tradition, the transmission of the esoteric teachings passed in succession from Mahavairochana Buddha to Vajrasattva, Nagarjuna, Nagabodhi, Vajrabodhi (Chin Chin-kang-chih), and Pu-k'ung.

5. According to ancient Indian belief, the basic constituents of all things—earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.

6. Four kinds of objects of devotion described by Kobo in his *Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form*. They are: (1) the great mandala, (2) the samaya mandala, (3) the Dharma mandala, and (4) the karma mandala.

7. The round-mirror wisdom indicates the great round mirror wisdom, one of the five kinds of wisdom, which perceives the world without distortion, just as a clear mirror accurately reflects all images.

8. Diamond Crown Sutra.

9. Mahavairochana Sutra.

10. Ibid.

11. Diamond Crown Sutra.

12. The five transcendental powers refer to the first five of the six transcendental powers; the powers of being anywhere at will, of seeing anything anywhere, of hearing any sound anywhere, of knowing the thoughts of all other minds, and of knowing past lives.

13. The stage of joy refers to the stage in which one rejoices at realizing a partial aspect of the truth. This represents the first of the ten stages of development.

14. Nirvana Sutra.

15. The third of the ten stages of development. It is called the stage of the emission of light, in which one radiates the light of wisdom.

16. Kobo is said to have transformed himself into Mahavairochana Buddha by invoking a spell at a religious ceremony presided over by Emperor Saga in 813.

17. The honorific title "Great Teacher Kobo" was posthumously granted Kobo in 921 by Emperor Daigo.

18. Tendai esotericism defines the Lotus and Flower Garland sutras as esoteric, but because they explain nothing about mantras and mudras, which can be described as esoteric practice in its concrete form, they are considered to be merely teachings of esoteric doctrine. In contrast, the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susidhikara sutras, which describe the mudras and mantras, are considered to be teachings not only of esoteric doctrine but also of practice.

19. In response to this statement of Manjushri's, Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated poses his question (see n. 1). Dengyo's commentary regards the dragon girl as an actual example of the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form through the power of the Lotus Sutra.

20. That is, Jikaku and Chisho honored the three True Word teachers but slighted their own teacher Dengyo, who was closer to them in both place and time.

21. This refers to the transmigration of unenlightened beings through the six paths. In this repeating cycle of rebirth through the six lower deluded worlds, living beings

are reborn with limited spans of life and in different forms in accordance with their karma.

22. According to tradition, when Kumara-rajiva's body was cremated, his tongue remained unburned as a sign of the accuracy with which he had explained the meaning of the Buddhist teachings.

23. This refers to a passage in the

"Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

24. That is, for their lack of discrimination in embracing erroneous teachings.

25. References are to the Izu Exile from 1261 to 1263, and the Sado Exile from 1271 through 1274, and to the unsuccessful attempt to execute the Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi near Kamakura in 1271.

White Horses and White Swans



IN the letter you wrote from Utsu-busa you say that the ninth day of the eighth month will mark the hundredth-day anniversary of your father's passing, and that, as an offering, you present ten thousand coins with deep respect.

In the declaration you sent for the memorial service, you say that you have read and recited the entire Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law once, the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters thirty times each, and the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter three hundred times, and have chanted the daimoku of Myoho-enge-kyo fifty thousand times. In the same document you say that you recall gratefully how, when your deceased father was still alive, you, my disciple, journeyed a thousand *ri* over mountains and rivers [to this distant place], receiving in person from me the daimoku of the Mystic Law, and how, less than thirty days later, your father's life came to an end. You say that although, alas, he has now become mere white bones in the dew garden¹ of Jambudvīpa, that although he has turned to dust and earth, you believe that his departed spirit will surely blossom into a flower of enlightenment in the land of Eagle Peak.

Your declaration is signed, "Respectfully yours, the woman disciple of the Onakatomi clan, third year of the Koan era (1280)."

When we consider the matter, we realize that, although in India the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the single vehicle, is so voluminous that it can fill a whole city one yojana square, the version that has been transmitted to Japan consists of only eight volumes. In the past, there have been many examples of people who, praying to receive benefit in their present or future existences, have achieved their desires by reciting and praising all eight volumes, or merely one volume, or the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters, or the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter alone. I will say no more about these examples here.

In your declaration you speak of reciting the daimoku of Myoho-enge-kyo fifty thousand times. With regard to this statement, I have tried to think of earlier examples of such a practice, but they seem to be very few. Although there may have been some who recited this daimoku once or twice and gained benefit, I have never heard of anyone who recited it fifty thousand times.

All phenomena have their respective names, and the name in each case indicates the particular virtue or property inherent in that thing. For example, the person known as General Stone Tiger was so called because he was capable of penetrating a stone tiger with

an arrow. And the minister Target Piercing² was given that name because he could shoot an arrow through a target made of iron. In both cases, the name indicates the qualities of the person.

In the case of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the virtues and benefits of its eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters are all contained within the five characters that make up its title; it is like, for instance, the wish-granting jewel that contains ten thousand different jewels within it. This is what is meant by the doctrine that the three thousand realms are all contained within a single particle of dust.

The word *namu* expresses feelings of reverence and a sense of compliance. Therefore, the Venerable Ananda placed *namu* above the two characters meaning "this" [of "This is what I heard"], which he wrote at the beginning of all the sutras. The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh employed the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, the words Keishu-nam-myoho-enge-kyo.³

The Venerable Ananda was the son of King Dronodana and a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Sixty days after Shakyamuni passed away, Mahakashyapa and the other disciples, a thousand persons in all, along with Manjushri and the others, eighty thousand bodhisattvas, all gathered together in the Great Lecture Hall to lament the passing of the Buddha. They conferred among themselves, saying: "Even we, who attended upon the Buddha for so many years, lament our parting from him after only sixty days. What, then, of all the people who live a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, or in the Latter Day of the Law? What means will they have to cherish his memory?"

"The six teachers of the non-Buddhist doctrines preserve the four Vedas and the eighteen major scriptures that the two deities and the three ascetics⁴

preached and left behind eight hundred years ago, so that the words left by their teachers might be transmitted to later ages. Should we not likewise write down the various teachings that we have heard the Buddha preach to the voice-hearers and the great bodhisattvas over the course of fifty years, so that they may serve as an eye to the people of the future?"

So concurring, they invited the Venerable Ananda to ascend to the highest seat and looked up to him in reverence in the same way they would the Buddha, while they themselves sat in the lower seats. Then Bodhisattva Manjushri recited the words Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and the Venerable Ananda, in response to this, replied, "This is what I heard." The 999 other great arhats then all dipped their brushes in ink and wrote down the words that were spoken.

It is precisely because all the benefits represented by the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra are contained within these five characters that Bodhisattva Manjushri recited them. The Venerable Ananda responded by saying, "Yes, indeed!" And the twelve thousand voice-hearers, the eighty thousand great bodhisattvas, and all the various other listeners from the two worlds and eight groups,⁵ since that agreed with what they had heard previously, signified their assent.

The sage known as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che wrote about the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the ten volumes and thousand pages of his work *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*. The gist of this work is that the eighty volumes or sixty volumes or forty volumes of the Flower Garland Sutra, the several hundred volumes of the Agama sutras, the scores of volumes of the Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra, the forty volumes or six hundred volumes of the Larger Wisdom Sutra, the forty volumes or thirty-six

volumes of the Nirvana Sutra, and all the countless sutras in India, in the palaces of the dragon kings, in the heavens, and in the worlds of the ten directions that are as numerous as the dust particles of the land, are all servants and followers of the single character *kyo*, or sutra, of Myoho-enge-kyo.

Moreover, the Great Teacher Miaolo wrote a work in ten volumes entitled *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,"* in which he declared that all the sutras that were brought to China after the time of T'ien-t'ai, including the sutras known as the new translations,⁶ are all servants and retainers of the Lotus Sutra. And in Japan, the Great Teacher Dengyo likewise established that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the other sutras of the True Word school, which are among the new translations, are all servants and retainers of the Lotus Sutra. Kobo, Jikaku, Chisho, and others, however, put forth opinions that were as different from this teaching as fire is from water. I will outline these opinions later in this letter.

To illustrate, without a single exception the five regions around the capital, the seven marches, the sixty-six provinces, the two islands, and all the districts, manors, villages, fields, plots, persons, cows and horses, gold, silver, and other things in Japan are all contained within the three characters that make up the words "country of Japan."

The character "king"⁷ is written with three horizontal lines and one vertical line. The three horizontal lines represent heaven, earth, and humanity, and the single vertical line represents the ruler. Like Mount Sumeru, which rises up out of the great earth and never sways, one whose presence pervades the realms of heaven, earth, and humanity and who does not waver in the slightest is called the ruler.

There are always two kinds of rulers, the first kind being the petty rulers.

Minor sovereigns in the realms of human and heavenly beings would be considered petty rulers. The second kind are the great rulers; the great heavenly king Brahma would be classified as such. In the case of Japan, the sovereign of the entire country would be considered a great ruler, while the governors of the various provinces would be petty rulers.

In the same way, sutras such as those of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, the Mahavairochana Sutra, the Nirvana Sutra, and all the other sutras preached before, simultaneously with, or after the Lotus Sutra are petty rulers. They are like the governors of the various provinces of Japan.

The Lotus Sutra, however, is comparable to a great ruler, a Son of Heaven. Hence, the people of the Flower Garland school, the True Word school, and the other schools are like the subjects and followers of the ruler of the nation. But when people who in social rank are no more than subjects living in the various provinces attempt to divest the Son of Heaven of his virtue, then it is as if inferiors are overthrowing superiors, as if the people are turning their backs on superiors and heeding inferiors, or as if the inferiors have overcome the superiors and are rioting and creating disturbances.

No matter how much one may hope to bring about order in the world under such circumstances, the result will only be confusion within the state and the downfall of the persons involved. One might as well try to move the roots of a tree without disturbing the branches and leaves, or hope that a ship could sail peacefully when the waves of the sea have risen in fury.

Though the priests of the Flower Garland, True Word, and Nembutsu schools as well as those of the Precepts and Zen teachings claim to possess great wisdom and eminence, strictly abiding by the precepts and conducting

themselves honestly, their status is that of persons born into families who engage in the overthrow of superiors by inferiors, and as such they are arch-enemies of the Lotus Sutra. Can they hope to escape falling into the great citadel of the Avichi hell? Among the adherents of the ninety-five different types of non-Buddhist schools,⁸ there were no doubt many who were honest and wise, and yet, because they subscribed to the erroneous doctrines handed down from the two deities and the three ascetics, they could not escape being reborn in the evil paths.

In the world today, however, those people who recite Namu Amida Butsu laugh at those who recite Nam-myohorenge-kyo, or try to deceive them. To use secular comparisons, this is like millet disliking rice, or a landowner detesting his own fields. They are like bandits when the leaders of the army are not present, supposing that they will not be punished for their night raids or acts of burglary, or like moles before the sun has come up, believing that they are as safe as they would be underground. But when Nam-myohorenge-kyo, which is like the leader of an army or like the sun, appears, they disappear as quickly as raging flames vanish under water, or as monkeys cower when they encounter dogs. Today, when the reciters of Namu Amida Butsu hear voices chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the color drains from their faces and their eyes glare with anger, their wits desert them and their bodies begin to quake.

The Great Teacher Dengyo said that, when the sun comes up, the stars hide themselves, and that, when true skill appears, clumsiness becomes known.⁹ Bodhisattva Nagarjuna stated that erroneous words are easily dismissed, and that mistaken opinions are hard to support.¹⁰ Bodhisattva Gunamati said, "On her face there was the color of death and mourning, and in her words there

was the sound of sorrow and resentment."¹¹ And Fa-sui said, "Those who were formerly the tigers of assertion are now the deer of assent."¹² One should consider these opinions and understand their intent.

Let us openly and clearly outline the virtues of Myoho-enge-kyo! Just as poisonous compounds are changed into medicine, so these five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo change evil into good. The Spring of Jewels is so called because, in this spring, stones are changed into jewels.¹³ In the same way, these five characters can change ordinary human beings into Buddhas. Therefore, because your beloved departed father chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo while he was alive, he was a person who attained Buddhahood in his present form, in the same way that stones change into jewels.

The actions you have taken, then, are the very height of filial piety and concern. Therefore, it says in the Lotus Sutra: "These two sons of mine have carried out the Buddha's work," and also "These two sons have been good friends to me."¹⁴

Long ago there lived a great ruler named King Rinda. As long as this ruler could listen to the neighing of white horses, his color remained healthy, he had great strength and vigor, and he was satisfied without being offered food. Even his enemies in neighboring countries doffed their helmets and pressed their palms together in admiration.

But the white horses neighed only when they caught sight of white swans. And because the ruler's manner of governing was faulty, or perhaps because of some evil karma from his past, all the white swans disappeared. With not a single bird left, the white horses no longer neighed. And when the white horses ceased to neigh, the king's complexion faded, his strength drained away, his body grew thin and withered,

and his plans for government became shallow and ineffectual.

Soon the nation was in a state of chaos. Lamenting over what to do if soldiers from neighboring nations should rush to attack his country, the king issued a proclamation in which he said: "In our nation, many people follow the non-Buddhist teachings, all of which enjoy our patronage and support. The same is true of the Buddhist teaching. But the non-Buddhists and Buddhists are on bad terms with each other. Now whichever of these two groups can succeed in making the white horses neigh will have its teaching made the object of our faith, while the other's teaching will be banished from the nation."

At this time all the non-Buddhist leaders gathered together and tried their best to make the white swans appear and the white horses neigh, but no swans appeared. Although in the past these leaders had shown themselves capable of causing clouds to form and fog to come rolling in, of calling forth winds and stirring up waves, of bringing forth fire or water from their bodies, of changing men into horses or horses into men, and of performing any acts that they pleased, for some reason on this occasion they could not make the swans appear.

At this time there was a disciple of the Buddha known as Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, or Horse Neigh. When he prayed to the Buddhas of the ten directions, the white swans immediately came forth, and the white horses began to neigh. When the king heard the sound, his color began to improve somewhat, his strength returned, and his skin took on a fresh look. More white swans appeared, and still more, until a thousand birds had come forth, and a thousand white horses neighed all at the same time like cocks crowing at dawn. When the king heard this sound, his complexion became as

bright as the sun, his skin as fresh-looking as the moon, his strength as powerful as the god Narayana, and his plans for government as sagacious as those of the god Brahma.

Then, because the silken words of the ruler were as irreversible as the outflow of sweat from the body, all the temples belonging to the non-Buddhist leaders were converted into Buddhist temples.

The country of Japan today resembles the story of King Rinda. This country began with the era of the gods. As it gradually approached the latter age, however, the views of its people became warped, and greed, anger, and foolishness grew stronger. The gods became shallow in their understanding, their authority and power waned, and they began to have difficulty extending their protection even to their devotees.

Meanwhile, the teachings of the great doctrine known as Buddhism were introduced to the country and gradually spread. The people once again became honest and straightforward in their outlook, and the gods were restored to power and authority. But many erroneous opinions appeared in connection with the Buddhist beliefs, and because of these the situation in the country became perilous.

The Great Teacher Dengyo traveled to China and there carried out an investigation into all the various sacred teachings of Japan, China, and India. He discarded those that were inferior and selected those that were worthy, examining each without prejudice or favor. In the end he singled out the Lotus Sutra and two other sutras,¹⁵ designating them as the three sutras that would ensure the protection of the nation.

Other sages, however, such as the great teachers Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, claiming to base their ideas on teachings from China or India, pro-

ceeded to demote the Lotus Sutra to second or third rank among the sutras, declaring it to be a work of “childish theory”¹⁶ or claiming that it belonged to “the region of darkness.”¹⁷ In place of the Lotus Sutra, they elevated the three sutras¹⁸ of the True Word teaching to the position of highest honor.

Thus the age gradually became one in which inferiors overthrow superiors, and these mistaken doctrines spread throughout the entire country. Hence many people have fallen into the evil paths, and the gods have little by little lost their authority, again finding it difficult to protect even their own devotees. As a result, we see that the five rulers¹⁹ of the nation, from the eighty-first to the eighty-fifth sovereign, either drowned in the western ocean or were abandoned on islands in the four seas. They were treated like demons while they were alive, and after their demise they fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

However, because there was no one who understood this situation, it has been impossible to remedy it. I am generally aware of these matters, and

therefore try to repay the debt of gratitude I owe my country [by speaking the truth], but people only hate me for it.

But I will say no more about that. Instead I would like to say that your beloved father is comparable to King Rinda, and you yourself are comparable to Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha. The white swans are the Lotus Sutra, the white horses are Nichiren, and the neighing of the white horses is the sound of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And so, in the same way that, when King Rinda hears the sound of the horses, his complexion brightens and his strength increases, when your beloved deceased father hears the sound of your voice chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, he will delight in his Buddhahood.

Nichiren

The fourteenth day of the eighth month in the third year of Koan (1280)

Reply to the lady of Utsubusa



Background

This letter was sent from Minobu to a follower known only as “the lady of Utsubusa,” who lived in Utsubusa in Ihara District of Suruga Province. The Daishonin’s letter is a reply to the offerings and declaration his follower sent when she requested that a memorial service be conducted on the hundredth-day anniversary of her father’s passing. Judging from the fact that she sent the Daishonin ten thousand coins, a fairly large sum of money, and from the contents of her personal vow, it is quite likely that she was a woman of some means.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin reviews the declaration he had received from her, in which she stated that she had recited the Lotus Sutra and chanted fifty thousand daimoku for her father. The Daishonin praises her dedication and teaches that all the benefits of the Lotus Sutra are contained in the daimoku, its title. He next points out the errors of those who are attached to other sutras, stressing that these sutras are no more than “servants and retainers” of the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin assures his follower that, because her father chanted

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, he certainly attained Buddhahood during his lifetime.

He then introduces the story of King Rinda, who was a strong, healthy, and capable ruler only as long as he could hear the neighing of white horses. The horses, in turn, raised their voices only when they could see white swans. For this reason, this letter is

known by the title *White Horses and White Swans*. Here the Daishonin likens the white horses to himself and their neighing to the sound of voices chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. He tells the lady of Utsubusa that, when she chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, her deceased father will delight in his Buddhahood.

Notes

1. The "dew garden" is a metaphorical expression meaning that all things in the continent of Jambudvīpa (signifying the entire world) are as fleeting as dew in the garden, which quickly vanishes in the morning sun.

2. Ikuwa no Toda no Sukune, a fourth-century Japanese court official. *The Chronicles of Japan* relates how he pierced an iron shield with an arrow.

3. One's reverence for and devotion to Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Keishu means to prostrate oneself on the ground in an act of obeisance.

4. The two deities refer to the two Brahman deities Shiva and Vishnu, and the three ascetics, to Kapila, Uluka, and Rishabha. For three ascetics, see Glossary.

5. "Listeners from the two worlds and eight groups" are beings assembled at the ceremony of the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. The two worlds—the world of desire and the world of form—are two of the three worlds that make up the threefold world. The eight groups refer to the gods of the world of desire, the gods of the world of form, the dragon kings and their followers, the kinnara kings and their followers, the gandharva kings and their followers, the asura kings and their followers, the garuda kings and their followers, and the king of the human world (Ajatashatru) and his followers.

6. Chinese translations of the Indian scriptures completed by or after Hsüan-tsang (602–664). Those done before Hsüan-tsang are called old translations.

7. The Chinese character for "king" discussed here is written: 王.

8. These schools are said to have existed in Shakyamuni's time. Their names and particular doctrines are unknown.

9. This statement is found in *The Verse-Form Record of the Lineage of the Tendai Lotus School*.

10. Source unknown.

11. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, Gunamati and Madhava, a non-Buddhist scholar famed for his learning, debated each other in the presence of the king of Magadha. Madhava was defeated and died six days later, but his wife, in order to avenge her husband's defeat, concealed his death and attempted to enter the debate against Gunamati as his representative. Recognizing from her expression that her husband must be dead, Gunamati said to her, "I have already defeated one more skilled than you," whereupon she realized that he had discovered her scheme and decided to give up her attempt to debate him. The statement by Gunamati in the text was his response when the king asked him how he knew that Madhava had died.

12. *The Biography of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che of the Sui Dynasty* relates that, when T'ien-t'ai lectured on the title of the Lotus Sutra, Fa-sui, a sixth-century Chinese priest, was struck by his deep understanding of the sutra. This passage represents the words Fa-sui used to express his impressions at that time, although the original passage refers to "dragons" rather than "tigers."

13. Source unknown.

14. Both quotes are from chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra. These words are spoken by King Wonderful Adornment, a believer in Brahmanism who was led to Buddhism by his two sons.

15. The two other sutras are the Golden Light and Benevolent Kings sutras.

16. This statement appears in Kobo's *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*.

17. This statement appears in Kobo's *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*.

18. The Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras.

19. The emperors Antoku, Gotoba, Tsuchimikado, Juntoku, and Chukyo. During the Battle of Dannoura (1185), Antoku, at

age eight, met his end at the final defeat of the Taira, when he drowned in the sea. In 1221, after the Jokyu Disturbance, the Kamakura shogunate exiled the retired emperors Gotoba, Tsuchimikado, and Juntoku, and deposed Emperor Chukyo.

The Place of the Cluster of Blessings



I HAVE received the rice you sent from Tono'oka.¹ I used it as an offering for the service for deceased ancestors² in the seventh month of this year. Not only the priests who participated, but the assembly gathered at Eagle Peak,³ the Buddha, and the gods must surely have accepted your offering and be rejoicing. It is difficult to express in words my appreciation for your unfailing sincerity and for your frequent visits.

In any event, there can be no doubt about your enlightenment in your next life. Above all, I remember how, in the eighth year of the Bun'ei era (1271), when I incurred the wrath of the authorities and was about to be beheaded at Tatsunokuchi in the province of Sagami, you held on to the reins of my horse, accompanying me barefoot and shedding tears of grief. You were even prepared to give your life had I in fact been executed. In what lifetime could I possibly forget it?

And that is not all. Exiled to the island of Sado, buried as I was beneath snows from the northern sea and exposed to winds from the northern peaks, it hardly seemed I would survive. Cast away even by my comrades of long standing, I thought that I could no more return to my birthplace than a stone on the bottom of the ocean requiring the strength of a thousand men to move it

could float to the surface. Ordinary person that I am, I naturally longed for the people of my native village.

For you, a lay person pressed for time in your lord's service, to believe in the Lotus Sutra is itself very rare. Moreover, surmounting mountains and rivers and crossing the great blue sea, you came to visit me from afar. How could your resolve be inferior to that of the man who broke open his bones at the City of Fragrances,⁴ or of the boy who threw away his body on the Snow Mountains?⁵

Again, for my part, though there was so little chance of rising again in the world, for some reason or other I was pardoned in the spring of the eleventh year of Bun'ei and was able to return to Kamakura.

On pondering the meaning of these affairs, I believe I must now be free from the karma of past offenses. Once I was almost deprived of life. In the Kocho era I was exiled to the province of Izu, and in the Bun'ei era, to the island of Sado. Because I remonstrated repeatedly with the authorities, I have encountered one persecution after another. Yet, for that very reason, I have certainly already escaped the charge of "betraying the Buddha's teaching."⁶

However, when I desired to leave the world for this mountain forest to pursue the way, people voiced differing

opinions. Nevertheless, for reasons I had carefully considered, I came to this mountain in this province, where I have already passed seven springs and autumns.

Setting aside for now the question of my wisdom, in enduring hardship and in suffering injury as an ally of the Lotus Sutra, I surpass even the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China and excel even the Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan. This is because the time has made it so. If indeed I am a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings of Eagle Peak; the Thus Come One Many Treasures of the World of Treasure Purity; the Buddhas of the ten directions who are Shakyamuni's emanations; the great bodhisattvas of the essential teaching; the great bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching; Brahma, Shakra, the dragon deities, and the ten demon daughters must all be present in this place. Where there is water, fish dwell. Where there

are woods, birds gather. On the mountain island of P'eng-lai there are many jewels, and on Mount Malaya sandalwood trees grow. There is gold in the mountains from which the river Li-shui⁷ flows. Now this place, too, is like that. It is the place of the cluster of blessings⁸ where the Buddhas and bodhisattvas dwell.

The blessings of the Lotus Sutra, which I have recited over these many years, must be vaster even than the sky. Thus, by having come here frequently year after year, it is certain that within this lifetime you will eradicate the karmic hindrances you have accumulated since the beginningless past. You should exert yourself all the more.

Nichiren

The eighth day of the tenth month

Reply to Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon, or Shijo Kingo, in the tenth month of the third year of Koan (1280) to express his thanks for an offering of rice. He also praises Kingo's unusual dedication, voicing gratitude not only for the indomitable spirit that the samurai displayed at the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, when the Daishonin was nearly executed, but also for the great efforts he has made since then in visiting the Daishonin and providing him with needed supplies, both on Sado Island and at Mount Minobu.

In the latter part of the letter, the Daishonin states his conviction that, by

undergoing various hardships on the Lotus Sutra's account, he has surely freed himself from the karma of past slanders. In undergoing such persecution for the sake of the Mystic Law, he says, he surpasses even those great masters of the past, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo. By so doing, he has shown himself to be the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. He expresses his enlightenment as a person whose life is one with the Law by describing his dwelling in the wilderness of Mount Minobu as "the place of the cluster of blessings" where Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities gather.

Notes

1. An area located in Igara Village of Shimoina District in Shinano Province (present-day Nagano Prefecture), held in fief by Shijo Kingo.

2. The service for deceased ancestors refers to a Buddhist ceremony in which offerings are made for the repose of dead ancestors, usually held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month.

3. The “assembly gathered at Eagle Peak” refers to those present in the assembly where the Lotus Sutra was preached.

4. Reference is to Bodhisattva Ever Wailing, who cut his flesh and broke open his bones to sell his blood and marrow to a Brahman (actually the god Shakra in disguise) who claimed to desire them for use in a sacrifice. He sought in this way to obtain the means of making an offering to Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, who lived in the

City of Fragrances, and hearing his teaching on the perfection of wisdom.

5. The boy Snow Mountains, who offered his body to a demon to hear a Buddhist teaching.

6. Nirvana Sutra. The Daishonin refers to the passage that reads, “If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha’s teaching.”

7. Probably the Lishui River in present-day Chekiang Province in China.

8. “The cluster of blessings” is an expression used to translate the Sanskrit word *mandala*. In *The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon* (p. 832), the Daishonin also refers to the Gohonzon in this way.

Reply to the Mother of Ueno



I HAVE received the offerings that you sent for the forty-ninth-day ceremony marking the passing of your son, the late Nanjo Shichiro Goro. As noted on the list, they consist of two strings of coins, one horseload of polished rice, one horseload of yams, pounded bean curd, konnyaku,¹ one basket of persimmons, fifty citrons, and other items. For the sake of your son's repose, I have recited the entire Lotus Sutra once and the verse section of its "Life Span" chapter several times, and chanted the daimoku hundreds or thousands of times.

The sutra known as the Lotus Sutra is a scripture that has no match among all the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime. And, as indicated by its words "between Buddhas,"² it can only be understood between one Buddha and another. Those at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment or below, on down to ordinary mortals, cannot fathom it. This is why Bodhisattva Nagarjuna stated in his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* that persons below the level of Buddha should simply have faith, and in that way they can attain Buddhahood.

In the "Teacher of the Law" chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha states, "Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the

Lotus is the foremost!" In the fifth volume it says, "Manjushri, this Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. Among the sutras, it holds the highest place."³ In the seventh volume we read, "So this Lotus Sutra is likewise. Among all the sutras, it holds the highest place."⁴ We also read, "It [this Lotus Sutra] shines the brightest. . . . so this sutra is the most honored."⁵

These passages of scripture do not represent some doctrine that I have put forward on my own. They are the truthful words of the Buddha, and hence it is impossible that they could be in error.

If someone born a commoner should claim to stand equal to a samurai, he would surely be faulted. And how much more so if he should claim that he is equal to the ruler of the nation, or even superior to the ruler! Not only would he himself be punished, but his father and mother and his wife and children would be made to suffer as well. It is like the case of a great fire that burns down houses, or of a great tree that, in falling, brings down the little trees around it as well.

It is the same with the Buddhist teachings. People who rely on the various sutras expounded in the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, such as the Maha-

vairochana or the Amida Sutra, regard the one they believe in as best, without distinguishing the relative worth of the sutras. Thus they say, "Our Amida Sutra is equal to the Lotus Sutra," or "It is superior." Fellow believers, hearing their own sutra praised in this way, think it is a cause for joy. On the contrary, however, they are committing a serious offense, and the teachers of such doctrines, their disciples, and their lay supporters will fall as swiftly as flying arrows into the evil paths.

However, those who declare that the Lotus Sutra is superior to all the other sutras are justified in doing so. In fact, they will enjoy great benefits. This is because their declaration accords with what the sutra itself says.

Prefacing the Lotus Sutra is a work called the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. It is like the vanguard of generals who go before the procession of a great king to quell disturbances. This Immeasurable Meanings Sutra states, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth." These words are like the great bows that the generals carry to drive away the king's enemies with arrows, or the swords with which they cut those enemies down. They are like a royal proclamation, sharp as a sword, directed to the members of the Flower Garland school who read only the Flower Garland Sutra, the priests of the Precepts school with their Agama sutras, the Nembutsu believers with their Meditation Sutra, and the True Word teachers with their Mahavairochana Sutra, chastising them for failing to follow the Lotus Sutra and bringing them to submission. They are like Yoshiie attacking Sadato, or Yoritomo destroying the forces of Kiyomori. These words of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, "In these more than forty years . . ." are the sword and rope of the wisdom king Immovable, or the bow and arrows of the wisdom king Craving-Filled.

When the late Nanjo Goro made his way across the mountains of death and the river of three crossings, the soldiers who escorted him and repulsed the mountain bandits of earthly desires and the pirates of past offenses and allowed him to proceed safely to the pure land of Eagle Peak were these words of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."

The "Expedient Means" chapter in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth." It also says, "Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way." In the fifth volume we read, "Only the bright jewel that is in his topknot . . .,"⁶ "This one jewel exists only on the top of the king's head," and "the way that powerful ruler did when he took the bright jewel he had guarded for so long and finally gave it away."

The import of these passages is this: The great collection of scriptures has been brought to this country of Japan, numbering 7,399 volumes, and each one of these various scriptures is a follower and retainer of the Lotus Sutra. To illustrate, the men and women in this country number 4,994,828, but all are subjects of one man, the ruler of the country.

As for the significance of these various scriptures, let me give an analogy that even an uncomprehending woman can understand immediately. Suppose that one is building a great pagoda. In addition to the lumber to be used in the pagoda itself, one gathers together a large quantity of small timbers and uses them to build a scaffolding ten or twenty feet in height. After one has done this, one uses the original lumber to construct the pagoda. And when the pagoda is completed, one then removes the scaffolding and discards it, leaving the pagoda in place.

Now the scaffolding represents the various other sutras, and the great pagoda, the Lotus Sutra. When the Buddha preached the other sutras, he was in effect erecting a scaffolding in preparation for the preaching of the Lotus Sutra.

In the same manner as the sutra describes when it says, "honestly discarding expedient means," persons who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra should first cast aside and fling away the Namu Amida Butsu invocation based on the Amida and other sutras, the teachings of the True Word school based on the Mahavairochana and other sutras, and the two hundred and fifty precepts of the Precepts school based on the Agama sutras, and other teachings, and then they should embrace the Lotus Sutra alone. When one is preparing to build a great pagoda, the scaffolding is of great importance. But once the pagoda is completed, then the scaffolding is removed and thrown away. This is the meaning of the passage about "honestly discarding expedient means."

Though the scaffolding is necessary to complete the pagoda, no one would ever dream of discarding the pagoda and worshiping the scaffolding. And yet the people who seek the way in the world today spend their whole lives reciting Namu Amida Butsu only, and never once chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. They are like persons who discard the pagoda and worship the scaffolding. They are examples of the secular saying, "seemingly wise, but actually foolish."

The late Shichiro Goro did not take after other people in Japan today. Though still a youth, he followed in the footsteps of his sagacious father. And at an early age, having not yet turned twenty, he began chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and thus he became a Buddha. This is what the sutra means when it says, "Then not a one will fail

to attain Buddhahood."⁷ I hope that, if you, his loving mother, are thinking with longing about your son, you will chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and pray to be reborn in the same place as the late Shichiro Goro and your husband, the late Nanjo.

The seeds of one kind of plant are all the same; they are different from the seeds of other plants. If all of you nurture the same seeds of Myoho-enge-kyo in your hearts, then you all will be reborn together in the same land of Myoho-enge-kyo. When the three of you are reunited there face to face, how great your joy will be!

Now when we open the Lotus Sutra and read what it says, we find these words "The Thus Come One will cover them with his robe, and they will also be protected and kept in mind by the Buddhas who are now present in other regions."⁸

The meaning of this passage is that the Buddhas of the ten directions will all assemble in throngs and fill in the lands to the east, west, north, and south, in the eight directions, the major world system, and all the four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands. They will be seated side by side like the stars in the heavens, or the rows of rice and hemp plants on the earth, and will guard and protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra just as the various ministers and subjects guard and protect the heir of a great ruler.

To be guarded by the four heavenly kings and their retainers is a great honor. But with the protection of all the four heavenly kings, all the stars and constellations, all the deities of the sun and moon, all the Shakras and Brahas, one can be completely confident. Moreover, all the persons of the two vehicles, all the bodhisattvas, Bodhisattva Maitreya in the inner court of the Tushita heaven, Bodhisattva Earth Repository on Mount Kharadiya, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds

on Mount Potalaka, and Bodhisattva Manjushri on Mount Clear and Cool, each together with all their followers, will guard and protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, so one may indeed rest assured. And furthermore, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will come of their own accord and watch over one through all the hours of the day and night, which is an honor beyond the power of words to express.

It was this splendid sutra that the late Shichiro Goro put his faith in and through which he attained Buddhahood. And today, on the forty-ninth day following his passing, all the Buddhas have surely gathered about him in the pure land of Eagle Peak, seating him on their palms, patting his head, embracing him, and rejoicing, welcoming him with affection as one would welcome a moon that has just risen, or blossoms that have just burst into bloom.

When we consider why the Buddhas of the ten directions throughout the three existences should so firmly protect the Lotus Sutra, we come to understand that it is only natural. For the Lotus Sutra is the father and mother of the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions; it is their wet nurse and their lord.

Frogs feed on the sound of their mother's voice, and if they cannot hear their mother's voice, they will not grow. The insect called kalakula feeds on wind, and if the wind does not blow, it will not grow. Fish must have water, and birds depend upon trees to build their nests in. In the same way, for the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra is their source of life, their sustenance, and their dwelling. As fish live in water, so the Buddhas live in this sutra. As birds dwell in trees, so the Buddhas dwell in this sutra. As the moon's reflection lodges in the water, so the Buddhas lodge in this sutra. You should

understand that, in a land where this sutra does not exist, there can be no Buddhas.

In ancient times there lived a sovereign named King Rinda who ruled over the southern continent of Jambudvīpa. What was it that this king required for sustenance? He listened to the neighing of white horses, and this became his food. As long as the white horses neighed, he grew more youthful, his complexion glowed, his spirit was vigorous, his physical strength remained undiminished, and he was able to conduct the affairs of state justly. Therefore, a great many white horses were gathered and cared for in his country. In this respect, he was like the ruler of Wei,⁹ who gathered a great many cranes, or Emperor Te-tsung, who loved fireflies. The white horses would neigh only if there were white swans who were singing, and accordingly, a number of white swans had also been gathered.

One time for some reason all the white swans disappeared, and as a result, the white horses no longer neighed. So the king's sustenance came to an end, and he was like full-blown blossoms that wilt under the dew, or a round moon that becomes shrouded in clouds. When it became apparent that the king was about to expire, his consort, his heir, the high ministers, and all the people throughout the kingdom turned pale, like a child who has just been separated from its mother, and wet their sleeves with tears, crying, "What shall we do? What shall we do?"

In that country there were many followers of non-Buddhist teachings, persons like the Zen and Nembutsu believers, the True Word teachers, and the Precepts priests of our own time. In addition, there were disciples of the Buddha, persons like the members of the Lotus school today. These two groups were on very bad terms, as incompatible as fire and water, or as

hostile toward each other as the peoples called Hu and Yüeh.¹⁰

The ruler issued a proclamation saying: "If these non-Buddhists cause the horses to neigh, then I will abolish the Buddhist teachings and put my faith entirely in the non-Buddhist doctrines, honoring them as the heavenly deities do Shakra. But if the disciples of the Buddha cause the horses to neigh, then I will cut off the heads of all the non-Buddhists, seize their dwellings, and hand them over to the disciples of the Buddha."

At this the non-Buddhists turned pale with fear, and the disciples of the Buddha fell to lamenting. But since that alone would not resolve matters, the non-Buddhists took their turn first. For seven days they carried out their practices, but no white swans gathered round, and the white horses failed to neigh.

Then it was the turn of the Buddha's disciples, and they were assigned the next seven days for the performance of their prayers. At that time there was a young monk named Ashvaghosha, or Horse Neigh, who, relying upon the Lotus Sutra, the object of devotion for all the Buddhas, for seven days offered his prayers, whereupon white swans came flying to the platform where he was praying. As soon as one of these birds would utter a cry, one of the white horses would neigh. The king, hearing the sound of the neighing, rose up from his sickbed, and all the persons who had gathered there, beginning with the ruler's consort, turned toward Ashvaghosha and bowed to him in reverence.

So the white swans came, one, two, three, then ten, a hundred, and a thousand, filling the kingdom. And the white horses neighed, one horse, two horses, then a hundred, a thousand white horses, all constantly neighing. When the king heard this sound, his face became that of a thirty-year-old

man. His mind was as clear and bright as the sun, and his administration was upright and fair, so that the rain of amrita fell down from the heavens, the common people bowed before his commands as though before a wind, and the kingdom prospered for countless ages.

The Buddhas are similar to this. Many Treasures Buddha, during the time when the Lotus Sutra does not appear, remains extinct; but in an age when this sutra is recited, he makes his appearance in the world. And the same is true of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Since the Lotus Sutra possesses this wonderful power, how could any person who upholds this sutra be abandoned by the Sun Goddess, by Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, or by Great Bodhisattva Fuji Sengen?¹¹ This is truly reassuring!

On the other hand, if a country should oppose this sutra, then no matter how sincerely its people may offer up prayers, that country will inevitably experience the seven disasters. You may be certain that it will be overthrown and destroyed by another country, like a ship that encounters a storm in the midst of the ocean, or like grass and trees that are withered by a great drought.

In a similar manner, in Japan today, no matter how prayers are offered up, because the people make light of Nichiren and his followers, the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, none of their various ways of praying are effective, and instead the forces of the great kingdom of the Mongols come to attack. Already the country is on the verge of destruction. Watch carefully from now on. Matters cannot continue as they are at present. You should understand once and for all that this is entirely due to the fact that the people all harbor enmity toward the Lotus Sutra.

It has now been forty-nine days

since your son, the late Shichiro Goro, passed away. Though impermanence is the way of all things, even one who merely hears the news of a person's having passed away finds it hard to bear. How much more deeply, then, must his mother or his wife grieve! I believe I can understand something of your feelings.

Though children may be young in years or more mature, though they may be ugly or even physically handicapped, their parents love them nonetheless. In your case, your child was a son, and in addition, he was blessed in every way, and he had a warm heart. When your husband, the late Ueno, preceded you in death, he was still in the prime of life, and your grief on that occasion was no shallow matter. Had you not been pregnant with his child, I know you would have followed him through fire and water. Yet when this son was safely born, you felt that it would be unthinkable to entrust his upbringing to another so that you could put an end to your life. Thus you encouraged yourself and spent the following fourteen or fifteen years raising your children.

How, then, are you to endure what has happened? You must have thought that in the future you would have two sons to rely upon. And yet on the fifth day of the ninth month of this year,

this younger son, like the moon hidden in the clouds, like blossoms scattered by the wind, passed from sight. As you wondered whether or not you were dreaming, lamenting at how long the dream goes on, you felt that this dream is indeed like reality, and forty-nine days had already passed. And if it is indeed real, how will you bear it? The full-blown flower remains on the tree, while the bud just about to open has withered away. The aged mother remains behind, while the young son has departed. How heartless is the transience of the world!

Now you must shun and abandon this heartless world, entrusting yourself to the Lotus Sutra, in which the late Shichiro Goro placed his faith, and quickly reach the eternally abiding and indestructible pure land of Eagle Peak. Your son's father is on Eagle Peak; his mother remains in the saha world. I sympathize with the feelings of the late Shichiro Goro, who is in the interval between the two of you.

There is much more that I would like to say, but I shall end here.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fourth day of the tenth month

Reply to the mother of Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the tenth month of the third year of Koan (1280) to the lay nun Ueno, the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu. Nichiren Daishonin acknowledges offerings that she had sent him on the occasion of the forty-ninth-day memorial service following the death of her youngest son, Shichiro Goro, and encourages

her in the face of her grief.

The lay nun Ueno was the daughter of Matsuno Rokuro Saemon and the wife of Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, the steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province. The lay nun's husband passed away in 1265, while she was pregnant with their youngest son, Shichiro Goro.

Shichiro Goro visited Minobu together with his elder brother Tokimitsu to see the Daishonin on the fifteenth day of the sixth month in 1280. The Daishonin had great expectations for the young man, but he died suddenly, at the age of sixteen, on the fifth day of the ninth month of that same year. No sooner had the Daishonin received the news of Shichiro Goro's death than he wrote a letter of condolence to the lay nun Ueno and Nanjo Tokimitsu.

This present letter is also called *On Intermediate Existence*. "Intermediate ex-

istence" indicates the interval of time between death and rebirth, and was widely believed to last for forty-nine days. On the basis of this belief, people conducted a memorial service on the forty-ninth day.

To reassure the lay nun Ueno that her son has attained Buddhahood, the Daishonin discusses the great benefit gained from embracing the Lotus Sutra, and asserts that a votary of the sutra will be protected by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and all the other Buddhas.

Notes

1. A jellylike food made from the root of the konnyaku plant. It is believed to eliminate poisonous substances from the body.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. This is taken from the passage "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas."

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, chap. 23.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 14. The following quotations are also from the same chapter. These passages refer to the parable of the priceless gem in the topknot. A king rewards his soldiers for their courage in battle with land, houses, and jewels, but he will not readily part with the priceless gem in his topknot.

Finally, however, he bestows it upon his most courageous warrior. The gem represents the Lotus Sutra, which the Buddha conceals while expounding the provisional teachings.

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

8. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

9. The ruler of Wei refers to Duke Yi of the state of Wei (r. 668–660 B.C.E.) in China. Te-tsung (742–805) was the ninth emperor of the T'ang dynasty.

10. Hu here refers to tribes living north of China, and Yüeh, to those living south of it.

11. Fuji Sengen refers to the deity worshiped at shrines in the Fuji and other regions.

Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigon



I PLACED the written petition, dated the eighth day of the eleventh month in the third year of Koan (1280), in which you expressed your prayer, along with your offerings of one thousand coins and an unlined robe made of thread spun from bark fiber, before the Lotus Sutra, and I spoke to the gods of the sun and moon about it. Now there is no need to attempt to surmise yourself how things will go. Whether or not your prayer is answered will depend on your faith; [if it is not] I will in no way be to blame.

When water is clear, the moon is

reflected. When the wind blows, the trees shake. Our minds are like the water. Faith that is weak is like muddy water, while faith that is brave is like clear water. Understand that the trees are like principles, and the wind that shakes them is like the recitation of the sutra.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-ninth day of the eleventh month

Reply to the lay nun Nichigon



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eleventh month of the third year of Koan (1280) in response to a petition from the lay nun Nichigon. She is thought to have been either a relative of the lay priest Takahashi, a cen-

tral figure among the believers in Fuji District of Suruga Province, or the mother of Nichigen, a priest of Jissoji temple in the same province who converted to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

Great Bodhisattva Hachiman



I HAVE received the white quilted robe and the ten *ryo* of cotton that you were kind enough to send. The year is drawing to a close, and here in the mountains where I live, the wind blows fiercely, and my little dwelling is as full of holes as a wicker basket. I have the leaves of plants for my floor covering and wear clothes made of paper,¹ so that my body becomes as cold as a stone, and the things I have to eat are like ice. When I received the quilted robe, I thought that I would put it on immediately and get warm, but you had written that it was for New Year's Day of the coming year. I wonder if even the Venerable Mahakashyapa, who retired to Mount Kukkutapada to await the coming of the Compassionate Honored One² 5,670 million years in the future, could feel as impatient as I do.

But enough of that. Shiji Shiro told me that you have been discussing the Buddhist teachings in the presence of your lord, which delights me no end. In reward, I will write to you now about a very important doctrine.

Most people, both the wise and the ignorant, will tell you that Great Bodhisattva Hachiman is a manifestation of Amida Buddha, and this claim is not without reason. In the documents of middle antiquity and in oracles from Hachiman himself, there have been a

few instances when he was identified with Amida Buddha.³ This has come about because people have each at heart become Nembutsu believers, so that they are like someone who mistakes a red stone for a lump of gold, or who looks at a stump in the field and sees a hare.⁴

The truth is that Hachiman is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha. I say this because in the province of Osumi there is an inscription on a stone to that effect.⁵ That stone is now broken into two. On one part are written the two characters of the name Hachiman. The other part bears this inscription: "Long ago on Eagle Peak he preached the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. Now he has manifested himself as the Great Bodhisattva and resides in the main shrine." This is the first proof that Hachiman is Shakyamuni Buddha.

But there is even more definite proof. Great Bodhisattva Hachiman's father was Emperor Chuai, the fourteenth human sovereign of Japan, and his mother was Empress Jingu, the fifteenth sovereign. [Their son] Emperor Ojin, the sixteenth sovereign, was the one now known as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman.

His father, Emperor Chuai, being commanded by the Sun Goddess, was about to cross the ocean to attack the

kingdom of Silla. But the king of Silla put a curse on him, and as a result Emperor Chuai passed away at Hakata.⁶ At that time his consort, Empress Jingu, was already pregnant with the prince. But in order to avenge the late emperor, she amassed a force of several tens of thousands of horsemen and crossed the sea to the kingdom of Silla.

While the ship was still on the waves, she could feel that the hour had come for her child to be born. At that time Empress Jingu addressed the babe in her womb, saying: "Are you a prince, or are you a girl child? If you are a prince, then listen well to what I say. I am crossing over to the land of Silla in order to attack the enemy of your father, Emperor Chuai. Since I am only a woman, I want you to act as my commander in chief. If you are destined to be the sovereign of Japan, then you must not be born just now, but must remain in my womb during the time of battle and from there serve as commander in chief to my tens of thousands of horsemen and carry out the attack on your father's enemy. But if you do not heed my words and instead insist upon being born at once, then I will cast you into the sea. You must not bear a grudge against me!"

The child accordingly remained in the womb as before. At that time the empress donned a belt made of stones in order to chill her womb and proceeded on her way to Silla where she subjugated the kingdom. When she returned to Japan, she went to Usa Shrine in the province of Buzen, and there her child was born. He had been in the womb for three years, six months, and three days, and was born on the eighth day of the fourth month of a year with the cyclical sign *kinoe-tora*. This was the child who was later to be known as Emperor Ojin. At the age of eighty, he passed away on the fifteenth day of the second month of a year with the sign *mizunoe-saru*. He is the chief

god of Mount Otokoyama, a guardian deity to the dynasty that rules our country. His enshrined form is not particularly unusual, but he is nevertheless revered for his mysterious powers. He is the deity now known as Great Bodhisattva Hachiman.

Now the Thus Come One Shakyamuni was born in the kalpa of continuance in the ninth period of decrease, when the human life span measured a hundred years. His father was King Shuddhodana, and his mother, Lady Maya. He was born in the state of Kapilavastu in central India, in a place called Lumbini Gardens, on the eighth day of the fourth month of a year with the sign *kinoe-tora*. After living for eighty years, he passed away on the bank of the Ajitavati River at Kushinagara in eastern India on the fifteenth day of the second month of a year with the sign *mizunoe-saru*. It was the same with the present Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. Though one was born in India and the other in Japan, and though they had different fathers and mothers, both were born on the eighth day of the fourth month of a year with the sign *kinoe-tora* and died on the fifteenth day of the second month of a year with the sign *mizunoe-saru*.

During the 2,220 and more years since the Buddha passed away, whether in India, China, Japan, or anywhere else in the entire land of Jambudvīpa, those born as sages and worthies are all said to have been manifestations of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. But no one has ever heard of such a coincidence as the one I have just pointed out.

In addition to this strange coincidence, there is the matter of Great Bodhisattva Hachiman's vow. When he preached the Lotus Sutra [as Shakyamuni Buddha] in India, he said, "Honestly discarding expedient means,"⁷ and in Japan he vowed that he would make his residence on the heads of honest

persons. Nevertheless, on the fourteenth day of last month, the eleventh month, at the hour of the rat (11:00 P.M.—1:00 A.M.), he burned down his sacred shrine⁸ and ascended to the heavens. If we consider the reason, we will see that, though this deity had vowed to reside on the heads of honest persons, there were no longer any honest persons on whose heads he might reside. Being thus left without a dwelling place, he ascended to the heavens.

But the strangest thing of all in this country of Japan is the fact that, although its people have been born in a land related to the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, they have discarded this Buddha, and all, every one of them alike, have become followers of Amida Buddha. They have cast aside Shakyamuni, with whom they have a deep bond, and pay reverence to Amida Buddha, with whom they have no connection at all.⁹

In addition, they have taken the day when Shakyamuni Buddha, their father, passed away, and assigned it to Amida Buddha, and taken the day when he was born, and assigned it to Medicine Master [Buddha]. And though they appear to pay reverence to Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, they claim that his true identity is Amida Buddha. Not only have they discarded both true identity and manifestation,¹⁰ but they treat as an enemy anyone who tries to point out their error. That is no doubt the reason why this deity, Hachiman, being powerless to correct the situation, has ascended to the heavens.

The moon will cast its image on water, but its reflection will not dwell in muddy water. However, it will be mirrored even in the drops of dew on the trees above and on the leaves of the grass, if the dew is clear and pure. And in the same way, Hachiman will undoubtedly take up his residence on the head of an honest person, even though

that person may not be the ruler of the nation.

Hachiman has vowed to take up residence on the heads of a hundred rulers.¹¹ And yet he did not reside on the heads of the five rulers of our nation, namely, the eighty-first sovereign, Emperor Antoku; the eighty-second sovereign, the Retired Emperor of Oki; the eighty-third sovereign, the Retired Emperor of Awa; the eighty-fourth sovereign, the Retired Emperor of Sado; and the eighty-fifth sovereign, the emperor of Higashi Ichijo.¹² He declined to do so because they had the heads of men who are fawning and crooked. Instead, he took up residence on the heads of Yoritomo and Yoshitoki, though these men were mere servants of the throne. This was no doubt because they were honest men.

On considering this, we can see that, because persons who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra are following an honest doctrine, Shakyamuni Buddha himself will protect them. How then could it happen that Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, who is his manifestation, would fail to protect them?

Though water may be pure at the outset, if it becomes muddied, the moon does not shine in it. But even though night soil is filthy, when it clears, the moon does not begrudge its reflection. The muddied water may be pure in nature, yet the moon does not shine in it. But the night soil, though impure in nature, reflects the moon's rays when it clears.

The muddy water may be likened to learned priests and eminent scholars who keep the precepts but turn their backs on the Lotus Sutra. The night soil may be likened to ignorant people without precepts whose greed is profound and whose anger is intense, but who put undivided faith in the Lotus Sutra alone.

The scripture known as the Nirvana Sutra lists the beings that have been

able to attain the way through the Lotus Sutra, and the list includes such filthy creatures as dung beetles, vipers, and scorpions. To express the wonderful power of the Lotus Sutra, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna says that it enables even such creatures as dung beetles to attain Buddhahood.¹³

The Nirvana Sutra also refers to persons who cannot become Buddhas even through the Lotus Sutra, defining them as icchantikas, or those of incorrigible disbelief, who appear to be like arhats, or like great bodhisattvas. They are like the muddy water that, though originally pure, does not reflect the moonlight. Thus Great Bodhisattva

Hachiman, because he hates dishonesty, has ascended to the heavens. But when he sees the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, how could he begrudge shedding his light on them?

My followers should believe the truth of this matter firmly. Great Bodhisattva Hachiman dwells with us here. Have no doubt about it! Have no doubt about it!

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the twelfth month

Reply to the wife of Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the twelfth month of the third year of Koan (1280) to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo, but its contents suggest that it was intended for them both.

The body of the letter deals with Hachiman, who, along with the Sun Goddess, was one of the major deities in Japanese mythology. The identification of Hachiman with Emperor Ojin is thought to have developed during the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods. Later, Hachiman became the object of veneration favored by the warrior class. Minamoto no Yoritomo, founder of the Kamakura shogunate, established a shrine to him in Kamakura.

Hachiman also provides an early example of the melding of Buddhist and Shinto elements. With the spread of Buddhism in Japan, the Japanese deities came to be viewed as local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and Hachiman was granted the title Great Bodhisattva by the imperial court in the early Heian period.

By the Kamakura period (1185–1333), with the increasing popularity of Pure Land beliefs, most people had begun to regard Great Bodhisattva Hachiman as a manifestation of Amida Buddha. In this letter Nichiren Daishonin sharply criticizes this view and states unequivocally that Hachiman is a manifestation of Shakyamuni Buddha. He offers two pieces of evidence in support of this claim: a stone inscription in the province of Osumi, and the coincidence of Shakyamuni Buddha and Emperor Ojin, who was identified with Hachiman, having exactly the same birth and death dates. The Daishonin's description of the birth of Emperor Ojin differs in some particulars from the accounts given in *The Records of Ancient Matters* and *The Chronicles of Japan*, the earliest Japanese histories. Different versions of these texts and various traditions concerning historical events may have been in circulation in the Daishonin's time.

The Daishonin then offers his interpretation of the destruction by fire of

Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura, which had occurred the month before. News of this event may in fact have prompted the choice of subject for this letter. Hachiman, the Daishonin says, once vowed to reside “on the heads of honest persons.” The fact that he has now abandoned his shrine and ascended to

the heavens can only mean that there are no longer any honest persons in the country; all have abandoned the “honest doctrine” of the Lotus Sutra. However, the Daishonin concludes, the votaries of the Lotus Sutra are none other than “honest persons,” and Hachiman surely continues to protect them.

Notes

1. This refers to a kind of garment made by gluing together sheets of thick Japanese paper. It was then crumpled to make it pliable and treated with persimmon tannin.

2. The Compassionate Honored One refers to Bodhisattva Maitreya. Some accounts view him as a historical personage who preceded the Buddha in death. He is said to have been reborn in the Tushita heaven and to be preaching there. It is prophesied that he will reappear in this world 5,670 million years after Shakyamuni's death, attain Buddhahood, and save the people in Shakyamuni's stead.

3. “Middle antiquity” here indicates the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods. The Daishonin is probably referring to some unspecified documents of this period. According to *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests*, a ninth-century priest called Gyokyo prayed at Usa Hachiman Shrine to see the god's original form. Thereupon Amida Buddha and his attendants appeared in his presence.

4. Reference is to a Chinese folktale. One day, when a farmer was plowing, he saw a hare run into a stump and break its neck. He thereupon abandoned his plow and stood guard by the stump, hoping to catch other hares in the same way. However, his strategy was unsuccessful, and he was ridiculed by others.

5. This stone is said to have stood in the precincts of Hachiman Shrine in Osumi Province, an area in what is now Kagoshima in the southern part of Kyushu. The stone itself no longer exists, but the inscription is quoted in a work by the Zen priest Nampo Gensho (1555–1620).

6. An area in northern Kyushu, once a center of foreign trade, international exchange, and national defense.

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. The sentence

reads: “Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.”

8. “His sacred shrine” refers to Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura, which burned down on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month, 1280.

9. Shakyamuni Buddha proclaims in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, “Ever since then I have been constantly in this saha world, preaching the Law, teaching and converting.” Thus those who live in this world have a deep connection with Shakyamuni. Other Buddhas such as Amida and Medicine Master, however, dwell in different realms of the universe. Amida is the Buddha of the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the west, and Medicine Master is the Buddha of the Pure Emerald World in the east.

10. This expression refers to the idea that indigenous Japanese deities were local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, who were their true identity. As this concept developed, correspondences were established identifying which deity was a manifestation of which Buddha or bodhisattva. The phrase “discarded both true identity and manifestation” means that, in rejecting Shakyamuni Buddha, who is Hachiman's true identity, people have in effect rejected Hachiman as well.

11. This refers to an oracle said to have been received from Hachiman in the reign of the fifty-first sovereign, Emperor Heizei (r. 806–809). In it Hachiman vowed to protect the nation until the reign of the hundredth sovereign.

12. The Retired Emperor of Oki refers to Emperor Gotoba, the Retired Emperor of Awa, to Emperor Tsuchimikado, the Retired Emperor of Sado, to Emperor Jun-toku, and the emperor of Higashi Ichijo, to Emperor Chukyo. In a number of his writ-

ings, the Daishonin attributes both the defeat of the Heike clan and the failure of the Retired Emperor Gotoba and his associates in attempting to overthrow the Kamakura

regime to their reliance on the rituals of the True Word school.

13. This statement is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

The Wealthy Man Sudatta



I HAVE received your offering of one thousand coins. Because you have demonstrated such sincerity, I will tell you something. You must not think I am a greedy priest.

I will teach you how to become a Buddha easily. Teaching another something is the same as oiling the wheels of a cart so that they turn even though it is heavy, or as floating a boat on water so that it moves ahead easily. The way to become a Buddha easily is nothing special. It is the same as giving water to a thirsty person in a time of drought, or as providing fire for a person freezing in the cold. Or again, it is the same as giving another something that is one of a kind, or as offering something as alms to another even at the risk of one's life.

There was once a ruler called King Golden Color.¹ For twelve years his country was besieged by a severe drought, and countless numbers of people died of starvation. In the rivers, corpses were treated as bridges, and on land, skeletons were regarded as burial mounds. At that time, King Golden Color aroused a great aspiration to save others and distributed a vast quantity of alms. He gave away everything he could, until a mere five measures of rice remained in his storehouse. When his ministers informed him that this would provide him with food for a sin-

gle day, the great king took up the five measures of rice and let each of his starving subjects have, for example, one or two grains, or three or four grains. Then he looked up to the heavens and raised his voice, crying out that he would take the pain of all the people's hunger and thirst on himself and die of starvation. The heavenly gods heard him and instantly sent down the sweet rain of immortality. All those people whose bodies this rain touched or whose faces it fell upon became satiated with food, and in the space of a moment, the inhabitants of the entire country revived.

In India there was a wealthy man called Sudatta. Seven times he became poor, and seven times he became a wealthy man. During his last period of poverty, when all the people had fled or perished and only he and his wife remained, they had five measures of rice that would nourish them for five days. At that time, five people—Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, Ananda, Rahula, and Shakyamuni Buddha—came one after another to beg for the five measures of rice, which Sudatta gave them. From that day on, Sudatta was the wealthiest man in all India, and he built Jetavana Monastery. From this, you should understand all things.

Just as a monkey resembles a man and a rice cake resembles the moon,

you already resemble the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Because you so earnestly protected my followers in Atsuhara, the people of this country consider you to be like Masakado of the Shohei era or Sadato of the Tengi era. This is solely because you have devoted your life to the Lotus Sutra. The heavenly gods do not in the least regard you as a man who has betrayed his lord. In addition, having had numerous public works forcibly assigned to your little village, you yourself lack the horse you should be riding, and your wife and children lack the clothing they should be wearing. Your feeling anxious that the votary of the Lotus Sutra was probably being assailed by snow amidst the moun-

tains and in want of food, and sending me one thousand coins even in such circumstances, is exactly like the poor woman giving a begging monk the single garment that she and her husband wore, or like Rida giving the millet in his jar to a pratyekabuddha.² How admirable, how noble! I will speak to you in more detail later.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the
twelfth month in the third year of
Koan (1280)

Reply to Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the winter of 1280 and sent to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the young steward of Ueno Village in Suruga Province. Since Nichiren Daishonin had come to live in Minobu, Tokimitsu had been particularly close to Nikko Shonin, supporting his propagation efforts in the Fuji area. During the Atsuhara Persecution, he used his influence to protect other believers, sheltering some in his own home and negotiating for the release of others who had been imprisoned. The Daishonin honored him for his courage by calling him “Ueno the Worthy,”

though the young man was barely twenty at the time.

This letter was written just over a year after the worst period of the Atsuhara Persecution. The authorities in Kamakura, in retaliation for Tokimitsu’s support of the Daishonin’s followers, had imposed heavy punitive taxes on his estate and demanded that he supply men for unpaid labor. Despite his own destitution, however, Tokimitsu’s first concern was for the Daishonin, and he somehow managed to send him one thousand coins. Deeply touched, the Daishonin wrote him this response.

Notes

1. King Golden Color refers to Shakyamuni Buddha in a previous existence. The King Golden Color Sutra tells a slightly different version of the story, in which the king gives his last measure of rice as alms to a pratyekabuddha. Then, clothing, food, and other treasures rain down from the heavens, and the people are relieved of their suffering.

2. As the Storehouse of Various Treasures Sutra tells the story, a certain wealthy man has two sons, Rida and Arida. At the time of his death, rather than dividing his wealth between them, he admonishes them to help each other. Eventually the elder brother, Rida, falls on hard times and takes religious vows, becoming a pratyekabuddha. The younger brother, Arida, also

loses his fortune and is compelled to eke out a living selling firewood. One day, observing a pratyekabuddha with an empty almsbowl, he offers him a meal without realizing that this is his elder brother. As a result of this good deed, he is reborn first as

the heavenly king Shakra, then as a wheel-turning king, and finally as one of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples. Though the text refers to Rida, the Daishonin may have meant Arida.

Reply to Onichi-nyo



I HAD already received the three hundred coins that you sent by the hand of the priest Ben-bo,¹ and now you have again sent me two hundred coins.

The Buddha, being truly worthy of respect, never judges by the size of one's offerings. In the past, the boy Virtue Victorious offered a mud pie to the Buddha, and was reborn as King Ashoka and ruled over all of Jambudvīpa. A poor woman cut off her hair and sold it to buy oil [for the Buddha],² and not even the winds sweeping down from Mount Sumeru could extinguish the flame of the lamp fed by this oil. Accordingly, your offerings of two and three strings of coins are far greater even than those of the ruler of Japan, who may offer the nation and build a pagoda adorned with the seven kinds of treasures that reaches to the heaven of the thirty-three gods.

A single character of the Lotus Sutra

is like the great earth, which gives rise to all things. A single character is like the great ocean, which contains the water from all rivers. A single character is like the sun and moon, which illuminate all four continents.

This single character changes and [becomes the moon. The moon changes and] becomes a Buddha.³ Rice plants change and become seedlings. Seedlings change and become stalks. Stalks change and become rice. Rice changes and becomes a person. And a person changes and becomes a Buddha. A woman changes and becomes the single character *myō*. The character *myō* changes and becomes Shakyamuni Buddha seated on a lotus pedestal. Nam-myōho-rengo-kyō, Nam-myōho-rengo-kyō.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

To Onichi



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the third year of Koan (1280) to a woman named Onichi-nyo. Though not much is known about her, the opening passage of the letter suggests

that she had some connection with Nissho, one of the Daishonin's senior disciples.

Citing the stories about the boy Virtue Victorious and about the poor

woman who sold her hair for oil, the Daishonin first praises Onichi-nyo's offerings, which, though not large, were given with a sincere heart. He then ex-

plains the great power of Nam-myohorenge-kyo that enables all people to attain Buddhahood.

Notes

1. Ben-bo is another name for Nissho (1221-1323), the Daishonin's first convert among the priesthood, who became one of his six senior disciples.

2. This story appears in the Prophecy of Buddhahood for King Ajatashatru Sutra. The version recounted here is different in some particulars. According to the sutra, an old woman in Magadha had always desired to make an offering to the Buddha, but could not fulfill her wish because of her poverty. One day she learned that King Ajatashatru was donating a great quantity of

oil to the Buddha for lamps. Deeply impressed, she went out begging, but gained only enough money to buy oil for a single lamp. Then, though the lamps offered by King Ajatashatru all eventually went out, her lamp alone continued to burn throughout the night.

3. In the Japanese text, this passage reads, "This single character changes and becomes a Buddha." The rendering here, with the reference to the moon, reflects the original work in the Daishonin's own hand.

The Gift of Clear Sake



I HAVE received all your gifts: one container of clear sake, ten metal pouring pots, one hundred steamed rice cakes, one bucket containing perhaps two *sho* of syrup, a basket of mandarin oranges, and ten skewers of dried persimmons. I have read your message that your joy at the beginning of spring¹ has unfolded like the cherry blossoms and waxed full like the moon.

Your late son Goro comes inevitably to mind. The blossoms that once fell are about to bloom again, and the withered grasses have begun to sprout anew. Why does the late Goro not return as well? Ah, if he were to come back with the evanescent flowers and grasses, then even though we are not Hitomaro,² we would wait by the blossoms; even though we are not tethered horses, we would never leave the grass!

A sutra passage says that children are enemies.³ Perhaps there is reason for this. The bird known as the owl devours its mother, and the beast called *hakei*⁴ destroys its father. A man called An Lu-shan was killed by his son, Shih Shih-ming,⁵ and the warrior Yoshitomo killed his father, Tameyoshi. Thus the sutra has grounds for saying that children are one's enemies.

Another sutra passage says that children are a treasure. The king Wonderful Adornment was destined, after his life had ended, to fall into the hell

called the great citadel of incessant suffering, but he was saved by his son, the prince Pure Storehouse. Not only was he able to escape the sufferings of that great hell, but he became a Buddha called Sal Tree King. A woman called Shodai-nyo, for the faults of greed and stinginess, was confined in the realm of hungry spirits, but she was saved by her son Maudgalyayana and was freed from that realm.⁶ Thus the sutra's statement that children are a treasure is in no way false.

The late Goro was sixteen years old. Not only did he surpass others in his disposition and handsome appearance, but he was fully endowed with a man's strengths and was praised by all. Moreover, his obedience to his parent's will was like water taking the shape of its container or a shadow following a body. You relied upon him as the pillar of your household; you thought of him as your staff upon the road. All the wealth in your family coffers existed for this child; so did the family retainers. You must have been firmly convinced that when you died you would be carried by him on his back to the graveyard, and that there would be nothing left for you to worry about. But lamentably, he has preceded you in death. "Why? Why did this happen? It must be a dream, an illusion! I will wake up; I will wake up!" you must

have thought. But without your having awakened, already one year has given way to the next. You do not know how long you will have to wait. You must feel that, if only he had left word where you could go to meet him, then without wings, you would soar to the heavens, or without a boat, you would cross over to China. If you heard that he was in the bowels of the earth, then how could you fail to dig into the ground?

And yet there is a way to meet him readily. With Shakyamuni Buddha as your guide, you can go to meet him in the pure land of Eagle Peak. The sutra states, "If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."⁷ This means that, even

if one were to point at the earth and miss it, even if the sun and moon should fall to the ground, even if an age should come when the tides cease to ebb and flow, or even if flowers should not turn to fruit in summer, it could never happen that a woman who chants *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo* would fail to be reunited with her beloved child. Continue in your devotion to faith, and bring this about quickly!

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the first
month

Reply to the lay nun Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the first month of the fourth year of Koan (1281), the year before the Daishonin's death, to the lay nun Ueno, the widowed mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu.

The title of this letter is taken from the first item on the list of the lay nun Ueno's offerings. According to the lunar calendar, New Year's Day fell somewhere between January 21 and February 19. It was celebrated as the start of spring.

This was the first New Year's Day since Nanjo Shichiro Goro, the lay nun's youngest child, had died about

four months earlier at the age of sixteen. The Daishonin sensed that, despite her outward expressions of good cheer, the joy of the new season would still be overshadowed by her grief. He expresses his profound sympathy for her loss, a loss made sadder still by its contrast with the emergence of new life at the beginning of spring. Explaining that *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*, the eternal Mystic Law, transcends birth and death, he encourages the lay nun to strengthen her faith and manifest the state of Buddhahood, so that she can quickly be reunited with her son.

Notes

1. According to the lunar calendar, the first month is the beginning of spring.
2. Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. c. 685–705), one of Japan's most outstanding poets. The Daishonin alludes here to a traditional association between poetry and cherry blossoms, which formed the theme of many

verses by both Hitomaro and other classical poets.

3. A paraphrase of a passage in the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra. The sutra passage mentioned in the next paragraph, which says that children are a treasure, is taken from the same text.

4. A legendary beast resembling a tiger, said to eat its father.

5. Shih Shih-ming (d. 761) was not in fact An Lu-shan's son, but a close subordinate who fought beside him at this time. An Lu-shan (705-757), a military officer in China during the T'ang dynasty, was even-

tually killed in a succession dispute by his real son An Ch'ing-hsü, who was in turn killed by Shih Shih-ming.

6. This story is described in the Service for the Deceased Sutra and cited in *On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors* (p. 817).

7. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

Reply to Jibu-bo



I HAVE received one *to* of polished rice, some myoga¹ buds, and one package of ginger.

People who present the Buddha with the cherry blossoms of spring, the crimson leaves of autumn, the clear water of summer, and the snow of winter all become Buddhas. How then could one who makes the Lotus Sutra an offering of rice, which sustains the life of the emperor and which to the common people is more valuable than jewels, possibly fail to become a Buddha?

In society, what people value are the words of the ruler and the words of their parents. One who disregards the instructions of one's parents is guilty of a lack of filial piety and will be abandoned by heaven. One who fails to do the bidding of the ruler of the country is a violator of the royal command and will have one's life taken away. Cherishing the desire for enlightenment from inconceivably distant kalpas in the past, we have done such things as abandoning our countries, our wives and children, or our own lives for the sake of attaining enlightenment in future existences. When we thus draw near to achieving Buddhahood, and when we encounter the scripture entitled the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law that is the single vehicle, the devil king of the sixth heaven, lord of the threefold

world, reasons: "If these persons should become Buddhas, I will suffer loss on two counts. First of all, if they free themselves from the threefold world, they will escape my control. Second, if they become Buddhas, their parents and siblings will also depart from the saha world. How can I stop this from happening?"

He then produces various emanations and with these takes possession of our parents, enters the body of the ruler of our country, or becomes a respected priest, exhorting us to commit evil acts, making threats, or resorting to flattery. Or else he becomes a high-ranking priest, a great priest, a learned priest, or someone who upholds the precepts, and, with the Flower Garland or Agama sutras or the Nembutsu or True Word teachings, attempts to turn us away from the Lotus Sutra, using deception to prevent us from becoming Buddhas.

The fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra states that, when the Latter Day of the Law arrives, a great demon will first enter the bodies of the sovereign, ministers, and common people, and curse or strike and wound the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If this fails, he will appear as an immeasurable multitude of priests who, employing all the other sutras, attempt to win the votary over. If this does not succeed, he will become a

great priest who upholds the two hundred and fifty precepts and the three thousand rules of conduct, and wheedle the sovereign and deceive his wife so that the votary is exiled or an attempt is made on his life.²

We may also refer to the detailed descriptions in the “Never Disparaging” chapter of the seventh volume, the “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the fourth volume, and the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the second volume, as well as in the forty-volume Nirvana Sutra and in the Protection Sutra, which differ not in the least from the conditions of the present time. In addition, the events in the area of Kajima in Suruga Province,³ especially as they affected you personally, must have brought these things to mind. In a way that bears no comparison with other matters, disobeying the prohibitions that one’s parents or the sovereign may put forward regarding the Lotus Sutra will in fact constitute filial piety toward one’s parents and accord with the prayers of the sovereign [for peace].

Furthermore, Japan is an unusual country, a country that respects the gods and honors the Buddhas. Nevertheless, because everyone from the sovereign on down to the common people hates Nichiren for propagating the Lotus Sutra, though they may revere all the gods and make offerings to all the Buddhas, these meritorious acts only turn into great evil. This is like moxibustion causing the outbreak of virulent boils, or medicine turning into poison. The prayers they offer to all the Buddhas and gods turn into

faults, and the country itself is about to become the possession of foreign countries. Moreover, for some time I have been telling people that the time will come when those of high standing will all suffer agonies that are a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times worse than those suffered by the Heike clan at the time of their destruction.⁴

By considering the magnitude of the punishment suffered by those who harbor enmity toward the Lotus Sutra, we can understand the magnitude of the benefits obtained by devoting oneself to it. For example, if one murders one’s parents, then no matter how many causes for great good one may create, one’s efforts will not be acceptable to heaven. But if one kills an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, even if that enemy should be one’s father or mother, this great crime will turn into a cause for great good.⁵ Even if one should be an archenemy of all the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions, if one believes in a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddhas will not abandon one. With this in mind, please carefully consider the nature of this matter. Because the messenger is in a hurry, I cannot write in detail, but I will write to you again.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-second day of the eighth month.

Reply to Jibu-bo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eighth month of the fourth year of Koan (1281) and sent to a disciple

named Jibu-bo Nichii, originally a Tendai priest at Shijuku-in temple in Suruga Province. Jibu-bo took faith in

the Daishonin's teachings and studied under Nichiji, one of the Daishonin's senior disciples.

Although the Atsuhara Persecution had ended almost two years before this letter was written, it is conceivable that the believers who were connected with this persecution were still being harassed by the authorities. The Daishonin explains that, when one approaches enlightenment, the devil king of the sixth heaven will enter the bodies of

the ruler of the country and of one's parents to thwart one's practice.

From the fifth to the seventh month of 1281, Japan was invaded by the Mongol forces, precipitating a deep crisis in the country. The Daishonin has this fact in mind when he says, "Though they [the Japanese] may revere all the gods and make offerings to all the Buddhas, these meritorious acts only turn into great evil."

Notes

1. A perennial grass plant belonging to the ginger family, whose buds and flower stems are both edible and fragrant.

2. This statement from the sutra's fifth volume is found in chapter 13 of the Lotus Sutra.

3. Exactly what "events" are referred to here is unclear, but it may indicate the Atsuhara Persecution, which occurred two years earlier. Kajima, like the village of Atsuhara, was located in Fuji District of Suruga Province.

4. In 1180 Minamoto no Yoritomo led a revolt against the powerful Heike, or Taira, clan. In the five-year struggle that ensued, Yoritomo's forces crushed the Taira and established a warrior government in Kama-

kura to rule Japan. All the major Taira leaders, including Taira no Kiyomori, died or were killed during this period, and the clan never again achieved prominence.

5. It is plainly evident from the body of Nichiren Daishonin's writings, and from the fact that he personally took pains to avoid harming any living thing, that he placed ultimate value on life. This statement, then, is clearly not to be taken as an exhortation to murder the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, but rather as a tool of emphasis and contrast. It may also be seen as an expression of the Buddhist spirit to do battle with and conquer the evil or darkness inherent within life.

The Person and the Law



I HAVE just heard from your messenger that you are suffering from a serious illness. I hope you will recover soon and come to see me.

Also, I have received your gifts of a horseload of salt, a sack of soybeans, a bag of seaweed, and a bamboo container of sake. I have not seen you since you returned home from the province of Kozuke, and I have been wondering how you are. I can hardly find words to say how much I appreciate your sincerity in sending me a letter and the many gifts.

As you well know, a sutra says that the boy Virtue Victorious,¹ who offered a mud pie to the Buddha, was later reborn as King Ashoka, who ruled over most of the southern continent of Jambudvīpa. Since the Buddha is worthy of respect, the boy was able to receive this great reward even though the pie was only mud. Shakyamuni Buddha teaches, however, that one who makes offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age for even a single day will gain benefit a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than one would by offering countless treasures to the Buddha for one million kalpas. How wonderful then is your having wholeheartedly supported the votary of the Lotus Sutra over the years! According to the Buddha's golden words, in the next life you are certain to be reborn in the

pure land of Eagle Peak. What remarkable rewards you will gain!

This is a mountainous place, remote from all human habitation. Not a single village is found in any direction. Although I live in such a forsaken place, deep in this mortal flesh I preserve the ultimate secret Law inherited from Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, at Eagle Peak. My heart is where all Buddhas enter nirvana; my tongue, where they turn the wheel of the Law; my throat, where they are born into this world; and my mouth, where they attain enlightenment. Because this mountain is where this wondrous votary of the Lotus Sutra dwells, how can it be any less sacred than the pure land of Eagle Peak? This is what [*The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* means when] it says, "Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect; since the person is worthy of respect, the land is sacred." The "Supernatural Powers" chapter reads, "Whether in a forest, beneath a tree, in monks' quarters . . . in such places have the Buddhas entered nirvana." Those who visit this place can instantly expiate the offenses they have accumulated since the infinite past and transform their evils deriving from the three types of action into the three virtues.²

A suffering traveler in central India once came to Heat-Free Lake to quench

the fires of anguish in his heart. He proclaimed that he could fulfill his desire, “as a clear cool pond can satisfy all those who are thirsty.”³ Although Heat-Free Lake and this place are different, the principle is exactly the same. Thus, Eagle Peak of India is now here at Mount Minobu in Japan. It has been a long time since you were last here. You should come to see me as soon as you

possibly can. I am looking forward eagerly to seeing you.

How can I describe your sincerity? In truth, it is splendid!

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the ninth month in the fourth year of Koan (1281)

Reply to Nanjo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter from Mount Minobu to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in Suruga, in the ninth month, 1281. Nanjo Tokimitsu was then just twenty-two years old.

Following the Atsuhara Persecution, in which Nanjo Tokimitsu had played an extremely important role in supporting the believers, government officials had taxed his estate heavily so that

he had difficulty maintaining his family. Exactly what illness he was suffering from remains unclear; he recovered, however, and lived for some fifty years after this letter was written.

The title of this letter, *The Person and the Law*, is derived from a passage of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* that states that, since the Law is wonderful, the person who upholds it is worthy of respect.

Notes

1. This story appears in *The Story of King Ashoka*.

2. The three types of action—that is, deeds, words, and thoughts—by which kar-

ma is created. The three virtues here mean the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation, which are attributes of a Buddha.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

Wu-lung and I-lung



I HAVE received one horseload of polished rice (four *to*) and a sack of yams, and respectfully chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Myoho-rence-kyo is likened to the lotus. The great mandara flower in heaven and the cherry blossom in the human world are both celebrated flowers, but the Buddha chose neither to compare to the Lotus Sutra. Of all the flowers, he selected the lotus blossom to symbolize the Lotus Sutra. There is a reason for this. Some plants first flower and then produce fruit, while in others fruit comes forth before flowers. Some bear only one flower but much fruit, others send forth many flowers but only one fruit, and still others produce fruit without flowering. Thus there are all manner of plants, but the lotus is the only one that bears flowers and fruit simultaneously. The benefit of all the other sutras is uncertain, because they teach that one must first make good causes and only then can one become a Buddha at some later time. With regard to the Lotus Sutra, when one's hand takes it up, that hand immediately attains Buddhahood, and when one's mouth chants it, that mouth is itself a Buddha, as, for example, the moon is reflected in the water the moment it appears from behind the eastern mountains, or as a sound and its echo arise simultaneously. It is for this

reason that the sutra states, "If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood."¹ This passage means that, if there are a hundred or a thousand people who uphold this sutra, without a single exception all one hundred or one thousand of them will become Buddhas.

In your letter you mention the anniversary of the passing of your compassionate father, the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon. You say, "Since he left many sons behind, memorial services for him will be conducted in as many different ways. I fear, however, that such ceremonies will be slanderous unless strictly based on the Lotus Sutra." Shakyamuni Buddha's golden teaching states, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."² The Buddha Many Treasures gave testimony, declaring, "The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!"³ And the Buddhas of the ten directions gave credence to the sutra's verity by extending their tongues to the Brahma heaven.⁴

To the southwest, across the ocean from Japan, there is a country named China. In that country, some people believe in the Buddha but not in gods, while others believe exactly the opposite. Perhaps a similar situation existed in the early days of our own country.

Be that as it may, in China there once lived a calligrapher named Wu-lung. In his art he was without peer in the entire country, just as was Tofu or Kozei⁵ in Japan. He hated Buddhism and vowed that he would never transcribe any Buddhist scriptures. As he approached his end, he fell seriously ill. On his deathbed he expressed his last wishes to his son, saying, "You are my son. Not only have you inherited my skill, but you write with an even better hand than I. No matter what evil influence may work upon you, you must never copy the Lotus Sutra." Thereupon blood spurted like fountains from his five sense organs. His tongue split into eight pieces, and his body fell apart in ten directions. Yet his relatives, ignorant of the three evil paths, did not realize that this was an omen that he would fall into hell.

The son's name was I-lung. He, too, proved to be the best calligrapher in China. Obedient to his father's will, he pledged that he would never transcribe the Lotus Sutra. The ruler of the time was named Ssu-ma.⁶ He believed in Buddhism and held the Lotus Sutra in especially high regard. He desired to have this sutra transcribed by an excellent calligrapher—none but the most skilled in all the country—so that he could have a copy of his own. So he summoned I-lung. I-lung explained that his father's will forbade him from doing so and beseeched the ruler to excuse him from the task. Hearing this, the ruler called another calligrapher and had him transcribe the entire sutra. The result, however, was far from satisfying.

The ruler sent again for I-lung and said to him, "Since you say your father's will forbids you, I will not compel you to copy the sutra. I do insist, however, that you at least obey my command to write the titles of its eight volumes." I-lung begged repeatedly to be excused. The ruler, now furious,

said, "Your father was as much my subject as you are. If you refuse to write the titles for fear of being unfilial to him, I will charge you with disobedience of a royal decree." The ruler repeated his strict order several times. I-lung, though unwilling to be unfilial, realized that he could no longer disobey the royal command, so he wrote the titles [of the eight volumes]⁷ of the Lotus Sutra and presented his work to the ruler.

Returning home, I-lung faced his father's grave and, shedding tears of blood, reported, "The ruler commanded me so strictly that, against your will, I wrote the titles of the Lotus Sutra." In his grief at having been unable to escape the offense of being unfilial, he remained by the graveside for three days on end, fasting until he was on the verge of death. At the hour of the tiger (3:00–5:00 A.M.) on the third day, he was almost dead and felt as if he were dreaming. He looked up at the sky and saw a heavenly being, who was like a painting of the god Shakra and whose multitude of followers filled both heaven and earth. I-lung asked him who he was. The heavenly being replied: "Do you not recognize me? I am your father, Wu-lung. While I was in the human world, I adhered to non-Buddhist scriptures and harbored enmity toward Buddhism, particularly toward the Lotus Sutra. For this reason, I fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

"Every day I had my tongue wrenched out several hundred times. Now I was dead, now I was alive again. I kept crying out in agony, alternately looking up to heaven and flinging myself to the ground, but there was no one to heed my screams. I wanted to tell the human world of my anguish, but there was no means of communication. Whenever you insisted upon adhering to my will, your words would either turn into flames and torment me, or be transformed into swords that

rained down from heaven upon me. Your behavior was unfilial in the extreme. However, since you were acting thus in order to abide by my will, I knew I could not entertain a grudge against you, for I was only receiving the retribution for my own deeds.

“While I was thinking thus, a golden Buddha suddenly appeared in the hell of incessant suffering and declared, ‘Even those who have destroyed enough good causes to fill the entire realm of phenomena, if they hear the Lotus Sutra just once, will never fail to attain enlightenment.’ When this Buddha entered the hell of incessant suffering, it was as if a deluge of water had been poured over a great fire. As my agony subsided a little, I joined my palms together in prayer and asked him what kind of Buddha he was. The Buddha replied, ‘I am the character *myo*, one of the sixty-four characters that compose the titles [of the eight volumes] of the Lotus Sutra, which your son, I-lung, is now writing.’ As eight characters form the title of each of the eight volumes,⁸ a total of sixty-four Buddhas appeared and shone like sixty-four full moons, and the utter darkness of the hell of incessant suffering was instantly transformed into a dazzling brilliance. Moreover, in accordance with the principle that any place, without changing its characteristics, is a Buddha land,⁹ the hell of incessant suffering became the Capital of Eternally Tranquil Light. I and all the other inmates became Buddhas seated on lotus blossoms, and we are now ascending to the inner court of the Tushita heaven. This I am reporting to you before anyone else.”

I-lung said, “It was my hand that wrote the titles. How could you have been saved? Moreover, I did not write

them with sincerity. How could it possibly have helped you?” His father replied: “How ignorant you are! Your hand is my hand, and your body is my body. The characters you write are the characters I write. Although you had no faith in your heart, you nevertheless wrote the titles with your hand. Therefore, I have already been saved. Think of a child who sets fire to something and, without the least intention of doing so, causes it to be burned. The same holds true with the Lotus Sutra. If one professes faith in it, one will surely become a Buddha, even though one may not expect it in the least. Now that you understand this principle, never slander the Lotus Sutra. Since we are among the laity, however, we are in a better position to repent of our past slanderous words, no matter how grave they may have been.”

I-lung reported all this to the ruler. The ruler said, “My wish has been answered with splendid results.” From then on, I-lung basked increasingly in the royal favor, and the entire populace of the country came to revere the Lotus Sutra.

The late Goro¹⁰ and the late lay priest Matsuno were, respectively, your son and father. You are the lay priest’s daughter. I believe, therefore, that he must at this very moment be in the inner court of the Tushita heaven. Hoki-bo¹¹ will read and explain this letter to you. Since I wrote in haste, it was impossible to furnish details.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The fifteenth day of the eleventh
month

Reply to the lay nun Ueno



Background

This letter was written at Minobu in the eleventh month of the fourth year of Koan (1281) to the lay nun Ueno, the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu. The Daishonin was sixty years old when he sent this letter acknowledging the offerings she had made to commemorate the anniversary of the death of her father, the lay priest Matsuno Rokuro Saemon.

The lay nun Ueno's husband was Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, the steward of Ueno Village in Suruga Province. Her name, Ueno, derived from Ueno Village. She had nine children, including Tokimitsu.

In this letter, the Daishonin first teaches that, just as the lotus bears

flowers and fruit simultaneously, all who believe in the Lotus Sutra are certain to attain Buddhahood. Then, citing the story of the renowned father and son calligraphers in ancient China, Wu-lung and I-lung, the Daishonin assures the lay nun that, when a son or daughter embraces faith in the Lotus Sutra, his or her parents will be able to attain Buddhahood. According to the story, though Wu-lung fell into the state of hell for his hatred of the Lotus Sutra, he was ultimately saved from his suffering by his son's transcribing the titles of the eight volumes of the sutra. This story is found in *The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions*, a work by the T'ang-dynasty priest Seng-hsiang.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., chap. 11.
4. Ibid., chap. 21.
5. Tofu refers to Ono no Tofu (894–966), and Kozei to Fujiwara no Kozei (972–1027). They were among the most outstanding Japanese calligraphers of their time.
6. Ssu-ma was a ruler of Ping-chou in the northern part of China. Ssu-ma was probably his official title rather than his name.
7. This means that I-lung wrote the titles on separate pieces of paper to be used on the covers of the eight scrolls of the sutra.
8. The title of each volume of the Lotus Sutra comprises eight Chinese characters:

the five characters of the title, *Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo*, and the three characters indicating the volume number.

9. *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra"* states that living beings in all of the nine worlds can attain Buddhahood just as they are, that is, without changing their individual characteristics. The same principle applies to the insentient environment.

10. Nanjo Shichiro Goro (1265–1280), the fifth son of the lay nun Ueno and a younger brother of Nanjo Tokimitsu. He had shown great promise, but died at the age of sixteen.

11. Hoki-bo was the Buddhist name that Nikko Shonin received in 1258 when he became Nichiren Daishonin's disciple.

Roots of Good Fortune



I HAVE received the various gifts that you were kind enough to send.

The roots of good fortune are not determined by whether one's offerings are large or small. Depending upon the country, the person, and the time, the merit gained will differ in various ways. Suppose one dries dung, breaks it up, passes it through a sieve, and forms it to resemble a block of sandalwood. Even if one were to then carve this into the image of a woman, a heavenly goddess, or a Buddha, when it is burned, it would still give off no other fragrance but the stink of dung. Similarly, if one kills or robs others and takes from them the first fruits of the harvest, then even if one should offer one's gains with the intent of acquiring merit and good fortune, that offering would instead become an evil deed.

The wealthy man Sudatta was the richest person in all of India. He built Jetavana Monastery as an offering and invited the Buddha there. Yet his monastery burned down, and not a trace of it remained. This rich man originally gained his wealth by catching and selling fish, thus depriving them of life, and therefore in the end this monastery disappeared.

In the same way, the donations made by people today may seem impressive, but they are offerings of fiefs won in

battle, or of wealth gained by heedlessly oppressing the people. Though these gifts appear to be great acts of devotion to the Buddha, not only will the people who offer them fail to attain Buddhahood, but their contributions will vanish without a trace.

Again, even if one does no harm to others and honestly strives to make offerings, there will be cases in which one does not attain Buddhahood. To illustrate, if one plants good seed in a bad field, the seed itself will be ruined, and one will in turn suffer loss. Even if one is sincere, if the person to whom one makes offerings is evil, those offerings will fail to produce benefit; rather, they will cause one to fall into the evil paths.

Your own offerings were not made to me, Nichiren, but to the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, we must leave it to Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions [to fathom the greatness of] the resulting benefits.

I have written to you about various events of this past year, but I must say that I do not recall at any time in my life such cold as we are now experiencing. The snow has fallen and piled up in great quantity. Even those with a strong resolve find it difficult to visit me. The fact that you have sent a

messenger to me here shows that yours
is certainly no ordinary sincerity!

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the
twelfth month

Reply to the lay nun of Kubo



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the last month of the fourth year of Koan (1281) to the lay nun of Kubo, thanking her for the offerings that she had sent him. The lay nun was a widow who lived with her daughter in Kubo in Fuji District of Suruga Province, but little else is known about her. From the contents of the several letters addressed to her, she appears to have been a believer of pure faith who frequently sent offerings to the Daishonin.

In response to her gifts, the Daishonin compares making offerings for the sake of Buddhism to a way of

planting “good roots” or accumulating merit and good fortune. In the opening passage, he explains that the benefit gained from donations depends upon the time, the place, and the person to whom they are offered. Moreover, even a large donation, if it derives from wealth obtained by harming or exploiting others, will never produce benefit, even though offered for the sake of Buddhism. Also, the Daishonin explains that one’s sincerity in making the offerings and the virtue of the person or teaching to which they are made are vital.

Reply to the Lay Nun Myoho



I HAVE received your gift of a light summer robe.

You have been left behind by your deceased husband in a woman's situation, and are separated from your relatives, too. You hear nothing from your one or two daughters, who are not to be relied on. Moreover, you are a woman who is hated by others because of this teaching. You are just like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.

The Buddha's aunt, the nun Mahaprajapati, was a woman. Nevertheless, she became an arhat, gained a name as a voice-hearer, and entered a path by which Buddhahood can never be attained. Changing her appearance as a woman, she abandoned her status as royal consort and began to honor the exhortations of the Buddha. For more than forty years, she upheld the five hundred precepts. By day she stood by the roadside [begging for alms], and by night she sat beneath a tree praying for her next life. And yet she was denied the path that leads to Buddhahood and was spoken of widely as one who was forever incapable of becoming a Buddha. How mortifying these things must have been! Because she was a woman, from inconceivably distant kalpas in the past people had spread false rumors about her, mixing fact and fiction. How embarrassing and vexing it must have been! When, loathing that body, she

dressed herself humbly and became a nun, she thought that she could free herself from such sorrows. Upon learning that, on the contrary, having become a person of the two vehicles, she was never to attain Buddhahood, how wretched she must have felt! By means of the Lotus Sutra, however, she was absolved from the wrath of the Buddhas of the three existences and was able to become a Buddha called Gladly Seen by All Living Beings. How happy, how joyful she must have been!

Thus, if it is for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, no matter what may occur, one should never turn one's back. The Buddha "in a loud voice addressed all the four kinds of believers, saying, 'Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this saha world?'"¹ When they responded with the thought, "I am, I am!" the Buddha admonished the nuns and laywomen as many as three times, saying that, if they desired to repay their debt to all the Buddhas, they should persevere through any difficulty to spread the Lotus Sutra in this saha world after his passing. But their failing to take his advice and saying that they wanted "to go to lands in other regions and broadly propagate this sutra"² shows that these were nuns who totally misunderstood the truth. How exasperated the Buddha must have been!

That is why the Buddha turned aside and looked earnestly at the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas.

I had therefore thought that, though women would tarnish their names and throw away their lives on meaningless paths, they were weak at following the path to Buddhahood. But now you, born a woman in the evil world of the latter age, while being reviled, struck, and persecuted by the barbaric inhabitants of this island country who are unaware of these things, have endured and are propagating the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha at Eagle Peak surely perceives that you surpass the nun [Mahaprajapati] as greatly as clouds do mud. The name of that nun, the Buddha Gladly Seen by All Living Beings, is no unrelated matter; it is now the name of the lay nun Myoho. One who becomes a king is reputed to be a person who in both the past and the present has observed the ten good precepts. Although the names of the kings may change, there is only one lion throne.

This name likewise will never change.

Even that nun who went against the Buddha's words received the name Buddha Gladly Seen by All Living Beings. You are a lay nun who, being true to the Buddha's words, has lost her good name only in this saha world and is giving her life [for the Lotus Sutra]. The Buddha did not abandon the nun, his foster mother. If he were to abandon you as one who is unrelated to him, he would be a biased Buddha. But how could such a thing ever be? And how much less so if, as the sutra states, "The living beings in it [the threefold world] are all my children"?³ Then you are the Buddha's daughter, and that nun was his foster mother. Is it possible that the Buddha, who did not abandon his foster mother, would wish to abandon his own daughter? Please understand the truth of this thoroughly. I have gone on too long, so I will stop here.

Nichiren

To the lay nun Myoho



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to a woman called the lay nun Myoho. There seem to have been several women among the Daishonin's followers known as Myoho; this particular Myoho was a widow who lived at Okamiya in Suruga Province. She also received the letter *The One Essential Phrase*. Her husband had died in 1278, and from the present letter, thought to have been written in 1281, it is clear that she was now virtually alone in the world. Whether because her daughters had married and become part of their husbands' families, or for some other reason, they were apparently of little help to her. She also lived apart from her

other relatives, possibly an estrangement stemming from her belief in the Daishonin's teaching. In any event, she appears to have maintained pure and steadfast faith despite the opposition of those around her.

In this letter, thanking her for the gift of a summer robe, Nichiren Daishonin praises her strong resolve and likens her to Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who patiently endured repeated insults in carrying out his Buddhist practice.

In the main part of the letter, the Daishonin likens the lay nun Myoho to the Buddha's maternal aunt Mahaprajapati, the first Buddhist nun. In the India of Shakyamuni's time, there

was no institution of women who had renounced lay life to pursue religious disciplines. Establishing the order of Buddhist nuns was thus a revolutionary step, and Mahaprajapati appears to have played a crucial role. The *Miscellaneous Agama Sutra* praises her as the foremost nun among the voice-hearer disciples. From the viewpoint of the provisional Mahayana teachings, however, the voice-hearers cannot become Buddhas. The Daishonin suggests that, in becoming a nun, Mahaprajapati perhaps hoped to free herself from the sufferings accompanying a woman's harshly restricted position in society. How distressed she must have been to learn that she had entered a path that would never lead her to Buddhahood! The

Lotus Sutra, however, repudiates the provisional teachings and declares that Buddhahood is open to all. Thus, in the Lotus Sutra, Mahaprajapati was able to receive Shakyamuni's prediction that she would one day become a Buddha.

Myoho's experience may have been similar to Mahaprajapati's, in that she too had no doubt undergone various sufferings because of her sex, and, after taking religious vows, met still further hardships on account of Buddhism. However, the Daishonin points out that, because she has taken faith in the Lotus Sutra, she is certain to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, Mahaprajapati's Buddha-name—"Gladly Seen by All Living Beings"—applies equally well to Myoho.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.
2. *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

3. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

The Proof of the Lotus Sutra

Nichiren, the votary of the Lotus Sutra



HOW does the mirror of the Lotus Sutra portray the people who, in the evil world of the latter age, believe in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra just as they are set forth in the sutra? Shakyamuni Buddha has left us words from his golden mouth revealing that such people have already made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas in their past existences.¹ But ordinary people in the latter age might well doubt the words spoken by just one Buddha. With this in mind, Many Treasures Buddha came expressly all the way from his World of Treasure Purity, many lands to the east. Facing Shakyamuni Buddha, he gave his words of testimony about the Lotus Sutra, saying, "All that you have expounded is the truth!"² If this is so, then there can be no room for doubt about the matter. Nevertheless, Shakyamuni Buddha may have felt that ordinary people in the latter age would still be skeptical. Hence he summoned the Buddhas of the ten directions to come and join him in the magnificent act of extending their long broad tongues, which had told nothing but the truth for countless kalpas, until they projected into the sky as high as Mount Sumeru.

Since this is the case, when ordinary people in the latter age believe in even one or two words of the Lotus Sutra, they are embracing the teaching to which the Buddhas of the ten direc-

tions have given credence. I wonder what karma we created in the past to have been born as such persons, and I am filled with joy. The words of Shakyamuni that I referred to above indicate that the blessings that come from having made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas are so great that, even if one has believed in teachings other than the Lotus Sutra and as a result of this slander been born poor and lowly, one is still able to believe in this sutra in this lifetime. A T'ien-t'ai [school's] commentary states, "It is like the case of a person who falls to the ground, but who then pushes himself up from the ground and rises to his feet again."³ One who has fallen to the ground recovers and rises up from the ground. Those who slander the Lotus Sutra will fall to the ground of the three evil paths, or of the human and heavenly realms, but in the end, through the help of the Lotus Sutra, they will attain Buddhahood.

Now since you, Ueno Shichiro Jiro, are an ordinary person in the latter age and were born to a warrior family, you should by rights be called an evil man,⁴ and yet your heart is that of a good man. I say this for a reason. Everyone, from the ruler on down to the common people, refuses to take faith in my teachings. They inflict harm on the few who do embrace them,

heavily taxing or confiscating their estates and fields, or even in some cases putting them to death. So it is a difficult thing to believe in my teachings, and yet both your mother and your deceased father dared to accept them. Now you have succeeded your father as his heir, and without any prompting from others, you too have wholeheartedly embraced these teachings. Many people, both high and low, have admonished or threatened you, but you have refused to give up your faith. Since you now appear certain to attain Buddhahood, perhaps the heavenly devil and evil spirits⁵ are using illness to try to intimidate you. Life in this world is limited. Never be even the least bit afraid!

And you demons, by making this man suffer, are you trying to swallow a

sword point first, or embrace a raging fire, or become the archenemy of the Buddhas of the ten directions in the three existences? How terrible this will be for you! Should you not cure this man's illness immediately, act rather as his protectors, and escape from the grievous sufferings that are the lot of demons? If you fail to do so, will you not have your heads broken into seven pieces in this life⁶ and fall into the great hell of incessant suffering in your next life! Consider it deeply. Consider it. If you ignore my words, you will certainly regret it later.

The twenty-eighth day of the second month in the fifth year of Koan (1282)

Delivered by Hoki-bo.⁷



Background

This letter was written at Minobu to Nanjo Shichiro Jiro, commonly known as Nanjo Tokimitsu, in the second month, 1282, when Nichiren Daishonin himself was seriously ill.

When he was in his teens, Tokimitsu had assumed his deceased father's duties as steward of the Ueno district, which covered a vast area on one side of Mount Fuji. Particularly during the Atsuhara Persecution, Tokimitsu had made many sacrifices in order to defend the Daishonin's followers who lived in his domains. For his courage, the Daishonin had honored him by naming him "Ueno the Worthy" in a letter written on the sixth day of the eleventh month, 1279, and entitled *The Dragon Gate*.

On first hearing of Tokimitsu's grave illness, the Daishonin had apparently asked a disciple to write a letter of encouragement on his behalf since he

himself was too ill to write. Deeply concerned, however, about the youthful believer, he forced himself to take up his writing brush and sent this letter through Nikko Shonin to help Tokimitsu overcome his illness.

The Daishonin declares that Tokimitsu is a person who, according to the Lotus Sutra, has made offerings to a hundred thousand million Buddhas in his past existences. He then strictly warns the demons causing Tokimitsu's illness that, if they do not cure him, they will suffer in the great Avichi hell.

The letter is traditionally called *The Proof of the Lotus Sutra* because it points out that all the Buddhas gave credence to the truth of the Lotus Sutra. However, it is also known as *Prayer for a Return to Life from Fatal Illness* because Tokimitsu was then battling a serious illness.

Notes

1. This is mentioned in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

3. Miao-lo’s *Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra.”*

4. The Daishonin says this because the work of a warrior involves killing.

5. The original word for evil spirits is “gedo,” which literally means “out of the

way” and usually indicates heretics and non-Buddhists. Here the word means something or someone that brings about disasters. Hence the expression “evil spirits.”

6. Reference is to a passage in the “Dharani” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

7. Hoki-bo is another name for Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin’s closest disciple and his successor.

The Treatment of Illness



Reply to the lay priest Toki.

Nichiren

I HAVE received the unlined robe you sent me through the offices of Saemon.¹ Please inform all those who sent me various offerings that I have received everything he listed. I also wish to acknowledge receipt of the various offerings from the lay priest Ota shown on the list you made. I have written the other part of the teaching I will discuss here in my letter to Saemon. I hope you will ask him to show it to you.

Your letter says that the epidemics are raging all the more fiercely. The illnesses of human beings may be divided into two general categories, the first of which is illness of the body. Physical diseases comprise one hundred and one disorders of the earth element, one hundred and one imbalances of the water element, one hundred and one disturbances of the fire element, and one hundred and one disharmonies of the wind element,² a total of four hundred and four maladies. These illnesses do not require a Buddha to cure them. Skilled physicians such as Water Holder and Water Carrier,³ Jivaka, and Pien Ch'üeh⁴ prescribed medicines that never failed to heal physical sickness.

The second category is illness of the mind. These illnesses arise from the

three poisons and are of eighty-four thousand kinds. They are beyond the healing powers of the two deities⁵ and the three ascetics [of Brahmanism] or the six non-Buddhist teachers. Medicines prescribed by Shen Nung and Huang Ti⁶ are even less effective.

Illnesses of the mind differ greatly in severity. The eighty-four thousand kinds of illnesses of the mind that arise from the three poisons and that afflict ordinary people of the six paths can be treated by the Buddha of Hinayana and his teachings in the Agama sutras, or by the scholars and teachers of the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools. However, if these Hinayana practitioners, in following their teachings, should turn against the Mahayana, or, even though they may not oppose Mahayana Buddhism, if the Hinayana countries think themselves equal to the Mahayana countries, the people will be plagued by sickness. If one attempts to cure such illnesses with Hinayana Buddhism, they will only become worse. They can be treated only by the votaries of the Mahayana sutras. Even within the Mahayana, if adherents of the Flower Garland, Profound Secrets, Wisdom, Mahavairochana, and other provisional Mahayana sutras confuse the inferior with the superior, and insist that the teachings of their schools are equal to

or even surpass the Lotus Sutra, and if the ruler and others in high positions come to accept their assertion, then the three poisons and eighty-four thousand illnesses will all arise. Then, if those followers should try to cure these illnesses with the provisional Mahayana sutras on which they rely, the sicknesses will become all the more serious. Even if they try to use the Lotus Sutra, their efforts will fail because, although the sutra itself is supreme, the practitioners are persons who hold distorted views.

Further, the Lotus Sutra itself is divided into two distinct categories, the theoretical teaching and the essential teaching. One is as different from the other as fire is from water or heaven from earth. The difference is even greater than that between the Lotus Sutra and the sutras that preceded it. These sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are certainly different, but still they have some points of similarity. Among the eight teachings expounded by the Buddha, the perfect teaching of the earlier sutras and that of the theoretical teaching are similar to each other.⁷ When the Buddha expounded the pre-Lotus Sutra and the theoretical teachings, he assumed different guises such as the inferior manifested body, the superior manifested body, the reward body, and the Dharma body, yet he invariably depicted himself as having attained enlightenment for the first time in this world.

The difference between the theoretical and the essential teachings is that in the former the Buddha is described as having first attained enlightenment during his life [in India], while in the latter he is the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past. This difference is like that between a one-hundred-year-old man and a one-year-old baby. The disciples of these two Buddhas are also as different as fire is from water, to say nothing of the difference between their lands.⁸ One who

confuses the essential teaching with the theoretical teaching would not have the sense to distinguish fire from water. The Buddha drew a distinct line between the two in his preaching, but during the more than two thousand years since his passing, no one in the three countries of India, China, and Japan—or for that matter, in the entire land of Jambudvīpa—has clearly understood the difference. Only T'ien-t'ai in China and Dengyo in Japan generally differentiated between the two. And the precept of the perfect and immediate enlightenment, in which the essential teaching is distinguished from the theoretical, still remained to be clarified.⁹ In the final analysis, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo perceived it in their hearts but did not reveal it for three reasons: first, the proper time had not yet come; second, the people had no capacity to accept it; and third, neither had been entrusted with the mission of propagating it. It is today, in the Latter Day of the Law, that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear and propagate it.

The Latter Day of the Law is the proper time for the spread of the essential teaching, so the followers of Hinayana, provisional Mahayana, and the Lotus Sutra's theoretical teachings will receive no benefit from their teachings, even though they are not guilty of any fault. These teachings can be likened to medicines compounded for use in springtime that are ineffective if taken in the fall, or at least not as effective as they are in spring or summer. What is worse, these people are deluded as to the relative superiority of Hinayana and Mahayana, or of the provisional and true teachings. And because the rulers of Japan of previous ages believed in these sutras, and erected temples and donated fields and farmland to the schools they espoused, if the followers of these teachings today were to admit the truth of my assertion that their teachings are inferior, they would have

no way to justify themselves and would in consequence lose the support of the ruler. For this reason, they become enraged, slandering the sutra of the true teaching and doing harm to its votary. The ruler, too, accepting the groundless accusations of the followers of these schools, persecutes the votary because he wishes to side with the majority, because he cannot bear to abandon the teachings honored by the rulers of the previous ages, because he is simply ignorant, or because he despises the votary of the true teaching. As a result, the gods who guard the true teaching, such as Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, punish the country, and the three calamities and seven disasters occur on an unprecedented scale. Hence the epidemics that have broken out this year as well as last year and in the Shoka era.¹⁰

Question: If, as you have stated, the benevolent deities inflict punishment on this country because it does harm to the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then epidemics should attack only the slanderers. Why is it that your own disciples also fall ill and die?

Answer: Your question is reasonable. Nevertheless, you are aware of only one side of the situation and not the other. Good and evil have been inherent in life since time without beginning. According to the provisional teachings and the schools based on them, both good and evil remain in one's life through all the stages of the bodhisattva practice up to the stage of near-perfect enlightenment. Hence people at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment or below have faults of some kind, [but not those at the highest stage]. In contrast, the heart of the Lotus school is the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which reveals that both good and evil are inherent even in those at the highest stage of perfect enlightenment. The fundamental nature of enlighten-

ment manifests itself as Brahma and Shakra, whereas the fundamental darkness manifests itself as the devil king of the sixth heaven. The benevolent deities hate evildoers, and evil demons hate good people. Because we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, it is natural that evil demons should be everywhere in the country, just like tiles, stones, trees, and grasses. Good demons are few because sages and worthies are rare in this world. One would therefore expect to find more victims of the epidemic among Nichiren's followers than among the believers of Nembutsu, or priests of the True Word, Zen, and Precepts schools. For some reason, however, there is less affliction and death among Nichiren's followers. It is indeed mysterious. Is this because we are few in number, or because our faith is strong?

Question: Has there ever in the past been such a terrible outbreak of epidemics in Japan?

Answer: During the reign of Emperor Sujin, the tenth ruler after Emperor Jimmu, epidemics swept Japan, claiming the lives of more than half the populace. But when Emperor Sujin had the people in each province worship the Sun Goddess and other deities, the epidemics ceased completely. Hence the name Sujin, which literally means "worshiping the gods." That was before Buddhism had been introduced to the country. The thirtieth, thirty-first, and thirty-second rulers in the imperial line, along with many of their ministers, died of smallpox and other epidemic diseases. Prayers were once again offered to the same deities, but this time to no avail.

During the reign of the thirtieth ruler, Emperor Kimmie, Buddhist sutras, treatises, and priests were sent from the state of Paekche to Japan, as well as a gilded bronze statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. The Great Minister Soga¹¹ urged that the statue be worshipped. But the Chief

Minister Mononobe and other ministers, along with the common people, joined in opposing the worship of the Buddha, saying that, if honor were paid to him, it would enrage the native deities who then would bring ruin upon Japan. The emperor was still trying to decide which opinion to follow when the three calamities and seven disasters struck the nation on a scale never known before, and great numbers of the populace died of disease.

The Chief Minister Mononobe seized this opportunity to appeal to the emperor. As a result, not only were the Buddhist priests and nuns disgraced, but the gilded bronze statue of Shakyamuni Buddha was placed upon burning coals and destroyed, and the Buddhist temple was likewise burned. At that time, the chief minister contracted a disease and died, and the emperor also passed away. The Great Minister Soga, who worshiped the Buddha, also fell ill.

The minister Moriya, the chief minister's son, declared that the three successive emperors as well as his own father had died in the epidemic solely because homage had been paid to the Buddha. "Let it be known," he declared, "that Prince Shotoku, Soga no Umako, and the others who revere the Buddha are all enemies of my father and of the deceased emperors!" Hearing this, the imperial princes Anabe and Yakabe,¹² along with their ministers and thousands of retainers, all joined forces with Moriya. Not only did they burn images of the Buddha and their temples, but a battle broke out, and Moriya was killed in the fighting. For a period of thirty-five years after Buddhism had first been brought to this country, not a year passed without seeing the three calamities and seven disasters, including epidemics. But after Mononobe no Moriya was killed by Soga no Umako and the gods were overpowered by the Buddha, the disasters abruptly ceased.

Outbreaks of the three calamities and seven disasters that occurred thereafter were for the most part due to confusion within Buddhism itself. But these would affect only one or two persons, or one or two provinces, one or two clans, or one or two areas. Such disasters occurred because of the curse of the gods, because Buddhism was slandered, or because of the people's distress.

The three calamities and seven disasters of these past thirty years or more, however, are due solely to the fact that the entire country of Japan hates me, Nichiren. In province after province, district after district, and village after village, everyone from the ruler on down to the common people seethes in anger against me such as the world has never seen. This is the first time that the fundamental darkness has erupted in the lives of ordinary people caught in the illusions of thought and desire.¹³ Even if they pray to the gods, the Buddha, or the Lotus Sutra, these calamities will only be aggravated. But it is different when the votary of the Lotus Sutra offers prayers to the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In the final analysis, unless we succeed in demonstrating that this teaching is supreme, these disasters will continue unabated.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* described the ten objects of meditation and the ten meditations, but no one after him practiced them. In the days of Miaolo and Dengyo some people practiced them to an extent but encountered few difficulties because there were no powerful opponents. The three obstacles and four devils described in *Great Concentration and Insight* will not arise to obstruct those who practice the provisional sutras. But now each and every one has risen to confront me. They are even more powerful than the three obstacles and four devils that T'ien-t'ai, Dengyo, and others had to face.

There are two ways of perceiving

the three thousand realms in a single moment of life. One is theoretical, and the other, actual. What T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo practiced was theoretical, but what I practice now is actual. Because what I practice is superior, the difficulties attending it are that much greater. The doctrine of T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo was the three thousand realms in a single moment of life of the theo-

retical teaching, while mine is that of the essential teaching. These two are as different as heaven is from earth. You should grasp this deeply when the time comes to face death.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the sixth
month



Background

This letter was originally thought to have been written in 1282, but it now seems more likely that it was 1278. The month and the day of the letter is exactly the same as that on a letter written to Saemon, commonly known as Shijo Kingo, which may very well be the letter mentioned in the first paragraph.

This letter was a reply to Toki Jonin, who had anxiously written about the rampant epidemic. The Daishonin first classifies all diseases into two categories, physical and mental. Physical illness, he says, can be cured by skilled physicians. However, illnesses of the mind, he adds, are more complicated. Those that arise from the three poisons can be treated with the Hinayana teachings, but those caused by slandering the correct or "essential" teaching can be cured only with the essential teaching. The Daishonin uses this term to indicate the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo that, he says, lies in the depths of the "Life

Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

In the Latter Day of the Law, he says, evil demons prevail, attacking the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. "One would therefore expect," the Daishonin tells Toki Jonin, "to find more victims of the epidemic among Nichiren's followers than among" the believers of the other schools. "However," he adds, "there is less affliction and death among Nichiren's followers."

In closing, the Daishonin points to the way to end the epidemic. The only way to do so is to demonstrate clearly that "this teaching" of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is supreme. By this, he means participating in and winning public debate on the relative superiority of the Buddha's teachings. Then he clarifies the difference between the three thousand realms in a single moment of life expounded by T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo and what he himself expounds. He identifies this doctrine as Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Notes

1. Saemon is another name for Shijo Kingo. "My letter to Saemon" mentioned later in this paragraph refers to *The Two Kinds of Illness*, dated the twenty-sixth day of the sixth month, 1278.

2. Earth, water, fire, and wind were regarded as the constituent elements of all

things, according to ancient Indian belief. In the case of the human body, earth corresponds to flesh, bone, skin, and hair; water, to blood and other liquids; fire, to body temperature; and wind, to the function of breathing. "One hundred and one" in each case here does not necessarily indicate an

exact number but simply a great many.

3. A father and son, both excellent physicians, mentioned in the Golden Light Sutra. According to that sutra, they lived countless kalpas ago. At one time, an epidemic broke out and spread throughout their country. Water Holder was too old to perform medical treatment, but Water Carrier mastered the medical arts and, in his father's place, saved the people.

4. Pien Ch'üeh was a physician of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.E.) in China. In his boyhood he learned the medical arts and is said to have been skilled in treating almost all diseases.

5. Shiva and Vishnu.

6. Two of the Three Sovereigns, legendary ideal rulers of ancient China. They were also said to have been skilled in medical matters and were revered as patron deities and the inventors of certain medicines, according to *Records of the Historian*.

7. The perfect teaching of the theoretical teaching is closer to that of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings than that of the essential teaching. The first two teachings explain, as does the essential teaching, that people can become Buddhas in this life, but, unlike the essential teaching, they never reveal the seed of Buddhahood. Moreover, the Buddha who preached the first two teachings is the one who attained enlightenment in his life in India, while the Buddha who expounded the essential teaching is the one who did so countless kalpas ago.

8. These two Buddhas are the Buddha of the theoretical teaching and that of the essential teaching. Though they both refer to Shakyamuni, they express the two different positions he assumes in the theoretical and essential teachings, as is mentioned in this paragraph. The land of the Buddha of the theoretical teaching is held to be somewhere apart from this saha world, and the Buddha appears in the saha world only temporarily to expound the Law and save people. In contrast, the essential teaching reveals that the saha world itself is the land where the Buddha has always dwelt since his original enlightenment.

9. The term "essential teaching" has

two meanings: the essential teaching of Shakyamuni's lifetime, or the latter fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra, as contrasted with the theoretical teaching, or the first fourteen chapters; and the essential teaching of the Latter Day of the Law, or Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. When the "essential teaching" is defined in this latter sense, the entire twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra is regarded as the theoretical teaching. Both here and in the following paragraph, the Daishonin uses the term "essential teaching" to indicate Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. As explained in *The Selection of the Time*, Dengyo established the precepts of the perfect and immediate enlightenment based on Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra. In speaking of the precept that "still remained to be clarified," the Daishonin indicates the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

10. That is, in 1259.

11. Soga no Iname (d. 570), an official who engaged in a struggle for power with the Chief Minister Mononobe no Okoshi, leader of the conservative faction at court.

12. Anabe (d. 587), also called Anahobe, was a son of Emperor Kimmei, and his mother was the daughter of Soga no Iname. According to *The Chronicles of Japan* and other sources, he could not ascend the throne upon the death of Emperor Bidatsu, and made another attempt to seize power at the death of Emperor Yomei, conspiring with Mononobe no Moriya. However, he is said to have been killed by Soga no Umako, who supported another crown prince, Hatsusebe (Emperor Sushun). Yaka-be (d. 587), one of Prince Anabe's closest friends, was also killed along with Anabe.

13. The fundamental darkness is said to usually erupt in the lives of those who have overcome the first two of the three categories of illusions, that is, the illusions of thought and desire and the illusions numerous as the particles of dust and sand. In this case, however, the Daishonin points out that quite unusually, the fundamental darkness has erupted in the lives of ordinary people caught in the first of the illusions.

The Properties of Rice



IT is also this way with rice. While the rice itself is the same, rice that nourishes a slanderer of the Law supports the life of one who destroys the seeds of Buddhahood, enabling him to become a more powerful enemy than ever. And yet, does it not sustain his life so that he will in the end be won over to the Lotus Sutra? On the other hand, rice that nourishes the votary of the Lotus Sutra must be rice of the utmost compassion, because it benefits all living beings. This is what is meant by the Buddha's relics turning into rice. I cannot express my joy at your having

sent a messenger all the way here at such a time. Can it be that Shakyamuni Buddha or the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have entered into your body?

I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province. It is stated that "the seeds of Buddhahood sprout as a result of conditions, and for this reason they preach the single vehicle."¹ If Jibu-bo, Shimotsuke-bo,² or the others should arrive, I will send them without delay. And if you have an opportunity to see Matsuno,³ please carefully explain what I have said.



Background

Only a fragment of this letter remains, and its recipient and the date of its writing are not known. It was once thought to represent the concluding portion of *The True Aspect of All Phenomena*, written on Sado Island in the fifth month of 1273, but in view of its style and content it is now considered to be a fragment of a letter written after Nichiren Daishonin moved to Mount Minobu. Likewise, it is thought that it may have been sent to the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, who

lived at Kajima in Fuji District of Suruga Province. Takahashi's wife was Nikko Shonin's aunt, and Takahashi and his family appear to have actively supported the propagation movement in the Fuji area.

It is worthy of note that, in closing, the Daishonin entrusts the letter's recipient with the responsibility for propagation in his province, suggesting that the recipient had strong faith and was a leading figure among the believers in that area.

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

2. Jibu-bo was a follower of Nichiren Daishonin. He was originally a Tendai priest at Shijuku-in temple in Suruga Province. Shimotsuke-bo is another name for Nishu, who was a priest at Ryusen-ji, a temple of the Tendai school in Atsuhara in Fuji District of Suruga Province, but was converted by Nikko Shonin. Because he in

turn had helped convert many farmers, he incurred the wrath of the temple's deputy chief priest, Gyochi, whose opposition to the Daishonin's teachings eventually led to the Atsuhara Persecution.

3. Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, a follower of Nichiren Daishonin and the maternal grandfather of Nanjo Tokimitsu.

Great Evil and Great Good



GREAT events never have minor omens. When great evil occurs, great good follows. Since great slander already exists in our land, the great correct Law will spread without fail. What could any of you have to lament? Even if you are not the Venerable Mahakashyapa, you should all perform a dance. Even if you are not Shari-

putra, you should leap up and dance. When Bodhisattva Superior Practices emerged from the earth, did he not emerge dancing? And when Bodhisattva Universal Worthy arrived, the ground shook in six different ways. There is much to say, but as I am pressed for time, I will close. I will write again on another occasion.

**Background**

It is not certain whether this is the text of a short letter or a fragment of a longer piece. Neither its date nor its recipient is known. Judging from the content, it may have been sent to some of the Daishonin's believers who were facing difficulties on account of their faith. With the assurance "When great evil occurs, great good follows," the Daishonin encourages his disciples to

regard the hostility they face as an omen of great good, that is, the eventual spreading of the correct teaching. He also urges them to rejoice like Mahakashyapa and Shariputra, who danced with joy in the Lotus Sutra when they heard the Buddha's teaching of universal enlightenment, and realized that they, too, could become Buddhas.

The Kalpa of Decrease



THE kalpa of decrease¹ has its origin in the human heart. As the poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness gradually intensify, the life span of human beings gradually decreases and their stature diminishes.

Before the introduction of Buddhism in the lands of China and Japan, the non-Buddhist scriptures of the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and the Three Sages were used to bring order to the hearts of the people and govern the world. When the hearts of the people gradually diminished in good and grew adept at evil, it became impossible to restrain profoundly evil offenses because the wisdom of the non-Buddhist scriptures was shallow. Since the world was ungovernable with the non-Buddhist scriptures, the Buddhist scriptures were gradually introduced, and when they were used in governing, the world became tranquil. This was solely because the wisdom of Buddhism can fully elucidate the hearts of the people.

What are called “non-Buddhist writings” today differ in spirit from the original non-Buddhist scriptures. Although when Buddhism was introduced the non-Buddhist scriptures and the Buddhist scriptures vied with each other, in time the non-Buddhist scriptures were defeated, and the ruler and the people no longer made use of them. But as

adherents of the non-Buddhist scriptures became followers of the Buddhist scriptures, and confrontations came to an end, these adherents extracted the essence of the Buddhist scriptures, increased their wisdom, and incorporated it into the non-Buddhist scriptures. Foolish rulers thought that this was actually the wisdom of the non-Buddhist writings.

Moreover, when good wisdom gradually diminished and evil wisdom surpassed it in people’s hearts, the rulers tried to govern society with the wisdom of the Hinayana sutras, which are also included among the Buddhist scriptures, but the world was not at peace. At that time, when the rulers spread the Mahayana sutras and used them to govern, order was somewhat restored in the world. After that, when the wisdom of the Mahayana teachings was no longer adequate, the wisdom of the sutra of the one vehicle was introduced and used to govern the world, and for a brief while the world was at peace.

The present age is such that neither the non-Buddhist scriptures, the Hinayana sutras, the Mahayana sutras, nor the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra has any effect. The reason is that the enormity of the greed, anger, and foolishness in people’s hearts is equal to the superiority of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment in great good. To

illustrate, in the keenness of its sense of smell, a dog is superior to a man. Moreover, in picking up the scent of birds and beasts, its nose is not inferior to a great sage's supernatural power of smell.² The owl's keenness of hearing, the kite's sharpness of eye, the sparrow's lightness of tongue, and the dragon's magnificence of body—all surpass even the faculties of a worthy. Thus, the extremity of greed, anger, and foolishness in people's hearts in the impure world of the latter age makes it difficult for any worthy or sage to control.

This is because, though the Buddha cured greed with the medicine of the meditation on the vileness of the body, healed anger with the meditation on compassion for all, and treated foolishness with the meditation on the twelve-linked chain of causation, teaching these doctrines now makes people worse and compounds their greed, anger, and foolishness. For example, fire is extinguished by water, and evil is defeated by good. In contrast, however, if water is poured on fire that has emerged from water, it would be as if one had poured oil, producing an even greater conflagration.

Now in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing than in connection with the doctrines of the religious world. When people today, who are unaware of this, endeavor to cultivate roots of good, events that lead to the ruin of the world occur all the more. Although superficially it may seem to be an act of good to provide support to the priests of the Tendai, True Word, and other schools of the present age, in reality it is a great evil surpassing even the five cardinal sins and the ten evil acts.

For this reason, in order that peace reign in the age, if a wise man existed in the world with wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and if he met with a worthy ruler like King Sen'yo; and if

together they devoted themselves to putting an end to these acts of good and committed the great evil of censoring, banishing, cutting off alms to, or even beheading those persons of the eight schools³ who are thought to be men of wisdom, then the age may be pacified to some extent.

This is explained in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra where it says, "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas." In the phrase "consistency from beginning to end,"⁴ "beginning" indicates the root of evil and the root of good, and "end" indicates the outcome of evil and the outcome of good. One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha. T'ien-t'ai stated, "Life at each moment is endowed with the Ten Worlds."⁵ Chang-an stated, "The Buddha intended these as his ultimate teachings. How could they ever be easy to understand?"⁶ Miao-lo added that "this principle is the ultimate revelation of his [T'ien-t'ai's] final and supreme teaching."⁷ The Lotus Sutra states, "[The doctrines that they preach . . .] will never be contrary to the true reality."⁸ T'ien-t'ai commented on this, saying that "no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality."⁹ A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed.

When the Yin dynasty became corrupt and the people were suffering, T'ai-kung Wang¹⁰ appeared in the world and beheaded King Chou of the Yin, bringing an end to the people's misery. When the Second Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty¹¹ caused the people to taste bitterness, Chang Liang appeared and restored order to the world, enabling them to know sweetness. Though these men lived before the in-

roduction of Buddhism, they helped the people as emissaries of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. And though the adherents of the non-Buddhist scriptures were unaware of it, the wisdom of such men contained at heart the wisdom of Buddhism.

If there were a ruler of outstanding wisdom in the world today, at the time of the great earthquake of the Shoka era, or at the time of the great comet of the Bun'ei era,¹² he would surely have heeded me, Nichiren. Or even if that had not happened, when strife broke out within the ruling clan in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), or when the Mongols attacked in the eleventh year of the same era, he would have welcomed me as King Wen of the Chou dynasty welcomed T'ai-kung Wang, or sought me out as King Kao-ting¹³ of the Yin dynasty sought out Fu Yüeh from seven *ri* away. Thus it is said that the sun and moon are not treasures to one who is sightless, and that a worthy man will be hated by a foolish ruler. Rather than go on at length, I will stop here. The heart of the Lotus Sutra is just as I have explained. You should not think of it as otherwise. Great evil portends the arrival of great good. If all of Jambudvpa were to be thrown into

chaos, there could be no doubt that [this sutra would] "be widely propagated throughout Jambudvpa."¹⁴

I have decided to send Acharya Daishin to pay a visit to the grave of the late lay priest Rokuro.¹⁵ In the past, I had thought that, if there were people in the Kanto region who had heard this teaching, I would go to their graves myself and recite the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. If I were to go there under the present circumstances, however, the entire province would hear of it within the day, and it would probably cause an uproar as far away as Kamakura. Even though they have steadfast faith, wherever I go, people must fear the eyes of others.

When I thought how much the late lay priest Rokuro might be longing to see me since I had not yet visited, it seemed to me that there was probably something I could do. Thus, to begin with, I have decided to send a disciple to recite the verse section of the "Life Span" chapter before his grave. I ask for your understanding on that point.

With my deep respect.



Background

Neither the date nor addressee of this letter is known. Judging from the concluding paragraph, Nichiren Daishonin may have sent it via his disciple Acharya Daishin to someone in the clan of the late lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, a believer who lived in Kajima in Fuji District of Suruga Province.

In the opening statement the Daishonin says, "The kalpa of decrease has its origin in the human heart." He then explains that the world declines

as a result of human delusion, and that, as the greed, anger, and foolishness of people's hearts intensify, progressively higher teachings are needed to check that influence. In the present time, the Latter Day of the Law, those three poisons are so pervasive that the provisional teachings not only fail to restrain them, but aggravate them all the more. In this age, the Daishonin explains, the worst evils actually arise, not from secular misdeeds, but from attachment to

the doctrines of the various schools of Buddhism, whose practice no longer leads one to salvation.

Citing the passage from the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas," the Daishonin explains that only the Buddhas' wisdom is capable of discerning the supreme truth that will bring about peace in the world. He also explains that a person of true wisdom is not one who carries out the Buddhist practice in isolation from the world, but who thoroughly comprehends the principles by which the world may be governed. This is in keeping with the Lotus Sutra's teaching that the ultimate reality is manifest in all phenomena. In this sense, the wise ministers who helped bring peace to

their dynasties in China in the ages before the introduction of Buddhism may be said to have grasped a portion of the Buddhist Law.

Though the ruler of Japan did not heed the Daishonin's admonition that only faith in the Mystic Law could restore peace to the land, the Daishonin nevertheless was convinced that his teaching would one day flourish. As suggested by the title of this letter, the disasters besetting society in his time were viewed by the Daishonin from one perspective as stemming from human delusion and attachment to inferior teachings. However, as indicated by the statement "Great evil portends the arrival of great good," the Daishonin also interpreted them from another perspective as heralding the rise and spread of the supreme Law.

Notes

1. The kalpa of decrease is a period when the human life span diminishes. When the world is in the stage of continuance (see kalpa in Glossary), the life span of human beings is said to undergo a cycle of change, increasing one year every hundred years until it reaches eighty thousand, and then decreasing at the same rate.

2. This refers to the supernatural abilities possessed by the bodhisattvas of Hinayana Buddhism.

3. King Sen'yo was the ruler of a great kingdom in India before the time of Shakyamuni. He once had five hundred Brahmans put to death for slandering the Mahayana teachings. The Daishonin refers to him here to point out the importance of a strict attitude toward protecting the correct Law.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. This phrase concludes the passage describing "the true aspect of all phenomena." The full passage reads, "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end."

5. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

6. *The Annotations on "The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind."*

7. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 19.

9. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

10. T'ai-kung Wang was teacher and adviser to Hsi Po, the Earl of the West (later known as King Wen of the Chou dynasty). His strategies are said to have enabled Hsi Po's son, King Wu, to overthrow the Yin dynasty and establish the Chou dynasty.

11. The Second Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty refers to Hu Hai (229–207 B.C.E.). A puppet ruler, he was controlled by the eunuch official Chao Kao, who eventually forced Hu Hai to commit suicide to further his own ambitions. Chang Liang (d. 168 B.C.E.), mentioned next, was a statesman and strategist who assisted Liu Pang in the overthrow of the Ch'in dynasty and the establishment of the Han dynasty.

12. References are to a major earthquake that leveled much of Kamakura in 1257 and to a large comet that appeared in 1264.

13. Kao-ting was the twenty-second rul-

er of the Yin dynasty. According to *Records of the Historian*, he sought to revive the declining Yin dynasty, but was unable to find capable advisers. At length he learned of Fu Yüeh, and though he had been living in retirement, Kao-ting appointed him his minister. Because of Fu Yüeh's counsel, Kao-ting was able to revive the dynasty.

14. The Daishonin alludes here to a passage from chapter 28 of the Lotus Sutra that states, "After the Thus Come One has entered extinction, I will cause it to be

widely propagated throughout Jambudvipa and will see that it never comes to an end."

15. Acharya Daishin was a priest-disciple of the Daishonin, who is thought to have been a relative of the Soya family. The lay priest Rokuro is thought to refer to the lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, a disciple of the Daishonin who was a leading figure among the lay believers in the Fuji area. He was converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism by Nikko Shonin, who was his wife's nephew.

The Gift of Rice



I HAVE received the sack of polished rice, the sack of yams, and the basket of river laver that you took the trouble to send me by messenger.

Human beings have two kinds of treasure. One is clothing and the other is food. A sutra states, "Sentient beings live in dependence on food."¹ This passage means that living beings dwell in this world owing to food and clothing. Fish dwell in water and regard water as their treasure. Trees grow on the earth and regard the earth as their treasure. Human beings have life owing to food, and regard food as their treasure.

Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasures of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one's body and life.² Even the treasures that fill the major world system are no substitute for life. Life is like a lamp, and food is like oil. When the oil is exhausted, the lamp goes out, and without food, life will cease.

In worshipping all the deities and Buddhas, the word *namu* is put ahead of their names. To explain exactly what *namu* means, *namu* is a word from India. In China and Japan it is translated as "dedicating one's life." "Dedicating one's life" means to offer one's life to the Buddha. In accordance with their status, some have wives and children,

relatives, fiefs, and gold and silver, while others have no treasure. Whether one has wealth or not, no treasure exceeds the one called life. This is why those known as the sages and worthies of ancient times offered their lives to the Buddha and then became Buddhas.

The boy Snow Mountains offered his body to a demon to receive a teaching composed of eight characters.³ Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his arms as an offering to the Lotus Sutra. In our own country too, Prince Shotoku peeled off the skin of his hand and copied the Lotus Sutra on it, and the sovereign known as Emperor Tenji⁴ burned his third finger as an offering to Shakyamuni Buddha. Because these things are the affairs of worthies and sages, they are impossible for us to do.

However, as for the matter of becoming a Buddha, ordinary people keep in mind the words "earnest resolve" and thereby become Buddhas. When we carefully consider what exactly earnest resolve refers to, it is the doctrine of observing the mind. When we inquire into what exactly the doctrine of observing the mind refers to, it means that offering one's only robe to the Lotus Sutra is equivalent to peeling off one's skin; and that in a time of famine, offering the food that is the only means for sustaining one's life that day to the Buddha is offering one's life to the Buddha.

The blessings from this are in no way inferior to those Bodhisattva Medicine King gained by burning his arms, or the boy Snow Mountains gained by offering his body to a demon. Thus, what is appropriate for sages is offering in actuality [offering one's life itself for the Law]. What is appropriate for ordinary people is offering in principle [sincerely offering what is important to one's own life]. This is the teaching called the paramita of almsgiving⁵ for the observation of the mind that is set forth in the seventh volume of *Great Concentration and Insight*.

The true path lies in the affairs of this world. The Golden Light Sutra states, "To have a profound knowledge of this world is itself Buddhism." The Nirvana Sutra states, "All of the non-Buddhist scriptures and writings in society are themselves Buddhist teachings, not non-Buddhist teachings."

When the Great Teacher Miao-lo compared these passages with the one from the sixth volume of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "No worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the

true reality,"⁶ he revealed their meaning and pointed out that although the first two sutras are profound, since their meaning is still shallow and fails to approach that of the Lotus Sutra, they relate secular matters in terms of Buddhism, whereas the Lotus Sutra explains that in the end secular matters are the entirety of Buddhism.

The essence of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra is that all phenomena arise from the mind. To illustrate, they say that the mind is like the great earth, while the grasses and trees are like all phenomena. But it is not so with the Lotus Sutra. It teaches that the mind itself is the great earth, and that the great earth itself is the grasses and trees. The meaning of the earlier sutras is that clarity of mind is like the moon, and that purity of mind is like a flower. But it is not so with the Lotus Sutra. It is the teaching that the moon itself is mind, and the flower itself is mind. You should realize from this that polished rice is not polished rice; it is life itself.



Background

This letter is missing the name of its addressee and the date of composition. The title, *The Gift of Rice*, derives from the opening passage of the letter, in which Nichiren Daishonin gives thanks for the offerings made. It also indicates the theme for this letter, which addresses the spirit of offering in Buddhism. While sages of old practiced "offering in actuality," giving their very lives for Buddhism, ordinary people in the present age practice "offering in principle," giving what sustains or is of

value to their lives. Ultimately, the Daishonin says, "earnest resolve" is what makes offering, or almsgiving, in Buddhism a meaningful act. The Daishonin thus equates the polished rice he has received to life itself.

Life at Mount Minobu was harsh, and the Daishonin and his disciples were often in need of food and other provisions. Fortunately, he had a loyal group of lay supporters who helped provide him with necessities.

Notes

1. Source unknown.
2. A similar passage is cited in *The Commentary on the Brahma Net Sutra* as a quotation from *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.
3. The story of the boy Snow Mountains offering his body to a demon is found in the Nirvana Sutra. "A teaching composed of eight characters" refers to the last sentence of the following passage: "All is changeable, nothing is constant. This is the law of birth and death. Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana."
4. An account of Prince Shotoku (574–622) peeling off the skin of his hand is found in *A Personal Commentary on Matters concerning Prince Shotoku*. An account of

Emperor Tenji (626–671), the thirty-eighth emperor, burning his third finger is found in *A Brief History of Japan*.

5. The paramita of almsgiving is one of the six paramitas, or practices, for Mahayana bodhisattvas.

6. This passage actually appears in T'ien-t'ai's *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* as an annotation to 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."

The Bodies and Minds of Ordinary Beings



THE sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra deal with the bodies and minds of ordinary beings. The Buddha preached them in terms that would be accessible to the minds of ordinary people, and therefore, though they represent the preachings of the Buddha, they do not go beyond the scope of the minds of ordinary people. Hence they are called the sutras that were preached in accordance with the minds of others.

To illustrate, suppose that there are parents who do not care for sake themselves, but who have a beloved son who is extremely fond of it. Feeling tenderly toward their son and desiring to win his affection, they urge him to have some sake and in so doing pretend that they themselves like it, too. The foolish son thereupon concludes that his father and mother in fact like sake.

The Trapusha Sutra¹ deals with the realms of human and heavenly beings. The Agama sutras deal with persons of the two vehicles. The Flower Garland Sutra deals with bodhisattvas. The Correct and Equal and the Wisdom sutras in some respects resemble the Agama and Trapusha sutras, and in others, the Flower Garland Sutra.

When ordinary people in this latter age read these various sutras, they suppose that these sutras accord with the mind of the Buddha. But if we ponder the matter closely, we will see that

in fact what they are reading is only a reflection of their own minds. And since their own minds are naturally uncultivated, there is little merit to be gained thereby.

The Lotus Sutra, on the other hand, is known as a sutra that was preached in accordance with the Buddha's own mind. Because the Buddha's mind is an excellent mind, persons who read this sutra, even though they may not understand its meaning, will gain inestimable benefit.

Mugwort that grows in the midst of hemp, or a snake inside a tube [will as a matter of course become straight], and those who associate with people of good character will consequently become upright in heart, deed, and word. The Lotus Sutra exerts a similar influence. The Buddha will look upon one who simply puts faith in this sutra as a good person.

Concerning the Lotus Sutra, however, the form of its teaching will vary depending upon the people's capacity, the time, the country, and the individuals who propagate it. Yet it seems that even bodhisattvas who have reached the stage of near-perfect enlightenment do not understand these relationships. How much less can ordinary people in the latter age ever fathom them!

In general, there are three kinds of messengers. The first kind is extremely

clever. The second is not particularly clever but is not foolish, either. The third is extremely foolish but nevertheless reliable.

Of these three types, the first will commit no error [in transmitting the message]. The second, being somewhat clever but not quite as clever as the first type, will add his own words to his lord's message. Thus he is the worst possible type of messenger. The third type, being extremely foolish, will not presume to insert his own words and, being honest, will relay his lord's message without deviating from it. Thus he is a better messenger than the second type, and occasionally may be even better than the first.

The first type of messenger may be likened to the four ranks of sages in India. The second type corresponds to the teachers in China. And the third type may be likened to the ignorant but honest persons among the ordinary people of this latter age.

I will set aside here the period when the Buddha lived in this world. The period of a thousand years that followed from the day after his passing is known as the Former Day of the Law. This thousand-year period of the Former Day is divided into two. During the first five hundred years, the teachings of the Hinayana sutras spread. The persons who propagated them were Mahakashyapa, Ananda, and others. In the second five hundred years, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, and others spread the teachings of the provisional Mahayana sutras. Some among these scholars wrote about parts of the Lotus Sutra, and others made no mention of it whatsoever. Of the scholars who appeared after this thousand-year period of the Former Day, their views in a few cases resembled the Buddha's own teaching, but for the most part they fell into error. Of those who [appeared in the Former Day and] were not in error, but whose treatises

were incomplete, we may name Mahakashyapa, Ananda, Ashvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Vasubandhu.

In the thousand-year period of the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism was introduced to China. But at first, because of controversy with the Confucians, there was apparently no time to delve into the internal divisions of Buddhism, such as the distinction between Mahayana and Hinayana, and between provisional and true teachings.

As the Buddhist teachings spread more widely and one doctrine after another was introduced from India, some persons who had earlier seemed discerning now appeared, in the light of more recently introduced sutras and treatises, to have been foolish. There were also some who had earlier been thought foolish, but who were now seen to have been wise. In the end, ten different schools² developed, and a thousand or ten thousand different interpretations were propounded. Ignorant people did not know which to adhere to, while the attachment to their own views of those thought to be wise was extreme.

In the end, however, there was one opinion that all agreed upon. It was, in short, that of all the teachings set forth in the course of the Buddha's lifetime the Flower Garland Sutra ranked first, the Nirvana Sutra, second, and the Lotus Sutra, third. No one from the ruler on down to the common people disputed this interpretation, because it was shared by the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün, the Dharma Teacher Chih-tsang, and the other leaders of the ten schools, who were all looked up to as great sages.

Then, in the time of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties during the Middle Day of the Law, there appeared a young priest named Chih-i, who was later to be known as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che. Although he taught many doctrines, his teachings ultimately

centered upon this single issue of the relative superiority of the Lotus, Nirvana, and Flower Garland sutras.

The Dharma Teacher Chih-i declared that the teachers of Buddhism had these three works ranked upside down. The ruler of the Ch'en dynasty, in order to determine the truth of the matter, thereupon summoned a group of more than a hundred men, including the Administrator of Priests Huiheng, the Supervisor of Priests Hui-k'uang, the Dharma Teacher Hui-jung, and the Dharma Teacher Fa-sui,³ all among the most eminent leaders of the ten schools of the north and south, and had them confront Chih-i in debate.

The Dharma Teacher Chih-i said: "The Lotus Sutra itself says, 'among the sutras, it holds the highest place.'⁴ It also says, 'Among the sutras I [Shakya-muni] have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.'⁵ The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra makes clear that the sutras the Buddha already 'has preached' here refer to 'the teaching of great wisdom and the Flower Garland teaching of the ocean-imprint meditation' and so forth. And with regard to the sutras he 'will preach,' the Nirvana Sutra says, '...from the prajna-paramita (the teachings of the perfection of wisdom) he brought forth the Nirvana Sutra.' These scriptural passages show that the Lotus Sutra is superior to the Flower Garland and Nirvana sutras; they make it abundantly clear, clear as could possibly be. You should understand accordingly."

Rebuked in this manner, some of his opponents simply shut their mouths, others spewed out abuse, while still others turned pale. The Ch'en ruler then rose from his seat and bowed three times, and all the hundred officials pressed their palms together in reverence. Powerless to prevail, the leaders of the other schools conceded defeat.

Thus it was established that the Lotus Sutra holds the highest place among the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime.

Then, during the latter five hundred years of the Middle Day of the Law, new translations⁶ of the sutras and treatises appeared one after another. In the third year of the Chen-kuan era (629) in the reign of Emperor T'ai-tsung, a priest named Hsüan-tsang journeyed to India. He spent seventeen years mastering the various Buddhist doctrines of the five regions of India and returned to China in the nineteenth year of the same era (645), introducing the Profound Secrets Sutra, *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice*, *The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*, and the other teachings of the Dharma Characteristics school.

Hsüan-tsang declared, "Although there are many different schools in India, this school is the foremost." Emperor T'ai-tsung was one of the wealthiest rulers China has known, and he took Hsüan-tsang to be his teacher.

In essence, what this school teaches is that for some persons the three vehicles are a mere expedient and the one vehicle represents the truth, while for others the one vehicle is an expedient and the three vehicles represent the truth. It also teaches that the five natures are completely separate, and that those sentient beings whose nature predestines them [to the two vehicles] or who lack the nature of enlightenment can never attain Buddhahood.

Such doctrines were as incompatible with those of the T'ien-t'ai school as are fire and water. But by this time both the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai and the Great Teacher Chang-an had passed on, and their successors were not the men they ought to have been. Hence it appeared that the T'ien-t'ai school had already gone down in defeat.

Later, during the reign of Empress Wu, the Flower Garland school appeared in China. The translation of the

Flower Garland Sutra in sixty volumes, which the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had criticized, was set aside, and thereafter the school was established on the basis of a new translation of the Flower Garland Sutra in eighty volumes, introduced by the Tripitaka Master Jih-chao.⁷ In general, this school teaches that the Flower Garland Sutra represents the "root teaching" of the Buddha while the Lotus Sutra represents the "branch teachings." Empress Wu was a Buddhist nun, and she had a certain degree of understanding of both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures. In her arrogance she looked down upon the T'ien-t'ai school. Between the Dharma Characteristics and Flower Garland schools, the Lotus Sutra thus became doubly obscured.

Later, in the reign of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, the three Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung traveled to China from India, bringing with them the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. In both their character and doctrine, these three men were quite beyond comparison with the earlier teachers of Buddhism in China. And, in addition, because they introduced mudras and mantras, which had been previously unknown, it was thought that Buddhism had not really existed in China before their arrival. These men declared that the T'ien-t'ai school was superior to the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, and Three Treatises teachings, but that it could not measure up to the doctrines of the True Word sutras.

Still later, the Great Teacher Miao-lo produced refutations of the Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and True Word schools, schools that the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had of course not criticized. But he did not carry out his refutations in a public debate, as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai had done. Thus the Lotus Sutra became like a piece of fine brocade worn in the dark

of night, while the mudras and mantras, which are not to be found in the Lotus Sutra, were clearly visible before people's eyes. Therefore, everyone believed the True Word school to be superior.

During the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the sixth year of the reign of Emperor Kimmei (545).⁸ During the more than two hundred years from the reign of Emperor Kimmei to the reign of Emperor Kammu, the six schools—the Three Treatises, Establishment of Truth, Dharma Characteristics, Dharma Analysis Treasury, Flower Garland, and Precepts—were propagated. The teachings of the True Word school were introduced during the reign of the forty-fourth sovereign, Empress Gen-sho, and those of the T'ien-t'ai school, during the reign of the forty-fifth sovereign, Emperor Shomu.⁹ But neither of these teachings was propagated at the time.

During the reign of Emperor Kammu, there lived the priest Saicho, who was later known as the Great Teacher Dengyo. Before journeying to T'ang China, he mastered the teachings of the six schools, and in addition, he spent fifteen years in seclusion on the mountain¹⁰ examining the doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools. Therefore, even before going to China he was able to criticize the earlier six schools from the viewpoint of the T'ien-t'ai teachings, and his criticisms persuaded all the leaders of the seven major temples of Nara to acknowledge themselves as his disciples. Thus the doctrines of the six schools were refuted.

Later, in the twenty-third year of the Enryaku era (804), he journeyed to China, returning to Japan in the twenty-fourth year of the same era. At that time he propagated the T'ien-t'ai and True Word teachings in Japan. But as far as their relative superiority was

concerned, though he discerned it in his heart, it appears that he did not expound it to others.

During this same period lived Kukai, later known as the Great Teacher Kobo. He, too, went to China in the twenty-third year of the Enryaku era and returned to Japan in the third year of the Daido era (808). He studied only the teachings of True Word and propagated them in Japan. In his opinion, the Lotus Sutra could not measure up even to the Flower Garland Sutra, much less to the True Word teachings.

The Great Teacher Dengyo had a disciple named Ennin, who was later known as the Great Teacher Jikaku. He went to China in the fifth year of the Jowa era (838) and returned to Japan in the fourteenth year of the same era. During those ten years he studied both the True Word and T'ien-t'ai doctrines. While in Japan, he had thoroughly studied the Tendai and True Word doctrines under the Great Teacher Dengyo, Gishin, and Encho, and in addition, during his ten years in China he studied True Word under eight distinguished teachers¹¹ and received instruction in the T'ien-t'ai teachings from Tsung-ju, Chih-yüan,¹² and others. After returning to Japan, he announced that the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools alike represented the flavor of ghee, and that the sutras of both schools were profound and subtle. An imperial edict was issued supporting these opinions.

After him there appeared Enchin, later known as the Great Teacher Chisho. Before journeying to China, he was a disciple of the Reverend Gishin. While in Japan, he studied the Tendai and True Word teachings under Gishin, Encho, Ennin, and others. In addition, he went to China in the third year of the Ninju era (853), returning in the first year of the Jogan era (859). During his seven years in China, he made a thorough study of the two

teachings of the T'ien-t'ai and True Word schools under such men as Fa-ch'üan and Liang-hsü.¹³

He declared that the relative merits of the two schools of Tendai and True Word were as clear as though reflected in a mirror, but that this point would surely be disputed in later times, and so he would settle the matter. He therefore stated his opinion that the two schools of Tendai and True Word were comparable to the two eyes of a person or the two wings of a bird. Those who held interpretations at variance with this were going against the founder, the Great Teacher Dengyo, and should not remain on the mountain. An imperial edict was again promulgated in support of this position, and Enchin spread his interpretation throughout the country.

Thus it would appear that, though there have been many wise persons in both China and Japan, there have been none who could refute this interpretation. If it is valid, then those who practice in accordance with it are certain to attain Buddhahood, and those rulers who pay respect to it are bound to enjoy peace and safety in their realm.

I had thought that, should I venture to share my own opinion with others, they would not only refuse to heed it but in fact would try to do me harm, and that my disciples and lay supporters who heard my views would also be placed in peril. And in fact everything has turned out just as I anticipated.

Nevertheless, I believe that the interpretations put forth by the persons I have mentioned simply do not accord with the Buddha's true intention. Judging from the eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, if there should be any other sutra that surpasses it, then the Lotus Sutra would represent no more than a gathering of the Buddhas of the ten directions who came together to pile up great lies. But in fact when we examine the Flower Garland, Nirvana, Wisdom,

Mahavairochana, and Profound Secrets sutras, we do not find any passage that controverts the Lotus Sutra's clear statement that "among the sutras, it holds the highest place."

Thus, although Shan-wu-wei, Hsüan-tsang, Kobo, Jikaku, Chisho, and the others put forth a variety of clever arguments, they could produce no passage of scripture proving the Lotus Sutra to be inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra. Their whole argument rests solely on the question of whether the sutra includes mudras and mantras. Rather than writing hundreds of volumes of argument, traveling back and forth between China and Japan with their unending schemes, and arranging for the promulgation of imperial edicts in order to intimidate people, they would have been better off producing some clear passage of proof in the sutras themselves. Who then could have doubted their assertions?

Dewdrops accumulate to form a stream, and streams accumulate to form the great ocean. Particles of dust accumulate to form a mountain, and mountains accumulate to form Mount Sumeru. And in the same way, trifling matters accumulate to become grave ones. How much more so in the case of this matter, which is the gravest of all! When these men wrote their commentaries, they should have exerted themselves in examining both the principles and documentary evidence of the two teachings, and when the court issued imperial edicts, it, too, should have delivered its admonitions after thoroughly investigating both sides and citing some clear passage of proof.

Not even the Buddha himself could repudiate his statement that, among all the sutras he has preached, now preaches, and will preach, [the Lotus Sutra stands supreme]. How much less, then, can scholars, teachers, and rulers of states use their authority to do so! This statement [of the Buddha] has

been heard by Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, and duly recorded in their respective palaces.

So long as the people truly did not know of this statement, it seems that the false interpretations of the teachers I mentioned spread without anyone incurring retribution. But once a person of forceful character has come forward to make this sutra passage known in a bold and uncompromising fashion, then grave matters are certain to occur. Because people have looked down on this person and cursed him, struck him, sent him into exile, or attempted to take his life, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings have risen up in anger and become that votary's allies. Thus unexpected censures have come down from heaven, and the people are about to be wiped out and the nation destroyed.

Though the votary of the Lotus Sutra may be of humble background, the heavenly deities who protect him are fearsome indeed. If an asura tries to swallow the sun or moon, its head will split into seven pieces.¹⁴ If a dog barks at a lion, its bowels will rot. And as I view the situation today, the same sort of retribution is happening here in Japan.

On the other hand, those who give alms and support to the votary will receive the same benefit as though making offerings to the Lotus Sutra itself. As the Great Teacher Dengyo says in his commentary, "Those who praise him will receive blessings that will pile up as high as Mount Calm and Bright, while those who slander him will be committing a fault that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering."¹⁵

The person who offered a humble meal of millet to a pratyekabuddha became the Thus Come One Treasure Brightness.¹⁶ He who offered a mud

pie to the Buddha became the ruler of Jambudvīpa.¹⁷ Though one may perform meritorious deeds, if they are directed toward what is untrue, then those deeds may bring great evil, but they will never result in good. On the other hand, though one may be ignorant and make meager offerings, if one presents those offerings to a person who upholds the truth, one's merit will be great. How much more so in the case of people who in all sincerity

make offerings to the correct teaching!

In addition, we live today in a time of trouble, when there is little that ordinary people can do. And yet, busy as you are, in your sincerity you have sent me thick-stemmed bamboo shoots of the moso variety¹⁸ as offerings to the Lotus Sutra here in the mountains. Surely you are sowing good seeds in a field of fortune. My tears never cease to flow when I think of it.



Background

The opening and concluding portions of this letter have been lost, so its date and recipient are both unknown. From the contents of this existing portion, however, it would seem that Nichiren Daishonin wrote it at Minobu to one of his devoted believers.

In the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin declares that all the sutras expounded before the Lotus Sutra are to be classified as “according with the minds of others.” That is, they are provisional teachings accommodated to the people’s understanding. The Lotus Sutra, on the other hand, is said to “accord with the Buddha’s own mind.” It is the teaching in which the Buddha directly revealed his own enlightenment. The provisional teachings set forth only partial aspects of the truth, for they are expounded in accordance with the people’s capacity, while the true teaching or Lotus Sutra reveals the truth in its entirety. The Daishonin asserts that those who take faith in the Lotus Sutra, even without understanding its meaning, will naturally gain immeasurable benefit.

He then briefly traces the history of the transmission of the Lotus Sutra in India, China, and Japan during the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the

Law. In so doing, he uses the analogy of three kinds of messengers, who correspond respectively to the Buddhist teachers of the Former, Middle, and Latter Days of the Law.

The greater part of his discussion in this letter focuses on the Middle Day of the Law, when the message of the Lotus Sutra became overshadowed by other teachings. In China, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai made clear the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra when he met in debate with leaders of the ten schools of the north and south. After T’ien-t’ai’s death, however, the central position of the Lotus Sutra was obscured by the introduction from India of the Dharma Characteristics, Flower Garland, and True Word schools. The Great Teacher Miao-lo to some extent revived T’ien-t’ai’s teaching, but his efforts fell short of restoring the Lotus Sutra to its former uncontested place of honor.

In Japan, the supreme position of the Lotus Sutra was established by the Great Teacher Dengyo, the founder of the Japanese Tendai school. However, during the same period, Kobo established the esoteric True Word school, and Dengyo’s successors eventually fell under its influence, placing the Lotus

Sutra on the same level as the esoteric teachings. Thus the teaching of the Lotus Sutra became obscured.

The Daishonin here criticizes the arguments of such teachers as Shan-wu-wei, Hsüan-tsang, Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho, pointing out that they have no basis in the Buddhist sutras. In contrast, the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra clearly states: "Among the sutras I [Shakyamuni Buddha] have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most

difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand," thus showing the Lotus Sutra to be the most profound teaching. When he sought to make the purport of this passage clear to all, the Daishonin says, he met with persecution; this, in turn, became the cause for various calamities. In contrast, he explains that those who support the votary of the Lotus Sutra will gain the same benefit as they would by serving the Lotus Sutra itself.

Notes

1. A sutra, now lost, in which Shakyamuni is said to have expounded the five precepts and the ten good precepts for the sake of Trapusha and Bhallika, two merchants who had offered him barley and honey soon after his enlightenment. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* cites a teacher of northern China who assigned this sutra to the category of teachings for human and heavenly beings.

2. Three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China.

3. Hui-heng (515–589), Hui-k'uang (534–613), and Hui-jung (d. 586) were priests of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. Hui-heng was appointed general administrator of priests in 586. His debate with the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai is mentioned in *The Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests*. According to the work, Hui-k'uang was instrumental in propagating the teachings of *The Summary of the Mahayana* and *The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine* translated by Paramartha. Hui-jung was a disciple of Fa-yün, who was revered as one of the three great teachers of the Liang dynasty. Fa-sui (n.d.) was a priest of Ting-lin-ssu temple, who lived during the Ch'en and the Sui dynasties. According to *The Biography of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che of the Sui Dynasty*, when T'ien-t'ai lectured on the title of the Lotus Sutra at Wa-kuan-ssu temple in Chin-ling, the capital of the Ch'en, Fa-sui attended it in his capacity as the chief priest of Ting-lin-ssu and, deeply affected by T'ien-t'ai's doctrine, became his follower on the spot.

4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

5. *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

6. Translations made by Hsüan-tsang (602–664) and those who came after him. They tend to be more literal than the "old translations," which preceded them.

7. Jih-chao (Skt Divakara, 613–687) was a monk from central India. He went to China in 676, where he produced the translations of eighteen texts. It is not certain in what sense the Daishonin says that Jih-chao "introduced" the eighty-volume Flower Garland Sutra. He may be referring to the fact that the Flower Garland patriarch Fa-tsang used the "Entering the Dharma Realm" chapter of the Flower Garland Sutra that Jih-chao had translated to supplement a deficiency in the old translation.

8. Today the date usually given for the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan is 538.

9. *A Brief History of Japan* quotes an unidentified source to the effect that the True Word master Shan-wu-wei visited Japan in the first year of the Yoro era (717) during Empress Gensho's reign. Though most probably not factual, it is a tradition that seems to have been accepted in the Daishonin's time. The priest Ganjin (Chin Chien-chen) brought T'ien-t'ai's three major works from China in 754 when he journeyed to Japan at Emperor Shomu's invitation to instruct priests and nuns in the Buddhist precepts.

10. The mountain refers here to Mount Hiei, located between Lake Biwa and the imperial capital at Kyoto. Later it became the site of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Japanese Tendai school.

11. Fa-ch'üan, Yüan-cheng, Tsung-jui,

Ch'üan-ya, I-chen, Pao-yüeh, K'an, and Wei-chin.

12. Tsung-jui (n.d.) was a priest of Hsi-ming-ssu temple in Ch'ang-an, different from the Tsung-jui listed in the preceding note. According to *The Genko Era Biographies of Eminent Priests*, Ennin studied Sanskrit with Tsung-jui when he went to T'ang China in 838. Chih-yüan (768-844) was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school during the T'ang dynasty, who lived at Hua-yen-ssu temple on Mount Wu-t'ai.

13. Fa-ch'üan (n.d.) was a True Word priest of the T'ang dynasty. He is said to have instructed both Ennin and Enchin in the esoteric teachings when they journeyed to China. Liang-hsü (n.d.) was a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school during the T'ang dynasty.

14. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, when the asura king Rahula threatened to swallow the moon, the Buddha reproved him, saying that, if he did so, his head would split into seven pieces. A version of the same story in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* says that Rahula threatened to engulf both the sun and moon.

15. *A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine*.

16. Probably this refers to Aniruddha, a cousin of Shakyamuni and one of his ten major disciples. He was predicted to become the Thus Come One Universal Brightness according to the Lotus Sutra, who is referred to in the text as Treasure Brightness.

17. This refers to the boy Virtue Victorious who offered a mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha. According to *The Story of King Ashoka*, as a result of this offering, a hundred years after the Buddha's death the boy Virtue Victorious was reborn as King Ashoka.

18. The name moso (Chin meng-tsung) came from the filial son Meng-tsung who lived at Wu during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280). According to *Tales of Times Now Past*, bamboo shoots were a favorite food with his mother. One winter morning, she could not get any bamboo shoots, for the ground was frozen with the snow. When Meng-tsung lamented to heaven at this, bamboo shoots spontaneously sprouted in the garden.

New Year's Gosho



I HAVE received a hundred slabs of steamed rice cake and a basket of fruit. New Year's Day marks the first day, the first month, the beginning of the year, and the start of spring.¹ A person who celebrates this day will accumulate virtue and be loved by all, just as the moon becomes full gradually, moving from west to east,² and as the sun shines more brightly, traveling from east to west.

First of all, as to the question of where exactly hell and the Buddha exist, one sutra states that hell exists underground, and another sutra says that the Buddha is in the west. Closer examination, however, reveals that both exist in our five-foot body. This must be true because hell is in the heart of a person who inwardly despises his father and disregards his mother. It is like the lotus seed, which contains both blossom and fruit. In the same way, the Buddha dwells within our hearts. For example, flint has the potential to produce fire, and gems have intrinsic value. We ordinary people can see neither our own eyelashes, which are so close, nor the heavens in the distance. Likewise, we do not see that the Buddha exists in our own hearts. You may question how it is that the Buddha can reside within us when our bodies, originating from our parents' sperm and blood, are the source of the three poisons and the seat of carnal desires. But repeated consideration

assures us of the truth of this matter. The pure lotus flower blooms out of the muddy pond, the fragrant sandalwood grows from the soil, the graceful cherry blossoms come forth from trees, the beautiful Yang Kuei-fei was born of a woman of low station, and the moon rises from behind the mountains to shed light on them. Misfortune comes from one's mouth and ruins one, but fortune comes from one's heart and makes one worthy of respect.

The sincerity of making offerings to the Lotus Sutra at the beginning of the New Year is like cherry blossoms blooming from trees, a lotus unfolding in a pond, sandalwood leaves unfurling on the Snow Mountains, or the moon beginning to rise. Now Japan, in becoming an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, has invited misfortune from a thousand miles away. In light of this, it is clear that those who now believe in the Lotus Sutra will gather fortune from ten thousand miles away. The shadow is cast by the form, and just as the shadow follows the form, misfortune will befall the country whose people are hostile to the Lotus Sutra. The believers in the Lotus Sutra, on the other hand, are like the sandalwood with its fragrance. I will write you again.

Nichiren

The fifth day of the first month

Reply to the wife of Omosu

Background

This letter was written to the wife of Omosu in acknowledgment of offerings Nichiren Daishonin had received from her at the beginning of the year. The precise year of this letter, however, remains unclear.

Omosu derived his name from that of the area in which his estate was located, Omosu Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province. His full name was Ishikawa Shimbei Yoshisuke. His

wife was the elder sister of Nanjo Tokimitsu.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin explains the operative principle of the Ten Worlds in a simple, poetic way, revealing that both Buddhahood and hell exist within the life of each individual. A person with a heart full of hatred experiences the world of hell; a person with faith in the Lotus Sutra experiences the world of Buddhahood.

Notes

1. According to the Japanese lunar calendar, spring begins with the first month—that is, on New Year's Day by that calendar, which on the Gregorian calendar falls somewhere between January 21 and February 19.

2. This refers to the fact that the new moon is first seen in the west just after sunset. On successive nights, as the moon grows fuller, it appears to have moved a little farther toward the east.

Appendix A

The Japanese Titles of the Writings in This Volume

Note: The numbers following the Japanese titles refer to the page numbers in the *Nichiren Daishonin gosho zenshu*.

1. On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime: *Issho jobutsu sho* (一生成仏抄), 383.
2. On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land: *Rissho ankoku ron* (立正安国論), 17.
The Postscript to “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”: *Rissho ankoku ron okugaki* (立正安国論奥書), 33.
3. A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering: *Shiiji Shiro dono gosho* (椎地四郎殿御書), 1448.
4. The Izu Exile: *Funamori Yasaburo moto gosho* (船守弥三郎許御書), 1445.
5. The Universal Salty Taste: *Doitsu kammi gosho* (同一鹹味御書), 1447.
6. The Four Debts of Gratitude: *Shion sho* (四恩抄), 935.
7. The Teaching, Capacity, Time, and Country: *Kyo ki ji koku sho* (教機時国抄), 438.
8. Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra: *Ji Myo-hokke mondo sho* (持妙法華問答抄), 461.
9. The Recitation of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters: *Gassui gosho* (月水御書), 1199.
10. Encouragement to a Sick Person: *Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro dono gosho* (南条兵衛七郎殿御書), 1493.
11. Opening the Eyes of Wooden and Painted Images: *Mokue nizo kaigen no koto* (木絵二像開眼之事), 468.
12. The Essence of the “Medicine King” Chapter: *Yakuo-bon tokui sho* (藥王品得意抄), 1499.
13. Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man: *Shogu mondo sho* (聖愚問答抄), 474.
14. The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra: *Hokekyo daimoku sho* (法華經題目抄), 940.
15. Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro: *Hoshina Goro Taro dono gohenji* (星名五郎太郎殿御返事), 1206.
16. The Rationale for Writing “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”: *Ankoku ron gokan yurai* (安国論御勸由来), 33.
17. The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei: *Zemmui Sanzo sho* (善無畏三藏抄), 881.
18. The Essence of the “Life Span” Chapter: *Juryo-bon tokui sho* (寿量品得意抄), 1210.
19. Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child: *Shijo Kingo nyobo gosho* (四条金吾女房御書), 1109.

20. The Birth of Tsukimaro: *Tsukimaro gozen gosho* (月滿御前御書), 1110.
21. The Origin of the Service for Deceased Ancestors: *Shijo Kingo dono gosho* (四条金吾殿御書), 1111.
22. Letter from Echi: *Toki dono gohenji* (土木殿御返事), 950.
23. The Persecution at Tatsunokuchi: *Shijo Kingo dono goshosoku* (四条金吾殿御消息), 1113.
24. Lessening One's Karmic Retribution: *Tenju kyōju homon* (転重輕受法門), 1000.
25. Banishment to Sado: *Sado gokanki sho* (佐渡御勘氣抄), 891.
26. Letter to Priest Nichiro in Prison: *Tsuchiro gosho* (土籠御書), 1213.
27. Letter from Teradomari: *Teradomari gosho* (寺泊御書), 951.
28. Aspiration for the Buddha Land: *Toki Nyudo dono gohenji* (富木入道殿御返事), 955.
29. The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life: *Shoji ichidaiji kechimyaku sho* (生死一大事血脈抄), 1336.
30. The Opening of the Eyes: *Kaimoku sho* (開目抄), 186.
31. On the Treasure Tower: *Abutsu-bo gosho* (阿仏房御書), 1304.
32. Letter from Sado: *Sado gosho* (佐渡御書), 956.
33. Reply to Sairen-bo: *Sairen-bo gohenji* (最蓮房御返事), 1340.
34. The Gods Same Birth and Same Name: *Dosho Domyo gosho* (同生同名御書), 1114.
35. Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1116.
36. Letter to the Sage Nichimyo: *Nichimyo Shonin gosho* (日妙聖人御書), 1213.
37. The Pure and Far-Reaching Voice: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1118.
38. On Prayer: *Kito sho* (祈禱抄), 1344.
39. The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind Established in the Fifth Five-Hundred-Year Period after the Thus Come One's Passing: *Nyorai metsugo gogohyakusai ni hajimu kanjin no honzon sho* (如来滅後五五百歲始觀心本尊抄・同送狀), 238.
40. The True Aspect of All Phenomena: *Shoho jisso sho* (諸法実相抄), 1358.
41. Letter to Gijo-bo: *Gijo-bo gosho* (義淨房御書), 892.
42. On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings: *Nyosetsu shugyo sho* (如說修行抄), 501.
43. On the Buddha's Prophecy: *Kembutsu mirai ki* (顯仏未來記), 505.
44. Reply to Hakiri Saburo: *Hakiri Saburo dono gohenji* (波木井三郎殿御返事), 1369.
45. Reply to Kyo'o: *Kyo'o dono gohenji* (絳王殿御返事), 1124.
46. On Offering Prayers to the Mandala of the Mystic Law: *Myoho mandara kuyo no koto* (妙法曼陀羅供養事), 1305.
47. The Entity of the Mystic Law: *Totai gi sho* (当体義抄・同送狀), 510.
48. On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins: *Kashaku hobo metsuzai sho* (呵責謗法滅罪抄), 1125.
49. The Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Persecution: *Hokke gyoja honan ji* (法華行者逢難事), 965.
50. The Swords of Good and Evil: *Yagenta dono gohenji* (弥源太殿御返事), 1226.
51. Letter to Endo Saemon-no-jo: *Endo Saemon-no-jo gosho* (遠藤左衛門尉御書), 1336.
52. Hell Is the Land of Tranquil Light: *Ueno dono goke-ama gohenji* (上野殿後家尼御返事), 1504.
53. On Recommending This Teaching to Your Lord and Avoiding the Offense of Complicity in Slander: *Shukun ninyu shihomon men yodozai ji* (主君耳入此法門免与同罪事), 1132.

54. The Unity of Husband and Wife: *Shijo Kingo dono nyobo gohenji* (四条金吾殿女房御返事), 1134.
55. Reply to Niiama: *Niiama gozen gohenji* (新尼御前御返事), 904.
56. The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1136.
57. The Teaching, Practice, and Proof: *Kyo gyo sho gosho* (教行証御書), 1276.
58. Reply to the Lay Priest Soya: *Soya Nyudo dono gohenji* (曾谷入道殿御返事), 1025.
59. The Royal Palace: *Oshajo no koto* (王舎城事), 1137.
60. Reply to the Lay Priest of Ko: *Ko Nyudo dono gohenji* (国府入道殿御返事), 1323.
61. Letter to the Brothers: *Kyodai sho* (兄弟抄), 1079.
62. Letter to Horen: *Horen sho* (法蓮抄), 1040.
63. Letter to the Lay Priest Ichinosawa: *Ichinosawa Nyudo gosho* (一谷入道御書), 1326.
64. The Offering of an Unlined Robe: *Sajiki nyobo gohenji* (さじき女房御返事), 1231.
65. Winter Always Turns to Spring: *Myoichi-ama gozen goshosoku* (妙一尼御前御消息), 1252.
66. The Selection of the Time: *Senji sho* (撰時抄), 256.
67. Letter to the Lay Nun of Ko: *Ko-no-ama gozen gosho* (国府尼御前御書), 1324.
68. Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain: *San sanzō kiu no koto* (三三藏祈雨事), 1468.
69. Reply to the Lay Priest Takahashi: *Takahashi Nyudo dono gohenji* (高橋入道殿御返事), 1458.
70. The Supremacy of the Law: *Oto gozen goshosoku* (乙御前御消息), 1218.
71. Many in Body, One in Mind: *Itai doshin ji* (異体同心事), 1463.
72. The Problem to Be Pondered Night and Day: *Tōki dono gosho* (富木殿御書), 969.
73. On Upholding Faith in the Gohonzon: *Myoshin-ama gozen gohenji* (妙心尼御前御返事), 1477.
74. The Embankments of Faith: *Abutsu-bo-ama gozen gohenji* (阿仏房尼御前御返事), 1307.
75. The Mongol Envoys: *Moko tsukai gosho* (蒙古使御書), 1472.
76. On Curing Karmic Disease: *Ota Nyudo dono gohenji* (太田入道殿御返事), 1009.
77. The Three Obstacles and Four Devils: *Hyoē Sakan dono gohenji* (兵衛志殿御返事), 1090.
78. A Sage Perceives the Three Existences of Life: *Shonin chi sanze ji* (聖人知三世事), 974.
79. On Omens: *Zuiso gosho* (瑞相御書), 1140.
80. Letter to the Priests of Seicho-ji: *Seicho-ji daishu chu* (清澄寺大衆中), 893.
81. Good Fortune in This Life: *Nanjo dono gohenji* (南条殿御返事), 1529.
82. The Bow and Arrow: *Tōki-ama gozen gohenji* (富木尼御前御返事), 975.
83. Letter to Konichi-bo: *Konichi-bo gosho* (光日房御書), 926.
84. The Blessings of the Lotus Sutra: *Myomitsu Shonin goshosoku* (妙密上人御消息), 1237.
85. The Story of Ohashi no Taro: *Nanjo dono gohenji* (南条殿御返事), 1531.
86. Happiness in This World: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1143.
87. On Consecrating an Image of Shakyamuni Buddha Made by Shijo Kingo: *Shijo Kingo Shakabutsu kuyo ji* (四条金吾釈迦仏供養事), 1144.
88. On Repaying Debts of Gratitude: *Ho'on sho* (報恩抄・同送文), 293.
89. The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood: *Soya dono gohenji* (曾谷殿御返事), 1055.

90. Letter to the Lay Priest Domyo: *Domyo Zemmon gosho* (道妙禪門御書), 1242.
91. Propagation by the Wise: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1148.
92. The Fourteen Slanders: *Matsuno dono gohenji* (松野殿御返事), 1381.
93. The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra: *Shuju onfurumai gosho* (種種御振舞御書), 909.
94. On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice: *Shishin gohon sho* (四信五品抄), 338.
95. The Eight Winds: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1150.
96. The Workings of Brahma and Shakra: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1537.
97. The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto: *Yorimoto chinjo* (頼基陳狀), 1153.
98. On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors: *Urabon gosho* (盂蘭盆御書), 1427.
99. A Warning against Begrudging One's Fief: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1163.
100. Reply to Yasaburo: *Yasaburo dono gohenji* (弥三郎殿御返事), 1449.
101. The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon: *Nichinyo gozen gohenji* (日女御前御返事), 1243.
102. The Hero of the World: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1165.
103. The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1170.
104. Reply to Matsuno: *Matsuno dono gohenji* (松野殿御返事), 1388.
105. A Father Takes Faith: *Hyo Sakano dono gosho* (兵衛志殿御書), 1095.
106. The Three Kinds of Treasure: *Sushun Tenno gosho* (崇峻天皇御書), 1170.
107. The Third Doctrine: *Jonin sho* (常忍抄), 980.
108. "This Is What I Heard": *Soya Nyudo dono gohenji* (曾谷入道殿御返事), 1057.
109. Letter to Shomitsu-bo: *Shomitsu-bo gosho* (聖密房御書), 896.
110. How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra: *Hokke shoshin jobutsu sho* (法華初心成仏抄), 544.
111. No Safety in the Threefold World: *Matsuno dono gohenji* (松野殿御返事), 1388.
112. Letter to Misawa: *Misawa sho* (三沢抄), 1487.
113. The Two Kinds of Faith: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1544.
114. Reply to the Followers: *Shonin gohenji* (諸人御返事), 1284.
115. The Teaching for the Latter Day: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1545.
116. Reply to a Believer: *Dannotsu bo gohenji* (檀越某御返事), 1294.
117. Unseen Virtue and Visible Reward: *Intoku yoho gosho* (陰德陽報御書), 1178.
118. Flowering and Bearing Grain: *Keka joju gosho* (華果成就御書), 900.
119. An Outline of the "Entrustment" and Other Chapters: *Nichinyo gozen gohenji* (日女御前御返事), 1245.
120. The Two Kinds of Illness: *Nakatsukasa Saemon-no-jo dono gohenji* (中務左衛門尉殿御返事), 1178.
121. The One Essential Phrase: *Myoho-ama gozen gohenji* (妙法尼御前御返事), 1402.
122. Reply to Tokimitsu: *Tokimitsu gohenji* (時光御返事), 1549.
123. The Sutra of True Requital: *Sennichi-ama gozen gohenji* (千日尼御前御返事), 1309.
124. The Good Medicine for All Ills: *Myoshin-ama gozen gohenji* (妙心尼御前御返事), 1479.
125. The Farther the Source, the Longer the Stream: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1180.
126. The Receipt of New Fiefs: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1183.
127. The Drum at the Gate of Thunder: *Sennichi-ama gozen gohenji* (千日尼御前御返事), 1315.
128. General Stone Tiger: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1185.
129. On Prolonging One's Life Span: *Kaen jogo sho* (可延定業書), 985.

130. The One-eyed Turtle and the Floating Log: *Matsuno dono goke-ama gozen gohenji* (松野殿後家尼御前御返事), 1390.
131. Persecution by Sword and Staff: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1555.
132. The Teaching That Accords with the Buddha's Mind: *Niike dono goshosoku* (新池殿御消息), 1435.
133. The Unmatched Blessings of the Law: *Hokyo hoju ji* (宝軽法重事), 1474.
134. On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion: *Shibosatsu zoryu sho* (四菩薩造立抄), 987.
135. Reply to the Wife of Matsuno: *Matsuno dono nyobo gohenji* (松野殿女房御返事), 1394.
136. King Rinda: *Soya dono gohenji* (曾谷殿御返事), 1059.
137. Letter to Jakunichi-bo: *Jakunichi-bo gosho* (寂日房御書), 902.
138. On Persecutions Befalling the Sage: *Shonin gonan ji* (聖人御難事), 1189.
139. The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1192.
140. The Dragon Gate: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1560.
141. Letter to the Lay Priest Nakaoki: *Nakaoki Nyudo shosoku* (中興入道消息), 1331.
142. "This Person Advances through the World": *Uemon no Tayu dono gohenji* (右衛門太夫殿御返事), 1102.
143. The Third Day of the New Year: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1562.
144. Letter to Akimoto: *Akimoto gosho* (秋元御書), 1071.
145. Letter to Niike: *Niike gosho* (新池御書), 1439.
146. On Filial and Unfilial Conduct: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1563.
147. The Meaning of Faith: *Myoichi-ama gozen gohenji* (妙一尼御前御返事), 1255.
148. A Comparison of the Lotus and Other Sutras: *Shokyo to Hokekyo to nan'i no koto* (諸經と法華經と難易の事), 991.
149. The Treasure of a Filial Child: *Sennichi-ama gohenji* (千日尼御返事), 1318.
150. The Sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye: *Jozo Jogen goshosoku* (淨藏淨眼御消息), 1396.
151. The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form: *Myoichi-nyo gohenji* (妙一女御返事), 1255.
152. White Horses and White Swans: *Utsubusa nyobo gohenji* (内房女房御返事), 1420.
153. The Place of the Cluster of Blessings: *Shijo Kingo dono gohenji* (四条金吾殿御返事), 1193.
154. Reply to the Mother of Ueno: *Ueno dono haha gozen gohenji* (上野殿母御前御返事), 1568.
155. Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigon: *Nichigon-ama gozen gohenji* (日巖尼御前御返事), 1262.
156. Great Bodhisattva Hachiman: *Shijo Kingo moto onfumi* (四条金吾許御文), 1195.
157. The Wealthy Man Sudatta: *Ueno dono gohenji* (上野殿御返事), 1574.
158. Reply to Onichi-nyo: *Onichi-nyo dono gohenji* (王日女殿御返事), 1263.
159. The Gift of Clear Sake: *Ueno-ama gozen gohenji* (上野尼御前御返事), 1575.
160. Reply to Jibu-bo: *Jibu-bo gohenji* (治部房御返事), 1425.
161. The Person and the Law: *Nanjo dono gohenji* (南条殿御返事), 1578.
162. Wu-lung and I-lung: *Ueno-ama gozen gohenji* (上野尼御前御返事), 1580.
163. Roots of Good Fortune: *Kubo-no-ama gozen gohenji* (窪尼御前御返事), 1485.
164. Reply to the Lay Nun Myoho: *Myoho-bikuni gozen gohenji* (妙法比丘尼御前御返事), 1419.
165. The Proof of the Lotus Sutra: *Hokke shomyo sho* (法華証明抄), 1586.
166. The Treatment of Illness: *Jiby daisho gonjitsu imoku* (治病大小権実違目), 995.

APPENDIX A

167. The Properties of Rice: *Takahashi dono gohenji* (高橋殿御返事), 1467.
168. Great Evil and Great Good: *Daiaku daizen gosho* (大悪大善御書), 1300.
169. The Kalpa of Decrease: *Genko gosho* (減劫御書), 1465.
170. The Gift of Rice: *Hakumai ippyo gosho* (白米一俵御書), 1596.
171. The Bodies and Minds of Ordinary Beings: *Shujo shinshin gosho* (衆生身心御書), 1590.
172. New Year's Gosho: *Mushimochi gosho* (十字御書), 1491.

Appendix B

The Recipients and the Writings They Received

Note: The titles of writings addressed to two or more persons appear after the name of each recipient. The numbers in parentheses following each title indicate the opening page in this volume.

- Abutsu-bo:** •On the Treasure Tower (299)
Akimoto Taro: •Letter to Akimoto (1014)
Domyo, lay priest: •Letter to the Lay Priest Domyo (750)
Endo Saemon-no-jo: •Letter to Endo Saemon-no-jo (454)
Enjo-bo: •Banishment to Sado (202)
Funamori Yasaburo: •The Izu Exile (35)
Gijo-bo: •The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei (166); •Letter to Gijo-bo (389);
•On Repaying Debts of Gratitude (690); •Flowering and Bearing Grain (909)
Hakiri Saburo: •Reply to Hakiri Saburo (405)
Hiki Yoshimoto, wife of: •The Recitation of the “Expedient Means” and “Life
Span” Chapters (68)
Hogan: •The Rationale for Writing “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the
Peace of the Land” (161)
Hojo Tokiyori: •On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land
(6)
Hojo Yagenta: •The Swords of Good and Evil (451)
Hoshina Goro Taro: •Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro (155)
Ichinosawa, wife of the lay priest: •Letter to the Lay Priest Ichinosawa (526)
Ikegami Munenaga: •Letter to the Brothers (493); •The Three Obstacles and
Four Devils (636); •A Father Takes Faith (845)
Ikegami Munenaka: •Letter to the Brothers (493); •“This Person Advances
through the World” (1011)
Jakunichi-bo: •Letter to Jakunichi-bo (993)
Jibu-bo: •Reply to Jibu-bo (1094)
Jibu-bo’s grandmother: •On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors (817)
Joken-bo: •The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei (166); •On Repaying Debts of
Gratitude (690); •Flowering and Bearing Grain (909)
Kimbara: •Lessening One’s Karmic Retribution (199)
Ko, lay nun of: •Letter to the Lay Nun of Ko (595)
Ko, lay priest of: •Reply to the Lay Priest of Ko (491)
Konichi, lay nun: •Letter to Konichi-bo (659); •The Actions of the Votary of the
Lotus Sutra (763)

- Kubo, lay nun of:** •Roots of Good Fortune (1103)
- Kudo Yoshitaka:** •The Four Debts of Gratitude (41)
- Kyo'o** (a daughter of Shijo Kingo): •Reply to Kyo'o (412)
- Matsuno Rokuro Saemon:** •The Fourteen Slanders (755); •Reply to Matsuno (843); •No Safety in the Threefold World (891)
- Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, wife of:** •The One-eyed Turtle and the Floating Log (957)
- Matsuno Rokuro Saemon-no-jo, wife of:** •Reply to the Wife of Matsuno (981)
- Misawa Kojiro:** •Letter to Misawa (894)
- Myoho, lay nun:** •How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra (872); •The One Essential Phrase (922); •Reply to the Lay Nun Myoho (1105)
- Myoichi, lay nun:** •Winter Always Turns to Spring (535); •The Meaning of Faith (1036)
- Myoichi-nyo:** •The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form (1052)
- Myomitsu:** •The Blessings of the Lotus Sutra (667)
- Myoshin, lay nun:** •On Upholding Faith in the Gohonzon (624); •The Good Medicine for All Ills (937)
- Nakaoki, wife of the lay priest:** •Letter to the Lay Priest Nakaoki (1005)
- Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro** (father of Nanjo Tokimitsu): •Encouragement to a Sick Person (76)
- Nanjo Tokimitsu:** •Good Fortune in This Life (654); •The Story of Ohashi no Taro (675); •The Workings of Brahma and Shakra (798); •The Two Kinds of Faith (899); •The Teaching for the Latter Day (902); •Reply to Tokimitsu (925); •Persecution by Sword and Staff (962); •The Dragon Gate (1002); •The Third Day of the New Year (1013); •On Filial and Unfilial Conduct (1033); •The Wealthy Man Sudatta (1086); •The Person and the Law (1097); •The Proof of the Lotus Sutra (1108)
- Nichigen-nyo** (wife of Shijo Kingo): •Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child (186); •The Gods Same Birth and Same Name (315); •Reply to Kyo'o (412); •The Unity of Husband and Wife (463); •Great Bodhisattva Hachiman (1080)
- Nichigon, lay nun:** •Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigon (1079)
- Nichimyo:** •Letter to the Sage Nichimyo (321)
- Nichinyo:** •The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon (831); •An Outline of the "Entrustment" and Other Chapters (911)
- Nichiro:** •Letter to Priest Nichiro in Prison (204)
- Niiama:** •Reply to Niiama (466)
- Niike Saemon:** •The Teaching That Accords with the Buddha's Mind (967); •Letter to Niike (1026)
- Nishiyama, lay priest:** •Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain (598); •The Mongol Envoys (628); •The Unmatched Blessings of the Law (973)
- Omosu, wife of:** •New Year's Goshō (1137)
- Onichi-nyo:** •Reply to Onichi-nyo (1089)
- Ota Jomyo:** •Lessening One's Karmic Retribution (199); •On Curing Karmic Disease (631)
- Oto** (a daughter of Nichimyo): •The Supremacy of the Law (612)
- Sairen-bo:** •The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life (216); •Reply to Sairen-bo (309); •On Prayer (336); •The True Aspect of All Phenomena (383); •The Entity of the Mystic Law (417)
- Sajiki, lady of:** •The Offering of an Unlined Robe (533)
- Sammi-bo:** •The Teaching, Practice, and Proof (473)

- Sennichi, lay nun:** •On Offering Prayers to the Mandala of the Mystic Law (414); •The Embankments of Faith (625); •The Sutra of True Requital (928); •The Drum at the Gate of Thunder (948); •The Treasure of a Filial Child (1041)
- Shiiji Shiro:** •A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering (33)
- Shijo Kingo:** •The Birth of Tsukimaro (188); •The Origin of the Service for Deceased Ancestors (190); •The Persecution at Tatsunokuchi (196); •The Opening of the Eyes (220); •Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment (317); •The Pure and Far-Reaching Voice (328); •Reply to Kyo'ō (412); •On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins (435); •On Recommending This Teaching to Your Lord and Avoiding the Offense of Complicity in Slander (460); •The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith (471); •The Royal Palace (488); •On Omens (644); •Happiness in This World (681); •On Consecrating an Image of Shakyamuni Buddha Made by Shijo Kingo (683); •Propagation by the Wise (752); •The Eight Winds (794); •The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto (803); •A Warning against Begrudging One's Fief (823); •The Hero of the World (835); •The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles (842); •The Three Kinds of Treasure (848); •Unseen Virtue and Visible Reward (907); •The Two Kinds of Illness (919); •The Farther the Source, the Longer the Stream (940); •The Receipt of New Fiefs (945); •General Stone Tiger (952); •On Persecutions Befalling the Sage (996); •The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra (1000); •The Place of the Cluster of Blessings (1069)
- Shomitsu-bo:** •Letter to Shomitsu-bo (863)
- Soya Doso:** •King Rinda (983)
- Soya Kyoshin:** •Lessening One's Karmic Retribution (199); •Reply to the Lay Priest Soya (486); •Letter to Horen (505); •The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood (746); •"This Is What I Heard" (859)
- Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe:** •Reply to the Lay Priest Takahashi (605); •The Properties of Rice (1117)
- Toki Jonin:** •On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime (3); •Letter from Echi (194); •Letter from Teradomari (206); •Aspiration for the Buddha Land (213); •Letter from Sado (301); •The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind Established in the Fifth Five-Hundred-Year Period after the Thus Come One's Passing (354); •The Problem to Be Pondered Night and Day (620); •A Sage Perceives the Three Existences of Life (641); •On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice (783); •The Third Doctrine (854); •On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion (976); •A Comparison of the Lotus and Other Sutras (1037); •The Treatment of Illness (1111)
- Toki Jonin, wife of:** •The Bow and Arrow (656); •On Prolonging One's Life Span (954)
- Ueno, lay nun** (mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu): •The Essence of the "Medicine King" Chapter (91); •Hell Is the Land of Tranquil Light (456); •Reply to the Mother of Ueno (1072); •The Gift of Clear Sake (1091); •Wu-lung and I-lung (1099)
- Utsubusa, lady of:** •White Horses and White Swans (1061)
- Yasaburo:** •Reply to Yasaburo (827)
- Yui:** •The Selection of the Time (538)
- Followers in general:** •Letter from Sado (301); •On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings (391); •On the Buddha's Prophecy (398); •The Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Persecution (447); •On Persecutions Befalling the Sage (996)
- Priests of Seicho-ji temple:** •Letter to the Priests of Seicho-ji (650)
- Recipients unknown:** •The Universal Salty Taste (39); •The Teaching, Capacity,

Time, and Country (48); •Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra (55); •Opening the Eyes of Wooden and Painted Images (85); •Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man (99); •The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra (141); •The Essence of the “Life Span” Chapter (182); •Many in Body, One in Mind (618); •Reply to the Followers (901); •Reply to a Believer (905); •The Sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye (1049); •Great Evil and Great Good (1119); •The Kalpa of Decrease (1120); •The Gift of Rice (1125); •The Bodies and Minds of Ordinary Beings (1128)

Appendix C

Sanskrit Personal Names and Their Japanese Equivalents

Sanskrit Names	Japanese Names
Agastya	Akada (阿竭多仙人)
Agnidatta	Agita (阿耆多王)
Ajatashatru (Ajātaśatru)	Ajase (阿闍世王)
Ajita	Aitta (阿逸多)
Ajnata Kaundinya (Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya)	Anyakyojinnyo (阿若憍陳如)
Akshobhya (Akṣobhya)	Ashuku (阿閼佉)
Ananda (Ānanda)	Anan (阿難)
Angulimāla (Aṅgulimāla)	Okutsumara (央掘摩羅)
Aniruddha	Anaritsu (阿那律)
Aryadeva (Āryadeva)	Daiba (提婆菩薩)
Aryasimha (Āryasiṃha)	Shishi (師子尊者)
Asanga (Aśaṅga)	Mujaku (無著)
Ashoka (Aśoka)	Asoka (阿育王)
Ashvaghosha (Aśvagoṣa)	Memyo (馬鳴)
Ashvajit (Aśvajit)	Asetsuji (阿說示)
Asita	Ashi (阿私仙人); Ashida (阿私陀仙人)
Baladitya (Bālāditya)	Gennichi (幻日王)
Bhadrapala (Bhadrāpāla)	Baddabara (跋陀婆羅)
Bhadraruchi (Bhadraruci)	Ken'ai (賢愛論師)
Bhadrika	Batsudairika (跋提梨迦); Batsudai (跋提王)
Bimbisara (Bimbisāra)	Bimbashara (頻婆舍羅王)
Bodhidharma	Daruma (達磨)
Brahma (Brahmā)	Bonten (梵天)
Buddhamitra	Buddamitta (仏陀密多)
Buddhananda	Buddanandai (仏陀難提)
Chandaka	Shanoku (車匿)
Chandrakirti (Candrakīrti)	Gassho (月称)
Chandraprabha (Candraprabha)	Gakko (月光)
Chincha (Ciñcā)	Sensha-nyo (旃遮女)
Chudapanthaka (Cūḍapanthaka)	Surihandoku (須利槃特)
Chunda (Cunda)	Junda (純陀)
Dashabala Kashyapa (Daśabala Kāśyapa)	Juriki Kasho (十力迦葉)

Devadatta	Daibadatta (提婆達多)
Dharmagupta	Darumakikuta (達摩掬多)
Dharmapala (Dharmapāla)	Goho (護法)
Dharmarakṣa (Dharmarakṣa)	Jikhugo (竺法護); Dommushin (曇無讖)
Dharmodgata	Dommukatsu (曇無竭菩薩)
Dhritaka (Dhṛṭaka)	Daitaka (提多迦)
Dignaga (Dignāga)	Jinna (陳那)
Dronodana (Droṇodana)	Kokubon (斛飯王)
Gautama	Kudon (瞿曇／瞿曇仙人)
Gautami (Gautamī)	Kyodommi (橋曇弥)
Ghoshila (Ghoṣīla)	Kushira (瞿師羅)
Girika	Giri (耆利)
Gunamati (Gunaṃati)	Tokue (德慧)
Gunaprabha (Gunaṃprabha)	Tokuko (德光論師)
Haklenayasha (Haklenayaśas)	Kakuroku (鶴勒)
Himatala	Sessenge (雪山下王)
Indra	Taishaku-ten (帝釈天)
Jayata	Jayana (闍夜那)
Jinu	Gito (耆菟)
Jivaka (Jīvaka)	Giba (耆婆)
Jnanagupta (Jñānagupta)	Janakutta (闍那崛多)
Kali (Kālī)	Kari (迦梨王)
Kalodayin (Kālodāyin)	Karudai (迦留陀夷)
Kanadeva (Kānadeva)	Kanadaiba (迦那提婆)
Kanishka (Kaniṣka)	Kanishika (迦忒志加王)
Kapila	Kabira (迦毘羅)
Kapimāla	Kabimara (迦毘摩羅)
Karttika (Kārttika)	Katei (迦帝王)
Kashyapa (Kāśyapa)	Kasho-doji (迦葉童子菩薩); Kasho (迦葉仏)
Kashyapa Matanga (Kāśyapa Mātāṅga)	Kashomato (迦葉摩騰)
Katyayana (Kātyāyana)	Kasennen (迦旃延)
Kaushika (Kauśika)	Kyoshika (橋尸迦)
Kokalika (Kokālika)	Kugyari (瞿伽利)
Kolita	Kuri (拘利)
Kriki (Kṛki)	Kiriki (訖利季王)
Krita (Kṛta)	Kirita (訖利多王)
Kumarajiva (Kumārajīva)	Kumaraju (鳩摩羅什)
Kumarata (Kumārata)	Kumarada (鳩摩羅駄)
Kumarayana (Kumārāyaṇa)	Kumaraen (鳩摩羅炎)
Kuntī (Kuntī)	Kodai-nyo (皁諦女)
Madhava (Mādhava)	Mato (摩沓)
Madhyantika (Madhyāntika)	Madenchi (末田地)
Mahadeva (Mahādeva)	Daiten (大天)
Mahakashyapa (Mahākāśyapa)	Kasho (迦葉)
Mahanama (Mahānāma)	Shakumanan (釈摩男)
Mahaprajapati (Mahāprajāpatī)	Makahajahadai (摩訶波闍波提)
Mahavairochana (Mahāvairocana)	Dainichi (大日如来)
Maheshvara (Maheśvara)	Makeishura-ten (摩醯首羅天); Daijizai-ten (大自在天)
Maitreya	Miroku (弥勒菩薩)

Manjushri (Mañjuśrī)	Monjushiri (文殊師利菩薩)
Manoratha	Nyoi (如意論師)
Manorhita	Manura (摩奴羅)
Marichi (Marīci)	Marishi-ten (摩利支天)
Matanga (Mātāṅga)	Mato (摩騰)
Maudgalyayana (Maudgalyāyana)	Mokuren (目連)
Maya (Māyā)	Maya (摩耶夫人)
Mihirakula	Daizoku (大族王)
Mikkaka	Mishaka (弥遮迦)
Nagabodhi (Nāgabodhi)	Ryuchi (竜智)
Nagarjuna (Nāgārjuna)	Ryuju (竜樹)
Nahusha (Nahuṣa)	Nagosa (那睺沙王)
Nanda	Nanda (難陀)
Narayana (Nārāyaṇa)	Naraen-ten (那羅延天)
Nirgrantha Jnataputra (Nirgrantha Jñātaputra)	Niken (尼犍)
Nyagrodha	Nikurida (尼俱律陀)
Papiyas (Pāpīyas)	Hajun (波旬)
Paramartha (Paramārtha)	Shindai (真諦)
Parshva (Pārśva)	Kyobiku (脇比丘)
Pilindavatsa	Hitsuryo (畢陵)
Pindolabharadvaja (Piṇḍolabhāradvāja)	Binzuru (賓頭盧尊者)
Prajna (Prajñā)	Hannya (般若)
Prasenajit	Hashinoku (波斯匿王)
Punyayashas (Puṇyayaśas)	Funasha (富那奢)
Purna (Pūrṇa)	Furuna (富樓那)
Pushyamitra (Puṣyamitra)	Hoshamittara (弗沙弥多羅王)
Rahula (Rāhula)	Ragora (羅睺羅)
Rahulata (Rāhulatā)	Rago (羅睺)
Rama (Rāma)	Rama (羅摩王)
Rishabha (R̥ṣabha)	Rokushaba (勒沙婆)
Samghanandi (Saṃghanandi)	Sogyanandai (僧伽難提)
Samghayashas (Saṃghayaśas)	Sogyayasha (僧伽耶奢)
Saramati (Sāramati)	Kenne (堅慧)
Satavahana (Sātavāhana)	Insho (印生王)
Sattva	Satta (薩埵王子)
Shakra (Śakra)	Taishaku-ten (帝釈天)
Shakyamuni (Śākyamuni)	Shakuson (釈尊)
Shanavasa (Śāṇavāsa)	Shonawashu (商那和修)
Shariputra (Śāriputra)	Sharihotsu (舍利弗)
Shibi (Śibi)	Shibi (尸毘王)
Shilabhadra (Śīlabhadra)	Kaigen (戒賢)
Shiladitya (Śīlāditya)	Kainichi (戒日王)
Shrutasoma (Śrutasoma)	Shudama (須陀摩王)
Shuddhodana (Śuddhodana)	Jobon (淨飯王)
Shuryasoma (Sūryasoma)	Shuriyasoma (須利耶蘇摩)
Siddhartha (Siddhārtha)	Shiddatta (悉達太子)
Simhahanu (Siṃhahanu)	Shishikyo (師子頰王)
Subhadra	Shubaddara (須跋陀羅)
Subhuti (Subhūti)	Shubodai (須菩提)
Sudatta	Shudatsu (須達長者)
Sudaya (Sudāya)	Shuda (須陀比丘)

Sunakshatra (Sunakṣatra)	Zensho (善星比丘)
Sundari (Sundarī)	Sondari (孫陀利)
Suprabuddha	Zemmon (善聞長者)
Sushanta (Suśānta)	Shusenda (須扇多仏)
Udayana	Uden (優填王)
Udraka Ramaputra (Udraka Rāmaputra)	Uzuranhotsu (罽頭羅弗)
Uluka (Ulūka)	Urusogya (漚樓僧佉)
Upagupta	Ubakikuta (優婆鞠多)
Utpalavarna (Utpalavarṇā)	Rengeshiki (蓮華色比丘尼)
Vaidehi (Vaidehī)	Idaike (韋提希)
Vaipulya	Hoko (方広)
Vairochana (Vairocana)	Birushana (毘盧遮那)
Vaishravana (Vaiśravaṇa)	Bishamon-ten (毘沙門天)
Vajrasattva	Kongosatta (金剛薩埵)
Varshakara (Varṣākāra)	Ugyo (雨行大臣)
Vasubandhu	Seshin (世親)
Vatsa	Tokushi (犢子)
Vimalakirti (Vimalakīrti)	Yuimakitsu (維摩詰)
Vimalamitra	Muku (無垢論師)
Vipashyin (Vipaśyin)	Bibashi (毘婆尸仏)
Viruchin (Virucin)	Birushin (毘樓真王)
Virudhaka (Virūdhaka)	Haruri (波瑠璃王)
Vishakha (Viśākha)	Bishakya (毘舍佉王)
Vishvakarman (Viśvakarman)	Bishukatsuma-ten (毘首羯磨天)
Yama	Emma (閻魔王)
Yasha (Yaśa)	Yashu (耶輸大臣); Yasha (夜叉尊者)
Yashodhara (Yaśodharā)	Yashutara (耶輸多羅)

Appendix D

Chinese Personal Names and Their Japanese Equivalents

Note: Chinese names are romanized according to the traditional Wade-Giles system. The pinyin romanization appears in parentheses.

Chinese Names	Japanese Names
An Ch'ing-hsü (An Qingxu)	An Keisho (安慶緒)
An Lu-shan (An Lushan)	An Rokuzan (安祿山)
Chang-an (Zhang'an)	Shoan (章安)
Chang Chieh (Zhang Jie)	Cho Kai (張階)
Chang Liang (Zhang Liang)	Cho Ryo (張良)
Chang Wen-chien (Zhang Wenjian)	Cho Bunken (張文堅)
Chao (Zhao), King	Sho-o (昭王)
Chao Kao (Zhao Gao)	Cho Ko (趙高)
Ch'en Chen (Chen Zhen)	Chin Shin (陳鍼·陳臣)
Ch'eng (Cheng), King	Sei-o (成王)
Cheng Hsüan (Zheng Xuan)	Tei Gen (鄭玄)
Ch'eng-kuan (Chengguan)	Chokan (澄觀)
Chia-hsiang (Jiaxiang)	Kajo (嘉祥)
Chia-shang (Jiashang)	Kasho (嘉尚)
Chi-cha (Jizha)	Kisatsu (季札)
Chieh (Jie), King	Ketsu-o (桀王)
Chieh Tzu-sui (Jie Zisui)	Kai Shisui (介子綏)
Chien-chen (Jianzhen)	Ganjin (鑑真)
Chih-chou (Zhizhou)	Chishu (智周)
Chih-i (Zhiyi)	Chigi (智顛)
Chih Po (Zhi Bo)	Chi Haku (智伯)
Chih-tsang (Zhizang)	Chizo (智藏)
Chih-tu (Zhidu)	Chido (智度)
Chih-yen (Zhiyan)	Chigon (智儼)
Chih-yüan (Zhiyuan)	Shion (志遠)
Ch'i Li-chi (Qi Liji)	Ki Riki (綺里季)
Ching-hsi (Jingxi)	Keikei (荆溪)
Ching K'o (Jing Ko)	Kei Ka (荆軻)
Ch'ing-liang (Qingliang)	Shoryo (清涼)
Ching-shuang (Jingshuang)	Kyoso (鏡霜)
Chin-kang-chih (Jingangzhi)	Kongochi (金剛智)

Ch'in-tsung (Qinzong), Emperor	Kinso-tei (欽宗帝)
Chi-tsang (Jizang)	Kichizo (吉藏)
Chou (Zhou), King	Chu-o (紂王)
Chuang (Zhuang), King	So-o (莊王)
Chuang Tzu (Zhuang Zi)	Soshi (莊子)
Chu Fa-lan (Zhu Falan)	Jiku Horan (竺法蘭)
Ch'ung-hua (Chonghua)	Choka (重華)
Ch'u Shan-hsin (Chu Shanxin)	Cho Zenshin (褚善信)
Chu Tao-sheng (Zhu Daosheng)	Jiku Dosho (竺道生)
Fa-ch'üan (Faquan)	Hassen (法全)
Fan K'uai (Fan Kuai)	Han Kai (樊噲)
Fan Yü-ch'i (Fan Yuqi)	Han Yoki (樊於期)
Fa-pao (Fabao)	Hobo (法宝)
Fa-sui (Fasui)	Hosai (法歲)
Fa-tao (Fadao)	Hodo (法道)
Fa-tsang (Fazang)	Hozo (法藏)
Fa-tsu (Fazu)	Hoso (法祖)
Fa-yün (Fayun)	Houn (法雲)
Fei Shu-ts'ai (Fei Shucai)	Hi Shukusai (費叔才)
Fu-ch'a (Fucha)	Fusa (夫差)
Fu Hsi (Fu Xi)	Fukki (伏羲)
Fu Ta-shih (Fu Dashi)	Fu Daishi (傅大士)
Fu Yüeh (Fu Yue)	Fu Etsu (傅悅)
Han-kuang (Hanguang)	Ganko (含光)
Han Po-yü (Han Boyu)	Kan Hakuyu (漢伯瑜)
Hsiang Yü (Xiang Yu)	Ko U (項羽)
Hsing-huang (Xinghuang)	Koko (興皇)
Hsing-man (Xingman)	Gyoman (行滿)
Hsin Yu (Xin You)	Shin Yu (辛有)
Hsüan-tsang (Xuanzang)	Genjo (玄奘)
Hsüan-tsung (Xuanzong), Emperor	Genso-tei (玄宗帝)
Huai-kan (Huaigan)	Ekan (懷感)
Huan (Huan), Duke	Kan-ko (桓公)
Huang Ti (Huang Di)	Ko Tei (黃帝)
Hua T'o (Hua Tuo)	Ka Da (華陀)
Hu Hai (Hu Hai)	Ko Gai (胡亥)
Hui (Hui), Emperor	Kei-tei (惠帝)
Hui-heng (Huiheng)	Ego (慧暉)
Hui-jung (Huirong)	E'ei (慧榮)
Hui-k'o (Huike)	Eka (慧可)
Hui-kuan (Huiguan)	Ekan (慧觀)
Hui-kuang (Huiguang)	Eko (慧光)
Hui-k'uang (Huikuang)	Eko (慧曠)
Hui-kuo (Huiguo)	Keika (惠果)
Hui-neng (Huineng)	Eno (慧能)
Hui-tsung (Huizong), Emperor	Kiso-tei (徽宗帝)
Hui-tz'u (Huici)	Eji (慧次)
Hui-yen (Huiyan)	Egon (慧嚴)
Hui-yüan (Huiyuan)	Eon (慧苑/慧遠)
Hung Yen (Hong Yan)	Ko En (弘演)
I-hsing (Yixing)	Ichigyo (一行)
I-lung (Yilong)	Iryo (遺龍)

Jih-chao (Rizhao)	Nissho (日照)
Juan Chi (Ruan Ji)	Gen Seki (阮籍)
Jung Ch'i-ch'i (Rong Qiqi)	Ei Keiki (榮啓期)
Kan-chiang (Ganjiang)	Kansho (干將)
Kao-ting (Gaoding), King	Kotei-o (高丁王)
Kao-tsu (Gaozu), Emperor	Koso (高祖)
Kao-tsung (Gaozong), Emperor	Koso-tei (高宗帝)
Kou-chien (Goujian)	Kosen (勾踐)
Kuang-hsiu (Guangxiu)	Koju (広修)
Kuang-wu (Guangwu), Emperor	Kobu-tei (光武帝)
Kuan Lung-feng (Guan Longfeng)	Kan Ryuho (関竜蓬)
K'uei-chi (Kuiji)	Kiki (窺基)
Lao Tzu (Lao Zi)	Roshi (老子)
Li (Li)	Ri (李夫人)
Liang-hsiu (Liangxu)	Ryosho (良諤)
Liang-pi (Liangbi)	Ryohi (良賈)
Li Chu (Li Zhu)	Ri Shu (離朱)
Li Kuang (Li Guang)	Ri Ko (李広)
Li Ling (Li Ling)	Ri Ryo (李陵)
Li Lou (Li Lou)	Ri Ro (離婁)
Ling Lun (Ling Lun)	Rei Rin (伶倫)
Li Ssu (Li Si)	Ri Shi (李斯)
Liu Pang (Liu Bang)	Ryu Ho (劉邦)
Luan Pa (Luan Ba)	Ran Pa (欒巴)
Lü Hui-t'ung (Lu Huitong)	Ryo Keitsu (呂慧通)
Mao Pao (Mao Bao)	Mo Ho (毛宝)
Ma Tzu (Ma Zi)	Mashi (麻子)
Miao-lo (Miaoluo)	Myoraku (妙楽)
Ming (Ming), Emperor	Mei-tei (明帝)
Ming-sheng (Mingsheng)	Myosho (明勝)
Mo Hsi (Mo Xi)	Bakki (妹嬉)
Mo-yeh (Moye)	Bakuya (莫耶)
Nan-yüeh (Nanyue)	Nangaku (南岳)
Pan-fu (Banfu)	Hampu (班婦)
Pao Ssu (Bao Si)	Ho Ji (褒姒)
Pao-yüeh (Baoyue)	Hogatsu (宝月)
Pien Ch'üeh (Bian Que)	Hen Jaku (扁鵲)
Pien Ho (Bian Ho)	Ben Ka (卞和)
Pi Kan (Bi Gan)	Hi Kan (比干)
P'ing (Ping), King	Hei-o (平王)
Po-ch'i (Boqi)	Hakuki (伯奇)
Po Chü-i (Bo Juyi)	Haku Kyoï (白居易)
Po I (Bo Yi)	Haku I (伯夷)
Po Yang (Bo Yang)	Haku Yo (白陽)
P'u-kuang (Puguang)	Fuko (普光)
Pu-k'ung (Bukong)	Fuku (不空)
San-chieh (Sanjie)	Sangai (三階)
Seng-chao (Sengzhao)	Sojo (僧肇)
Seng-ch'üan (Sengquan)	Sosen (僧詮)
Seng-jou (Sengrou)	Sonyu (僧柔)
Shang Chün (Shang Jun)	Sho Kin (商均)
Shan-tao (Shandao)	Zendo (善導)

Shan-wu-wei (Shanwuwei)	Zemmui (善無畏)
Shen-fang (Shenfang)	Jimbo (神昉)
Shen Nung (Shen Nong)	Shin No (神農)
Shen Yao (Shen Yao), Emperor	Shingyo-tei (神堯帝)
Shih Ch'ao-i (Shi Chaoyi)	Shi Chogi (史朝義)
Shih K'uang (Shi Kuang)	Shi Ko (師曠)
Shih Shih-ming (Shi Shiming)	Shi Shimei (史師明)
Shu Ch'i (Shu Qi)	Shuku Sei (叔齊)
Shun (Shun)	Shun (舜)
Shun-hsiao (Shunxiao)	Jungyo (順曉)
Shu-pao (Shubao)	Shukuho (淑宥)
Ssu-ma (Sima)	Shiba (司馬)
Su Wu (Su Wu)	So Bu (蘇武)
Su Yu (Su You)	So Yu (蘇由)
Ta Chi (Da Ji)	Dakki (妲己)
T'ai-kung Wang (Taigong Wang)	Taiko Bo (太公望)
Tai-tsung (Daizong), Emperor	Daiso-tei (代宗帝)
T'ai-tsung (Taizong), Emperor	Taiso-tei (太宗帝)
Tan (Dan), the prince of Yen (Yan)	Tan-taishi (丹太子)
Tan (Dan), the Duke of Chou (Zhou)	Shu-ko Tan (周公旦)
Tan Chu (Dan Zhu)	Tan Shu (丹朱)
T'an-luan (Tanluan)	Donran (曇鸞)
Tao-an (Daoan)	Doan (道安)
Tao-ch'o (Daochuo)	Doshaku (道續)
Tao-hsien (Daoxian)	Dosen (道暹)
Tao-hsüan (Daoxuan)	Dosen (道宣)
Tao-sui (Daosui)	Dosui (道邃)
Te-tsung (Dezong), Emperor	Tokuso-tei (德宗帝)
T'ien-t'ai (Tiantai)	Tendai (天台)
Ting Lan (Ding Lan)	Tei Ran (丁蘭)
Ts'ai Yin (Cai Yin)	Sai In (蔡愔)
Ts'ung-i (Congyi)	Jugi (從義)
Tsung-juì (Zongrui)	Shuei (宗叡)
Tsun-shih (Zunshi)	Junshiki (遵式)
Tu-shun (Dushun)	Tojun (杜順)
Tzu-an (Zian)	Shian (子安)
Tz'u-en (Cien)	Jion (慈恩)
Wang Chao-chün (Wang Zhaojun)	O Shokun (王昭君)
Wang Ling (Wang Ling)	O Ryo (王陵)
Wang Mang (Wang Mang)	O Mo (王莽)
Wang Shou (Wang Shou)	O Ju (王壽)
Wang Tsun (Wang Zun)	O Jun (王遵)
Wang Yin (Wang Yin)	O In (王尹)
Wei Cheng (Wei Zheng)	Gi Cho (魏徵)
Wei-chüan (Wei Juan)	Yuiken (惟綸)
Wei Yüan-sung (Wei Yuansong)	Ei Gensu (衛元嵩)
Wen (Wen), King	Bun-o (文王)
Wu (Wu), Empress	Sokutenbu-ko (則天武后)
Wu (Wu), King	Bu-o (武王)
Wu Ch'eng (Wu Cheng)	Mu Sei (務成)
Wu-i (Wuyi)	Ui (烏遺)
Wu-lung (Wulong)	Oryo (烏龍)

APPENDIX D

Wu-tsung (Wuzong), Emperor
 Wu Tzu-hsü (Wu Zixu)
 Yang Kuei-fei (Yang Guifei)
 Yang Kung (Yang Gong)
 Yang Meng (Yang Meng)
 Yao (Yao)
 Yen Hui (Yan Hui)
 Yen Kuang (Yan Guang)
 Yen Yüan (Yan Yuan)
 Yi (Yi), Duke
 Yin Chi-fu (Yin Jifou)
 Yin Shou (Yin Shou)
 Yu (You), King
 Yü (Yu)
 Yüan-cheng (Yuanzheng)
 Yüan-chung (Yuanzhong)
 Yü Jang (Yu Rang)
 Yu-meng (Youmeng)

Buso-tei (武宗帝)
 Go Shisho (伍子胥)
 Yo-kihi (楊貴妃)
 Yo Ko (陽公)
 Yo Mo (陽猛)
 Gyo (堯)
 Gan Kai (顏回)
 Gen Ko (嚴光)
 Gan En (顏淵)
 I-ko (懿公)
 In Kippo (尹吉甫)
 In Ju (尹壽)
 Yu-o (幽王)
 U (禹)
 Genjo (元政)
 Genju (元重)
 Yo Jo (予讓)
 Yubo (西夢)

Appendix E

English Personal Names and Their Japanese Equivalents

English Names	Japanese Names
All Bright King	Issaimyo'o (一切明王仏)
Aspiration for the Law	Gyobo-bonji (樂法梵志)
Awesome Sound King	Ionno (威音王仏)
Banner-like Virtue	Sotoku (相徳仏)
Born from the Crown of the Head	Chosho (頂生王)
Boundless Practices	Muhengyo (無辺行菩薩)
Brave Donor	Yuze (勇施菩薩)
Bright Pure	Kojo (光淨菩薩)
Brilliant Virtue	Myotoku (明徳仏)
Buddha Eye	Butsugen (仏眼)
Buddha Seed	Busshu (仏種王)
Burning Torch	Nento (燃燈仏)
Chief Wise	Genju (賢首菩薩)
Cloud Thunder Sound King	Unraionno (雲雷音王仏)
Constellation King Flower	Shukuoke (宿王華菩薩)
Craving	Ai (愛王)
Craving-Filled	Aizen-myo'o (愛染明王)
Demon Eloquence	Kiben (鬼弁婆羅門)
Dharma Clouds Freedom King	Hounjizaio (法雲自在王如来)
Dharma Lotus Fragrance	Horenko (法蓮香比丘尼)
Dharma Treasury	Hozo (法藏比丘)
Dharma Wisdom	Hoe (法慧菩薩)
Diamond Banner	Kongodo (金剛幢菩薩)
Diamond Pounder	Kongo-doji (金剛童子)
Diamond Storehouse	Kongozo (金剛藏菩薩)
Dragon Seal	Ryuin (竜印王)
Earnest Donor	Nose (能施太子)
Earth Repository	Jizo (地藏菩薩)
Ever Wailing	Jotai (常啼菩薩)
Fire-Sustaining	Kaji (火持如来)
Firmly Established Practices	Anryugyo (安立行菩薩)
First Emperor of the Ch'in	Shikotei (始皇帝)
Flower Virtue	Ketoku (華徳仏)

Forbearance	Ninniku (忍辱仙人)
Forest of Merits	Kudokurin (功德林菩薩)
Giver of Treasure	Hose (宝施仏)
Gladly Seen	Kiken (喜見菩薩)
Golden Color	Konjiki (金色王)
Golden Grains	Konzoku (金粟王)
Good Treasures	Zenzai-doji (善財童子)
Good Virtue	Zentoku (善徳仏)
Great Adornment	Daishogon (大莊嚴仏/大莊嚴菩薩)
Great Arrogant Brahman	Daiman Baramon (大慢婆羅門)
Great Awesome Virtue	Daiitoku-myo'o (大威徳明王)
Great Power	Seishi (勢至菩薩)
Great Universal Wisdom Excellence	Daitsuchisho (大通智勝仏)
Holder of Many People	Jitanin (持多人王)
Immovable	Fudo (不動仏); Fudo-myo'o (不動明王)
Infinite Brightness	Muryomyo (無量明仏)
Infinite Life	Muryoju (無量寿仏)
Invincible	Musho (無勝); Musho-doji (無勝童子)
Jeweled Dignity	Hoi (宝威仏)
Jeweled Glow	Hoko-tenshi (宝光天子)
Joy Increasing	Kangizoyaku (歡喜增益如来)
King Purity of Jeweled Dignity and Virtue	Hoitokujo'o (宝威徳浄王仏)
Learned Youth	Judo (儒童菩薩)
Light Bright	Komyo (光明王)
Lion Sound King	Shishionno (師子音王仏)
Many Treasures	Taho (多宝仏)
Medicine King	Yakuo (薬王菩薩)
Medicine Master	Yakushi (薬師如来)
Medicine Superior	Yakujo (薬上菩薩)
Moonlight	Gakko (月光菩薩/月光王)
Moon of Deliverance	Gedatsugatsu (解脱月菩薩)
Moon Storehouse	Gatsuzo (月蔵菩薩)
Mother of Demon Children	Kishimojin (鬼子母神)
Never Disparaging	Fukyo (不軽菩薩)
One Thousand Stupas	Sento (千塔王)
Painfully Acquired	Kutoku (苦得外道)
Perceiver of the World's Sounds	Kanzeon (觀世音菩薩)
Pervading Fragrance	Fuko-tenshi (普香天子)
Pleasure Virtue	Rakutoku (楽徳長者)
Possessor of Virtue	Utoku (有徳王)
Pure Eye	Jogen (浄眼)
Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom	Jokeshukuochi (浄華宿王智仏)
Pure Practices	Jogyo (浄行菩薩)
Pure Storehouse	Jozo (浄蔵)
Pure Virtue	Jotoku (浄徳夫人)
Queen Mother of the West	Seiobo (西王母)
Rare Moon	Myogatsu-tenshi (名月天子)
Realization of Virtue	Kakutoku (覚徳比丘)
Root of Joy	Kikon (喜根比丘)
Same Birth	Dosho-ten (同生天)
Same Name	Domyo-ten (同名天)

Sandalwood Virtue	Sendantoku (栴檀德仏)
Shore of Suffering	Kugan (苦岸比丘)
Snow Mountains	Sessen-doji (雪山童子)
Sorrow-Dispelling Virtue	Mu'utoku (無憂德仏)
Space Treasury	Kokuzo (虚空蔵菩薩)
Spotted Feet	Hanzoku (班足王)
Sun Goddess	Tensho Daijin (天照太神)
Sunlight	Nikko (日光菩薩/日光王)
Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue	Nichigatsu Jomyotoku (日月淨明德仏)
Sun Moon Bright	Nichigatsu Tomyo (日月燈明仏)
Superior Intent	Shoi (勝意比丘)
Superior Practices	Jogyo (上行菩薩)
Superlative Truth Appearing	Shogisho (勝義生菩薩)
Three Vehicle Practice	Sanjogyo (三乘行仏)
Universal Brightness	Fumyo (普明王)
Universal Practice	Fuji (普事比丘)
Universal Worthy	Fugen (普賢菩薩)
Upholder of the Nation	Jikoku-ten (持国天)
Vast Myriad Virtue	Koshutoku (広衆徳仏)
Victorious	Sho (勝)
Virtue Victorious	Tokusho-doji (徳勝童子)
Water Carrier	Rusui (流水)
Water Holder	Jisui (持水)
Wisdom Accumulated	Chishaku (智積菩薩)
Wonderful Adornment	Myoshogon (妙莊嚴王)
Wonderful Sound	Myo'on (妙音菩薩)
Worthy of Upholding	Oji (応持菩薩)

Appendix F

Personal Names in Japanese and the Sanskrit, Chinese, or English Equivalents Used

Japanese Names	Sanskrit, Chinese, or English Names
Agita-o (阿耆多王)	Agnidatta
Ai-o (愛王)	Craving
Aitta (阿逸多)	Ajita
Aizen-myo'o (愛染明王)	the wisdom king Craving-Filled
Ajase-o (阿闍世王)	Ajatashatru
Akada (阿竭多仙人)	the ascetic Agastya
Anan (阿難)	Ananda
Anaritsu (阿那律)	Aniruddha
An Keisho (安慶緒)	An Ch'ing-hsü
An Rokuzan (安祿山)	An Lu-shan
Anryugyo (安立行菩薩)	Firmly Established Practices
Anyakyojinnyo (阿若憍陳如)	Ajnata Kaundinya
Asetsuji (阿說示)	Ashvajit
Ashi (阿私仙人)	the seer Asita
Ashida (阿私陀仙人)	the seer Asita
Ashuku (阿闍伽)	Akshobhya
Asoka-o (阿育王)	Ashoka
Baddabara (跋陀婆羅)	Bhadrapala
Bakki (妹嬉)	Mo Hsi
Bakuya (莫耶)	Mo-yeh
Batsudai-o (跋提王)	Bhadrika
Batsudairika (跋提梨伽)	Bhadrika
Ben Ka (卞和)	Pien Ho
Bibashi (毘婆尸伽)	Vipashyin
Bichu-ten (毘紐天)	Vishnu
Bimbashara-o (頻婆舍羅王)	Bimbisara
Binzuru-sonja (寶頭盧尊者)	Venerable Pindolabharadvaja
Birushana (毘盧遮那伽)	Vairochana
Birushin-no (毘樓真王)	Viruchin
Bishakya-o (毘舍伽王)	Vishakha
Bishamon-ten (毘沙門天)	Vaishrava
Bishukatsuma-ten (毘首羯摩天)	Vishvakarman
Bonten (梵天)	Brahma

Buddamitta (仏陀密多)	Buddhamitra
Buddanandai (仏陀難提)	Buddhananda
Bu-ko (則天武后)	Empress Wu
Bun-no (文王)	King Wen
Bu-o (武王)	King Wu
Buso-tei (武宗帝)	Emperor Wu-tsung
Busshu-o (仏種王)	Buddha Seed
Butsugen (仏眼)	Buddha Eye
Chido (智度)	Chih-tu
Chigi (智顛)	Chih-i
Chigon (智儼)	Chih-yen
Chi Haku (智伯)	Chih Po
Chin Shin (陳鍼·陳臣)	Ch'en Chen
Chishaku (智積菩薩)	Wisdom Accumulated
Chishu (智周)	Chih-chou
Chizo (智藏)	Chih-tsang
Cho Bunken (張文堅)	Chang Wen-chien
Choka (重華)	Ch'ung-hua
Cho Kai (張階)	Chang Chieh
Chokan (澄觀)	Ch'eng-kuan
Cho Ko (趙高)	Chao Kao
Cho Ryo (張良)	Chang Liang
Chosho-o (頂生王)	Born from the Crown of the Head
Cho Zenshin (褚善信)	Ch'u Shan-hsin
Chu-o (紂王)	King Chou
Daiba (提婆菩薩)	Aryadeva
Daibadatta (提婆達多)	Devadatta
Daibonten (大梵天)	the great heavenly king Brahma
Daiitoku-myo'o (大威德明王)	the wisdom king Great Awesome Virtue
Daijizai-ten (大自在天)	Maheshvara
Daiman Baramon (大慢婆羅門)	Great Arrogant Brahman
Dainichi (大日如來)	Mahavairochana
Daishogon (大莊嚴仏/大莊嚴菩薩)	Great Adornment
Daiso-tei (代宗帝)	Emperor Tai-tsung
Daitaka (提多迦)	Dhritaka
Daiten (大天)	Mahadeva
Daitsuchisho (大通智勝仏)	Great Universal Wisdom Excellence
Daizoku-o (大族王)	Mihirakula
Dakki (妲己)	Ta Chi
Daruma (達磨)	Bodhidharma
Darumakikuta (達摩拏多)	Dharmagupta
Doan (道安)	Tao-an
Domukatsu (曇無竭菩薩)	Dharmodgata
Domushin (曇無讖)	Dharmaraksha
Domyo-ten (同名天)	Same Name
Donran (曇鸞)	T'an-luan
Dosen (道暹)	Tao-hsien
Dosen (道宣)	Tao-hsüan
Doshaku (道綽)	Tao-ch'ö
Dosho-ten (同生天)	Same Birth
Dosui (道邃)	Tao-sui
E'ei (慧榮)	Hui-jung

Ego (慧暉)	Hui-heng
Egon (慧嚴)	Hui-yen
Ei Gensu (衛元嵩)	Wei Yüan-sung
Ei Keiki (榮啓期)	Jung Ch'i-ch'i
Eji (慧次)	Hui-tz'u
Eka (慧可)	Hui-k'o
Ekan (慧觀)	Hui-kuan
Ekan (懷惑)	Huai-kan
Eko (慧光)	Hui-kuang
Eko (慧曠)	Hui-k'uang
Emma-o (閻魔王)	Yama
Eno (慧能)	Hui-neng
Eon (慧苑 / 慧遠)	Hui-yüan
Fu Daishi (傅大士)	Fu Ta-shih
Fudo (不動仏)	Immovable
Fudo-myo'o (不動明王)	the wisdom king Immovable
Fu Etsu (傅悅)	Fu Yüeh
Fugen (普賢菩薩)	Universal Worthy
Fuji (普事比丘)	the monk Universal Practice
Fukki (伏羲)	Fu Hsi
Fuko (普光)	P'u-kuang
Fuko-tenshi (普香天子)	Pervading Fragrance
Fuku (不空)	Pu-k'ung
Fukyo (不輕菩薩)	Never Disparaging
Fumyo-o (普明王)	Universal Brightness
Funasha (富那奢)	Punayashas
Furuna (富樓那)	Purna
Fusa (夫差)	Fu-ch'a
Gakko (月光)	Chandraprabha
Gakko (月光菩薩)	Moonlight
Gakko-o (月光王)	Moonlight
Gan En (顏淵)	Yen Yüan
Ganjin (鑑真)	Chien-chen
Gan Kai (顏回)	Yen Hui
Ganko (含光)	Han-kuang
Gassho (月称)	Chandrakirti
Gatsuzo (月藏菩薩)	Moon Storehouse
Gedatsugatsu (解脫月菩薩)	Moon of Deliverance
Genjo (玄奘)	Hsüan-tsang
Genjo (元政)	Yüan-cheng
Genju (元重)	Yüan-chung
Genju (賢首菩薩)	Chief Wise
Gen Ko (嚴光)	Yen Kuang
Gennichi-o (幻日王)	Baladitya
Gen Seki (阮籍)	Juan Chi
Genso-tei (玄宗帝)	Emperor Hsüan-tsung
Giba (耆婆)	Jivaka
Gi Cho (魏徵)	Wei Cheng
Giri (耆利)	Girika
Gito (耆菟)	Jinu
Goho (護法)	Dharmapala
Go Shisho (伍子胥)	Wu Tzu-hsu

Gyo (堯)	Yao
Gyobo-bonji (樂法梵志)	Aspiration for the Law
Gyoman (行滿)	Hsing-man
Hajun (波旬)	Papiyas
Haku I (伯夷)	Po I
Hakuki (伯奇)	Po-ch'i
Haku Kyoï (白居易)	Po Chü-i
Haku Yo (白陽)	Po Yang
Hakuyu (伯瑜)	Han Po-yü
Hampu (班婦)	Pan-fu
Han Kai (樊噲)	Fan K'uai
Hannya (般若)	Prajna
Han Yoki (樊於期)	Fan Yü-ch'i
Hanzoku-o (班足王)	Spotted Feet
Haruri-o (波瑠璃王)	Virudhaka
Hashinoku-o (波斯匿王)	Prasenajit
Hassen (法全)	Fa-ch'üan
Hei-o (平王)	King P'ing
Hen Jaku (扁鵲)	Pien Ch'üeh
Hi Kan (比干)	Pi Kan
Hi Shukusai (費叔才)	Fei Shu-ts'ai
Hitsuryo (畢陵)	Pilindavatsa
Hobo (法宝)	Fa-pao
Hodo (法道)	Fa-tao
Hoe (法慧菩薩)	Dharma Wisdom
Hogatsu (宝月)	Pao-yüeh
Hoi (宝威仏)	Jeweled Dignity
Hoitokujo'o (宝威德浄王仏)	King Purity of Jeweled Dignity and Virtue
Ho Ji (褒姒)	Pao Su
Hoko (方広)	Vaipulya
Hoko-tenshi (宝光天子)	Jeweled Glow
Horenko (法蓮香比丘尼)	the nun Dharma Lotus Fragrance
Hosai (法蔵)	Fa-sui
Hose (宝施仏)	Giver of Treasure
Hoso (法祖)	Fa-tsu
Hosshamittara-o (弗沙弥多羅王)	Pushyamitra
Houn (法雲)	Fa-yün
Hounjizaio (法雲自在王如来)	Dharma Clouds Freedom King
Hozo (法蔵)	Fa-tsang
Hozo (法蔵比丘)	the monk Dharma Treasury
Ichigyo (一行)	I-hsing
Idaïke (韋提希)	Vaidehi
I-ko (懿公)	Duke Yi
In Ju (尹寿)	Yin Shou
In Kippo (尹吉甫)	Yin Chi-fu
Insho-o (印生王)	Satavahana
Ionno (威音王仏)	Awesome Sound King
Iryo (遺竜)	I-lung
Issaimyo'o (一切明王仏)	All Bright King
Janakutta (闍那崛多)	Jnanagupta
Jayana (闍夜那)	Jayata

Jikoku-ten (持国天)	Upholder of the Nation
Jiku Doshō (竺道生)	Chu Tao-sheng
Jikuhōgo (竺法護)	Dharmaraksha
Jiku Horan (竺法蘭)	Chu Fa-lan
Jimbo (神昉)	Shen-fang
Jinna (陳那)	Dignaga
Jion (慈恩)	Tz'u-en
Jisui (持水)	Water Holder
Jitanin-no (持多人王)	Holder of Many People
Jizo (地藏菩薩)	Earth Repository
Jobon-no (淨飯王)	Shuddhodana
Jogen (淨眼)	Pure Eye
Jogyo (上行菩薩)	Superior Practices
Jogyo (淨行菩薩)	Pure Practices
Jokeshukuochi (淨華宿王智仏)	Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom
Jotai (常啼菩薩)	Ever Wailing
Jotoku (淨德夫人)	Lady Pure Virtue
Jozo (淨藏)	Pure Storehouse
Judo (儒童菩薩)	Learned Youth
Jugi (從義)	Ts'ung-i
Junda (純陀)	Chunda
Jungyo (順曉)	Shun-hsiao
Junshiki (遵式)	Tsun-shih
Juriki Kashō (十力迦葉)	Dashabala Kashyapa
Kabimara (迦毘摩羅)	Kapimāla
Kabira (迦毘羅)	Kapila
Ka Da (華陀)	Hua T'o
Kaigen (戒賢)	Shilabhadra
Kainichi-o (戒日王)	Shiladitya
Kai Shisui (介子綏)	Chieh Tzu-sui
Kaji (火持如來)	Fire-Sustaining
Kajo (嘉祥)	Chia-hsiang
Kakuroku (鶴勒)	Haklenayasha
Kakutoku (覺德比丘)	the monk Realization of Virtue
Kanadaiba (迦那提婆)	Kanadeva
Kangi Zoyaku (歡喜增益如來)	Joy Increasing
Kan Hakuyu (漢伯瑜)	Han Po-yü
Kanishika-o (迦忒志加王)	Kanishka
Kan-ko (桓公)	Duke Huan
Kannon (觀音菩薩); Kanzeon (觀世音菩薩)	Perceiver of the World's Sounds
Kan Ryuho (閔龍蓬)	Kuan Lung-feng
Kansho (干將)	Kan-chiang
Kari-o (迦梨王)	Kali
Karudai (迦留陀夷)	Kalodayin
Kasennen (迦旃延)	Katyayana
Kasho (迦葉)	Mahakashyapa
Kasho (迦葉仏)	Kashyapa
Kasho (嘉尚)	Chia-shang
Kasho-doji (迦葉童子菩薩)	Kashyapa
Kashomato (迦葉摩騰)	Kashyapa Matanga
Katei-o (迦帝王)	Karttika

Kei Ka (荆軻)	Ching K'o
Keika (惠果)	Hui-kuo
Keikei (荆溪)	Ching-hsi
Kei-tei (惠帝)	Emperor Hui
Ken'ai-ronji (賢愛論師)	Scholar Bhadraruchi
Kenne (堅慧)	Saramati
Ketoku (華德仏)	Flower Virtue
Ketsu-o (桀王)	King Chieh
Kiben (鬼弁婆羅門)	Demon Eloquence
Kichizo (吉藏)	Chi-tsang
Kiken (喜見菩薩)	Gladly Seen
Kiki (窺基)	K'uei-chi
Kikon (喜根比丘)	the monk Root of Joy
Kinso-tei (欽宗帝)	Emperor Ch'in-tsung
Ki Riki (綺里季)	Ch'i Li-chi
Kiriki-o (訖利季王)	Kriki
Kirita-o (訖利多王)	Krita
Kisatsu (季札)	Chi-cha
Kishimojin (鬼子母神)	Mother of Demon Children
Kiso-tei (徽宗帝)	Emperor Hui-tsung
Kobu-tei (光武帝)	Emperor Kuang-wu
Kodai-nyo (皐諱女)	Kunti
Ko En (弘演)	Hung Yen
Ko Gai (胡亥)	Hu Hai
Kojo (光淨菩薩)	Bright Pure
Koju (広修)	Kuang-hsiu
Koko (興皇)	Hsing-huang
Kokubon-no (斛飯王)	Dronodana
Kokuzo (虚空藏菩薩)	Space Treasury
Komyo-o (光明王)	Light Bright
Kongochi (金剛智)	Chin-kang-chih
Kongodo (金剛幢菩薩)	Diamond Banner
Kongo-doji (金剛童子)	the boy Diamond Pounder
Kongosatta (金剛薩埵)	Vajrasattva
Kongozo (金剛藏菩薩)	Diamond Storehouse
Konjiki-o (金色王)	Golden Color
Konzoku-o (金粟王)	Golden Grains
Kosen (勾踐)	Kou-chien
Koshutoku (広衆徳仏)	Vast Myriad Virtue
Koso (高祖)	Emperor Kao-tsu
Koso-tei (高宗帝)	Emperor Kao-tsung
Ko Tei (黄帝)	Huang Ti
Kotei-o (高丁王)	King Kao-ting
Ko U (項羽)	Hsiang Yü
Kudokurin (功德林菩薩)	Forest of Merits
Kudon (瞿曇)	Gautama
Kudon (瞿曇仙人)	the ascetic Gautama
Kugan (苦岸比丘)	the monk Shore of Suffering
Kugyari (瞿伽利)	Kokalika
Kumarada (鳩摩羅駄)	Kumarata
Kumaraen (鳩摩羅炎)	Kumarayana
Kumaraju (鳩摩羅什)	Kumarajiva

Kuri (拘利)	Kolita
Kuru (拘留外道)	Uluka
Kushira (瞿師羅)	Ghoshila
Kutoku (苦得外道)	Painfully Acquired
Kyobiku (脇比丘)	the monk Parshva
Kyodommi (橋曇弥)	Gautami
Kyoshika (橋尸迦)	Kaushika
Kyoso (鏡霜)	Ching-shuang
Madenchi (末田地)	Madhyantika
Makahajahadai (摩訶波闍波提)	Mahaprajapati
Makeishura-ten (摩醯首羅天)	Maheshvara
Manura (摩奴羅)	Manorhita
Marishi-ten (摩利支天)	Marichi
Mashi (麻子)	Ma Tzu
Mato (摩沓)	Madhava
Mato (摩騰)	Matanga
Maya (摩耶夫人)	Lady Maya
Mei-tei (明帝)	Emperor Ming
Memyo (馬鳴)	Ashvaghosha
Miroku (弥勒菩薩)	Maitreya
Mishaka (弥遮迦)	Mikkaka
Mo Ho (毛宝)	Mao Pao
Mokuren (目連)	Maudgalyayana
Monjushiri (文殊師利菩薩)	Manjushri
Muhengyo (無辺行菩薩)	Boundless Practices
Mujaku (無著)	Asanga
Muku-ronji (無垢論師)	Scholar Vimalamitra
Muryoju (無量寿仏)	Infinite Life
Muryomyo (無量明仏)	Infinite Brightness
Mu Sei (務成)	Wu Ch'eng
Musho (無勝)	Invincible
Musho-doji (無勝童子)	the boy Invincible
Mu'utoku (無憂徳仏)	Sorrow-Dispelling Virtue
Myogatsu-tenshi (名月天子)	Rare Moon
Myo'on (妙音菩薩)	Wonderful Sound
Myoraku (妙楽)	Miao-lo
Myosho (明勝)	Ming-sheng
Myoshogon-no (妙莊嚴王)	Wonderful Adornment
Myotoku (明徳仏)	Brilliant Virtue
Nagosa-o (那睺沙王)	Nahusha
Nanda (難陀)	Nanda
Nangaku (南岳)	Nan-yüeh
Naraen-ten (那羅延天)	Narayana
Nento (燃燈仏)	Burning Torch
Nichigatsu Jomyotoku (日月淨明徳仏)	Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue
Nichigatsu Tomyo (日月燈明仏)	Sun Moon Bright
Niken (尼犍)	Nirgrantha Jnataputra
Nikko (日光菩薩)	Sunlight
Nikko-o (日光王)	Sunlight
Nikurida (尼俱律陀)	Nyagrodha
Ninniku (忍辱仙人)	the ascetic Forbearance
Nissho (日照)	Jih-chao

Nose (能施太子)	Prince Earnest Donor
Nyoi-ronji (如意論師)	Scholar Manoratha
O In (王尹)	Wang Yin
Oji (応持菩薩)	Worthy of Upholding
O Ju (王寿)	Wang Shou
O Jun (王遵)	Wang Tsun
Okutsumara (央掘摩羅)	Angulimala
O Mo (王莽)	Wang Mang
Oryo (烏菟)	Wu-lung
O Ryo (王陵)	Wang Ling
O Shokun (王昭君)	Wang Chao-chün
Rago (羅猴)	Rahulata
Ragora (羅睺羅)	Rahula
Rakutoku (樂德長者)	Pleasure Virtue
Rama-o (羅摩王)	Rama
Ran Pa (爨巴)	Luan Pa
Rei Rin (佉倫)	Ling Lun
Rengeshiki (蓮華色比丘尼)	the nun Utpalavarna
Ri (李夫人)	Li
Ri Ko (李広)	Li Kuang
Ri Ro (離婁)	Li Lou
Ri Ryo (李陵)	Li Ling
Ri Shi (李斯)	Li Ssu
Ri Shu (離朱)	Li Chu
Rokushaba (勒沙婆)	Rishabha
Roshi (老子)	Lao Tzu
Rusui (流水)	Water Carrier
Ryohi (良賈)	Liang-pi
Ryo Keitsu (呂慧通)	Lü Hui-t'ung
Ryosho (良譚)	Liang-hsü
Ryuchi (竜智)	Nagabodhi
Ryu Ho (劉邦)	Liu Pang
Ryuhō (竜蓬)	Kuan Lung-feng
Ryuin-o (竜印王)	Dragon Seal
Ryuju (竜樹)	Nagarjuna
Sai In (蔡愔)	Ts'ai Yin
Sangai (三階)	San-chieh
Sanjogyo (三乘行仏)	Three Vehicle Practice
Satta (薩埵王子)	Sattva
Sei-o (成王)	King Ch'eng
Seiobo (西王母)	Queen Mother of the West
Seishi (勢至菩薩)	Great Power
Sendantoku (旃檀徳仏)	Sandalwood Virtue
Sensha-nyo (旃遮女)	Chincha
Sento-o (千塔王)	One Thousand Stupas
Seshin (世親)	Vasubandhu
Sessen-doji (雪山童子)	the boy Snow Mountains
Sessenge-o (雪山下王)	Himatala
Shakudai Kan'in (釈提桓因)	Shakra, the lord of gods
Shakumanan (釈摩男)	Mahanama
Shakuson (釈尊)	Shakyamuni
Shanoku (車匿)	Chandaka

Sharihotsu (舍利弗)	Shariputra
Shiba (司馬)	Ssu-ma
Shibi-o (尸毘王)	Shibi
Shi Chogi (史朝義)	Shih Ch'ao-i
Shiddatta (悉達太子)	Siddhartha
Shi Ko (師曠)	Shih K'uang
Shikotei (始皇帝)	First Emperor of the Ch'in
Shindai (真諦)	Paramartha
Shingyo-tei (神堯帝)	Emperor Shen Yao
Shin No (神農)	Shen Nung
Shin Yu (辛有)	Hsin Yu
Shion (志遠)	Chih-yüan
Shishikyo-o (師子頰王)	Simhahanu
Shi Shimei (史師明)	Shih Shih-ming
Shishionno (師子音王仏)	Lion Sound King
Shishi-sonja (師子尊者)	Venerable Aryasimha
Sho (勝)	Victorious
Shoan (章安)	Chang-an
Shogisho (勝義生菩薩)	Superlative Truth Appearing
Shoi (勝意比丘)	the monk Superior Intent
Sho Kin (商均)	Shang Chün
Shonawashu (商那和修)	Shanavasa
Sho-o (昭王)	King Chao
Shoryo (清涼)	Ch'ing-liang
Shubbaddara (須跋陀羅)	Subhadra
Shubodai (須菩提)	Subhuti
Shuda (須陀比丘)	the monk Sudaya
Shudama-o (須陀摩王)	Shrutasoma
Shudatsu (須達長者)	Sudatta
Shuei (宗叡)	Tsung-jui
Shu-ko Tan (周公旦)	Tan, the Duke of Chou
Shukuho (淑室)	Shu-pao
Shukuoke (宿王華菩薩)	Constellation King Flower
Shuku Sei (叔齊)	Shu Ch'i
Shun (舜)	Shun
Shuriyasoma (須利耶蘇摩)	Shuryasoma
Shusenda (須扇多仏)	Sushanta
So Bu (蘇武)	Su Wu
Sogyanandai (僧佉難提)	Samghanandi
Sogyayasha (僧佉耶奢)	Samghayasha
Sojo (僧肇)	Seng-chao
Sokutenbu-ko (則天武后)	Empress Wu
Sondari (孫陀利)	Sundari
Sonyu (僧柔)	Seng-jou
So-o (莊王)	King Chuang
Sosen (僧詮)	Seng-ch'üan
Soshi (莊子)	Chuang Tzu
Sotoku (相徳仏)	Banner-like Virtue
So Yu (蘇由)	Su Yu
Surihandoku (須利槃特)	Chudapanthaka
Taho (多宝仏)	Many Treasures
Taiko Bo (太公望)	T'ai-kung Wang

Taishaku-ten (帝釈天)	Shakra
Taiso-tei (太宗帝)	Emperor T'ai-tsung
Tan Shu (丹朱)	Tan Chu
Tan-taishi (丹太子)	the prince Tan
Tei Gen (鄭玄)	Cheng Hsüan
Tei Ran (丁蘭)	Ting Lan
Tendai (天台)	T'ien-t'ai
Tenjin (天親)	Vasubandhu
Tensho Daijin (天照太神)	the Sun Goddess
Tojun (杜順)	Tu-shun
Tokue (德慧)	Gunamati
Tokuko-ronji (德光論師)	Scholar Gunaprabha
Tokushi (犢子)	Vatsa
Tokusho-doji (德勝童子)	the boy Virtue Victorious
Tokuso-tei (德宗帝)	Emperor Te-tsung
Tomyo (燈明仏)	Sun Moon Bright
U (禹)	Yü
Ubakikuta (優婆塞多)	Upagupta
Uden-o (優填王)	Udayana
Ugyo (雨行大臣)	Varshakara
Ui (烏遺)	Wu-i
Unraionno (雲雷音王仏)	Cloud Thunder Sound King
Urusogya (漚楼僧佉)	Uluka
Utoku-o (有徳王)	Possessor of Virtue
Uzuranhotsu (罽頭羅弗)	Udraka Ramaputra
Yakujo (薬上菩薩)	Medicine Superior
Yakuo (薬王菩薩)	Medicine King
Yakushi (薬師如来)	Medicine Master
Yasha-sonja (夜叉尊者)	Venerable Yasha
Yashu (耶輸大臣)	Yasha
Yashutara (耶輸多羅)	Yashodhara
Yo Jo (予讓)	Yü Jang
Yo-kihi (楊貴妃)	Yang Kuei-fei
Yo Ko (陽公)	Yang Kung
Yo Mo (陽猛)	Yang Meng
Yubo (酉夢)	Yu-meng
Yuiken (惟鐸)	Wei-chüan
Yuimakitsu (維摩詰)	Vimalakirti
Yu-o (幽王)	King Yu
Yuze (勇施菩薩)	Brave Donor
Zemmon (善聞長者)	Suprabuddha
Zemmui (善無畏)	Shan-wu-wei
Zendo (善導)	Shan-tao
Zensho (善星比丘)	the monk Sunakshatra
Zentoku (善徳仏)	Good Virtue
Zenzai-doji (善財童子)	the boy Good Treasures

Appendix G

The Documents Referred to in the Text and Their Japanese Titles

Note: *Kyo* or *gyo* in the Japanese title means “sutra.” *Gyo* is a phonetic change of *kyo*.

Agama sutras: *Agon gyo* (阿含經)

Amida Sutra: *Amida kyo* (阿彌陀經)

Amida Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha: *Bussetsu Amida kyo* (仏説阿彌陀經)

Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight,” The: *Shikan bugyoden guketsu* (止觀輔行伝弘決)

Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra, The: *Nehan gyo sho* (涅槃經疏)

Annotations on the Peacock Sutra, The: *Kujaku kyo ongi* (孔雀經音義)

Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,” The: *Hokke gengi shakusen* (法華玄義釈籤)

Annotations on “The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind,” The: *Kanjin ron sho* (観心論疏)

Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,” The: *Hokke mongu ki* (法華文句記)

Awakening of Faith: Short title of “The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana”

Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana, The: *Daijo kishin ron* (大乘起信論)

Benevolent Kings Sutra: *Ninno kyo* (仁王經)

Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra: *Ninno hannya kyo* (仁王般若經)

Biographies of Eminent Priests, The: *Koso den* (高僧伝)

Biography of the Tripitaka Master of Ta-tz’u-en-ssu Temple, The: *Jion den* (慈恩伝)

Brahma Excellent Thought Sutra: *Shiyaku bonten shomon gyo* (思益梵天所問經)

Brahma Net Sutra: *Bommo kyo* (梵網經)

Buddha Infinite Life Sutra: *Muryoju kyo* (無量壽經)

Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha: *Bussetsu muryoju kyo* (仏説無量壽經)

Buddha’s Successors Sutra: *Fuhozo kyo* (付法藏經)

Chen-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon, The: *Jogen nyuzo roku* (貞元入藏録)

Chronicles of Japan, The: *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀)

Clarification of the Precepts, A: *Kenkai ron* (顯戒論)

Clarification of the Schools: Short title of “A Clarification of the Schools Based on T’ien-t’ai’s Doctrine”

Clarification of the Schools Based on T’ien-t’ai’s Doctrine, A: *Ebyo shu* (依憑集)

Classic of Filial Piety, The: *Kokyō* (孝經)

Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight, The: *Anraku shu* (安樂集)

- Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings, A: *Juketsu shu* (授決集)
- Collection of Tendai Documents, The: *Shuyo shu* (宗要集)
- Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahavairochana Sutra, The: *Dainichi kyo gishaku* (大日經義釈)
- Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra, The: *Jujubibasha ron* (十住毘婆沙論)
- Commentary on “The Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure Land,” The: *Ojo ron chu* (往生論註)
- Commentary on “The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra,” The: *Hokke ron ki* (法華論記)
- Commentary on the Universal Worthy Sutra, The: *Fugen kyo ki* (普賢經記)
- Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism, A: *Ben kemmitsu nikyo ron* (弁顯密二教論)
- Complete and Final Teaching on Perfect Enlightenment Sutra: *Daiengaku shutara ryo-gi kyo* (大円覚修多羅了義經)
- Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra: *Shinjikan gyo* (心地觀經)
- Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests, The: *Zoku koso den* (続高僧伝)
- Correct and Equal Dharani Sutra: *Hodo darani kyo* (方等陀羅尼經)
- Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra: *Hodo daijukkyo* (方等大集經)
- Decline of the Law Sutra: *Hometsujin gyo* (法滅盡經)
- Dharma Analysis Treasury, The: *Kusha ron* (俱舍論)
- Diamond Crown Sutra: *Kongocho kyo* (金剛頂經)
- Diamond Scalpel, The: *Kongobei ron* (金剛鐮論)
- Diamond Wisdom Sutra: *Kongo hannya kyo* (金剛般若經)
- Different Views on the Teaching and the Time: *Kyojijo ron* (教時評論)
- Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One’s Present Form, The: *Sokushin jobutsu gi* (即身成仏義)
- Epilogue to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, The: *Nehan gyo gobun* (涅槃經後分)
- Essay on the Protection of the Nation, An: *Shugo kokkai sho* (守護国界章)
- Essential Meaning of “Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra,” The: *Hokke gen-zan yoshu* (法華玄贊要集)
- Essentials of Government in the Chen-kuan Era, The: *Jogan seiyo* (貞觀政要)
- Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land, The: *Ojo yoshu* (往生要集)
- Essentials of the Mahavairochana Sutra, The: *Dainichi kyo shiiki* (大日經指帰)
- Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching, The: *Ichijo yoketsu* (一乘要決)
- Eternity of the Law Sutra: *Hojaju kyo* (法常住經)
- Exoteric and Esoteric: Short title of “A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism”
- Five Precepts Sutra: *Gokai kyo* (五戒經)
- Flower Garland Sutra: *Kegon gyo* (華嚴經)
- Forest of Meanings in the Garden of the Law, The: *Ho'on girin jo* (法苑義林章)
- Fourfold Rules of Discipline, The: *Shibun ritsu* (四分律)
- Four Meditations, The: *Shi'nenjo* (四念処)
- Four Peaceful Practices, The: *Shi anrakugyo* (四安樂行)
- Ghoshila Sutra: *Kushira kyo* (瞿師羅經)
- Golden Light Sutra: *Konkomyo kyo* (金光明經)
- Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra: *Daihokobutsu kegon gyo* (大方広仏華嚴經)
- Great Canon of Monastic Rules, The: *Sogi ritsu* (僧祇律)
- Great Cloud Sutra: *Daiun gyo* (大雲經)
- Great Collection Sutra: *Daijukkyo* (大集經)
- Great Commentary on the Abhidharma, The: *Daibibasha ron* (大毘婆沙論)
- Great Compassion Sutra: *Daihi kyo* (大悲經)
- Great Concentration and Insight: *Maka shikan* (摩訶止觀)

- Great Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra: *Daihodo daijukyo* (大方等大集經)
- Great Diligence Sutra: *Daigo shojin gyo* (大強精進經)
- Great Perfection of Wisdom: Short title of “The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom”
- Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra: *Makahannya haramitsu kyo* (摩訶般若波羅蜜經)
- Great Wisdom Sutra: *Daihannya kyo* (大般若經)
- Heart Sutra: *Hannya shin gyo* (般若心經)
- History of the Buddha’s Successors, A: *Fuhozo den* (付法藏伝)
- Immeasurable Meanings Sutra: *Muryogi kyo* (無量義經)
- Jeweled Necklace Sutra: *Yoraku kyo* (瓔珞經)
- Kinnara King Great Tree Sutra: *Daiju kinnara-o gyo* (大樹緊那羅王經)
- Lankavatara Sutra: *Ryoga kyo* (楞伽經)
- Larger Amida Sutra: *Dai amida kyo* (大阿彌陀經)
- Larger Wisdom Sutra: *Daibon hannya kyo* (大品般若經)
- Life-Prolonging Northern Dipper Sutra: *Hokuto jumyo kyo* (北斗壽命經)
- Lotus-like Face Sutra: *Rengemen gyo* (蓮華面經)
- Lotus Meditation Sutra: *Hokke sammai kyo* (法華三昧經)
- Lotus Sutra: *Hokekyo* (法華經)
- Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions, The: *Hokke denki* (法華伝記)
- Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law: *Sho hokekyo* (正法華經)
- Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law: *Myoho-rence-kyo* (妙法蓮華經)
- Mahaparinirvana Sutra: *Daihatsunehan gyo* (大般涅槃經)
- Mahavairochana’s Protection through Supernatural Powers Sutra: *Daiburushana jim-benkaji kyo* (大毘盧遮那神變加持經)
- Mahavairochana Sutra: *Dainichi kyo* (大日經)
- Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight, The: *Daijo shikan* (大乘止觀)
- Maya Sutra: *Maya kyo* (摩耶經)
- Medicine Master Sutra: *Yakushi kyo* (藥師經)
- Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra: *Kammuryoju kyo* (觀無量壽經)
- Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha: *Bussetsu kammuryoju kyo* (仏説觀無量壽經)
- Meditation on the Buddha’s Ocean-like Characteristics Sutra: *Kambutsu sokai kyo* (觀仏相海經)
- Meditation on the Buddha Sutra: *Kambutsu sammai kyo* (觀仏三昧經)
- Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sutra: *Shobonenjo kyo* (正法念処經)
- Meditation Outshining the Sun and Moon Sutra: *Chonichigatsu sammai kyo* (超日月三昧經)
- Meditation Sutra: *Kan gyo* (觀經)
- Medium-Length Agama Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha: *Bussetsu chu-agon gyo* (仏説中阿含經)
- Method of Repentance through the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke sempo* (法華懺法)
- Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment: Short title of “The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment”
- Miscellaneous Agama Sutra: *Zo-agon gyo* (雜阿含經)
- Nembutsu Chosen above All, The: *Senchaku shu* (選択集)
- New Narrations, The: *Shinjo* (新序)
- Nirvana Sutra: *Nehan gyo* (涅槃經)
- Observance of the Precepts Sutra: *Saiho kyo* (齋法經)
- On “Great Concentration and Insight”: Short title of “The Annotations on ‘Great Concentration and Insight’”
- On “The Profound Meaning”: Short title of “The Annotations on ‘The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra’”

- On “The Words and Phrases”: Short title of “The Annotations on ‘The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra’”
- Outstanding Principles: Short title of “The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra”
- Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke shuku* (法華秀句)
- Parinirvana Sutra: *Hatsunaion gyo* (般泥洹經)
- Platform Sutra, The: *Dan kyo* (壇經)
- Practice of the Pure Law Sutra: *Shojohogyo kyo* (清淨法行經)
- Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra: *Hokke genzan* (法華玄贊)
- Prayer for Rain Sutra: *Sho’u kyo* (請雨經)
- Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, The: *Hizo hoyaku* (秘藏寶鑰)
- Profound Meaning: Short title of “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra”
- Profound Meaning of the Four Mahayana Treatises, The: *Mue mutoku daijo shiron gengi ki* (無依無得大乘四論玄義記)
- Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke gengi* (法華玄義)
- Profound Meaning of the “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds” Chapter, The: *Kannon gengi* (觀音玄義)
- Profound Secrets Sutra: *Jimmitsu kyo* (深密經)
- Profundity of the Lotus Sutra: Short title of “The Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra”
- Protection Sutra: *Shugo kyo* (守護經)
- Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law, The: *Nitto junrei ki* (入唐巡禮記)
- Record of the Western Regions, The: *Saiiki ki* (西域記)
- Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou, The: *Shusho iki* (周書異記)
- Records of the Historian: *Shiki* (史記)
- Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra: *Ho’on gyo* (報恩經)
- Rituals of the Assembly for Rebirth in the Pure Land, The: *Ojoko shiki* (往生講式)
- Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha’s Relics, The: *Shariko shiki* (舍利講式)
- Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke giki* (法華儀軌); *Kanchi giki* (觀智儀軌)
- Saddharmapundarika Sutra: *Satsu’un fundari kyo* (薩云分陀利經)
- Secret Key to the Heart Sutra, The: *Shin gyo hiken* (心經秘鍵)
- Secret Solemnity Sutra: *Mitsugon gyo* (密嚴經)
- Service for the Deceased Sutra: *Urabon gyo* (盂蘭盆經)
- Shrimala Sutra: *Shoman gyo* (勝鬘經)
- Shurangama Sutra: *Shuryogon gyo* (首楞嚴經)
- Silver-Colored Woman Sutra: *Gonjikinyo kyo* (銀色女經)
- Six Paramitas Sutra: *Rokuharamitsu kyo* (六波羅蜜經)
- Sovereign Kings Sutra: *Saisho-o kyo* (最勝王經)
- Stages of Yoga Practice: Short title of “The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice”
- Supernatural Powers Sutra: *Jinzu kyo* (神通經)
- Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law: *Tembon hokekyo* (添品法華經)
- Supplement to “The Words and Phrases”: Short title of “The Supplement to ‘The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra’”
- Supplement to “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,” The: *Fusho ki* (輔正記)
- Supplement to T’ien-t’ai’s Three Major Works, The: *Fuchu* (補註)
- Susiddhikara Sutra: *Soshitsuji kyo* (蘇悉地經)
- Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma’s Questions: *Dai-bontenno mombutsu ketsugi kyo* (大梵天王問仏決疑經)
- Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law: *Zobo ketsugi kyo* (像法決疑經)

- Teaching on Meditation Sutra, The: *Kannen homon kyo* (觀念法門經)
- Ten Conditions for Rebirth in the Pure Land, The: *Ojo juin* (往生拾因)
- Ten Stages Sutra: *Juji kyo* (十地經)
- Three Major Works: Short title of “The Supplement to T’ien-t’ai’s Three Major Works”
- Transmission of the Lamp, The: *Dento roku* (伝燈録)
- Trapusha Sutra: *Daii kyo* (提謂經)
- Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine, The: *Yuishiki ron* (唯識論)
- Treatise on the Discipline for Attaining Enlightenment, The: *Bodai shiryō ron* (菩提資糧論)
- Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, The: *Daichido ron* (大智度論)
- Treatise on the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke ron* (法華論)
- Treatise on the Middle Way, The: *Chu ron* (中論)
- Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment, The: *Bodaishin ron* (菩提心論)
- Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke genron* (法華玄論)
- Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice, The: *Yuga ron* (瑜伽論)
- Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, The: *Jujushin ron* (十住心論)
- Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood, The: *Hosho ron* (宝性論)
- Tso’s Commentary on “Spring and Autumn Annals”: *Saden* or *Shunju sashi den* (左伝・春秋左氏伝)
- Tung-ch’un: *Toshun* (東春)
- Two-Volumed Sutra: *Sokan gyo* (雙觀經)
- Universal and Impartial Enlightenment Sutra: *Byodogaku kyo* (平等覺經)
- Universal Worthy Sutra: *Fugen kyo* (普賢經)
- Vimalakirti Sutra: *Yuima kyo* (維摩經); *Jomyo kyo* (淨名經)
- Wisdom Sutra: *Hannya kyo* (般若經)
- Woman Born as a Man to Become a Buddha Sutra: *Tennyō jobutsu kyo* (轉女成仏經)
- Words and Phrases: Short title of “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra”
- Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra, The: *Hokke mongu* (法華文句)

Appendix H

The Japanese Titles of the Documents Referred to in the Text

Note: *Kyo* or *gyo* in the Japanese title means “sutra.” *Gyo* is a phonetic change of *kyo*.

Agon gyo (阿含經): the Agama sutras

Amida kyo (阿彌陀經): the Amida Sutra

Anraku shu (安樂集): The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight

Ben kemmitsu nikyo ron (弁顯密二教論): A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism (Short title: Exoteric and Esoteric)

Bodaishin ron (菩提心論): The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment (Short title: Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment)

Bodai shiryo ron (菩提資糧論): The Treatise on the Discipline for Attaining Enlightenment

Bommo kyo (梵網經): the Brahma Net Sutra

Bussetsu Amida kyo (仏説阿彌陀經): the Amida Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha

Bussetsu chu-agon gyo (仏説中阿含經): the Medium-Length Agama Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha

Bussetsu kammuryoju kyo (仏説觀無量壽經): the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha

Bussetsu muryoju kyo (仏説無量壽經): the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, as Spoken by the Buddha

Byodogaku kyo (平等覺經): the Universal and Impartial Enlightenment Sutra

Chonichigatsu sammai kyo (超日月三昧經): the Meditation Outshining the Sun and Moon Sutra

Chu ron (中論): The Treatise on the Middle Way

Dai amida kyo (大阿彌陀經): the Larger Amida Sutra

Daibibasha ron (大毘婆沙論): The Great Commentary on the Abhidharma

Daibirushana jimbenkaji kyo (大毘盧遮那神變加持經): the Mahavairochana’s Protection through Supernatural Powers Sutra

Daibon hannya kyo (大品般若經): the Larger Wisdom Sutra

Daibontenno mombutsu ketsugi kyo (大梵天王問仏決疑經): the Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma’s Questions

Daichido ron (大智度論): The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (Short title: Great Perfection of Wisdom)

Daiengaku shutara ryogi kyo (大円覺修多羅了義經): the Complete and Final Teaching on Perfect Enlightenment Sutra

Daigo shojin gyo (大強精進經): the Great Diligence Sutra

- Daihannya kyo* (大般若經): the Great Wisdom Sutra
Daihatsunehan gyo (大般涅槃經): the Mahaparinirvana Sutra
Daihi kyo (大悲經): the Great Compassion Sutra
Daihodo daijukkyo (大方等大集經): the Great Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra
Daihokobutsu kegon gyo (大方廣佛華嚴經): the Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra
Daii kyo (提謂經): the Trapusha Sutra
Daijo kishin ron (大乘起信論): The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana (Short title: Awakening of Faith)
Daijo shikan (大乘止觀): The Mahayana Method of Concentration and Insight
Daiju kinnara-o gyo (大樹緊那羅王經): the Kinnara King Great Tree Sutra
Daijukkyo (大集經): the Great Collection Sutra
Dainichi kyo (大日經): the Mahavairochana Sutra
Dainichi kyo gishaku (大日經義釈): The Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahavairochana Sutra
Dainichi kyo shiiki (大日經指歸): The Essentials of the Mahavairochana Sutra
Daiun gyo (大雲經): the Great Cloud Sutra
Dan kyo (壇經): The Platform Sutra
Dento roku (伝燈録): The Transmission of the Lamp
Ebyo shu (依憑集): A Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine (Short title: Clarification of the Schools)
Fuchu (補註): The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works (Short title: Three Major Works)
Fugen kyo (普賢經): the Universal Worthy Sutra
Fugen kyo ki (普賢經記): The Commentary on the Universal Worthy Sutra
Fuhozo den (付法藏伝): A History of the Buddha's Successors
Fuhozo kyo (付法藏經): the Buddha's Successors Sutra
Fusho ki (輔正記): The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra" (Short title: Supplement to "The Words and Phrases")
Gejimmitsu kyo (解深密經): the Profound Secrets Sutra
Gokai kyo (五戒經): the Five Precepts Sutra
Gonjikinryo kyo (銀色女經): the Silver-Colored Woman Sutra
Guketsu (弘決): The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight" (Short title: On "Great Concentration and Insight")
Hannya kyo (般若經): the Wisdom Sutra
Hannya shin gyo (般若心經): the Heart Sutra
Hatsunaion gyo (般泥洹經): the Parinirvana Sutra
Hizo hoyaku (秘藏宝鑰): The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury
Hodo daijukkyo (方等大集經): the Correct and Equal Great Collection Sutra
Hodo darani kyo (方等陀羅尼經): the Correct and Equal Dharani Sutra
Hojoju kyo (法常住經): the Eternity of the Law Sutra
Hokekyo (法華經): the Lotus Sutra
Hokke denki (法華伝記): The Lotus Sutra and Its Traditions
Hokke gengi (法華玄義): The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra (Short title: Profound Meaning)
Hokke gengi shakusen (法華玄義釈籤): The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra" (Short title: On "The Profound Meaning")
Hokke genron (法華玄論): The Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra (Short title: Profundity of the Lotus Sutra)
Hokke genzan (法華玄贊): Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra
Hokke genzan yoshu (法華玄贊要集): The Essential Meaning of "Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra"

- Hokke giki* (法華儀軌): The Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra
Hokke mongu (法華文句): The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra (Short title: Words and Phrases)
Hokke mongu ki (法華文句記): The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” (Short title: On “The Words and Phrases”)
Hokke ron (法華論): The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra
Hokke ron ki (法華論記): The Commentary on “The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra”
Hokke sammai kyo (法華三昧經): the Lotus Meditation Sutra
Hokke sandaibu fuchu (法華三大部補註): The Supplement to T’ien-t’ai’s Three Major Works (Short title: Three Major Works)
Hokke sempo (法華懺法): The Method of Repentance through the Lotus Sutra
Hokke shuku (法華秀句): The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra (Short title: Outstanding Principles)
Hokuto jumyo kyo (北斗寿命經): the Life-Prolonging Northern Dipper Sutra
Hometsujin gyo (法滅尽經): the Decline of the Law Sutra
Ho’on girin jo (法苑義林章): The Forest of Meanings in the Garden of the Law
Ho’on gyo (報恩經): the Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra
Hosho ron (宝性論): The Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood
Ichijo yoketsu (一乘要訣): The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching
Jimmitsu kyo (深密經): the Profound Secrets Sutra
Jinzu kyo (神通經): the Supernatural Powers Sutra
Jion den (慈恩伝): The Biography of the Tripitaka Master of Ta-tz’u-en-ssu Temple
Jogan seiyo (貞觀政要): The Essentials of Government in the Chen-kuan Era
Jogen nyuzo roku (貞元入藏録): The Chen-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon
Jomyo kyo (浄名經): the Vimalakirti Sutra
Juji kyo (十地經): the Ten Stages Sutra
Jujubibasha ron (十住毘婆沙論): The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra
Jujushin ron (十住心論): The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind
Juketsu shu (授決集): A Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings
Kambutsu sammai kyo (觀仏三昧經): the Meditation on the Buddha Sutra
Kambutsu sokai kyo (觀仏相海經): the Meditation on the Buddha’s Ocean-like Characteristics Sutra
Kammuryoju kyo (觀無量寿經): the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra
Kanchi giki (觀智儀軌): The Rules of Rituals Based on the Lotus Sutra
Kan gyo (觀經): the Meditation Sutra
Kanjin ron sho (觀心論疏): The Annotations on “The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind”
Kannen homon kyo (觀念法門經): The Teaching on Meditation Sutra
Kannon gengi (觀音玄義): The Profound Meaning of the “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds” Chapter
Kegon gyo (華嚴經): the Flower Garland Sutra
Kenkai ron (顯戒論): A Clarification of the Precepts
Kishin ron (起信論): The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana (Short title: Awakening of Faith)
Kokyo (孝經): The Classic of Filial Piety
Kongobei ron (金剛鐮論): The Diamond Scalpel
Kongocho kyo (金剛頂經): the Diamond Crown Sutra
Kongo hannya kyo (金剛般若經): the Diamond Wisdom Sutra
Konkomyo kyo (金光明經): the Golden Light Sutra
Koso den (高僧伝): The Biographies of Eminent Priests
Kujaku kyo ongi (孔雀經音義): The Annotations on the Peacock Sutra
Kusha ron (俱舍論): The Dharma Analysis Treasury

- Kushira kyo* (瞿師羅經): the Ghoshila Sutra
Kyojijo ron (教時評論): Different Views on the Teaching and the Time
Makahannya haramitsu kyo (摩訶般若波羅蜜經): the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra
Maka shikan (摩訶止觀): Great Concentration and Insight
Maya kyo (摩耶經): the Maya Sutra
Mitsugon gyo (密嚴經): the Secret Solemnity Sutra
Mue mutoku daijo shiron gengi ki (無依無得大乘四論玄義記): The Profound Meaning of the Four Mahayana Treatises
Muryogi kyo (無量義經): the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra
Muryoju kyo (無量壽經): the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra
Myoho-rengé-kyo (妙法蓮華經): the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law
Nehan kyo (涅槃經): the Nirvana Sutra
Nehan gyo gobun (涅槃經後分): The Epilogue to the Mahaparinirvana Sutra
Nehan gyo sho (涅槃經疏): The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra
Nihon shoki (日本書紀): The Chronicles of Japan
Nikeyo ron (二教論): A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism (Short title: Exoteric and Esoteric)
Ninno hannya kyo (仁王般若經): the Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra
Ninno kyo (仁王經): the Benevolent Kings Sutra
Nitto junrei ki (入唐巡禮記): The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law
Ojo juin (往生拾因): The Ten Conditions for Rebirth in the Pure Land
Ojoko shiki (往生講式): The Rituals of the Assembly for Rebirth in the Pure Land
Ojo ron chu (往生論註): The Commentary on “The Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure Land”
Ojo yoshu (往生要集): The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land
Rengemen gyo (蓮華面經): the Lotus-like Face Sutra
Rokuharamitsu kyo (六波羅蜜經): the Six Paramitas Sutra
Ryoga kyo (楞伽經): the Lankavatara Sutra
Saden (左伝・春秋左氏伝): Tso’s Commentary on “Spring and Autumn Annals”
Saiho kyo (齋法經): the Observance of the Precepts Sutra
Saiiki ki (西域記): The Record of the Western Regions
Saisho-o kyo (最勝王經): the Sovereign Kings Sutra
Satsu’un fundari kyo (薩云分陀利經): the Saddharmapundarika Sutra
Senchaku shu (選択集): The Nembutsu Chosen above All
Shakusen (釈籤): The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” (Short title: On “The Profound Meaning”)
Shariko shiki (舍利講式): The Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha’s Relics
Shi anrakugyo (四安樂行): The Four Peaceful Practices
Shibun ritsu (四分律): The Fourfold Rules of Discipline
Shikan bugyoden guketsu (止觀輔行伝弘決): The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight” (Short title: On “Great Concentration and Insight”)
Shiki (史記): Records of the Historian
Shi’nenjo (四念処): The Four Meditations
Shin gyo hiken (心經秘鍵): The Secret Key to the Heart Sutra
Shinjikan gyo (心地觀經): the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra
Shinjo (新序): The New Narrations
Shiyaku bonten shomon gyo (思益梵天所問經): the Brahma Excellent Thought Sutra
Shobonenjo kyo (正法念処經): the Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sutra
Sho hokekyo (正法華經): the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law
Shojohogyo kyo (清淨法行經): the Practice of the Pure Law Sutra
Shoman gyo (勝鬘經): the Shrimala Sutra

- Sho'u kyo* (請雨經): the Prayer for Rain Sutra
Shugo kokkai sho (守護国界章): An Essay on the Protection of the Nation
Shugo kyo (守護經): the Protection Sutra
Shuryogon gyo (首楞嚴經): the Shurangama Sutra
Shusho iki (周書異記): The Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou
Shuyo shu (宗要集): The Collection of Tendai Documents
Sogi ritsu (僧祇律): The Great Canon of Monastic Rules
Sokan gyo (雙觀經): the Two-Volumed Sutra
Sokushin jobutsu gi (即身成仏義): The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form
Soshitsuji kyo (蘇悉地經): the Susiddhikara Sutra
Tembon hokekyo (添品法華經): the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law
Tenno jobutsu kyo (転女成仏經): the Woman Born as a Man to Become a Buddha Sutra
Toshun (東春): Tung-ch'un
Urabon gyo (盂蘭盆經): the Service for the Deceased Sutra
Yakushi kyo (薬師經): the Medicine Master Sutra
Yoraku kyo (瓔珞經): the Jeweled Necklace Sutra
Yuga ron (瑜伽論): The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice (Short title: Stages of Yoga Practice)
Yuima kyo (維摩經): the Vimalakirti Sutra
Yuishiki ron (唯識論): The Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine
Zo-agon gyo (雜阿含經): the Miscellaneous Agama Sutra
Zobo ketsugi kyo (像法決疑經): the Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law
Zoku koso den (続高僧伝): The Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests

Appendix I

Lotus Sutra Chapter Titles and Their Abbreviated Forms

Japanese titles	English titles
1. Jo (序品)	Introduction
2. Hoben (方便品)	Expedient Means
3. Hiyu (譬喻品)	Simile and Parable
4. Shinge (信解品)	Belief and Understanding
5. Yakusoyu (藥草喻品)	Parable of the Medicinal Herbs
6. Juki (授記品)	Bestowal of Prophecy
7. Kejoyu (化城喻品)	Parable of the Phantom City
8. Gohyaku deshi juki (五百弟子受記品)	Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples
Gohyaku deshi (五百弟子品)	Five Hundred Disciples
9. Ju gaku mugaku ninki (授学無学人記品)	Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts
Ninki (人記品)	Prophecies
10. Hosshi (法師品)	Teacher of the Law
11. Ken hoto (見宝塔品)	Emergence of the Treasure Tower
Hoto (宝塔品)	Treasure Tower
12. Daibadatta (提婆達多品)	Devadatta
13. Kanji (勸持品)	Encouraging Devotion
14. Anrakugyo (安樂行品)	Peaceful Practices
15. Juji yujutsu (從地涌出品)	Emerging from the Earth
Yujutsu (涌出品)	
16. Nyorai juryo (如来寿量品)	Life Span of the Thus Come One
Juryo (寿量品)	Life Span
17. Fumbetsu kudoku (分別功德品)	Distinctions in Benefits
18. Zuiki kudoku (隨喜功德品)	Benefits of Responding with Joy
Zuiki (隨喜品)	Responding with Joy
19. Hosshi kudoku (法師功德品)	Benefits of the Teacher of the Law
20. Jo fukyo bosatsu (常不輕菩薩品)	Bodhisattva Never Disparaging
Fukyo (不輕品)	Never Disparaging
21. Nyorai jinriki (如来神力品)	Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One
Jinriki (神力品)	Supernatural Powers
22. Zokurui (囑累品)	Entrustment

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 23. Yakuo bosatsu honji
(藥王菩薩本事品)
Yakuo (藥王品) | Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva
Medicine King
Medicine King |
| 24. Myo'on bosatsu (妙音菩薩品)
Myo'on (妙音品) | Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound
Wonderful Sound |
| 25. Kanzeon bosatsu fumon
(觀世音菩薩普門品)
Kannon (觀音品)
Fumon (普門品) | Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva
Perceiver of the World's Sounds
Perceiver of the World's Sounds
Universal Gateway |
| 26. Darani (陀羅尼品) | Dharani |
| 27. Myoshogon-no honji
(妙莊嚴王本事品)
Myoshogon-no (妙莊嚴王品) | Former Affairs of King Wonderful
Adornment
King Wonderful Adornment |
| 28. Fugen bosatsu kambotsu
(普賢菩薩勸發品)
Kambotsu (勸發品)
Fugen (普賢品) | Encouragements of the Bodhisattva
Universal Worthy
Encouragements
Universal Worthy |

Appendix J

Names of Buddhist Schools

English names	Japanese names
Dharma Analysis Treasury	Kusha (俱舍宗)
Dharma Characteristics	Hosso (法相宗)
Establishment of Truth	Jojitsu (成実宗)
Flower Garland	Kegon (華嚴宗)
Lotus	Hokke (法華宗)
Nembutsu	Nembutsu (念仏宗)
Precepts	Ritsu (律宗)
Pure Land	Jodo (淨土宗)
Summary of the Mahayana	Shoron (撰論宗)
Tendai (Japan)	Tendai (天台宗)
Tendai Lotus (Japan)	Tendai Hokke (天台法華宗)
Three Treatises	Sanron (三論宗)
T'ien-t'ai (China)	Tendai (天台宗)
T'ien-t'ai Lotus (China)	Tendai Hokke (天台法華宗)
Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra	Jiron (地論宗)
True Word	Shingon (真言宗)
Zen	Zen (禪宗)



Japanese names	English names
Hokke (法華宗)	Lotus
Hosso (法相宗)	Dharma Characteristics
Jiron (地論宗)	Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra
Jodo (淨土宗)	Pure Land
Jojitsu (成実宗)	Establishment of Truth
Kegon (華嚴宗)	Flower Garland
Kusha (俱舍宗)	Dharma Analysis Treasury
Nembutsu (念仏宗)	Nembutsu
Ritsu (律宗)	Precepts
Sanron (三論宗)	Three Treatises

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Shingon (真言宗)	True Word
Shoron (攝論宗)	Summary of the Mahayana
Tendai (天台宗)	Tendai (Japan)
	T'ien-t'ai (China)
Tendai Hokke (天台法華宗)	Tendai Lotus (Japan)
	T'ien-t'ai Lotus (China)
Zen (禪宗)	Zen

Appendix K

Events in the Life of Nichiren Daishonin

Year	Age*	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1222	1	2/16† Born at Kominato in the province of Awa and named Zennichi-marō.	7/23 Earthquake in Kamakura.
1224	3		6/28 Hojo Yasutoki (1183–1242) becomes regent.
1233	12	Spring, enters Seicho-ji temple to study as a disciple of Dozen-bo.	
1237	16	Enters the priesthood and takes the name Zesho-bo Rencho.	
1239	18	Spring, leaves for Kamakura to study Buddhism.	
1241	20		2/7 and 4/3 Earthquakes in Kamakura.
1242	21	Spring, returns to Seicho-ji temple, and then leaves for Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei where he continues his studies.	6/15 Hojo Tsunetoki (1224–1246) becomes regent.
1246	25	Leaves Enryaku-ji temple for further study in nearby provinces.	3/8 Nikko is born in Kai Province. 3/23 Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263) becomes regent.
1249	28	Returns to Enryaku-ji temple.	3/23 Fires in Kyoto.
1251	30		2/10 Fires in Kamakura.
1252	31	Studies at Onjo-ji temple.	2/8 Fires in Kamakura.
1253	32	Returns to Seicho-ji temple.	

* Nichiren Daishonin's age is given according to the traditional Japanese system of calculation, which put a person's age upon birth at one year old.

† Dates given here are from the lunar calendar. For example, 2/16 indicates the sixteenth day of the second month, and 2/ , the second month.

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Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1253	32	4/28 Declares the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the first time at Seicho-ji temple, and renames himself Nichiren. Converts his parents. 8/ Moves to Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura.	2/ Storm and earthquake in Kamakura. 11/ Nissho becomes a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin.
1254	33		1/10 Fires in Kamakura. Toki Jonin becomes a follower of the Daishonin. Nichiro becomes a disciple of the Daishonin.
1255	34	<i>Writes On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime.</i>	
1256	35		Shijo Kingo, Kudo Yoshitaka, and Ikegami Munenaka become followers of the Daishonin. 8/ Gale, floods, and epidemics in Kamakura. 11/22 Hojo Nagatoki (1229–1264) becomes regent.
1257	36		5/ , 8/ , and 11/ Earthquakes in Kamakura.
1258	37	Goes to Jisso-ji temple at Iwamoto in Suruga Province to examine its sutra library.	Nikko becomes a disciple of the Daishonin and is given the name Hoki-bo. 2/14 The Daishonin's father passes away. 8/ Storm destroys crops nationwide; in Kamakura, floods kill many people. 10/16 Heavy rains and flooding in Kamakura.
1259	38		Frequent famines and epidemics throughout Japan.

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Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1260	39	<p>7/16 Submits <i>On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land</i> to Hojo Tokiyori.</p> <p>8/27 Matsubagayatsu Persecution: his dwelling in Matsubagayatsu is attacked by Nembutsu believers.</p>	<p>4/28 Nichimoku is born in Izu.</p> <p>6/12 Government orders all temples and shrines to pray for an end to the epidemics.</p> <p>Ota Jomyo, Soya Kyoshin, and Akimoto Taro become the Daishonin's followers.</p> <p>Famines and epidemics throughout Japan.</p>
1261	40	<p>5/12 Exiled to Izu Peninsula.</p>	<p>Funamori Yasaburo and his wife aid the Daishonin in Izu.</p> <p>Nikko arrives in Izu to continue to serve the Daishonin.</p> <p>11/3 Hojo Shigetoki dies.</p>
1263	42	<p>2/22 Pardoned from exile, he returns to Kamakura.</p> <p><i>Writes Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra.</i></p>	<p>11/22 Hojo Tokiyori dies.</p>
1264	43	<p>Autumn, visits Awa where he prays for the recovery of his ill mother.</p> <p>11/11 Komatsubara Persecution: attacked by swordsmen led by the steward, Tojo Kagenobu, he sustains injuries.</p> <p>11/14 Meets Dozen-bo, his former teacher, at Renge-ji temple.</p>	<p>Niko becomes the Daishonin's disciple.</p> <p>Hojo Masamura (1205–1273) becomes regent.</p>
1265	44	<p><i>Writes Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man.</i></p>	
1266	45	<p>1/6 <i>Writes The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.</i></p>	
1267	46		<p>8/15 The Daishonin's mother passes away.</p> <p>Nitcho becomes the Daishonin's disciple.</p>

APPENDIX K

Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1268	47	Returns to Kamakura. 10/11 Writes eleven letters of remonstrance to government officials and high-ranking priests.	1 (intercalary)/ Mongol delegation demands tribute from Japan for the Mongol empire. 3/5 Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284) becomes regent.
1269	48		3/7 and 9/17 Mongol delegations arrive in Japan.
1270	49		Nichiji becomes the Daishonin's disciple.
1271	50	9/10 On answering a government summons, remonstrates with Hei no Saemon, the deputy chief of military and police affairs. 9/12 Tatsunokuchi Persecution: arrested by Hei no Saemon and taken to Tatsunokuchi to be beheaded; this attempt fails. 9/13 Government confines him to the residence of Homma Rokuro Saemon at Echi in Sagami Province. 10/5 Writes <i>Lessening One's Karmic Retribution</i> . 10/10 Having been exiled to Sado Island, he leaves Echi for Sado. 11/1 Arrives at Sammai-do, a hut in Tsukahara, Sado Island.	Nationwide drought occurs. 6/18–7/4 Ryokan, a priest of the True Word Precepts school, prays for rain but without effect. 9/ Mongol delegation conveys demands to the Japanese government. 9/ While the Daishonin is at Echi, many disciples and followers, including Nichiro, are arrested and imprisoned on false charges. Nikko accompanies the Daishonin to Sado Island. Abutsu-bo and his wife, Sen-nichi, become the Daishonin's followers.
1272	51	1/16 and 17 Engages in a religious debate in Tsukahara with priests	

Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1272	51	<p>of other schools and refutes their doctrines.</p> <p>2/11 Writes <i>The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life</i>.</p> <p>2/ Completes <i>The Opening of the Eyes</i>, declaring that he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.</p> <p>3/20 Writes <i>Letter from Sado</i>.</p> <p>4/ Moves to Ichinosawa on Sado Island.</p>	<p>2/ Sairen-bo becomes the Daishonin's disciple.</p> <p>2/ Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune, plots to seize power but fails.</p> <p>4/ Shijo Kingo travels to Sado to see the Daishonin.</p> <p>5/ Nichimyo comes from Kamakura to see the Daishonin.</p> <p>5/ Mongol delegation presents demands to Japan.</p>
1273	52	<p>4/25 Completes <i>The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind</i>, identifying the object of devotion for the people of the Latter Day of the Law.</p> <p>5/17 Writes <i>The True Aspect of All Phenomena</i>.</p> <p>5/ Writes <i>On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings</i>.</p> <p>5 (intercalary)/11 Writes <i>On the Buddha's Prophecy</i>.</p> <p>Writes <i>The Entity of the Mystic Law</i>.</p>	
1274	53	<p>1/14 Writes <i>The Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Persecution</i>.</p> <p>2/14 Pardoned by the government.</p> <p>3/13 Leaves Ichinosawa for Kamakura.</p> <p>3/26 Arrives in Kamakura.</p> <p>4/8 Remonstrates with Hei no Saemon.</p> <p>5/12 Leaves Kamakura to live at the foot of Mount Minobu.</p>	<p>4/10 The Dharma Seal Kaga prays for rain.</p> <p>4/12 High winds in Kamakura.</p>

APPENDIX K

Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1274	53		<p>7/ Nanjo Tokimitsu visits Minobu to see the Daishonin.</p> <p>10/ Mongol forces sweep across the islands of Tsushima and Iki, and attack Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan.</p> <p>10/20 Storm attacks Mongol forces.</p>
1275	54	<p>4/16 Writes <i>Letter to the Brothers</i>. Writes <i>The Selection of the Time</i>.</p>	<p>9/7 Mongol emissaries are beheaded at Tatsunokuchi.</p> <p>Because of Nikko's propagation activities, many people, including several priests of Ryusen-ji temple in Atsuhara, become the Daishonin's followers.</p>
1276	55	<p>7/21 Completes <i>On Repaying Debts of Gratitude</i>. Writes <i>The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra</i>.</p>	<p>Nichimoku becomes the Daishonin's disciple.</p> <p>3/16 Dozen-bo dies.</p> <p>11/24 Nichimoku goes to Minobu to serve the Daishonin.</p>
1277	56	<p>6/25 Writes <i>The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto</i> on behalf of Shijo Kingo.</p> <p>7/ Writes <i>A Warning against Begudging One's Fief</i>.</p> <p>8/23 Writes <i>The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon</i>.</p> <p>9/11 Writes <i>The Three Kinds of Treasure</i>. Writes <i>How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra</i>.</p>	
1278	57	<p>Atsuhara Persecution begins.</p>	<p>7/ Three brothers from Atsuhara—Jinshiro, Yagoro, and Yarokuro—become the Daishonin's followers.</p>

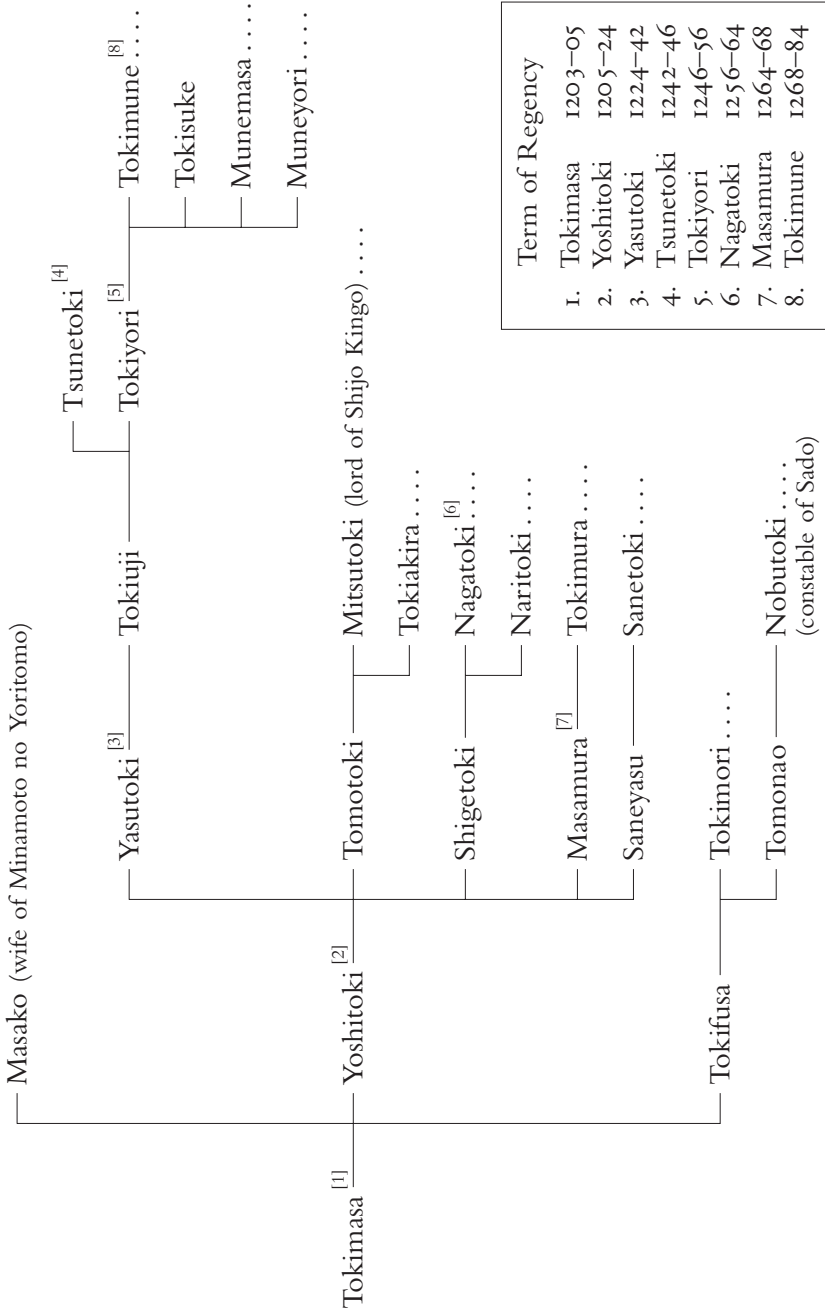
APPENDIX K

Year	Age	Events in the Daishonin's Life	Other Events
1279	58	<p>4/20 Writes <i>Persecution by Sword and Staff</i>.</p> <p>10/1 Writes <i>On Persecutions Befalling the Sage</i>.</p> <p>10/12 Inscribes the object of devotion for all humanity.</p>	<p>7/29 Members of a Mongol delegation carrying a letter for the Japanese government are killed at Hakata.</p> <p>9/21 Twenty farmers from Atsuhara, including Jinshiro and his brothers, are arrested and sent to Kamakura.</p> <p>10/15 Jinshiro, Yagoro, and Yaro-kuro are beheaded; the rest of those arrested are banished from Atsuhara.</p>
1280	59	<p>2/ Writes <i>Letter to Niike</i>.</p> <p>7/14 Writes <i>The Doctrine of Attaining Buddhahood in One's Present Form</i>.</p>	<p>2/21 Imperial court orders temples to pray for victory over the Mongols.</p>
1281	60		<p>5/ -7/ Mongol forces attack Kyushu for the second time. After most of their fleet is sunk by a typhoon, the forces withdraw.</p>
1282	61	<p>2/28 Writes <i>The Proof of the Lotus Sutra</i>.</p> <p>9/ Writes a transfer document at Minobu, entrusting Nikko with the entirety of his teachings.</p> <p>9/8 Leaves Mount Minobu.</p> <p>9/18 Arrives at Ikegami Munenaka's residence in Musashi Province (present-day Tokyo).</p> <p>10/8 Chooses six senior priests as leaders of their respective areas.</p> <p>10/13 Writes a transfer document at Ikegami, designating Nikko as chief priest of Kuon-ji temple at Minobu, and shortly afterward passes away.</p>	



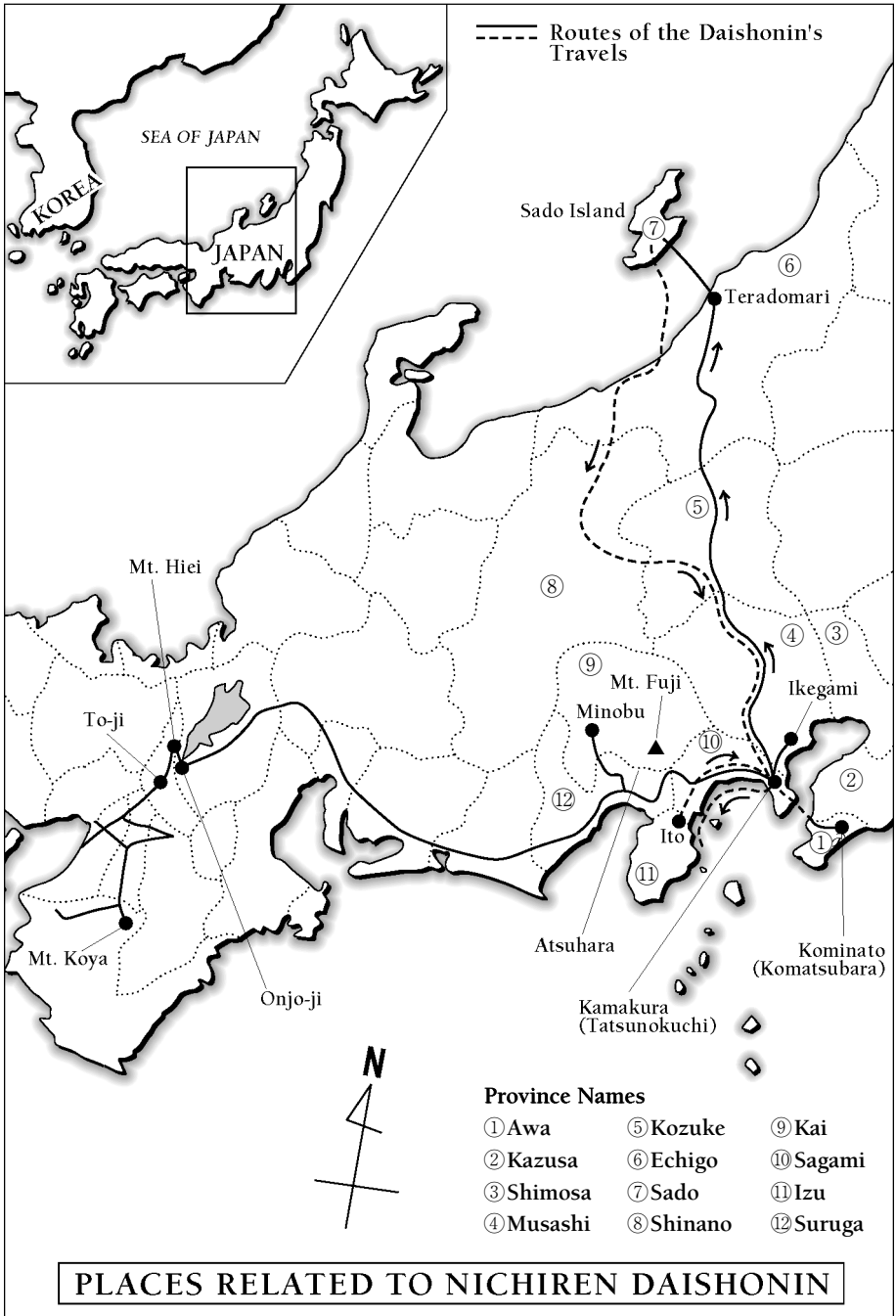
Appendix L: Genealogy of the Hojo Clan

The numbers in brackets show the order in the lineage of regency.



Term of Regency	
1. Tokimasa	1203-05
2. Yoshitoki	1205-24
3. Yasutoki	1224-42
4. Tsunetoki	1242-46
5. Tokiyori	1246-56
6. Nagatoki	1256-64
7. Masamura	1264-68
8. Tokimune	1268-84

Appendix M: Maps



APPENDIX M



Hitachi	6
Hizen	66
Hoki	44
Hyuga	61
Iga	28
Iki	67
Inaba	43
Ise	29
Iwami	49
Iyo	57
Izu	10
Izumi	35
Izumo	47
Kaga	24
Kai	15
Kawachi	34

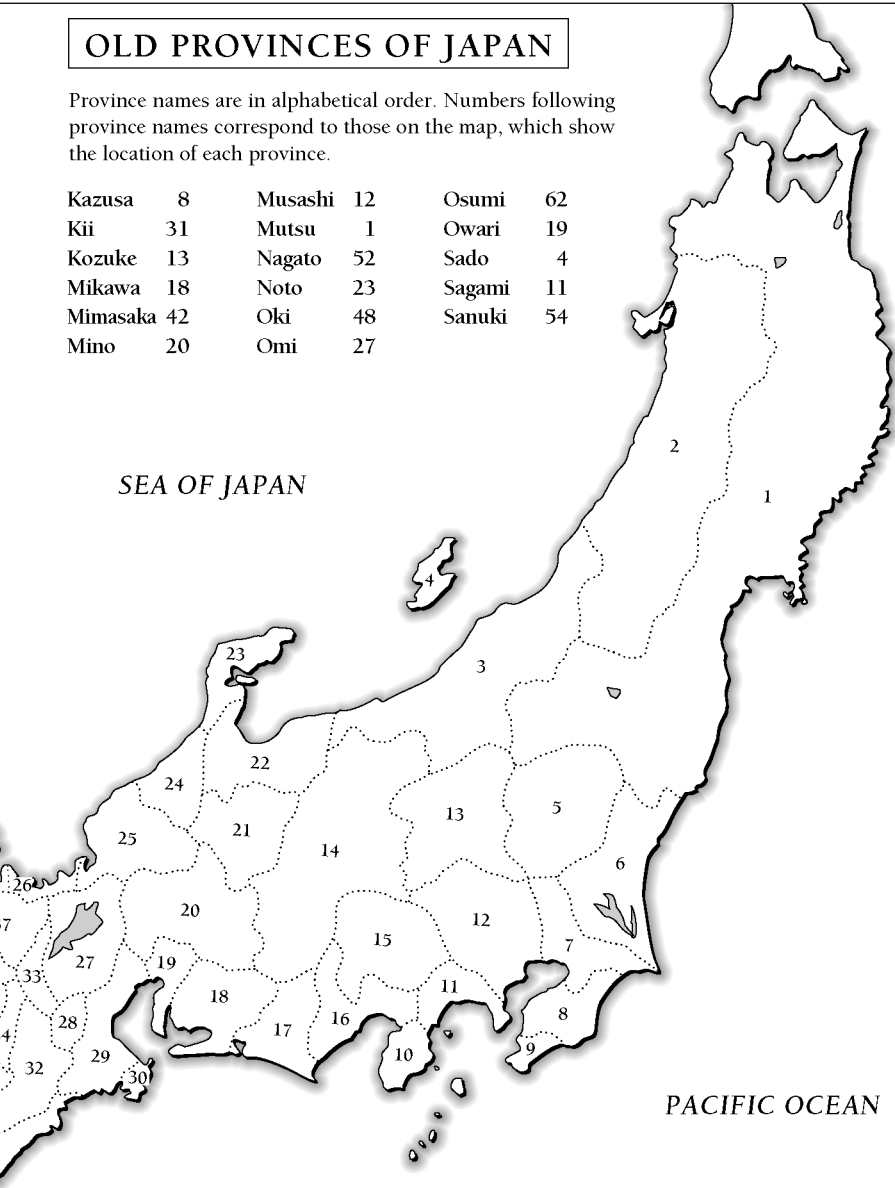
Aki	50	Bizen	41	Echigo	3
Awa	9	Bungo	60	Echizen	25
Awa	55	Buzen	58	Etchu	22
Awaji	53	Chikugo	65	Harima	40
Bingo	46	Chikuzen	59	Hida	21
Bitchu	45	Dewa	2	Higo	64



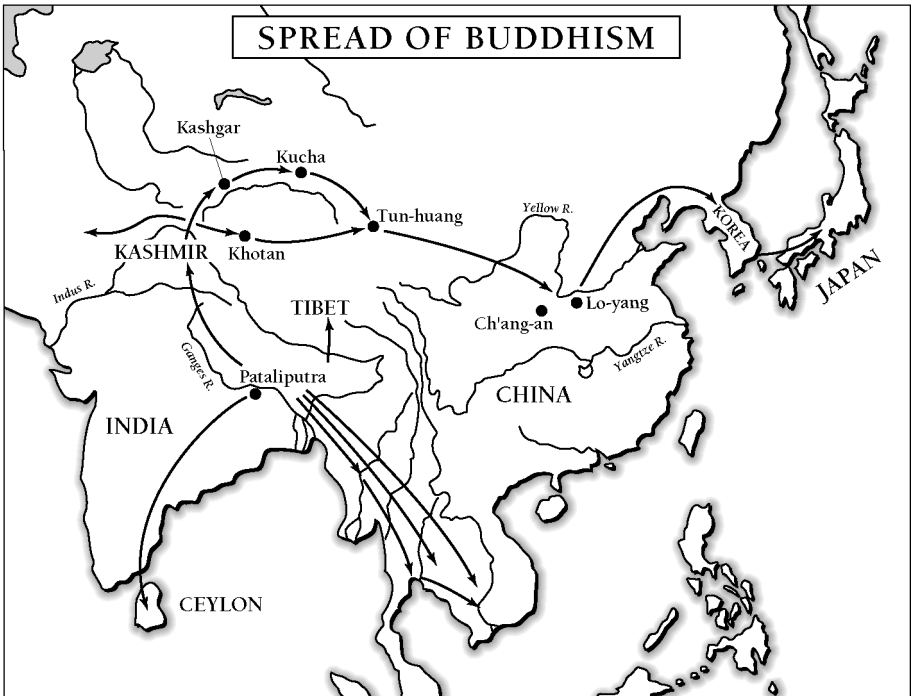
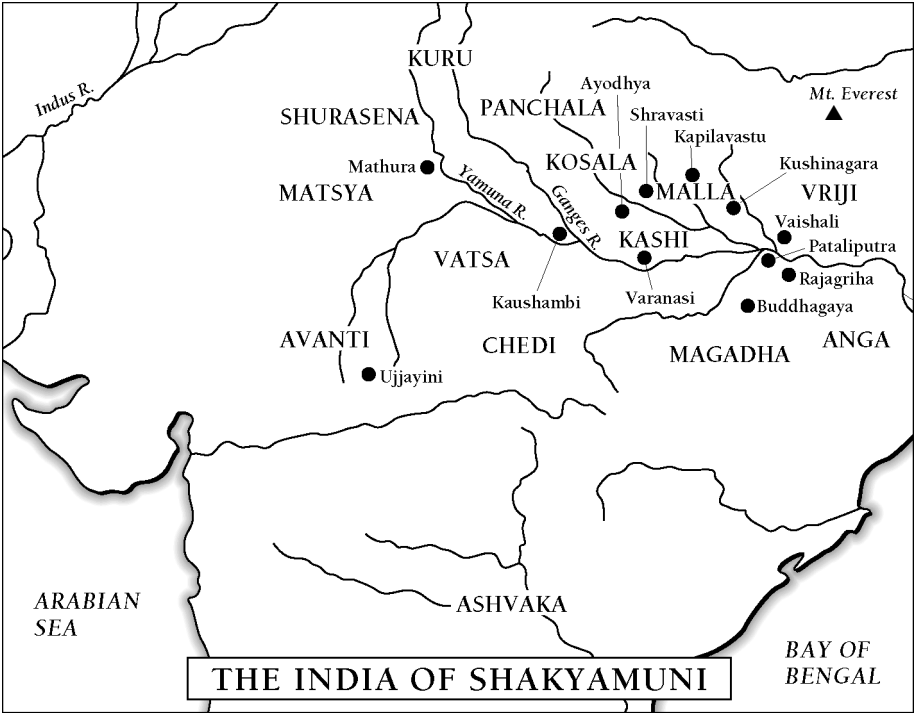
OLD PROVINCES OF JAPAN

Province names are in alphabetical order. Numbers following province names correspond to those on the map, which show the location of each province.

Kazusa	8	Musashi	12	Osumi	62
Kii	31	Mutsu	1	Owari	19
Kozuke	13	Nagato	52	Sado	4
Mikawa	18	Noto	23	Sagami	11
Mimasaka	42	Oki	48	Sanuki	54
Mino	20	Omi	27		



Satsuma	63	Suo	51	Totomi	17
Settsu	36	Suruga	16	Tsushima	68
Shima	30	Tajima	39	Wakasa	26
Shimosa	7	Tamba	37	Yamashiro	33
Shimotsuke	5	Tango	38	Yamato	32
Shinano	14	Tosa	56		



Appendix N: Chinese Dynasties

Hsia	c. 21st–c. 16th century B.C.E.		
Yin (Shang)	c. 16th–c. 11th century B.C.E.		
Chou	c. 1100–256 B.C.E.		
Western Chou	c. 1100–770 B.C.E.		
Eastern Chou	770–256 B.C.E.		
Spring and Autumn period	770–403 B.C.E.		
Warring States period	403–221 B.C.E.		
Ch'in	221–206 B.C.E.		
Han	202 B.C.E.–C.E. 220		
Former Han	202 B.C.E.–C.E. 8		
Later Han	25–220		
Period of the Three Kingdoms	220–280		
Wu	222–280	Wei	220–265
Shu	221–263		
Chin	265–420		
Western Chin	265–316		
Eastern Chin	317–420		
		Later Chao	319–351
		Former Liang	301–376
		Former Ch'in	351–394
		Later Ch'in	384–417
		Northern Liang	397–439
Northern and Southern Dynasties	439–589		
Liu Sung	420–479		
Ch'i	479–502		
Liang	502–557		
Ch'en	557–589		
Northern Wei	386–534		
Northern Ch'i	550–577		
Northern Chou	557–581		
Sui	581–618		
T'ang	618–907		
Five Dynasties	907–960		
Sung	960–1279		
Northern Sung	960–1127		
Southern Sung	1127–1279		
		Liao	916–1125
		Chin	1115–1234
Yüan	1271–1368		
Ming	1368–1644		
Ch'ing	1644–1912		



Appendix O: Chinese Zodiacal Symbols

The ten stems or trunks: the names are derived from the five elements combined with the genitive particle *no* and either *e* (elder) or *to* (younger). *E* and *to* also symbolize yang and yin, respectively.

Chinese character	甲	乙	丙	丁	戊	己	庚	辛	壬	癸
Five elements	木 <i>ki</i> (wood)	火 <i>hi</i> (fire)	土 <i>tsuchi</i> (earth)	金 <i>kanē*</i> (metal)	水 <i>mizu</i> (water)					
<i>E</i> and <i>to</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>to</i>
Name	<i>kinoe</i>	<i>kinoto</i>	<i>hinoe</i>	<i>hinoto</i>	<i>tsuchi-noe</i>	<i>tsuchi-noto</i>	<i>kanoe</i>	<i>kanoto</i>	<i>mizu-noe</i>	<i>mizu-noto</i>

**Kanē* (金) is pronounced *ka* in its two combinations.

The twelve branches: used to indicate directions and the divisions of the day.

Chinese character	子	丑	寅	卯	辰	巳	午	未	申	酉	戌	亥
Animal name	<i>ne</i> (rat)	<i>us/hi</i> (ox)	<i>tora</i> (tiger)	<i>u</i> (hare)	<i>fatsu</i> (dragon)	<i>mi</i> (snake)	<i>uma</i> (horse)	<i>hitsuji</i> (sheep)	<i>saru</i> (monkey)	<i>tori</i> (cock)	<i>inu</i> (dog)	<i>i</i> (boar)
Direction	north			east			south			west		
Time	2300 – 0100	0100 – 0300	0300 – 0500	0500 – 0700	0700 – 0900	0900 – 1100	1100 – 1300	1300 – 1500	1500 – 1700	1700 – 1900	1900 – 2100	2100 – 2300

The sexagenary cycle: the stems and branches are combined to form a cycle of sixty terms.

I. 甲子 kinoe- ne	2. 乙丑 kinoto- ushi	3. 丙寅 hinoe- tora	4. 丁卯 hinoto- u	5. 戊辰 tsuchinoe- tatsu	6. 己巳 tsuchimoto- mi	7. 庚午 kanoe- uma	8. 辛未 kanoto- hitsuji	9. 壬申 mizunoe- saru	10. 癸酉 mizunoto- tori
II. 甲戌 kinoe- inu	12. 乙亥 kinoto- i	13. 丙子 hinoe- ne	14. 丁丑 hinoto- ushi	15. 戊寅 tsuchinoe- tora	16. 己卯 tsuchimoto- u	17. 庚辰 kanoe- tatsu	18. 辛巳 kanoto- mi	19. 壬午 mizunoe- uma	20. 癸未 mizunoto- hitsuji
2I. 甲申 kinoe- saru	22. 乙酉 kinoto- tori	23. 丙戌 hinoe- inu	24. 丁亥 hinoto- i	25. 戊子 tsuchinoe- ne	26. 己丑 tsuchimoto- ushi	27. 庚寅 kanoe- tora	28. 辛卯 kanoto- u	29. 壬辰 mizunoe- tatsu	30. 癸巳 mizunoto- mi
3I. 甲午 kinoe- uma	32. 乙未 kinoto- hitsuji	33. 丙申 hinoe- saru	34. 丁酉 hinoto- tori	35. 戊戌 tsuchinoe- inu	36. 己亥 tsuchimoto- i	37. 庚子 kanoe- ne	38. 辛丑 kanoto- ushi	39. 壬寅 mizunoe- tora	40. 癸卯 mizunoto- u
4I. 甲辰 kinoe- tatsu	42. 乙巳 kinoto- mi	43. 丙午 hinoe- uma	44. 丁未 hinoto- hitsuji	45. 戊申 tsuchinoe- saru	46. 己酉 tsuchimoto- tori	47. 庚戌 kanoe- inu	48. 辛亥 kanoto- i	49. 壬子 mizunoe- ne	50. 癸丑 mizunoto- ushi
5I. 甲寅 kinoe- tora	52. 乙卯 kinoto- u	53. 丙辰 hinoe- tatsu	54. 丁巳 hinoto- mi	55. 戊午 tsuchinoe- uma	56. 己未 tsuchimoto- hitsuji	57. 庚申 kanoe- saru	58. 辛酉 kanoto- tori	59. 壬戌 mizunoe- inu	60. 癸亥 mizunoto- i

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Glossary

Abbreviations: Skt = Sanskrit; Chin = Chinese; Kor = Korean; Jpn = Japanese; b. = born; d. = died; r. = reign; n.d. = no dates; c. = circa; fl. = flourished

acharya (Skt) An honorific title meaning teacher, conferred upon a priest who guides the conduct of disciples and serves as an example to them.

acting administrator Hojo Yoshitoki (1163–1224), the second regent of the Kamakura government.

administrator of priests An official rank within the Buddhist priesthood. The administrator of priests as the highest-ranking official was general supervisor over the other priests and nuns. Later the system of ranking for priests became a matter of formalism, with such titles bestowing honor but indicating no specific function or position.

Agama sutras A generic term for the Hinayana sutras.

Ajatashatru A king of the state of Magadha in India. Incited by Devadatta, he killed his father, King Bimbisara, a follower of Shakyamuni, and ascended the throne to become the most influential ruler of his time. Later he contracted a terrible disease and, in remorse for his evil acts, converted to Buddhism and supported the First Buddhist Council for the compilation of Shakyamuni's teachings.

Ajitavati See **Hiranyavati**.

alaya-consciousness Also called “storehouse consciousness.” The level of consciousness where the results of one's actions (karma), good or evil, accumulate as karmic potentials or “seeds” that later produce the results of happiness or suffering. According to the Consciousness-Only school, which postulates the existence of eight levels of consciousness, the alaya-consciousness corresponds to the eighth level and is the source of the first seven consciousnesses, as well as the storehouse for the seeds that produce all things and phenomena. The T'ien-t'ai and Flower Garland schools refer to another, deeper, level—the ninth consciousness—which corresponds to the true aspect of life, or the Buddha nature.

Amida (Skt Amitayus or Amitabha, “Infinite Life” or “Infinite Light”) The Buddha of the Land of Perfect Bliss in the west. According to the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, a bodhisattva named Dharma Treasury made forty-eight vows concerning the Buddha land he would establish upon attaining enlightenment. After many kalpas of practicing austerities, he became Amida Buddha and realized his Pure Land. Amida is worshiped by adherents of the Pure Land school.

Amida Sutra One of the three basic scriptures of Pure Land Buddhism. Kumara-jiva's translation of the smaller *Sukhavativyuha*. Written in the form of a discourse

between Shakyamuni, Shariputra, and others, it describes the blessings associated with Amida Buddha and his Pure Land and asserts that one can attain rebirth in this land by relying on Amida.

amrita (Skt) A legendary, ambrosia-like liquid. Often translated as sweet dew. In ancient India it was regarded as the sweet-tasting beverage of the gods. In China it was thought to rain down from heaven when the world became peaceful. The word amrita means immortality.

Ananda One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples. He was a cousin of Shakyamuni and also the younger brother of Devadatta. For many years he accompanied Shakyamuni as his personal attendant and thus heard more of his teachings than any other disciple. He was known, therefore, as the foremost in hearing the Buddha's teachings. In addition, he is said to have possessed an excellent memory, which allowed him to play a central role in compiling Shakyamuni's teachings at the First Buddhist Council after the Buddha's passing.

Anavatapta (Skt) A dragon said to live in Heat-Free (Anavatapta) Lake, north of the Snow Mountains.

Angulimāla A notorious murderer who became a follower of Shakyamuni. After having already killed 999 people, he was just about to kill his own mother and Shakyamuni, when he received instruction from the Buddha and repented.

Aniruddha A cousin of Shakyamuni and one of his ten major disciples, known as the foremost in divine insight. His father is regarded as having been either King Amritodana or King Dronodana, each of whom was the younger brother of Shuddhodana, Shakyamuni's father.

An Lu-shan (705–757) A military officer in China during the T'ang dynasty. He gained control of a large area on the northeastern frontier and achieved power at court through the patronage of Emperor Hsüan-tsung. In 755 he led a rebellion and took control of the capital.

An'ne (795–868) The fourth chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school in Japan.

Annen (b. 841) A priest of the Tendai school who helped establish the doctrine and practice of Tendai esotericism in Japan.

Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight," *The* A commentary by Miao-lo on *Great Concentration and Insight*, one of T'ien-t'ai's three major works.

Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra," *The* A commentary by Miao-lo on *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, one of T'ien-t'ai's three major works.

Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra," *The* A commentary by Miao-lo on *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, one of T'ien-t'ai's three major works.

arhat (Skt) One who has attained the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment. Arhat means one worthy of respect.

Aryadeva (n.d.) A third-century scholar of the Madhyamika school in India. He was born to a Brahman family in southern India and studied the doctrine of non-substantiality under Nagarjuna. He was also called Kanadeva because of the loss of an eye (kana means "one eye"). He refuted teachers of Brahmanism at Pataliputra in a religious debate and was killed by one of their disciples. Aryadeva is regarded as the fifteenth of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors.

Aryasimha (n.d.) The last of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors, who lived in central India during the sixth century. His efforts to propagate Buddhism led to his execution by Dammira, a king who destroyed many Buddhist temples and murdered scores of monks.

asamkhyā (Skt) "Innumerable." An ancient Indian numerical unit indicating an

exceedingly large number. One account has it equal to 10^{59} , while another describes it as 10^{51} .

Asanga (n.d.) Scholar of the Consciousness-Only doctrine. He is thought to have lived around 310–390 or, according to another account, around 390–470. Born to a Brahman family at Purushapura in Gandhara in northern India, he initially studied the Hinayana teachings but was dissatisfied with these doctrines and made efforts to master the Mahayana teachings as well. When Vasubandhu, his younger brother, became attached to Hinayana teachings, Asanga converted him to Mahayana Buddhism.

Ashoka (r. c. 268–232 B.C.E.) The third ruler of the Indian Maurya dynasty and the first king to unify India. During the early years of his reign he was a tyrant, but later he converted to Buddhism and governed compassionately in accordance with Buddhist ideals.

Ashvaghosha (n.d.) A second-century Mahayana scholar and poet of Shravasti in India. He at first criticized Buddhism but was later converted by Parshva. He led many people to the Buddha's teachings through his skill in music and literature. Ashvaghosha is known as the twelfth of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors.

Asita (1) A seer mentioned in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, referred to as a former incarnation of Devadatta. According to this chapter, in one of his past existences, Shakyamuni was seeking the great Law. At that time, Asita expounded the Lotus Sutra for him. (2) A seer of Kapilavastu. When Shakyamuni was born, King Shuddhodana asked Asita to examine his newborn child's physiognomy. Asita, perceiving the thirty-two features of a great man, foretold that, if the boy remained in the secular world, he would become a wheel-turning king by the age of twenty-nine, but if he renounced secular life, which was more probable, he would achieve supreme wisdom and attain Buddhahood. Asita lamented that, since he himself was already ninety years old, he would die before the prince attained enlightenment and therefore be unable to hear the Buddha's teaching.

Aspiration for the Law The name of Shakyamuni in a past existence. When the ascetic Aspiration for the Law was seeking the Law, a devil disguised as a Brahman appeared to him and said that he would reveal to him a Buddhist teaching if he was ready to transcribe it using his skin as paper, one of his bones as a pen, and his blood as ink. When Aspiration for the Law gladly complied and prepared to write down the Buddhist teaching, the devil vanished. In response to his seeking mind, a Buddha appeared and taught him a profound teaching.

asura (Skt) A type of demon in Indian mythology, contentious and belligerent by nature, who fights continually with the god Shakra, or Indra. The world of asuras constitutes one of the six paths of existence.

Avichi hell Also, the hell of incessant suffering. The most terrible of the eight hot hells. The Avichi hell is also referred to as the great citadel of the Avichi hell because it is surrounded by seven solid iron walls that make it impossible for its inhabitants to escape. The Sanskrit word avichi was translated into Chinese as "incessant," indicating that, in this hell, pain and suffering continue without interruption. It is said that one who commits any of the five cardinal sins or slanders the correct teaching is destined to be reborn in the Avichi hell.

Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana, The A work that sets forth the fundamental doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism and attempts to awaken people to faith in it. This work is traditionally attributed to Ashvaghosha, though there are differing opinions.

Awesome Sound King A Buddha mentioned in the "Never Disparaging" chap-

ter of the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging appeared during the Middle Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King when Buddhism was in decline and arrogant monks held great authority. He revered all people for their innate Buddha nature, for which he was slandered and beaten by ignorant and conceited people.

Baladitya (n.d.) A king of Magadha said to have lived around the sixth century who was a devout Buddhist. He erected a temple at Nalanda Monastery, and monks from throughout India assembled to celebrate its completion. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, Mihirakula, the ruler of the neighboring kingdom of Cheka, opposed Buddhism and attempted to conquer Baladitya. When Mihirakula attacked Magadha, the people united against him and took him prisoner. Baladitya intended to put Mihirakula to death but released him instead, moved by his own mother's plea that he act compassionately.

Bamboo Staff school A reference to any of several different groups of Brahmins in Shakyamuni's day known under this name. Followers of these groups are said to have carried staves, and the members of one such group are known to have killed Maudgalyayana. Maudgalyayana came across some Brahmins of the Bamboo Staff school who engaged him in discussion, whereupon he refuted their teacher. Enraged, they beat him to death with their staves.

beings of the two worlds and the eight groups The beings who assembled to listen to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. They are listed in the "Introduction" chapter of the sutra. They are beings who reside in the two worlds, the first two divisions of the threefold world: the world of desire and the world of form. The eight groups are a further division of the beings of the two worlds. They are: (1) the gods of the world of desire, (2) the gods of the world of form, (3) dragon kings and their followers, (4) kinnara kings and their followers, (5) gandharva kings and their followers, (6) asura kings and their followers, (7) garuda kings and their followers, and (8) the king of the human world (Ajatashatru) and his followers.

benevolent gods See **heavenly gods and benevolent deities**.

Benevolent Kings Sutra A sutra regarded as the concluding sutra of the Wisdom sutras. It enumerates seven disasters that will occur when the correct teaching perishes, and stresses the need to attain perfect wisdom.

Bimbisara A king of the state of Magadha in India and a devout follower of Shakyamuni. He is also known as the father of Ajatashatru.

Bodhidharma The founder of Zen Buddhism in China. The date of Bodhidharma's birth is not clear, and the year of his death is regarded by some to be 528, and others, 536. He is said to have lived to be 150.

bodhisattva (Skt) A being who aspires to attain Buddhahood and carries out altruistic practices to achieve that goal. Compassion predominates in bodhisattvas, who postpone their own entry into nirvana in order to lead others toward enlightenment.

bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds An expression commonly used to refer to the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear from beneath the earth in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. "Numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds" derives from the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the sutra.

Bodhisattvas of the Earth The innumerable bodhisattvas who appear in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra and are entrusted by Shakyamuni with the task of propagating the Law after his passing. In several of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin identifies his own role with that of their leader, Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

bodhisattvas of the essential teaching Bodhisattvas taught by the true Buddha, that is, the Buddha whose true identity is revealed in the essential teaching (the latter fourteen chapters) of the Lotus Sutra. In this teaching, Shakyamuni reveals his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past. The disciples he has taught in this capacity since the time of his enlightenment are the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching. They are also known as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear in the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the first chapter of the essential teaching. Shakyamuni entrusts them with the mission of propagating the essence of the sutra, the Mystic Law, in the Latter Day of the Law.

bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching Bodhisattvas who are followers of a provisional Buddha. They include the bodhisattvas Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, and Medicine King. A provisional Buddha is a Buddha who, in order to save the people, assumes a transient role in accordance with their capacity, not revealing his true identity. In the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and in the theoretical teaching (the first fourteen chapters) of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni did not reveal his original enlightenment in the remote past but assumed the provisional status of a Buddha who had first attained enlightenment in that lifetime. The bodhisattvas whom he taught in this capacity are called bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. This term is used in contrast to the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching, or the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching are said to appear in the Former and Middle Days of the Law and spread provisional Mahayana or the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, in contrast to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who appear in the Latter Day and devote themselves to spreading the Mystic Law, the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

Boundless Practices One of the four bodhisattvas who lead the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Brahma A god said to live in the first of the four meditation heavens in the world of form above Mount Sumeru and to rule over the saha world. In Indian mythology he was regarded as the personification of the fundamental universal principle, and in Buddhism he was adopted as one of the two major tutelary gods, together with Shakra.

Brahma Excellent Thought Sutra A sutra in which a Brahma king named Excellent Thought comes to the saha world from an eastern realm of the universe and listens to Shakyamuni Buddha’s preaching of the bodhisattva way. The sutra discusses the doctrines of non-substantiality and nonduality.

Brahma heaven Another name for the first of the four meditation heavens in the world of form above Mount Sumeru.

Brahma Net Sutra A sutra that sets forth the Mahayana precepts—the ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts. This sutra was highly valued in China and Japan because it describes the precepts for Mahayana bodhisattvas, and many commentaries were written on it. In Japan, Dengyo used this sutra to repudiate the Hinayana precepts observed by the six schools of Nara, emphasizing the necessity of embracing Mahayana precepts.

Buddha Eye One of the Buddhas who appear in the esoteric teachings. Also called Buddha Mother, this Buddha is said to give birth to all other Buddhas.

Buddhahood Also referred to by the word enlightenment. The supreme state of life in Buddhism, characterized by boundless wisdom and compassion. In this state one is awakened to the eternal and ultimate truth that is the reality of all things. Buddhahood is regarded as the goal of Buddhist practice and the highest of the Ten Worlds.

- Buddha Infinite Life Sutra** Also, the Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra and the Two-Volumed Sutra. One of the three basic scriptures of the Pure Land school. It relates how Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury made forty-eight vows and, on fulfilling them, became a Buddha called Infinite Life or Amida. It describes this Buddha Infinite Life's pure land and explains that one can be reborn there after death if one has faith in this Buddha.
- Buddha land** The place where a Buddha dwells. Since Buddhism views the environment as part of oneself, the term Buddha land is often used simply to refer to the enlightened state or absolute happiness that Buddhas enjoy, and does not necessarily indicate a paradise or land removed from mortal sufferings.
- Buddhamitra** (n.d.) The ninth of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors. The king of the country where he lived was strongly attached to Brahmanism and tried to rid the land of all Buddhist influence. Determined to make the king overcome his prejudice, Buddhamitra is said to have walked back and forth in front of the palace for twelve years, bearing a red flag. The king was moved by his resolve and allowed him to debate with a Brahman teacher. Buddhamitra refuted his opponent and thus converted the king to Buddhism.
- Bun'ei era** The period in Japan from 1264 to 1275. In 1275, the era name changed to Kenji. Accordingly, among letters written by the Daishonin in 1275, some are dated the twelfth year of Bun'ei, and others, the first year of Kenji.
- Calm and Bright, Mount** Another name for Mount Sumeru. The Sanskrit name Sumeru was translated into Chinese as "Calm and Bright" and "Wonderful Bright."
- cause-awakened one** See **pratyekabuddha**.
- Ceremony in the Air** One of the three assemblies described in the Lotus Sutra, in which the entire gathering is suspended in space above the saha world. It extends from the "Treasure Tower" (eleventh) chapter to the "Entrustment" (twenty-second) chapter. The heart of this ceremony is the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past and the transfer of the essence of the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- ceremony of anointment** Also, anointment ceremony. A ceremony, commonly performed in esoteric Buddhism, in which one is invested with a certain status. The ceremony is said to derive from the practice of pouring water on the heads of rulers in ancient India upon their ascending the throne. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of esoteric anointment ceremonies: those designed to establish a relationship between the individual and the Buddha, those to confer the status of practitioner of the esoteric teaching, and those to invest a person with the rank of acharya, qualifying him to teach the esoteric doctrine.
- Chandaka** A servant of Shakyamuni before he renounced secular life. The night Shakyamuni left the palace to seek the way, Chandaka accompanied him, holding his horse Kanthaka by the bridle. After Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, Chandaka became his disciple. Being arrogant, he was unable to get along with the other monks. However, it is said that, after the Buddha's passing, he followed Ananda and attained the state of arhat.
- chandala** (Skt) The untouchable caste, below the lowest of the four classes in ancient India. People in this class handled corpses, butchered animals, and carried out other tasks connected with death or the killing of living things. Since Nichiren Daishonin was born to a family of fishermen, he declared himself to be a member of the chandala.
- Chandrakirti** Also presented as Chandrayashas. A minister who served King Ajatashatru. When the king was suffering from virulent sores all over his body, his six ministers exhorted him to consult the six non-Buddhist teachers. Chan-

drakirti was one of them, and he urged the king to see Purana, one of the six non-Buddhist teachers.

- Chang-an** (561–632) T'ien-t'ai's disciple and successor. He recorded T'ien-t'ai's lectures and later compiled them as *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*. His own works include *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* and *The Profound Meaning of the Nirvana Sutra*.
- Chang Liang** (d. 168 B.C.E.) A statesman and strategist who assisted Liu Pang, or Emperor Kao-tsu, in the overthrow of the Ch'in and the establishment of the Former Han dynasty of China.
- Chao Kao** (d. 207 B.C.E.) A minister to the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty in China. When the emperor died of an illness, the eunuch official Chao Kao forged an edict putting the emperor's youngest son on the throne. He brought about the death of the emperor's eldest son, as well as that of many generals and high ministers and, eventually, the second emperor. In this way he manipulated power and attempted to control the throne but was finally killed by the third ruler, the First Emperor's grandson.
- Ch'en Chen** (n.d.) An older brother of T'ien-t'ai. He was told that he would die in one month but prolonged his life for fifteen years by practicing T'ien-t'ai's teaching of concentration and insight.
- Ch'eng-kuan** (738–839) Also called the Teacher of the Nation Ch'ing-liang. The fourth patriarch of the Flower Garland school in China.
- Chen-yüan era catalog** An index of Chinese Buddhist texts compiled by Yüan-chao in 800, the sixteenth year of the Chen-yüan era. This catalog lists 2,417 works.
- Chia-hsiang** See **Chi-tsang**.
- Chi-cha** (c. 561–515 B.C.E.) Son of Shou-meng, king of Wu in China. According to tradition, while passing through the state of Hsü, he met the lord of Hsü, who, seeing Chi-cha's precious sword, wanted it for himself, though he did not dare say so. Chi-cha sensed the lord's wish and resolved to give it to him on his way back through Hsü. Upon returning, however, he discovered that the lord had died. He therefore placed the sword as an offering at the lord's grave.
- Chieh** The last ruler of the Hsia dynasty of China. King Chieh abandoned himself to a dissolute life and caused his people great distress with his tyranny and extravagance. Thus he brought about the downfall of his dynasty. Together with King Chou of the Yin (Shang) dynasty, he is regarded as the epitome of a tyrant.
- Chien-chen** See **Ganjin**.
- Chih-che** An honorific title meaning "person of wisdom." The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was also called the Great Teacher Chih-che and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che.
- Chih-i** See **T'ien-t'ai**.
- Chih-tsang** (458–522) A priest of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period in China. He was revered by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty and wrote a number of treatises and commentaries at K'ai-shan-ssu temple. Chih-tsang is considered one of the three great teachers of the Liang dynasty, together with Fa-yün and Seng-min.
- Chih-yen** (602–668) The second patriarch of the Chinese Flower Garland school.
- ch'i-lin** (Chin) Imaginary beast appearing in ancient Chinese legend. It was thought to resemble a fiery horse and was believed to appear to herald the advent of a sage.
- Chincha** Also, Chinchamanavika. A woman who slandered Shakyamuni by tying a pot to her belly under her robe and publicly declaring that she was pregnant by

him. According to the Commitment of Previous Deeds Sutra, her falsehood was exposed by the god Shakra, who assumed the form of a rat and gnawed through the string holding the pot in place. The slander of Chincha is regarded as one of the nine great ordeals that Shakyamuni experienced.

- Ching K'o** (d. 227 B.C.E.) A swordsman who attempted on behalf of Prince Tan of the state of Yen to assassinate the king of Ch'in, the ruler who later united China under his rule and became the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty.
- Chin-kang-chih** (671–741) (Skt Vajrabodhi) An Indian scholar of the esoteric teaching. He studied the esoteric teachings as a disciple of Nagabodhi before journeying to China in 720, where he won the support of Emperor Hsüan-tsung. He translated several texts into Chinese and was the teacher of Pu-k'ung.
- Chinzei** An ancient name for Kyushu, Japan's southernmost major island.
- Chisho** (814–891) Also known as Enchin or the Great Teacher Chisho. The fifth chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school on Mount Hiei. In 853 he went to T'ang China, where he studied the T'ien-t'ai and esoteric doctrines. On his return he mixed esoteric doctrines with those of the Tendai school. He also erected a hall for performing the esoteric ceremony of anointment at Onjo-ji temple.
- Chi-tsang** (549–623) Also called Chia-hsiang. A priest of the Three Treatises school in China, sometimes regarded as the first patriarch of that school.
- cho** (Jpn) A unit of area and a unit of linear measurement as well. As a unit of area, a *cho* measured about 9,920 square meters. A *cho* as a unit of linear measurement equaled about 110 meters. Its exact size varied somewhat from era to era.
- Chou** The last ruler of the Yin (Shang) dynasty, which ended in the eleventh century B.C.E. Infamous as an oppressive ruler, together with King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, he is regarded as the epitome of tyranny. He was prone to drunkenness and debauchery, and was encouraged in his evildoing by his favorite concubine, Ta Chi. Because of his corruption and cruelty, the feudal lords and people of the kingdom eventually turned against him. He was finally defeated by King Wu of the Chou dynasty.
- Chudapanthaka** The younger of two brothers who were followers of Shakyamuni Buddha. The elder brother's name was Mahapanthaka. The elder brother was clever, but his younger sibling was stupid. Accounts vary considerably according to the source. According to one account, both brothers were stupid. According to another account, Chuda is the name of the elder brother, and Panthaka, that of the younger brother. Chudapanthaka was so dull-witted that in three years he was unable to learn even a single verse of the Buddhist teachings, despite having been instructed by five hundred arhats. Taking pity on him, the Buddha gave him a verse to learn, explaining to Chudapanthaka the meaning of the verse. Chudapanthaka attained an awakening and reached the state of arhat.
- Chu Fa-lan** (n.d.) An Indian monk traditionally believed to have first introduced Buddhism to China together with Kashyapa Matanga. The Sanskrit for Chu Fa-lan is unknown. It is said that in C.E. 67 they traveled from India to Lo-yang in China at the request of Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty.
- Chunda** A blacksmith in Pava Village who was deeply moved by Shakyamuni's preaching and offered the Buddha his last meal before his nirvana.
- Chu Tao-sheng** (d. 434) Also called Tao-sheng. A Chinese priest and disciple of Kumarajiva who insisted, on the basis of his study of Fa-hsien's Chinese version of the Nirvana Sutra, that even an icchantika, or person of incorrigible disbelief, can attain Buddhahood. For this, he was banished from the community of priests to a mountain in Su-chou. Later, when the Nirvana Sutra was translated by Dharmaraksha into Chinese, Tao-sheng's assertion was verified.

- Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine, A** A work that Dengyo wrote in 813. It shows how the Buddhist scholars in China based their thought on T'ien-t'ai's doctrines and, on this basis, refutes the errors of the True Word, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, and other schools.
- Classic of Filial Piety, The** (Chin *Hsiao ching*) A work purportedly written by Tseng Tzu, a disciple of Confucius. Written in the form of a dialogue between Tseng Tzu and the master, it stresses filial piety as the cardinal virtue and the source of all instruction. It enjoyed special popularity under the Han dynasty emperors (202 B.C.E.–C.E. 220).
- Clear and Cool, Mount** According to the Flower Garland Sutra, the abode of Manjushri. "Clear and Cool" is the translation of Ch'ing-liang in Chinese. It later came to be associated with Mount Ch'ing-liang, also known as Mount Wu-t'ai, in China.
- Cloud Thunder Sound King** (1) The Buddha who appears in the "Wonderful Sound" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This chapter says that in the remote past Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound served the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound King. (2) Another name for the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom, the Buddha who appears in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. According to this chapter, he instructed King Wonderful Adornment, who was the father of Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye. One view regards the above-mentioned Buddhas as the same.
- cold-suffering bird** A legendary bird said to live in the Snow Mountains. This bird, tortured during the night by the cold, determines to build a nest in the morning. When day breaks, however, it instead sleeps away the hours in the warm sunlight and forgets about building its nest. Thus, when night falls, the bird must suffer again.
- combining, excluding, corresponding, and including** Categories describing the various provisional sutras and used to differentiate between them and the Lotus Sutra. These four terms are derived from the relationship between the four teachings of doctrine and the first four of the five periods. The four teachings of doctrine are T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings according to their content. They are the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, the specific teaching, and the perfect teaching. The five periods are T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni's teachings according to the order in which he believed they had been expounded. They are the Flower Garland period, the Agama period, the Correct and Equal period, the Wisdom period, and the Lotus and Nirvana period. During the Flower Garland period, the specific teaching was combined with the perfect teaching. During the Agama period, only the Tripitaka, or Hinayana, teachings were expounded, and the connecting, specific, and perfect teachings were excluded. During the Correct and Equal period, all four teachings were taught in a manner corresponding to the people's capacity, while during the Wisdom period the connecting and specific teachings were included in the perfect teaching. In contrast to the provisional doctrines preached during these periods, which either excluded the perfect teaching or mixed it with other teachings, the Lotus Sutra contains only the perfect teaching. Hence it is called the pure and perfect teaching.
- Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra, The** A work attributed to Nagarjuna. It is highly esteemed by the Pure Land school because in its "Easy Practice" chapter, it discusses two ways of Buddhist practice—the difficult-to-practice way and the easy-to-practice way. The Pure Land school employed these categories and interpreted the easy-to-practice way as the practice of calling upon the name of Amida Buddha.

- Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism, A** A work by Kobo. In this work, Kobo compares the esoteric teachings with the exoteric teachings and asserts that the former are superior to the latter. This work also outlines the ten stages of the mind. See also **ten stages of the mind**.
- connecting teaching** One of the four teachings of doctrine, a classification of Shakyamuni's teachings set forth by T'ien-t'ai. The connecting teaching corresponds to introductory Mahayana, being so called because it forms a link between the Tripitaka teaching and the specific teaching. Like the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching is also concerned with casting off attachment to the threefold world. However, the teachings of this category deny the view of the Tripitaka teaching that all things when analyzed prove to be without substance, and instead set forth the view that all things, just as they are, are without substance, because they arise and disappear only by virtue of dependent origination. These teachings are directed primarily to bodhisattvas and secondarily to persons of the two vehicles.
- Constellation King Flower** The bodhisattva who appears in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra to play the role of questioning the Buddha. In this chapter Shakyamuni Buddha orders him to protect the sutra with his transcendental power because it provides good medicine for the ills of the people of the entire world.
- Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra** A sutra that explains that the states of the Buddha, bodhisattva, pratyekabuddha, arhat, and voice-hearer all originate from the minds of ordinary people. Thus it compares the mind to the ground, which produces grain. The sutra also defines the four debts of gratitude—those owed to one's parents, to all living beings, to one's sovereign, and to the three treasures—and extols the blessings of observing the mind.
- continual propagation to the fiftieth person** A principle described in the "Benefits of Responding with Joy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Suppose, the text says, that, after Shakyamuni Buddha's passing, a person were to hear the Lotus Sutra and rejoice, then preach it to a second person, who also rejoices and in turn preaches it to a third, and so on, until a fiftieth person hears the sutra. The benefit this person receives by rejoicing upon hearing the sutra, even at fifty removes, would be immeasurable.
- Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests, The** A collection of the biographies of five hundred eminent priests who lived during the period from 502, the beginning of the Liang dynasty, to 645. It was compiled by Tao-hsüan of the T'ang dynasty as a continuation of *The Liang Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests*.
- Correct and Equal period** The third of the five periods, the period of the introductory Mahayana. In this period Shakyamuni refuted his disciples' attachment to Hinayana and directed them toward provisional Mahayana with such teachings as the Amida, Mahavairocana, and Vimalakirti sutras. According to T'ien-t'ai's conjecture, the Correct and Equal period lasted for eight or sixteen years. This period is also known as the Vaipulya period and the Extended period.
- correct and equal sutras** Another term for Mahayana sutras. This expression is differentiated from the expression "the Correct and Equal sutras," the sutras of the Correct and Equal period.
- Correct and Equal sutras** Also known as the sutras of the Correct and Equal period. Lower provisional Mahayana sutras belonging to the third of the five periods of Shakyamuni's teachings. In these sutras Shakyamuni refutes his disciples' attachment to Hinayana and leads them toward higher teachings.
- correct practices** Practices for attaining rebirth in the Pure Land, expounded by

Shan-tao, a patriarch of the Pure Land school in China. He classifies Buddhist practices into “correct practices” and “sundry practices,” and defines correct practices as those directed toward Amida Buddha, such as reading and reciting the three basic scriptures of the Pure Land school, invoking Amida Buddha’s name, and extolling Amida Buddha. Among these correct practices, Shan-tao designates the practice of invoking Amida Buddha’s name as the primary practice. The term sundry practices signifies all Buddhist practices not directed toward Amida Buddha.

Craving-Filled A Buddhist deity said to purify human beings of earthly desires and free them from illusions and sufferings. Craving-Filled is one of a group of deities, called the wisdom kings, who are said to destroy all obstacles.

daimoku (Jpn) (1) The title of a sutra, in particular the title of the Lotus Sutra, Myoho-renge-kyo. (2) The invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Dainichi (n.d.) Also called Nonin. A twelfth-century Japanese priest who was among the first to spread the Zen teaching in Japan. He propagated the Zen teachings before Eisai, the founder of the Rinzaï school. In 1189 he sent two disciples to China to have his teachings authenticated by a Zen master, Cho-an Te-kuang. His school was known as the Nihon Daruma, or the Japanese Bodhidharma, school.

Daishin, Acharya (n.d.) A disciple of Nichiren Daishonin who was born in Shimosha Province and is believed to have been a relative of the Soya family. He taught the believers in Kamakura while the Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island.

Daishin-bo (d. 1279) A priest in the Fuji area in Nichiren Daishonin’s day. At one point the Daishonin’s disciple, he was persuaded by Gyochi, the deputy chief priest of Ryusen-ji temple, to abandon his faith and join in harassing Nikko Shonin and other believers in the area. He was one of the party that rode to arrest twenty peasant-believers in Atsuhara in 1279 on false charges of stealing a crop of rice. The peasants resisted, and in the melee he was thrown from his horse and killed.

Daishonin (Jpn) Literally, “great sage.” In particular, this honorific title is applied to Nichiren to show reverence for him as the Buddha who appeared in the Latter Day of the Law to save all humankind.

Dammira (n.d.) Also, Mirakutsu. A king of Kashmir in northern India who destroyed the Buddhist temples and stupas in his kingdom. He killed many monks including Aryasimha, the last of Shakyamuni’s twenty-four successors. The names Dammira and Mirakutsu are Japanese pronunciations of the Chinese. The original Sanskrit names are unknown.

Dandaka, Mount A mountain said to be located in Gandhara, India. Dandaka was believed to be the mountain where Shakyamuni carried out austerities after he renounced the world. It is also known as the place where, according to the Sutra of Collected Birth Stories concerning the Practice of the Six Paramitas, Sudana, Shakyamuni as a prince in a former life, went into retreat and carried out austerities.

Danna (953–1007) Another name for Kakuun, the founder of the Danna branch of the Tendai school in Japan. He was one of the chief disciples of Ryogen, the eighteenth chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school. His name derives from the fact that he lived in Danna-in temple on Mount Hiei.

Dazaifu *See Dazaifu government office.*

Dazaifu government office Also simply called Dazaifu. A local headquarters of the government established in Kyushu, Japan’s southernmost major island, to

regulate contact with the mainland and also for defensive measures.

Decline of the Law Sutra A sutra that describes how Shakyamuni's teachings will disappear after his death. It also explains that, in the Latter Day of the Law, devils will appear in the form of priests and carry out slanderous acts against the Law.

Deer Park The name of a park in Varanasi in India, the site of present-day Sarnath. The place where Shakyamuni delivered his first sermon.

Demon Eloquence (n.d.) A Brahman whose ability of eloquence was endowed by a demon and who was therefore revered widely as a sage. He often conducted debates from behind a curtain. One day Ashvaghosha, who was well versed in the Buddhist teachings, confronted him in debate and argued him into silence. Then Ashvaghosha lifted the curtain, revealing that he was dependent upon the demon.

Dengyo (767–822) Also called Saicho and the Great Teacher Dengyo. The founder of the Tendai school in Japan. In 804 he went to China to study T'ien-t'ai's doctrines. Returning the next year, he founded the Tendai school. The word Tendai is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word T'ien-t'ai. He made efforts to establish a Mahayana ordination center on Mount Hiei despite opposition from the older schools in Nara. Permission was finally granted shortly after his death, and his successor Gishin completed the center in 827. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, Dengyo is also referred to as the Great Teacher Kompon, or the Great Teacher Fundamental.

Devadatta A cousin of Shakyamuni who at one time followed him but later became his enemy. In his arrogance he sought to kill the Buddha and usurp his position. He encouraged dissension within the Buddhist Order and made several attempts on the Buddha's life. He is said to have fallen into hell alive. The "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, however, predicts his future enlightenment.

devil king of the sixth heaven The king of devils, who dwells in the highest of the six heavens of the world of desire. He works to obstruct Buddhist practice and delights in sapping the life force of other beings. He is also regarded as the manifestation of the fundamental darkness inherent in life. Also called the heavenly devil.

dharma (Skt) A term fundamental to Buddhism that has a variety of meanings. These include: law, truth, doctrine, the Buddha's teaching, steadfast decree, customary observance, prescribed conduct, duty, virtue, morality, good deeds, religion, justice, nature, quality, character, characteristic, essential quality, elements of existence, ultimate constituents of things, phenomena, etc. Some of the more common usages are: (1) (Sometimes capitalized) The Law, or ultimate truth. (2) The teaching of the Buddha that reveals the Law. (3) (Often plural) Manifestations of the Law, that is, phenomena, things, facts, existences, etc. (4) The elements of existence, which, according to the Hinayana schools, are the most basic constituents that make up the individual and his or her reality. (5) Norms of conduct leading to the accumulation of good karma.

Dharma Analysis Treasury, The An exhaustive and systematic study of Buddhist ideas and concepts written by Vasubandhu. As the pinnacle of doctrinal study, this work was greatly influential later on and was studied widely in India, China, and Japan. It is the basic text of the Dharma Analysis Treasury school.

Dharma Analysis Treasury school A reference to the Chinese Chü-she school and the Japanese Kusha school (*kusha* being the Japanese pronunciation of *chü-she*). A school based on Vasubandhu's *Dharma Analysis Treasury*. It enjoyed a brief independent existence during the T'ang dynasty, but by 793 it had been regis-

tered as a branch of the Dharma Characteristics school. The doctrines of this school are thought to have been transmitted to Japan by Chitsu and Chidatsu, who went to T'ang China in 658 and studied under Hsüan-tsang and his disciple Tz'u-en. The Dharma Analysis Treasury system was widely studied during the Nara period (710–794) and is counted as one of the six schools of Nara, though it never became fully independent. Its doctrine teaches that the self is without substance but the dharmas themselves are real, and that past, present, and future actually exist. It also classifies all phenomena into seventy-five dharmas in five categories.

Dharma body Also, body of the Law. One of the three bodies that a Buddha possesses. The Dharma body means the ultimate truth or Law and also the entity or true nature of the Buddha's life. The Dharma body also means a Buddha's entire being, which embodies the ultimate truth or Law.

Dharma Characteristics school A reference to the Chinese Fa-hsiang school and the Japanese Hosso school (*hosso* being the Japanese pronunciation of *fa-hsiang*). A school that aims at clarifying the ultimate reality by analyzing and classifying the aspects and characteristics of things. Its doctrines derive from the teachings of the Consciousness-Only school of Maitreya, Asanga, and Vasubandhu. Hsüan-tsang and his disciple Tz'u-en are traditionally regarded as the founders of this school in China.

Dharma eye (1) One of the official ranks for priests. The official ranks changed with the passage of time. The rank of the Dharma eye was created in 864 in Japan. Later, it became formalized as had the other ranks and was conferred merely as an honorific title. (2) One of the five types of vision. *See also* **five types of vision**.

Dharma nature The essential and unchanging nature inherent in all existence. The term Dharma nature is also used to refer to the Buddha nature, or the internal cause or potential for attaining Buddhahood. The Lotus and Nirvana sutras hold that all beings are endowed with the Buddha nature.

Dharmaraksha (1) (233?–310?) A priest of Dun-huang, an oasis town in Central Asia, who went to China during the Western Chin dynasty and translated Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. The oldest extant Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra, entitled the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law, is his work. (2) (385–433) A priest from central India. He first studied the Hinayana teachings, but later he was so impressed by the Nirvana Sutra that he converted to Mahayana. He translated many sutras into Chinese, including the Nirvana Sutra.

Dharma seal One of the official ranks for priests. The system of official ranking changed with time. The rank of the Dharma seal was established in 864 in Japan. Later "Dharma seal" became an honorary position and lost its original significance, as was the case with the other ranks. Eventually it became simply a title of respect.

Dharma teacher A priest who is versed in Buddhist teachings and gives instruction in the doctrines of Buddhism. Here, the Dharma means the Buddhist teachings. "Dharma Teacher" was often used simply as an honorific title.

Dharma Wisdom One of the four great bodhisattvas appearing in the Flower Garland Sutra. Dharma Wisdom expounded the doctrine of the ten stages of security in the heaven of the thirty-three gods at the third assembly described in that sutra.

Dharmodgata A bodhisattva described in the Wisdom sutras. He preached on the perfection of wisdom, and those who listened to his teaching and embraced it never fell into the evil paths. From Dharmodgata, Bodhisattva Ever Wailing learned the teaching of the perfection of wisdom and acquired supreme wisdom,

thus accomplishing the perfection of wisdom. In the Wisdom sutras, Bodhisattva Dharmodgata is described as a “good friend” (Jpn *zenchishiki*) who acts to lead Bodhisattva Ever Wailing to enlightenment lifetime after lifetime.

Diamond Crown Sutra One of the basic scriptures of esoteric Buddhism. In contrast to the Mahavairochana Sutra, which reveals the teaching of the Womb Realm, the Diamond Crown Sutra explains the teaching of the Diamond Realm, on which the Diamond Realm mandala is based.

Diamond Realm mandala Also, the Diamond World mandala. A mandala of the True Word school. The Diamond Realm, described in the Diamond Crown Sutra, represents the wisdom of Mahavairochana Buddha, while the Womb Realm, described in the Mahavairochana Sutra, represents the fundamental truth illuminated by this wisdom. The Diamond Realm and Womb Realm mandalas are placed at the center of the esoteric rituals of the True Word school.

Diamond Wisdom Sutra A sutra that teaches that one should rely upon one’s innate Buddha wisdom, which is as solid, sharp, and brilliant as a diamond. This sutra is set in Jetavana Monastery in Shravasti and records Shakyamuni’s discourse to Subhuti on the constant flux of all phenomena and the doctrine of non-substantiality.

difficult-to-practice way Together with the “easy-to-practice way,” one of two ways of Buddhist practice mentioned in Nagarjuna’s *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*. The difficult-to-practice way means the exertion of strenuous effort in austere practices for countless kalpas in order to attain enlightenment. The “Easy Practice” chapter of this commentary emphasizes salvation by the power of Buddhas, saying that one can be reborn in a pure land by calling on their names. The Pure Land school interprets the difficult-to-practice way as the practice of any sutra other than the three basic sutras of that school, and the easy-to-practice way as that of calling upon the name of Amida Buddha, relying upon his power of salvation to attain enlightenment.

discipline master A priest who is adept in the Buddhist rules of discipline and observes the precepts. Discipline master was also one of the official ranks of a priest. A priest was appointed discipline master by the government to act as official instructor of priests and nuns. “Discipline Master” was also used simply as an honorific title.

Doamidabutsu (n.d.) A Nembutsu priest in Nichiren Daishonin’s day.

Doji (675–744) The third patriarch of the Three Treatises school in Japan. He was also well versed in the doctrines of the Dharma Characteristics school. He visited China in 701.

Dokyo (d. 772) A priest of the Dharma Characteristics school at Todai-ji temple, whose prayers were said to be effective in restoring the Retired Empress Koken to health. When she resumed the throne as Empress Shotoku, he acquired considerable power and was accused of trying to usurp the throne. After the empress’s death, he was sent into exile.

Doryu (1213–1278) (Chin Tao-lung) A priest of the Rinzaï school of Zen, also called Rankei (Lan-ch’i). In 1246 he traveled to Japan from China. When Kencho-ji was built by Hojo Tokiyori in Kamakura in 1253, he became its first chief priest. He opposed Nichiren Daishonin and, with Ryokan and others, plotted against him.

Dosho (629–700) The founder of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan. In 653 he went to China and studied the Dharma Characteristics doctrine under Hsüan-tsang. After an eight-year period of study in China, he returned to Japan and propagated the Dharma Characteristics teaching.

Dozen-bo (d. 1276) A priest of Seicho-ji temple, under whom Nichiren Daisho-

nin first studied Buddhism. After his death, the Daishonin wrote *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude* as an expression of his gratitude to Dozen-bo.

dragon girl See **dragon king's daughter**.

dragon king's daughter Also called the dragon girl. The daughter of Sagara, one of the eight great dragon kings said to dwell in a palace at the bottom of the sea. According to the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, she conceived the desire for enlightenment when she heard Bodhisattva Manjushri preach the Lotus Sutra in the dragon king's palace. Later, when she appeared before the assembly of the Lotus Sutra, Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated and Shariputra asserted that women were incapable of attaining Buddhahood. At that moment, she immediately manifested the state of Buddhahood without changing her dragon form.

Dronodana A younger brother of King Shuddhodana, Shakyamuni's father. He was the father of Devadatta and Ananda.

Duke of Chou A younger brother of King Wu, the founder of the Chou dynasty (c. 1100–256 B.C.E.). His personal name was Tan. Nichiren Daishonin's writings refer to him as "the Duke of Chou" or "Tan, the Duke of Chou." He assisted his brother in the task of overthrowing the Yin (Shang) dynasty and founding a new rule. He continued to assist in the affairs of government. When King Wu died and his son Ch'eng, who was still a child, came to the throne, the Duke of Chou acted as regent for the young ruler. He has been revered over the centuries by Confucianists as a model of correct government and propriety.

dust particles of the land An expression indicating "incalculable in number." In Buddhist scriptures "the dust particles of the land" often appears as a simile for an uncounted number and indicates "as numerous as the dust particles of the land." This expression is used to represent, for example, incalculable worlds or kalpas or uncountable bodhisattvas at a particular preaching assembly. It is also used as an emphatic expression to indicate a great number of slanderers of the correct teaching. The phrase "dust particles" is often used as a simile for an unfathomable number in expressions such as "the dust particles of a world," "the dust particles of a major world system," and "the dust particles of all the worlds in the ten directions." In Buddhist scriptures "the sands of the Ganges River" is also frequently used to indicate an inconceivable number.

Eagle Peak (Skt Gridhrakuta) Also, Vulture Peak. A mountain located to the northeast of Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha in ancient India, where Shakyamuni is said to have expounded the Lotus Sutra. Eagle Peak also symbolizes the Buddha land or the state of Buddhahood. In this sense, the "pure land of Eagle Peak" is often used.

Earnest Donor Also, Prince Earnest Donor. The name of Shakyamuni in a past existence. Born to a royal family, he felt pity for the poor and suffering people and entreated his father to give his treasures to them. When his father had exhausted his treasures, he entered the sea and, despite many obstacles, found a wish-granting jewel and caused treasures to rain down upon his people.

earthly desires A generic term for all the negative workings of life, including desires and illusions in the general sense, which cause one spiritual and physical suffering and impede the quest for enlightenment.

Earth Repository A bodhisattva entrusted by Shakyamuni Buddha with the task of saving living beings during the period from Shakyamuni's death until the advent of Bodhisattva Maitreya, 5,670 million years later, as the next Buddha.

easy-to-practice way One of the two categories of Buddhist practice mentioned by Nagarjuna in his *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*. The easy-to-practice way means calling upon the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, relying upon

their power of salvation, while the other, or the difficult-to-practice way, means the exertion of strenuous effort in austere practices for countless kalpas in order to attain enlightenment. In the Pure Land school, the easy-to-practice way is interpreted as the practice of calling upon the name of Amida Buddha.

eight cold hells Eight hells said to lie under the continent of Jambudvīpa next to the eight hot hells. Those who reside there are tormented by unbearable cold.

eighteen kinds of non-substantiality A concept expounded in the Larger Wisdom Sutra, suggesting that all things are by nature non-substantial.

eighteen major scriptures The eighteen Brahmanic classics—the four Vedas, six works, and eight works. The six works are regarded as auxiliary to the Vedas, and each deals with a particular subject, such as Vedic phonetics, grammar, ceremonial rules, and astronomy. Each of the eight works deals with a particular branch of learning, such as tradition, music, medicine, and the science of archery.

eighteenth vow Also called the original vow. The eighteenth of forty-eight vows made by Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury before he attained enlightenment as Amida Buddha. In the eighteenth vow, Dharma Treasury pledged that if he attains Buddhahood, all people who place their trust in him will obtain rebirth in his pure land, except those who commit the five cardinal sins and those who slander the correct teaching.

eight errors The opposite of the eightfold path. They are: wrong views, wrong thinking, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong way of life, wrong endeavor, wrong mindfulness, and wrong meditation.

eight kinds of nonhuman beings Beings that protect Buddhism. They are: gods, dragons, a kind of demon called yaksha, gods of music called gandharva, beligerent demons called asura, garuda (birds that prey on dragons), kinnara (gods with beautiful voices), and mahoraga (gods shaped like snakes).

eight major offenses Also known as the eight grave offenses. (1) The most grave offenses as defined for nuns. These offenses were punishable by expulsion from the Buddhist Order. They are: killing, stealing, sexual intercourse, lying, touching a male, improper association with a male, concealing the misbehavior of another, and following a monk whose behavior goes against monastic rules. (2) Violations of prohibitions for bodhisattvas. They consist of the above-mentioned first four offenses plus those of praising oneself and disparaging others, begrudging offerings or sparing one's efforts to expound the teachings, giving way to anger and refusing to accept apology, and speaking ill of the correct teaching.

eight negations Also, the middle path of eight negations. Eight expressions of negation that appear in the opening of Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*: "Neither birth nor extinction, neither cessation nor permanence, neither uniformity nor diversity, neither coming nor going." The teaching of the eight negations is intended to demonstrate that the true nature of phenomena can be defined neither as existence nor as nonexistence, nor, for that matter, as any other fixed concept one might choose to impose upon it. Rather, the nature of phenomena is non-substantiality, the Middle Way that transcends all duality.

eight offenses Eight serious crimes as defined by Japan's Taiho code (effective 701) and the Yoro code (effective 757). They are: (1) rebellion against the emperor, (2) damage to imperial palaces or tombs, (3) treason against the nation, (4) killing of one's relatives, (5) killing of one's wife or more than three people belonging to another family, (6) theft or damage of imperial or religious property, (7) unfilial conduct toward one's parents or senior relatives, and (8) killing of one's teacher or other superior.

eight phases of a Buddha's existence Successive phases that a Buddha manifests in the world to save the people. They are: (1) descending from heaven, (2) entering the mother's body, (3) emerging from the mother's body, (4) renouncing the world, (5) conquering devils, (6) attaining enlightenment, (7) turning the wheel of the Law, and (8) entering nirvana.

eight precepts Precepts observed by lay believers on specific days of the month. Although they vary somewhat depending on the source, they can be summarized as follows: (1) not to take life, (2) not to steal, (3) to refrain from all sexual activity, (4) not to lie, (5) not to drink intoxicants, (6) not to wear cosmetics or ornaments or to watch dancing or listen to singing, (7) not to sleep on a wide or elevated bed, and (8) not to eat after the noon hour.

eight schools The eight major schools of Buddhism in Japan before the Kamakura period (1185–1333). They are: the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, and True Word schools. The first six schools flourished in the Nara period (710–794), while the Tendai and True Word schools rose to prominence during the Heian period (794–1185).

eight teachings One system by which T'ien-t'ai classified Shakyamuni's sutras. The eight teachings are divided into two groups: the four teachings of doctrine and the four teachings of method. The first is a division by content, and the second, by method of teaching. The four teachings of doctrine are: (1) the Tripitaka teaching, which corresponds to the Hinayana teachings; (2) the connecting teaching, or introductory Mahayana teachings; (3) the specific teaching, a higher level of provisional Mahayana; and (4) the perfect teaching, or true Mahayana. The four teachings of method are: (1) the sudden teaching, or those teachings that Shakyamuni expounded directly from his enlightenment; (2) the gradual teaching, or teachings expounded to gradually elevate people's capacities to an understanding of higher doctrines; (3) the secret teaching, teachings that listeners understand according to their respective individual capacities and from which they each receive a different benefit without knowing it; and (4) the indeterminate teaching, teachings that listeners understand and benefit in the same way as above but are aware of the difference.

eight winds Eight conditions that prevent people from advancing along the right path to enlightenment. They are: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering, and pleasure. People are often swayed either by their attachment to prosperity, honor, praise, and pleasure, or by their aversion to decline, disgrace, censure, and suffering.

eighty characteristics Remarkable qualities of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

eighty thousand sacred teachings See **eighty thousand teachings**.

eighty thousand teachings Also, the eighty thousand sacred teachings and the eighty-four thousand teachings. The entire body of teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha during his lifetime. The figure is frequently given as eighty-four thousand. These figures are not intended to be literal but are used to simply indicate a large number.

Emā The lord of Shijo Kingo. Emā refers to either Emā Mitsutoki (Hojo Mitsutoki) or his son Emā Chikatoki (Hojo Chikatoki). A retainer of the Emā family, Shijo Kingo served these two lords. Emā Mitsutoki was a grandson of Hojo Yoshitoki, the second regent of the Kamakura government. In 1246 he fell under suspicion of treason against the regent Hojo Tokiyori and was banished to a place called Emā in Izu. At that time his retainer Nakatsukasa Yorikazu, Shijo Kingo's father, accompanied him into exile. Later he was permitted to return to Kamakura.

emanation Buddhas *See* **emanations of the Buddha.**

emanations of the Buddha Also called emanation Buddhas, or simply emanations. Buddhas who are separate manifestations of a true Buddha. According to Mahayana belief, a true Buddha can divide his body an infinite number of times and appear in innumerable worlds at once in order to save the people there. Hence “the emanation Buddhas of the ten directions” and other similar expressions. In the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni summons the Buddhas who are his emanations from the ten directions.

emptiness A fundamental Buddhist concept, also expressed as non-substantiality, void, latency, or relativity, which teaches that things and phenomena have no fixed or independent nature. This idea is closely linked to that of dependent origination, which states that because phenomena arise and continue to exist only by virtue of their relationship with other phenomena, they have no fixed substance. The concept of emptiness thus teaches that nothing exists independently. However, implications of the concept of emptiness differ among the Buddhist schools and their doctrines.

Enchin *See* **Chisho.**

Encho (772–837) Also, the Great Teacher Jakko. The second chief priest of Enryaku-ji temple.

“Encouraging Devotion” chapter The thirteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in which countless bodhisattvas vow to spread the sutra in the frightful evil age after the Buddha’s passing, even in the face of harsh persecution. The words of their vow enumerate the types of persecutions that will be met in propagating the Lotus Sutra in the fearful latter age. These persecutions were later summarized as the “three powerful enemies.”

Enryaku-ji The head temple of the Tendai school, located on Mount Hiei. It was founded by Dengyo in 788.

eranda (Skt) A castor-oil plant or a relative of the castor-oil plant. In Buddhist scriptures the eranda is depicted as a plant emitting a very foul odor and often contrasted with the fragrant sandalwood tree. The odor of the eranda plant is compared to that of a rotting corpse and is described as reaching a distance of forty yojanas (one yojana measures about seven kilometers). The fragrant sandalwood tree was believed to dispel the stench of the eranda.

Eshin *See* **Genshin.**

esoteric teachings Teachings that are revealed secretly or exclusively, that is, intended for the specially initiated alone, in contrast to exoteric, or explicit, teachings, which can be understood and shared by all. Nichiren Daishonin uses the term esoteric (or secret) teachings in the following ways. (1) The “secret teachings” in T’ien-t’ai’s classification of the four teachings of method: sudden, gradual, secret, and indeterminate. *See also* **eight teachings.** (2) The esoteric teachings of the True Word school. This school attributes them to Mahavairochana Buddha and holds that they contain the enlightenment of this Buddha, said to be beyond the understanding of ordinary people. The line of transmission is held to be from Mahavairochana Buddha to Vajrasattva, Nagarjuna, Nagabodhi, and to Shan-wu-wei (Skt Shubhakarasiṃha), Chin-kang-chih (Vajrabodhi), and Pu-k’ung (Amoghavajra). The last three introduced the esoteric teachings from India to China. Kobo brought them from China to Japan and systematized them as the Japanese True Word school. Later the esoteric teachings were also incorporated into the Tendai school by Jikaku, Chisho, and others. (*See also* **True Word school.**) Nichiren Daishonin refuted the esoteric teachings of both the True Word and Tendai schools.

Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land, The A work by the Tendai priest Genshin

completed in 985, compiling passages from more than 160 sutras and treatises regarding the subject of rebirth in the land of Amida Buddha. In this work Gen-shin strove to inspire fear of the sufferings of transmigration through the six paths and longing for the bliss of the Pure Land, stressing the Nembutsu as the practice for attaining rebirth there. His work became extremely popular and lent tremendous impetus to the rise of Pure Land practices in Japan.

Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching, The A treatise written around 1006 by Gen-shin, a Japanese Tendai priest. Based on the Tendai doctrine, it stresses the one vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra and asserts that all people possess the Buddha nature. It attacks the “five natures” doctrine of the Dharma Characteristics school that sentient beings are divided by their inborn capacity into five groups, some of which can never attain Buddhahood.

essential teaching (1) The teaching expounded by Shakyamuni from the perspective of his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. T'ien-t'ai classifies the last fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra as the essential teaching. (2) The essential teaching of the Latter Day of the Law, that is, the teaching of Nam-myoho-kyo.

Establishment of Truth school A reference to the Chinese Ch'eng-shih school and the Japanese Jojitsu school (*jojitsu* being the Japanese pronunciation of *ch'eng-shih*). A school based on *The Treatise on the Establishment of Truth* authored by Harivarman and translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva. It was introduced to Japan along with the Three Treatises school.

Ever Wailing A bodhisattva who appears in the Wisdom sutras. He was called Ever Wailing because he wept when he could not find a teacher from whom he would seek the teaching of the perfection of wisdom. He is described as being devoted to the pursuit of the perfection of wisdom, heedless of worldly fame or fortune. Finally Bodhisattva Ever Wailing sought the teaching from Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. Having nothing to offer him, Bodhisattva Ever Wailing attempted to sell his body in the marketplace to obtain money for alms. The god Shakra decided to test his resolve. Assuming the form of a Brahman, he told Bodhisattva Ever Wailing that he needed a heart, human blood, and marrow in order to perform a certain ritual. Bodhisattva Ever Wailing agreed to provide them, and voluntarily drew blood from his arm with a knife. Just as he had cut into his thigh and was about to obtain the marrow, he was interrupted by the daughter of a wealthy householder nearby. At this, Shakra revealed his true form and praised Bodhisattva Ever Wailing for his devotion.

evil friend (Jpn *akuchishiki*) Also, evil companion, evil teacher, and evil influence. One who deceives and causes others to fall into the evil paths, into suffering. An evil friend deludes others with false doctrines in order to obstruct their Buddhist practice. The Nirvana Sutra teaches that one should fear not a mad elephant but an evil friend. The term refers to those who approach others and befriend them with the intention of leading them away from correct Buddhist practice and to an erroneous teaching. *See also* **good friend**.

evil paths Also, evil paths of existence. The realm of suffering into which one who has committed evil acts descends; also the suffering that such a person undergoes. “Path” here means a state or realm of existence, or specifically, any of the Ten Worlds. The worlds of hell, hungry spirits, and animals are called the three evil paths, and these three plus the realm of asuras are called the four evil paths.

exoteric teachings Teachings that were revealed openly or explicitly, in contrast to the esoteric teachings, which were taught secretly or exclusively. The True Word

school defines Shakyamuni's teachings as exoteric teachings expounded in accord with the people's capacity, and the teachings of Mahavairochana Buddha as esoteric teachings. *See also* **esoteric teachings**.

“Expedient Means” chapter The second chapter of the Lotus Sutra and the key chapter of the theoretical teaching. In this chapter Shakyamuni declares that Buddhas appear in the world solely for the purpose of leading all people to enlightenment. And he shows that all people have the potential for Buddhahood, namely, that Buddhahood is not separate from ordinary people but is inherent in their lives.

eye-opening ceremony A ceremony performed to consecrate a Buddha image, in the belief that the image can thereby be endowed with spiritual properties.

Ezo people Indigenous inhabitants of northern Japan. Sources from the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods refer to them as barbaric tribes who had once occupied northern Japan and resisted military pressure from a centralized Yamato state. The Ainu people who now reside on Japan's northernmost major island, Hokkaido, are thought to be descendants of the Ezo mentioned in ancient documents, though the association is not certain.

Fa-ch'üan (n.d.) A priest of the esoteric teachings in T'ang China. He transferred the esoteric doctrines to Jikaku and Chisho when they journeyed to China in 838 and 853, respectively. He wrote many treatises on esoteric Buddhism.

Fan K'uai (d. 189 B.C.E.) A military leader and strategist who assisted Emperor Kao-tsu in unifying China and establishing the Former Han dynasty. Fan K'uai is known for his courage and loyalty.

Fan Yü-ch'i (d. 227 B.C.E.) A general of the state of Ch'in in China. According to tradition, after incurring the wrath of the king of Ch'in, Fan Yü-ch'i sought refuge in the state of Yen, where he was cordially received by Prince Tan. Tan had been feeling resentment against the king of Ch'in, the ruler who later united China under his rule and became the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty. Tan arranged to have him assassinated by a man named Ching K'o. As a device to ensure the plot's success, Ching K'o demanded the head of Fan Yü-ch'i. On hearing this, Fan Yü-ch'i cut off his own head to repay his debt of gratitude to Prince Tan and to avenge himself upon the king of Ch'in.

Fa-pao (n.d.) A priest of the T'ang dynasty who contributed to the translation of Buddhist scriptures as one of Hsüan-tsang's major disciples. He also wrote a commentary on *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*.

Fa-tao (1086–1147) A priest who remonstrated with Emperor Hui-tsong of the Sung dynasty when the emperor supported Taoism and attempted to suppress Buddhism. He was branded on the face and exiled to Tao-chou, south of the Yangtze River.

Fa-tsang (643–712) The third patriarch of the Flower Garland school in China. He learned the teachings from Chih-yen and contributed greatly to the systematization of the Flower Garland doctrine.

Fa-tsu (n.d.) Also, Po-yüan and Po Fa-tsu. A priest and translator of Buddhist scriptures in the Western Chin dynasty (265–316). He built a Buddhist monastery at Ch'ang-an where he lectured on and translated Buddhist scriptures. In 305 he set out for Lung-yu in order to live in retirement. Because of his refusal to work for Chang Fu, the local governor of Ch'in-chou, and also because of slander by someone whom he had defeated in debate, he was killed on his way to Lung-yu.

Fa-yün (467–529) A priest of Liang-dynasty China, revered as one of the three great teachers of the Liang dynasty, together with Chih-tsang and Seng-min. In 508 he was appointed chief priest of Kuang-che-ssu temple by Emperor Wu. He

was often invited by the emperor to lecture at court, and in 525 he was appointed general administrator of priests.

fifteen great temples The major temples of the Nara period (710–794) and the Heian period (794–1185), including the seven major temples. *See also seven major temples.*

fifth five-hundred-year period The last of the five five-hundred-year periods following Shakyamuni's death. It corresponds to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. According to the Great Collection Sutra, this period is one of contention and strife in which Shakyamuni's teachings will be obscured and lost.

fifth watch The hour of the tiger (3:00–5:00 A.M.).

fiftieth person *See continual propagation to the fiftieth person.*

fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice Also, the fifty-two stages of practice. The fifty-two stages through which a bodhisattva progresses toward Buddhahood. They consist of ten stages of faith, ten stages of security, ten stages of practice, ten stages of devotion, ten stages of development, the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, and the stage of perfect enlightenment.

fifty-two stages of practice *See fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.*

Firmly Established Practices One of the four bodhisattvas who are the leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

first stage of development The first of the ten stages of development, which corresponds to the forty-first of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. This stage is also called the stage of joy.

first stage of security The first of the ten stages of security, which corresponds to the eleventh of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. This stage is regarded as the point at which bodhisattvas no longer regress in practice.

five ascetic practices Five rules of conduct. They are: (1) to wear clothing of patched rags, (2) to subsist only on alms, (3) to eat only one meal a day, (4) to remain always outdoors, and (5) to refrain from eating sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, or salty food.

five ascetics The first converts of Shakyamuni Buddha. Their names are generally given as Ajnata Kaundinya, Ashvajit, Bhadrīka, Dashabala Kashyapa, and Mahanama. When Shakyamuni renounced secular life, his father, Shuddhodana, anxious about his son's safety, dispatched these five men to accompany him, and together with Shakyamuni they engaged in ascetic practice. However, when Shakyamuni forsook asceticism, they thought that he had abandoned the search for truth altogether and left him, going to Deer Park to continue their austerities. After he attained enlightenment, Shakyamuni went to Deer Park to preach to them, and they became his first followers.

Five Canons The writings of the Five Emperors, or the five legendary sage emperors in China—Shao Hao, Chuan Hsü, Ti Kao, T'ang Yao, and Yü Shun. The *Five Canons* is mentioned in early Chinese writings but is not extant.

five cardinal sins The five most serious offenses in Buddhism. Explanations vary according to sutras and treatises. The most common version is: (1) killing one's father, (2) killing one's mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) injuring a Buddha, and (5) causing disunity in the Buddhist Order.

five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo The Mystic Law, or Myoho-enge-kyo. The Law, or Myoho-enge-kyo, is so called because it consists of the five Chinese characters of *myo*, *ho*, *ren*, *ge*, and *kyo*.

five components Also, the five components of life and the five aggregates. The constituent elements of form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness that unite temporarily to form an individual living being. The five components also constitute the first of the three realms of existence.

- five constant virtues** Also, the five great principles of humanity: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and good faith. They were set forth in Confucianism as the principles by which one should always abide.
- five desires** The desires resulting from the contact of the five sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) with their respective objects (form, sound, smell, taste, and texture).
- five elements** The five constituents of all things in the universe. They are earth, water, fire, wind, and space.
- Five Emperors** The five legendary sage emperors in China who are said to have reigned after the Three Sovereigns. There are three different sets of Five Emperors in the classics. One of them lists Shao Hao, Chuan Hsü, Ti Kao, T'ang Yao, and Yü Shun.
- five five-hundred-year periods** Five consecutive periods following Shakyamuni's death, during which Buddhism is said to spread, prosper, and eventually decline. These five periods are described in the Great Collection Sutra and predict the course of Buddhism in the first twenty-five hundred years following Shakyamuni's death. In chronological sequence, the five five-hundred-year periods are: (1) the age of attaining emancipation, (2) the age of meditation, (3) the age of studying and reciting the sutras and receiving lectures on them, (4) the age of building temples and stupas, and (5) the age of quarrels and disputes in which Shakyamuni's teachings will be obscured and lost. Periods (1) and (2) constitute the Former Day of the Law, (3) and (4), the Middle Day of the Law, and (5), the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law.
- five flavors** Also, the five tastes. The flavors of fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee—the five stages in the process by which milk is made into ghee, the finest clarified butter. These five flavors were used by T'ien-t'ai as a metaphor for the teachings of the five periods. The "five periods" is a classification by T'ien-t'ai of Shakyamuni's entire body of teachings according to the order in which they were expounded.
- fivefold meditation** Esoteric practices of meditation consisting of: (1) perceiving the mind of enlightenment, (2) arousing the mind of enlightenment, (3) achieving the adamantine mind, (4) obtaining the adamantine body, and (5) obtaining the body of the Buddha.
- five heavens of purity** Also called the heavens of purity. The five highest heavens in the world of form. One who reaches the stage of the non-returner, or the second highest of the four stages of Hinayana enlightenment, is said to be reborn in these heavens.
- five hundred precepts** Rules of discipline to be observed by fully ordained nuns of Hinayana Buddhism. "Five hundred" is not a literal figure; the actual number differs from one source to another. *The Fourfold Rules of Discipline* lists 348 precepts.
- five impurities** Impurities of the age, of desire, of living beings, of view, and of life itself. They are mentioned in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
- five kinds of sundry practices** Also, the five sundry practices. They are: (1) to read and recite any sutra other than the three Pure Land scriptures, (2) to meditate on any Buddha other than Amida Buddha, (3) to worship any Buddha other than Amida Buddha, (4) to invoke the name of any Buddha other than Amida Buddha, and (5) to extol and make offerings to any Buddha other than Amida Buddha. Set forth by Shan-tao, a patriarch of the Pure Land school, they are contrasted with the "five correct practices," which are directed toward Amida Buddha.
- five kinds of wisdom** In the teachings of the True Word school, the five aspects

of Mahavairochana Buddha's wisdom. They are: (1) the wisdom of the essence of the phenomenal world, (2) the great round mirror wisdom, (3) the non-discriminating wisdom, (4) the wisdom of insight into the particular, and (5) the wisdom of perfect practice.

five major principles The five viewpoints from which T'ien-t'ai interpreted the Lotus Sutra. They are designation or name, entity, quality, function, and teaching. In his *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai explains that *Myohorenge-kyo*, the title of the Lotus Sutra, is not only the name but the entity of the Lotus Sutra, and is endowed with a unique quality, function, and position among all teachings.

five natures Also, the five distinct natures. A doctrine set forth by the Dharma Characteristics school, dividing human beings into five groups according to their inborn religious capacity. The five groups are: (1) those predestined to be voice-hearers, (2) those predestined to be cause-awakened ones, (3) those predestined to be bodhisattvas, (4) an indeterminate group, and (5) those without the capacity for enlightenment. Neither of the first two groups can attain Buddhahood. The third group can eventually attain Buddhahood because they possess the seed of enlightenment. These three are called the determinate groups, because the state they will achieve is predetermined. People in the indeterminate group possess two or more of the first three natures, but which nature will develop is not predetermined. Those in the fifth group cannot attain enlightenment but must transmigrate through the six paths for eternity.

five obstacles The limitations that were said to prevent a woman from becoming a Brahma, a Shakra, a devil king, a wheel-turning king, or a Buddha. Together with the three types of obedience to which women are subject, the five obstacles are often referred to as the five obstacles and three obediences.

five or seven characters The five characters of *myo, ho, ren, ge, and kyo*. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, *Myohorenge-kyo* is often used synonymously with *Nam-myohorenge-kyo*, which consists of seven Chinese characters. *Nam* is a compound of two Chinese characters.

five paramitas Almsgiving, keeping the precepts, forbearance, assiduousness, and meditation—five practices omitting the obtaining of wisdom, the sixth of the six paramitas.

five paths The realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, human beings, and heavenly beings. These five paths plus the realm of asuras constitute the six paths.

five periods T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni's teachings according to the order of preaching. They are: (1) the Flower Garland period, or period of the Flower Garland Sutra, immediately following Shakyamuni's enlightenment; (2) the Agama period, or period of the Agama sutras, in which the Hinayana teachings were expounded; (3) the Correct and Equal period, when the Amida, Mahavairochana, Vimalakirti, and other sutras were set forth; (4) the Wisdom period, in which the Wisdom sutras were taught; and (5) the Lotus and Nirvana period, an eight-year interval in which Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus and Nirvana sutras.

five practices Various categories of five practices are set forth in Buddhism. The five practices described in the "Teacher of the Law" chapter of the Lotus Sutra consist of embracing, reading, reciting, expounding, and copying the Lotus Sutra.

five precepts The basic precepts expounded for lay people. They are: not to kill, not to steal, not to commit unlawful sexual intercourse, not to lie, and not to drink intoxicants.

five provinces and seven marches A general term for the administrative sectors

into which Japan was divided. This expression was also used to indicate the whole of Japan. The “five provinces” referred to the provinces surrounding the capital, or the site of the imperial court, which were Yamashiro, Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi, and Settsu. The “seven marches” referred to the regions into which the remaining sixty or so provinces were grouped, in accordance with the main roads extending from the capital.

five regions of India A term for ancient India, meaning all of India. The eastern, western, southern, northern, and central regions of India.

five sense organs Also, the five sensory organs. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body.

five signs of decay Five signs of decline that appear when the life of heavenly beings is about to end. These signs differ according to the sutras. According to one sutra, they are: (1) their clothes become soiled, (2) the flowers on their heads wither, (3) their bodies smell bad and become dirty, (4) they sweat under the armpits, and (5) they do not feel happy wherever they may be.

five spicy foods Also referred to as the five strong-flavored foods and by other similar expressions. Five kinds of pungent vegetables. The names of these vegetables differ according to the source. According to one account, they are garlic, scallions, leeks, rocamboles, and a plant of the dropwort family. According to another account, they are listed as garlic, scallions, leeks, onions, and ginger. In Buddhism, they were forbidden because of their strong odor and because of their stimulating effect when eaten. The five spicy foods were said to produce irritability and sexual desire.

five stages of practice Practice for believers in the Lotus Sutra to follow after Shakyamuni’s death, formulated by T’ien-t’ai on the basis of the contents of the “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter. They are: (1) to rejoice upon hearing the Lotus Sutra, (2) to read and recite the sutra, (3) to expound the sutra to others, (4) to embrace the sutra and practice the six paramitas, and (5) to perfect one’s practice of the six paramitas.

five thousand or seven thousand volumes of Buddhist scriptures Also, five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras. Generally, the entire collection of Buddhist scriptures. These numbers derive from two Buddhist catalogs in China. *The K’ai-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*, compiled in 730, lists 5,048 volumes of Buddhist works, and *The Chen-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*, compiled in 800, lists 7,388 volumes. These and other similar numbers refer to the entire body of Buddhist works. Though these catalogs contain the sutras, works on the rules of monastic discipline, and treatises, the numbers “five thousand” and “seven thousand” were employed to indicate the entire collection of sutras as well.

five transcendental powers Also, the five supernatural powers. The first five of the six transcendental powers. They are: (1) the power of being anywhere at will, (2) the power of seeing anything anywhere, (3) the power of hearing any sound anywhere, (4) the power of knowing the thoughts of all other minds, and (5) the power of knowing past lives.

five types of vision Also, the five types of eyes. The five kinds of perceptive faculty. They are: (1) the eye of common mortals, also called the physical eye, which distinguishes color and form; (2) the heavenly eye, or the ability of heavenly beings to see beyond the physical limitations of darkness, distance, or obstruction; (3) the wisdom eye, or the ability of those in the two vehicles to perceive that all phenomena are without substance; (4) the Dharma eye, by which bodhisattvas penetrate all teachings in order to save the people; and (5) the Buddha eye, which perceives the true nature of life spanning past, present, and

future. The Buddha eye also includes the other four perceptive faculties. In other words, the Buddhas possess the five types of vision.

five vehicles The five kinds of teaching expounded in accordance with the people's capacity. Vehicle means a teaching that brings people to a particular stage of attainment. The five are the vehicles of ordinary mortals, heavenly beings, voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas.

Flower Garland school Refers to the Chinese Hua-yen school and to the Japanese Kegon school. *Kegon* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word *hua-yen*, meaning flower garland. A school based on the Flower Garland Sutra. Tu-shun (557–640) was the first patriarch of the school in China, although Fa-tsang who systematized its doctrines can be considered the real founder. The founder of the Flower Garland school in Japan is considered to be Shinjo (Kor Simsang, d. 742), a priest from Korea. Todai-ji in Nara is the head temple of the school.

Flower Garland Sutra Also, the Avatamsaka Sutra. A compilation of the teachings Shakyamuni is said to have expounded immediately after his enlightenment. According to T'ien-t'ai's classification, the Flower Garland doctrines represent a very high level of teaching, second only to the Lotus Sutra. The sutra sets forth many stages of bodhisattva practice and teaches that all things constantly interrelate with and give rise to one another; that one permeates all and all are contained in one, and so on.

Forest of Merits One of the four great bodhisattvas appearing in the Flower Garland Sutra. Forest of Merits put forth the doctrine of the ten stages of practice in the Yama heaven at the fourth assembly described in the sutra.

Former Day of the Law Also, the period of the Correct Law. The first of the three periods following a Buddha's death, when teaching, practice, and proof are all present and those who practice Buddhism attain enlightenment. Some sources describe the Former Day of the Law of Shakyamuni as one thousand years, and others as five hundred years.

forty-eight vows Vows Amida Buddha is said to have made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury. Among these vows, the eighteenth vow—that all who place their trust in Amida Buddha shall obtain rebirth in the Pure Land—is the one most emphasized by the Pure Land school. *See also* **eighteenth vow**.

forty-two levels of ignorance (1) Different kinds of illusions associated with the final forty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, from the ten stages of security through the highest stage of perfect enlightenment. (2) The third of the "three categories of illusion." They are illusions about the true nature of life, illusions that prevent bodhisattvas from attaining enlightenment. The last and most deeply rooted of the forty-two is called fundamental darkness. According to T'ien-t'ai's teachings, one attains enlightenment by eradicating these successive levels of ignorance and finally freeing oneself from fundamental darkness.

four bodhisattvas Various kinds of four bodhisattvas appear in Buddhism. The leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth described in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra are Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices.

four categories of believers *See* **four kinds of believers**.

four categories of Buddhists *See* **four kinds of believers**.

four continents The continents situated respectively to the east, west, north, and south of Mount Sumeru, according to ancient Indian worldview. They are Purvavideha in the east, Aparagodaniya in the west, Uttarakuru in the north, and Jambudvipa in the south.

- four debts of gratitude** The debts owed to one's parents, to all living beings, to one's sovereign, and to the three treasures of the Buddha, the Law (the Buddha's teachings), and the Order (community of believers). The definition of the four debts of gratitude varies somewhat according to the source.
- four elements** The first four of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space.
- four evil paths** The realms of suffering one undergoes because of evil karma—hell and the realms of hungry spirits, animals, and asuras.
- four flavors** Also, the first four flavors and the four tastes. The first four of the five flavors—fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee (the finest clarified butter). T'ien-t'ai used the five flavors as a metaphor for the teachings of the five periods of Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, and Lotus and Nirvana, comparing the process by which Shakyamuni Buddha instructed his disciples and gradually developed their capacity to the process whereby milk is converted into ghee. The four flavors indicate all sutras expounded before the Lotus and Nirvana period, that is, the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. The ghee represents the Lotus Sutra.
- four flavors and three teachings** Also, the four tastes and three teachings. A term used to indicate the entire body of teachings preached prior to the Lotus Sutra. The four flavors indicate the first four of the five flavors—fresh milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee. The three teachings are the first three of the four teachings of doctrine—the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings.
- four forms of birth** A classification of the ways of coming into existence. They are: (1) birth from the womb; (2) birth from eggs; (3) birth from dampness or moisture—the way worms were thought to be generated; and (4) birth by transformation, that is, spontaneous birth without the womb, eggs, or dampness.
- four great seas** See **four seas**.
- four great voice-hearers** Maudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Katyayana, and Subhuti. Their attainment of Buddhahood is predicted in the "Bestowal of Prophecy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
- four heavenly kings** The heavenly kings Upholder of the Nation, Wide-Eyed, Vaishravana, and Increase and Growth. They are the lords of the four quarters who serve Shakra as his generals and protect the four continents. They live halfway down the four sides of Mount Sumeru.
- four infinite virtues** Boundless pity, compassion, joy, and impartiality. Pity here means to give living beings delight or happiness. Compassion means to remove their suffering. Joy means to rejoice at seeing them become free from suffering and gain happiness. And impartiality means to abandon attachments to love and hatred and be impartial toward everyone.
- four kalpas** Four periods of time corresponding to the four stages in the cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration that a world is said to repeatedly undergo.
- four kinds of believers** Also, the four kinds of Buddhists, the four categories of Buddhists, and the four categories of believers. Monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.
- four kinds of Buddhists** See **four kinds of believers**.
- four kinds of lands** A classification of the various types of lands mentioned in the sutras, which are: (1) the Land of Sages and Common Mortals, also called the Land of Enlightened and Unenlightened Beings, where ordinary mortals of the six lower worlds live together with the sages of the four noble worlds (from voice-hearers to a Buddha); (2) the Land of Transition, which is populated by

voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and lower-stage bodhisattvas; (3) the Land of Actual Reward, a realm inhabited by bodhisattvas in the higher stages; and (4) the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, the Buddha land free from impermanence and impurity.

four-line verse See **four-phrase verse**.

four major offenses Also, the four unpardonable offenses. Grave transgressions that carried the penalty of automatic expulsion of monks from the Buddhist Order. They are: killing, stealing, sexual intercourse, and lying (in particular, claiming to have attained some level of insight or understanding that one does not in fact possess).

four meditation heavens The four heavens that constitute the world of form. Individually, they are simply called the first meditation heaven, the second meditation heaven, and so on, and this represents an ascending order both in space and in quality. The four meditation heavens are further subdivided into eighteen heavens. When, by practicing the four stages of meditation, one has freed oneself from the illusions of the world of desire, one can be reborn in these four meditation heavens.

four noble truths A fundamental doctrine of Buddhism clarifying the cause of suffering and the way of emancipation. The four are the truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering, and of the path to the cessation of suffering. Specifically, they are explained as follows: (1) all existence is suffering; (2) suffering is caused by selfish craving; (3) the eradication of selfish craving brings about the cessation of suffering and enables one to attain nirvana; and (4) there is a path by which this eradication can be achieved, namely, the discipline of the eightfold path. The eightfold path consists of: (1) right views, (2) right thinking, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right way of life, (6) right endeavor, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right meditation.

four noble worlds The highest four of the Ten Worlds—the realms of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. These four noble worlds are also regarded as the states in which one makes efforts to transcend the uncertainty of the six paths, or six lower worlds, which are controlled by earthly desires and governed by an ever-changing environment, and to establish independence.

Four Peaceful Practices, The A work by Nan-yüeh. The formal title is *On the Peaceful Practices of the Lotus Sutra*. It explains practices set forth in the Lotus Sutra, particularly those mentioned in the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. The four peaceful practices are those of deeds, words, thoughts, and vows set forth in that chapter.

four-phrase verse Also, four-line verse. A group of four phrases composing a verse in the Chinese translation of a Buddhist sutra or treatise. A number of four-line or four-phrase verses constitute a complete verse section. The Lotus Sutra mentions the great benefit to be gained by embracing a single four-line verse.

four ranks of bodhisattvas Bodhisattvas who embrace and propagate the correct teaching after the Buddha’s death. They thereby serve as Buddhist teachers upon whom people can rely. They are also defined as those bodhisattvas who follow the four standards: (1) to rely on the Law and not upon persons; (2) to rely on the meaning of the teaching and not upon the words; (3) to rely on wisdom and not upon discriminative thinking; and (4) to rely on sutras that are complete and final and not upon those that are not complete and final. The expressions such as “bodhisattvas of the four standards” and “sages of the four standards” are often used in reference to the bodhisattvas and sages who appear in the world

after the Buddha's passing and spread his teachings in accordance with the four standards.

four ranks of sages Buddhist teachers upon whom people can rely. Though the four ranks represent the four levels of understanding, "the four ranks of sages" is often used as a generic term for such Buddhist teachers, irrespective of the level of their understanding.

four seas Also, the four great seas. The outermost seas surrounding Mount Sumeru, which is said to stand at the center of the world, lying in the four directions of north, east, south, and west. The "four seas" also refers to an entire country or the whole world.

four stages of faith The stages of faith of those who embrace the Lotus Sutra during Shakyamuni's lifetime. It is a principle that was formulated by T'ien-t'ai on the basis of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter of the sutra. The four stages are: (1) to produce even a single moment of belief and understanding in the sutra, (2) to generally understand the import of the words of the sutra, (3) to expound the teaching of the sutra widely for others, and (4) to realize the truth expounded by the Buddha with deep faith.

four stages of Hinayana enlightenment Also, the four stages of enlightenment in Hinayana Buddhism. The four levels of enlightenment that the voice-hearers aim to attain. In ascending order, they are the stage of the stream-winner (Skt *srota-apanna*), the stage of the once-returner (*sakridagamin*), the stage of the non-returner (*anagamin*), and the stage of arhat. The stage of the stream-winner indicates one who has entered the stream of the sages, in other words, the river leading to nirvana. At this stage one has eradicated the illusions of thought in the threefold world. At the stage of the once-returner, one has eradicated six of nine illusions of desire in the world of desire. Due to the remaining illusions, one will be born next in heaven and then once again in the human world before entering nirvana; hence the name once-returner. At the stage of the non-returner, one has eliminated the other three illusions of desire and will not be reborn in the world of desire. At the stage of arhat, one has eliminated all the illusions of thought and desire and has freed oneself from transmigration in the threefold world or six paths.

four stages of meditation Four levels of meditation that enable those in the world of desire to throw off illusions and be reborn in the four meditation heavens in the world of form. The first meditation leads one to the first heaven, and so on. The four meditation heavens are also regarded as the four levels of consciousness one can attain by practicing the corresponding meditation.

four teachings Usually refers to the four teachings of doctrine.

four teachings of doctrine Also, the four teachings. T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni's teachings according to content. They are the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings.

fourteen slanders Fourteen attitudes that one should avoid in Buddhist practice: (1) arrogance, (2) negligence, (3) wrong views of the self, (4) shallow understanding, (5) attachment to earthly desires, (6) not understanding, (7) not believing, (8) scowling with knitted brows, (9) harboring doubts, (10) slandering, (11) despising, (12) hating, (13) envying, and (14) bearing grudges.

four Vedas The four scriptures of Brahmanism—the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, and the Atharvaveda.

four wheel-turning kings The four types of wheel-turning kings—a gold-wheel-turning king, a silver-wheel-turning king, a copper-wheel-turning king, and an iron-wheel-turning king. It is said that, when a wheel-turning king, a sage ruler, ascends the throne, the wheel is given to him by heaven. While turn-

ing his own wheel, a wheel-turning king advances freely without obstruction and establishes peace.

Four White-Haired Elders Also, the Four White-Haired Elders of Mount Shang. Master Tung-yüan, Scholar Lu-li, Ch'i Li-chi, and Master Hsia-huang. They were recluses who lived on Mount Shang in China in the troubled times at the end of the Ch'in dynasty. They were persuaded by the statesman Chang Liang to leave retirement and come to the court of the newly founded Han dynasty, where they gave their support to the heir apparent, Emperor Kao-tsu's son by his consort Lü, who later came to the throne as Emperor Hui (r. 194–188 B.C.E.).

fundamental darkness Also, fundamental ignorance. The most deeply rooted illusion inherent in life, which gives rise to all other illusions and earthly desires.

fusion of reality and wisdom The fusion of the objective reality or truth and the subjective wisdom to realize that truth, which is the Buddha nature inherent within one's life. This fusion itself represents the attainment of Buddhahood.

Gango-ji A temple of the Flower Garland school in Japan. One of the seven major temples of Nara. The construction of this temple was begun in 588 by the court official Soga no Umako and was completed in 596.

Ganjin (688–763) (Chin Chien-chen) A Chinese priest who founded the Precepts school in Japan. He was invited to Japan to perform orthodox ordination ceremonies. After five attempts to make the voyage, he finally arrived in Japan in 753 and, the following year, conducted ceremonies conferring the precepts on the Retired Emperor Shomu, high court officials, and priests.

garuda (Skt) A huge bird in Indian mythology that feeds on dragons and is regarded as the king of birds. Garuda has been incorporated into Buddhism and is counted as one of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings. In the Chinese translations of the Buddhist scriptures, a garuda is often rendered as “golden-winged bird.”

Gautama The family name of Shakyamuni. “Gautama” is often used to refer to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Gautami See **Mahaprajapati**.

Gaya A city in Magadha. It is near Buddhagaya, the site of Shakyamuni's enlightenment.

Gayashirsha A mountain in India on which Shakyamuni is believed to have preached. It has been identified as the hill now known as Brahmayoni, located 1.5 kilometers southwest of Gaya city. Mount Gayashirsha was translated in Chinese as Elephant-Headed Mountain.

Gembo (d. 746) A priest of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan. After twenty years of study in China, he returned to Japan, bringing images of the Buddha as well as sutras, Buddhist treatises, and commentaries totaling more than five thousand volumes.

General Stone Tiger Li Kuang (d. 119 B.C.E.), a general who served Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty and excelled in archery. It is said that, once when he was out hunting, he mistook a stone in the grass for a tiger and shot at it with an arrow. Upon realizing that his target was in fact a stone, he was surprised to see that the tip of the arrow had embedded itself in the stone. He thus came to be known as General Stone Tiger. According to a later version of this anecdote, Li Kuang's father (his mother, by another account) had earlier been killed by a tiger. He mistook a stone in the grass for the tiger that had killed his parent and shot at it with an arrow.

Genji clan of Kai A powerful family descended from the Genji clan whose influence extended throughout Kai and Shinano provinces.

Genshin (942–1017) Also known as Eshin, a Tendai priest of Mount Hiei. In 985 he

compiled *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land*, which lent tremendous impetus to the establishment of the Pure Land school in Japan. Later he recanted and wrote *The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching*, a defense of the Tendai doctrine of the one vehicle of Buddhahood for all, in which he asserted the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. He was often called the Supervisor of Priests Genshin and also the Supervisor of Priests Eshin.

ghee The finest clarified butter, or the last of the five flavors (milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee), the stages in the process by which milk is made into ghee. The word ghee is used to indicate the supreme teaching. T'ien-t'ai used ghee as a metaphor for the Lotus Sutra, the highest of all the sutras.

Gijo-bo (n.d.) A senior disciple of Dozen-bo at Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province, where Nichiren Daishonin entered the priesthood. When the Daishonin refuted the errors of the dominant schools and declared the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in 1253, the steward of the village, Tojo Kagenobu, ordered his arrest. At that time, Gijo-bo and another priest named Joken-bo helped the Daishonin escape. They continued to correspond with him and sought his teaching. Nichiren Daishonin sent them several letters and treatises, including *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude*, *The Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei*, and *Flowering and Bearing Grain*.

Girika (n.d.) A notorious man in the state of Magadha during King Ashoka's time who killed many people, including his own father and mother.

Gishin (781–833) Dengyo's successor and the first chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school. When Dengyo traveled to China in 804, Gishin accompanied him as his interpreter. In 827 he established a Mahayana ordination center on Mount Hiei in fulfillment of Dengyo's wishes.

Gladly Seen Also, Gladly Seen by All Living Beings. A bodhisattva who appears in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra as a previous incarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King. He learned the Lotus Sutra from a Buddha called Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue and, in gratitude, anointed himself with oil and burned his body as an offering for twelve hundred years. He was reborn in the land of the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue and again served this Buddha. After the death of the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue, he burned his arms for seventy-two thousand years as a further offering.

gods of the sun and moon Deifications of the sun and moon.

Gohonzon The object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the embodiment of the Mystic Law permeating all phenomena. It takes the form of a mandala inscribed on paper or on wood with characters representing the Mystic Law as well as the Ten Worlds, including Buddhahood. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism holds that all people possess the Buddha nature and can attain Buddhahood through faith in the Gohonzon.

Gokuraku-ji A temple of the True Word Precepts school in Kamakura, built in 1259 by Hojo Shigetoki. Later Hojo Nagatoki invited Ryokan to act as chief priest. The temple was destroyed by fire in 1275, but was rebuilt in 1281 by Hojo Tokimune as the government's official place of prayer. In 1332 it became affiliated with the imperial court.

Gokuraku-ji, the lay priest of Hojo Shigetoki (1198–1261), the third son of Hojo Yoshitoki, the second regent of the Kamakura government. Shigetoki held several important posts and served as cosigner to Hojo Tokiyori, the fifth regent of the Kamakura government. A "cosigner" was an official subordinate to the regent who placed his signature next to that of the regent on official documents. After retiring from office, he lived at Gokuraku-ji temple, which he had founded as a devoted Nembutsu believer.

- Golden Light Sutra** A sutra that takes the form of a discourse by Shakyamuni on Eagle Peak. It teaches that those who embrace this sutra will obtain the protection of the four heavenly kings and other benevolent deities, and that, if a ruler takes faith in the correct teaching, his country will be protected by these deities. On the other hand, if he fails to protect the correct teaching, the benevolent deities will abandon the nation, and calamities and disasters will occur. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, the Golden Light Sutra refers to a Chinese translation by Dharmaraksha of the Northern Liang dynasty that is entitled the Golden Light Sutra, and it also refers to the Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light Sutra translated by I-ching of the T'ang dynasty. The Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light Sutra is a newer translation of the Golden Light Sutra and contains more chapters than the older version.
- Gomyo** (750–834) A priest of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan. In 827 he was designated administrator of priests. In 819 he petitioned the throne to protest Dengyo's attempt to construct a Mahayana ordination platform.
- Gonso** (758–827) A priest of the Three Treatises school in Japan. As the supervisor of priests, Gonso administered Todai-ji and Saidai-ji temples at Nara, and in 826 he was appointed general supervisor of priests.
- good friend** (Jpn *zenchishiki*) One who leads other people to the correct teaching. Buddhism teaches that one should associate with a good friend in order to pursue the way to enlightenment. In the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni describes Devadatta, his lifelong enemy, as a good friend because in a past life he received instruction in the Lotus Sutra from Devadatta. In like manner, the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the sutra describes the two brothers Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye as good friends to their father, King Wonderful Adornment, because they converted their father to Buddhism. This chapter defines a "good friend" as follows: "A good friend is the great cause and condition by which one is guided and led, and which enables one to see the Buddha and to conceive the desire for supreme perfect enlightenment." A "good friend" is also called a "good teacher" because he or she gives instruction in the correct teaching. In his writings, the Daishonin also refers to enemies as "good friends" to the extent that they help one strengthen one's resolve to carry out Buddhist practice. *See also evil friend.*
- Good Treasures** A bodhisattva in the Flower Garland Sutra who visits a total of fifty-three teachers in order to seek the truth.
- Gosho** The designation of the individual and collected writings of Nichiren Daishonin, made by his successor Nikko Shonin. The Japanese "sho" means writing and "go" is an honorific prefix.
- gradual teaching** Teachings expounded to gradually elevate people's capacities to an understanding of higher doctrines. One of the four teachings of method, or T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings according to the way in which they were expounded.
- Great Adornment** (1) A Buddha mentioned in the Buddha Treasury Sutra. According to the sutra, the Buddha Great Adornment lived in the extremely remote past. His life lasted for sixty-eight trillion years, and he amassed a following of sixty-eight trillion disciples. One hundred years after this Buddha's death, his followers split into five schools. Only the monk Universal Practice, the leader of one of the five schools, correctly upheld what Great Adornment had taught. The leaders of the four other schools, such as the monk Shore of Suffering, held erroneous views and, along with their followers, persecuted Universal Practice. For this reason, these four monks and their followers fell into hell. (2) A bodhisattva appearing in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra who rep-

resents the assembly on Eagle Peak that listened to Shakyamuni Buddha preach that sutra, an introductory teaching to the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha entrusted the sutra to him and the other eighty thousand bodhisattvas present, who then vowed to propagate it.

Great Arrogant Brahman (n.d.) A Brahman in the kingdom of Malava in India. He was overly proud and boastful of his erudition. When he was defeated in debate by a Mahayana Buddhist monk, Bhadraruchi, the king of Malava sentenced him to death. The Brahman was spared at Bhadraruchi's request but slandered him nevertheless. It is said that he fell into hell alive.

Great Collection Sutra A sixty-volume sutra preached by Shakyamuni Buddha to a great assembly of Buddhas and bodhisattvas who gathered from the ten directions. The Great Collection Sutra is a collection of sutras translated into Chinese by Dharmaraksha (385–433) and others. These sutras were compiled into a single sutra, or the Great Collection Sutra, by Seng-chiu of the Sui dynasty in 586. The work refers to the three calamities and predicts how the spread of Buddhism will unfold over the five five-hundred-year periods following Shakyamuni's death.

Great Commentary on the Abhidharma, The An exhaustive commentary on the Hinayana doctrines. This work was compiled in Kashmir in the former half of the second century. According to tradition, the compilation was carried out under the guidance of Parshva and the support of King Kanishka by five hundred arhats at the time of the Fourth Buddhist Council.

Great Concentration and Insight One of T'ien-t'ai's three major works. This work clarifies the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life based on the Lotus Sutra. And it elucidates the method of meditation for observing one's mind and realizing the principle within oneself.

Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra A reference to two different sutras: (1) Kumarajiva's translation of one of the major Wisdom sutras. Consisting of ninety chapters, it is also called the Larger Wisdom Sutra, in contrast to the Smaller Wisdom Sutra. It expounds the doctrine of supreme wisdom and the non-substantiality of all phenomena. Nagarjuna commented on the Sanskrit version of this sutra in his *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. (2) Another sutra translated by Kumarajiva under the same name. Consisting of only twenty-nine chapters, it is also called the Smaller Wisdom Sutra. Though considerably different in length, the Larger and Smaller Wisdom sutras set forth basically the same doctrines.

Great Power A bodhisattva said to possess great strength of wisdom and compassion with which to save people. According to the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, he attends Amida Buddha, together with Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

Great Teacher An honorific title awarded to priests of virtue in China and Japan by the imperial court, usually after their death.

Great Treasure Chamber The name of the vast court where the Great Collection Sutra was preached. According to the sutra, it is located between the world of desire and the world of form.

Great Universal Wisdom Excellence A Buddha who appeared and taught the Lotus Sutra major world system dust particle kalpas ago. His story appears in the "Parable of the Phantom City" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Originally a king who had sixteen sons, after he attained Buddhahood, he preached the Lotus Sutra at the request of his sixteen sons. All sixteen spread the Lotus Sutra as bodhisattvas, and the sixteenth son was reborn in the saha world as Shakyamuni.

Gridhrakuta See *Eagle Peak*.

- Gunamati** (c. 420–500) A monk of the Consciousness-Only school in southern India, revered as one of the ten great scholars of the school.
- Gunaprabha** (n.d.) A scholar of India who first studied the Mahayana but converted to the Hinayana after reading a Hinayana treatise. According to *The Record of the Western Regions*, he ascended to the Tushita heaven in order to resolve his doubts concerning the Hinayana and the Mahayana. There he met Bodhisattva Maitreya but did not respect or learn from him because Maitreya was not an ordained monk.
- Gyohyo** (722–797) A priest of the Three Treatises school in Japan. He became the chief priest of Sofuku-ji temple in Omi Province and was appointed as provincial teacher by the imperial court. In 778 he performed the ceremony in which Dengyo was ordained a priest.
- Hachiman** Also, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. One of Japan's main deities. Though originally a Shinto god, after the introduction of Buddhism to that country, Hachiman came to be closely associated with Buddhism. In the late twelfth century, Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, erected a shrine to Hachiman at Tsurugaoka in Kamakura, and the worship of Hachiman as a protective deity of the warriors and the villages spread throughout Japan. Since the Heian period (794–1185), Hachiman was regarded as the deified spirit of the fifteenth sovereign, Emperor Ojin.
- hakei** (Jpn) A legendary beast, resembling a tiger, that is said to eat its father.
- Han Po-yü** (n.d.) A man of the Former Han dynasty. His father died when he was young, and his mother raised him very strictly, often beating him with a staff. But he never cried. One day, however, his mother saw him weep when she beat him and asked the reason. Po-yü replied that he was grieved to realize that she was growing old and feeble.
- Heart Sutra** A short sutra containing the essence of the Wisdom sutras and briefly stating the doctrine of the non-substantiality or emptiness of all phenomena.
- Heat-Free Lake** Also, Anavatapta Lake. A lake said to give rise to the four rivers that nurture the soil in the four quarters of Jambudvīpa and to lie north of the Snow Mountains.
- heavenly devil** See **devil king of the sixth heaven**.
- heavenly gods and benevolent deities** Also, Buddhist gods, protective gods, tutelary gods, guardian gods, and so on. Gods who protect the correct Buddhist teaching and its votaries. These gods also work to protect the people and their land and bring fortune to both. "Heavenly gods and benevolent deities" is a generic term for Brahma, Shakra, the four heavenly kings, and other deities.
- heaven of the thirty-three gods** The second of the six heavens in the world of desire. It is said to be located on a plateau at the top of Mount Sumeru, where it is home to thirty-three gods, including Shakra who rules over the others.
- heavens of purity** See **five heavens of purity**.
- Hei no Saemon** (d. 1293) A leading official of the Hojo regency, also known as Hei no Saemon-no-jo and Taira no Yoritsuna. He served two successive regents, Hojo Tokimune and Hojo Sadatoki, and wielded tremendous influence as deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs (the chief being the regent himself). He played an active part in persecuting Nichiren Daishonin and his followers.
- hell** The realm of utmost suffering. Various kinds of hells are described in the sutras, such as the eight hot hells and the eight cold hells. Also, the first and lowest of the Ten Worlds. Viewed as a state of life, hell is a condition of extreme mental or physical suffering, characterized by an impulse of rage to destroy oneself.
- hell of incessant suffering** See **Avichi hell**.

- Hiei, Mount** The mountain in Japan where Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school, is located. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, it is often used to indicate Enryaku-ji itself. After the death of Dengyo, its founder, the Tendai school was greatly influenced by the esoteric teachings of the True Word school.
- Himatala** (n.d.) A ruler of the ancient kingdom of Tukhara in northern India about six hundred years after Shakyamuni's death. A devout Buddhist, he defeated King Krita of Kashmir who had suppressed Buddhism.
- Hinayana** The teaching that aims at attaining the state of arhat. Hinayana, literally "lesser vehicle," was originally a pejorative term used by Mahayana Buddhists, who regarded the practitioners of these teachings as preoccupied solely with achieving personal emancipation and indifferent to the salvation of others. Hinayana teachings are represented by the doctrines of the four noble truths and the twelve-linked chain of causation. They regard earthly desires as the cause of suffering and assert that suffering is eliminated only by eradicating earthly desires.
- Hiranyavati** Also, Ajitavati. A river that flows through Kushinagara in India. Shakyamuni passed away in a grove of sal trees near the west bank of this river. Some scholars regard the Ajitavati and Hiranyavati as different rivers.
- Honen** (1133–1212) Also known as Genku. The founder of the Pure Land school in Japan. He first studied the Tendai doctrines but later turned to chanting the name of Amida Buddha, urging people to discard all of Shakyamuni's teachings other than the three sutras on which the Pure Land school is based.
- Hsing-man** (n.d.) A priest of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school during the T'ang dynasty and a disciple of Miao-lo. When Dengyo arrived at Mount T'ien-t'ai from Japan in 804, Hsing-man taught him the T'ien-t'ai doctrine and entrusted him with the major works of the school.
- Hsüan-tsang** (602–664) A Chinese priest of the T'ang dynasty and a translator of Buddhist scriptures. He left for India in 629, where he studied the Consciousness-Only doctrine and other Buddhist teachings. In 645 he returned to China with numerous Sanskrit texts, many of which he later translated. His extensive travels are described in *The Record of the Western Regions*. Both he and his disciple Tz'u-en are regarded as the founders of the Dharma Characteristic school.
- Hsüan-tsung** (685–762) The sixth emperor of the T'ang dynasty. During his reign (712–756), the dynasty reached the height of its prosperity. However, he became infatuated with the beautiful concubine Yang Kuei-fei and began to neglect affairs of government. In 755, a rebellion broke out, headed by the military leader An Lu-shan, and the rebels ultimately captured the capital, forcing the emperor and his court to flee.
- Hui-k'ö** (487–593) The second patriarch of the Chinese Zen school.
- Hui-kuan** (368–438) A Chinese priest during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. He became a disciple of Kumarajiva and joined in the master's translation work. It is said that, after Kumarajiva's death, he assisted Buddhahadra with his translation of the Flower Garland Sutra. He also revised the two existing Chinese translations of the Nirvana Sutra and produced what is called the southern version of the sutra.
- Hui-kuang** (468–537) The founder of the Fourfold Rules of Discipline school, or the *Ssu-fen-lü* (Jpn *Shibunritsu*) school, in China. He studied the vinaya, or rules of monastic discipline. He joined in the translation work with Bodhiruchi and Ratnamati, and wrote a commentary on *The Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra*.
- Hui-k'uang** (534–613) A priest in China who was famed for his strict observance of the precepts and deep knowledge of Buddhism.

- Hui-kuo** (746–805) A Chinese T'ang-dynasty priest and the seventh patriarch of esoteric Buddhism. Hui-kuo was one of Pu-k'ung's six major disciples. He transferred the esoteric teachings to Kobo, the founder of the Japanese True Word school.
- Hui-neng** (638–713) A disciple of the fifth patriarch of Chinese Zen, Hung-jen, and the founder of the Southern school. After Hung-jen's death, Chinese Zen split into two branches—the Southern school headed by Hui-neng and the Northern school headed by Shen-hsiu. Hui-neng's words were recorded as *The Platform Sutra*.
- Hui-tsung** (1082–1135) The eighth emperor of the Northern Sung dynasty in China. He ascended the throne in 1100 but took little interest in ruling, devoting his time to calligraphy and painting. He was a follower of Taoism and suppressed Buddhism.
- Hui-yüan** (1) (523–592) A Chinese priest of the Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra school, or the Ti-lun (Jpn Jiron) school. He remonstrated with Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou dynasty when the latter threatened to abolish Buddhism. (2) (n.d.) A Chinese priest of the Flower Garland school from the late seventh century through the mid-eighth century during the T'ang dynasty. He became a disciple of Fa-tsang, the third patriarch of the Flower Garland school, and was well versed in the doctrines of the school.
- hundred worlds and thousand factors** “Hundred worlds” means the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds—the principle that each of the Ten Worlds possesses all ten within itself. Each of the hundred worlds in turn encompasses the ten factors, thus constituting “thousand factors.” In contrast to the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which includes all things in the universe, both sentient and insentient, the “hundred worlds and thousand factors” applies only to sentient beings.
- hungry spirits** Also, hungry ghosts. The spirits of the dead who, as described in the Buddhist scriptures, are suffering from hunger as karmic retribution for their greed and selfishness while alive. The realm of hungry spirits is one of the three evil paths and of the four evil paths. The realm of hungry spirits is also regarded as a state in which one is tormented physically or spiritually by relentless craving. Hungry spirits are often referred to by their Sanskrit name, *preta*.
- Hung Yen** (d. 660 B.C.E.) A retainer of Duke Yi (r. 668–660 B.C.E.) of the Chinese state of Wei. While Hung Yen was away on a journey, an enemy attacked the state of Wei, killed Duke Yi, and devoured his body, leaving only the duke's liver. Returning, Hung Yen beheld the disastrous scene and wept. He then slit open his own stomach and inserted the liver to save his lord from dishonor, and died. To the Chinese, the liver was the source of vitality.
- icchantika** (Skt) Persons of incorrigible disbelief who have no aspiration for enlightenment and thus no prospect of attaining Buddhahood. Many sutras say that icchantikas are inherently incapable of attaining enlightenment, but some Mahayana sutras hold that even icchantikas can become Buddhas.
- I-hsing** (683–727) A Chinese priest of the esoteric teachings and a disciple of Shan-wu-wei.
- Iki** A small Japanese island lying between Kyushu and the Korean Peninsula. In Nichiren Daishonin's day, it was devastated by the Mongol invasion of 1274. See also *Tsushima*.
- illusions of thought and desire** The first of the three categories of illusion formulated by T'ien-t'ai. Illusions of thought are distorted perceptions of the truth. Illusions of desire mean base inclinations such as greed and anger that arise from the contact of the five sense organs with their respective objects. The illusions of

thought and desire cause one to suffer in the six paths. For those of the two vehicles, ridding themselves of these illusions guarantees entry into nirvana and freedom from rebirth in the threefold world. Bodhisattvas go on to eradicate the remaining two categories of illusion.

Immeasurable Meanings Sutra A sutra that is regarded as an introductory teaching to the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni explains in this sutra that immeasurable meanings derive from a single Law and implies that this Law will be revealed in the Lotus Sutra. He then states that all the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra are expedient and provisional.

Immovable (1) A Buddhist deity said to protect practitioners by defeating the obstacles and devils that hinder Buddhist practice. A main deity among a group of deities, called the wisdom kings, who are said to destroy all obstacles. (2) Another name for the Buddha Immovable Wisdom said to live in the Golden-colored World in the eastern part of the universe.

incorrigible disbelief The state of *icchantikās*, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. *See also icchantika.*

Indra *See Shakra.*

Indra's net A net that hangs on a wall in the palace of Indra, or Shakra. A reflective jewel hangs in each space in the net, and each jewel mirrors all the other countless jewels in the net. Indra's net is frequently employed as an image for the interrelation or mutual inclusiveness of all phenomena.

inferior manifested body *See superior manifested body.*

initial stage of rejoicing The stage of practice in which one rejoices on hearing the Lotus Sutra. The first of the five stages of practice for believers of the Lotus Sutra after Shakyamuni Buddha's death, set forth by T'ien-t'ai on the basis of the "Distinctions in Benefits" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. *See also five stages of practice.*

Invincible (1) *See Virtue Victorious.* (2) A consort of the god of the sun, who is mentioned in the Mahavairocana Sutra.

Jambudvīpa One of the four continents situated in the four directions around Mount Sumeru. Jambudvīpa is located to the south and is the place where the Buddhas appear. It is often used in the sense of the entire world.

Jien (1155-1225) A priest of the Tendai school in Japan. Four times he assumed the position of chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school located on Mount Hiei.

Jikaku (794-866) Also known as Ennin or the Great Teacher Jikaku. The third chief priest of Enryaku-ji temple. In 838 he journeyed to China, where he studied both T'ien-t'ai's teachings and esoteric Buddhism. After returning to Japan, he became head of the Tendai school and later introduced esoteric elements into the Tendai doctrines.

Jimmu According to the oldest Japanese chronicles, the legendary first emperor of Japan, who was said to have established the Japanese nation in 660 B.C.E.

Jivaka A skilled physician and devout Buddhist from the state of Magadha in India who served as minister to King Ajatashatru. He won renown for treating King Bimbisara and Shakyamuni Buddha. Jivaka dissuaded Ajatashatru from killing his mother and later persuaded the king to seek out the Buddha's teachings when the ruler broke out in malignant sores all over his body.

Joan-bo (n.d.) A priest at Renge-ji temple at Hanabusa in Tojo Village of Awa during Nichiren Daishonin's time. Renge-ji is thought to have been a branch temple of Seicho-ji.

Jogu *See Shotoku.*

Joken-bo (n.d.) *See Gijo-bo.*

Jokyu Disturbance A struggle that broke out between the imperial court and the Kamakura shogunate in 1221. The Retired Emperor Gotoba, along with two other retired emperors, attempted to break free of the domination of the regent Hojo Yoshitoki. But the imperial forces were defeated, and the shogunate deposed the reigning emperor, placed another on the throne, and exiled the retired emperors to distant islands.

Jufuku-ji A Zen temple of the Rinzai school located in Kamakura in Japan. It was built by Hojo Masako, the widow of Minamoto no Yoritomo, in 1200 and opened by Eisai. It is regarded as one of the five major Rinzai Zen temples of Kamakura and played a remarkable role in the early development of Zen in Japan.

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. c. 685–705) One of Japan's most outstanding poets, whose poems appear in *The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves (Man'yo shu)*, the earliest anthology of Japanese poems.

Kakuban See **Shokaku-bo**.

kalakula (Skt) Imaginary insects whose bodies were said to swell rapidly in a strong wind.

Kali A king who appears in a story about one of Shakyamuni Buddha's previous lives. When a hermit, a previous incarnation of Shakyamuni, was carrying out the practice of forbearance, the king Kali desired to test whether he was truly engaged in that practice. He cut off the hermit's hands, feet, ears, and nose. When he saw that the hermit remained unperturbed, however, he was struck with awe and deeply repented his action, and thereafter frequently invited the hermit to his palace and made offerings to him.

Kalodayin A follower of Shakyamuni Buddha. When Shakyamuni was a prince, Kalodayin was his subject. Later Kalodayin renounced secular life and became a disciple of the Buddha. He is said to have often broken the precepts. Later, however, he is said to have attained enlightenment and converted 999 families in Shravasti. According to *The Ten Divisions of Monastic Rules*, Kalodayin was given offerings by a woman when he was going about begging for alms in Shravasti. Being jealous, her husband killed Kalodayin and buried his head in horse dung.

kalpa (Skt) An extremely long period of time. Sutras and treatises differ in their definitions, but kalpas fall into two major categories, those of measurable and immeasurable duration. There are three kinds of measurable kalpas: small, medium, and major. One explanation sets the length of a small kalpa at approximately sixteen million years. According to Buddhist cosmology, a world repeatedly undergoes four stages: formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration. Each of these four stages lasts for twenty small kalpas and is equal to one medium kalpa. Finally, one complete cycle forms a major kalpa.

kalpa of continuance The period corresponding to the second stage of the four-stage cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration. In this kalpa a world and its inhabitants continue to exist. In this period the life span of human beings is said to repeat a cycle of change, decreasing by a factor of one year every hundred years until it reaches ten years, and then increasing at the same rate until it reaches eighty thousand years. It then decreases again until it reaches ten years, and so on. A period when the human life span is lengthening is called a kalpa of increase, while a period when it is diminishing is called a kalpa of decrease.

kalpa of decline The period of time during which a world decays; one of the four stages in the cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration.

kalpa of decrease A period in which the human life span diminishes. In the kalpa of continuance, the life span of human beings is said to repeatedly undergo

a pattern of decrease and increase. Any period of diminution is called a kalpa of decrease.

kalpa of formation The period of time in which a world takes shape and living beings appear; the first of the four-stage cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration that a world is said to repeatedly undergo.

Kamakura government Also, Kamakura shogunate. Japan's first military or warrior government, established by Minamoto no Yoritomo in Kamakura. The rule of the Kamakura government—corresponding to the Kamakura period in Japanese history—is dated from 1185, when the system of appointed provincial constables and estate stewards by which it controlled the country was instituted. Yoritomo was given the title shogun in 1192. Because Yoritomo's successors were young and lacking in leadership, a shogunal regency was set up. The regency became the de facto authority. The office of regent was held by members of the Hojo family until the Kamakura shogunate was overthrown in 1333.

Kanroku (n.d.) (Kor Kwallük) A seventh-century priest of Paekche, an ancient state on the Korean Peninsula. In 602 he brought the teachings of the Three Treatises and the Establishment of Truth schools, as well as works relating to the calendar, astronomy, and geography, to Japan. In 624 he was given the title administrator of priests by the imperial court, the first time this title was bestowed in Japan.

Kanto The eastern part of Japan, including present-day Tokyo. By Nichiren Daishonin's day, the seat of national authority had shifted from Kyoto to Kamakura, which also lies in Kanto. Kanto, the Kanto government, and the Kanto authorities also refer to the Kamakura government.

Kapila A legendary figure said to be the founder of the Samkhya school, one of the six major schools of Brahmanism in ancient India.

Kashyapa (1) A bodhisattva to whom Shakyamuni Buddha addressed the "Bodhisattva Kashyapa" chapter of the Nirvana Sutra. In this sutra, he asks Shakyamuni thirty-six questions. (2) A bodhisattva who is regarded as the previous incarnation of Lao Tzu. (3) The sixth of seven Buddhas of the past, the last of whom is Shakyamuni.

Kashyapa Matanga (n.d.) Also simply called Matanga. Together with Chu Fa-lan, one of two Indian monks traditionally believed to have first introduced Buddhism to China. It is said that in c.e. 67 they traveled from India to Lo-yang in China at the request of Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty.

Katsu A Tungusic nation that ruled over the northeastern part of China and northern Korea in the Sui and T'ang periods. According to old maps, a "land to the east of T'ang and to the west of Katsu," as described in Dengyo's *Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra*, would indicate Japan.

Katyayana One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples, respected as the foremost in debate.

Kencho-ji The head temple of the Kencho-ji branch of the Rinzai school of Zen, located in Kamakura in Japan. One of the five major Rinzai temples in Kamakura. At one time it had more than five hundred branch temples. Hojo Tokiyori built Kencho-ji temple in Kamakura in 1253, inviting Doryu (Chin Tao-lung), a priest from Sung China, to be the first chief priest.

Kennin-ji The head temple of the Kennin-ji branch of the Rinzai school of Zen, one of the five major Rinzai Zen temples in Kyoto. It was founded in 1202 by Eisai and built by the shogun Minamoto no Yoriie. Although Kennin-ji was the first Zen temple in Kyoto, because of pressure from the older schools, the doctrines of the Tendai and True Word schools were also taught there. However, in 1265 Doryu (Chin Tao-lung), a priest from Sung China, took up residence

there, and from that time the temple was used exclusively for Zen practice.

Kharadiya One of seven concentric gold mountain ranges that, according to ancient Indian cosmology, are said to surround Mount Sumeru.

Kimmei (509–571) The twenty-ninth or, depending on how the lineage is calculated, thirtieth emperor of Japan. According to tradition, Buddhism was introduced from Korea during Kimmei's reign.

Kiyomori See **Taira no Kiyomori**.

Kobo (774–835) Also known as Kukai or the Great Teacher Kobo. The founder of the True Word school in Japan. He traveled to China in 804, where he studied the esoteric doctrines and rituals. After returning to Japan in 806, he devoted himself to the dissemination of the esoteric teaching and established a temple complex on Mount Koya.

Kocho era The period in Japan from 1261 to 1264. In 1264, the era name changed to Bun'ei. Nichiren Daishonin's exile to Izu Province took place during the Kocho era.

Koguryō One of three ancient kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula, along with Silla in the southeast and Paekche in the southwest. Established in the first century B.C.E., Koguryō dominated northern Korea, but in 668 it was conquered by Silla and the Chinese forces of Kao-tsung, the third emperor of the T'ang dynasty.

Kojo (779–858) A disciple of Dengyo who exerted himself to realize Dengyo's dream of establishing a Mahayana ordination hall on Mount Hiei. The Tendai school received imperial permission for construction seven days after Dengyo's death, in 822. Later Kojo became the superintendent of Enryaku-ji temple.

Kokalika A member of the Shakya tribe and an enemy of Shakyamuni. Falling under Devadatta's influence, he slandered the Buddha's disciples, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, and is said to have fallen into hell alive.

koku (Jpn) A unit of volume equal to about 180 liters or about 5 bushels.

Kompon Also, the Great Teacher Kompon. Another name of the Great Teacher Dengyo. Kompon means fundamental.

Koryō A kingdom that was established in north-central Korea in 918 and ruled the Korean Peninsula from 935 to 1392.

koti (Skt) An ancient Indian numerical unit. There are various interpretations as to the value of this unit; koti is defined as 100,000, 10,000,000, and so on.

Krita (n.d.) A king of Kashmir in India who opposed Buddhism. After he became king, he was conquered by Kanishka, king of Gandhara. But upon Kanishka's death, he regained his throne and banished the Buddhist monks, destroying Buddhism in the area. He was therefore killed by Himatala, king of Tukhara and a patron of Buddhism.

Kshatriya (Skt) The second highest of the four classes or castes in ancient India, just below the Brahmans or priestly class. Its members were nobles and warriors, and it was the ruling class in secular affairs.

Kuan Lung-feng A minister to King Chieh, the last king of the Hsia dynasty. King Chieh led a dissolute life and caused his people great distress. Kuan Lung-feng remonstrated with him, but Chieh gave no ear to his admonitions and had him beheaded. After that the Hsia dynasty rapidly declined and was destroyed by King T'ang of the Yin (Shang) dynasty. The Hsia dynasty is traditionally considered to have ended in 1766 B.C.E. Together with Pi Kan, Kuan Lung-feng was regarded as a model of loyalty.

K'uei-chi See **Tz'u-en**.

Kukai See **Kobo**.

Kukkutapada Also, Mount Gurupadaka. A mountain in the kingdom of Magadha well known as the place where Mahakashyapa died.

- Kumarajiva** (344–413) A prominent scholar who translated a number of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. In 401 he went to Ch'ang-an and immersed himself in the translation of Buddhist scriptures including the Lotus Sutra. His translation of the Lotus Sutra became the most widely used version in China and Japan. Titled *Myoho-renge-kyo* in Japanese, it is the translation Nichiren Daishonin relied upon in elucidating Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings.
- Kumarayana** (n.d.) The father of Kumarajiva and the son of a chief minister of one of the ancient Indian kingdoms in the fourth century. He gave up his position in order to enter the Buddhist Order. He left India and crossed the Pamir range to the north, traveling toward China. In the country of Kucha, he was officially welcomed by the king, who offered him the hand of his sister, Jivaka. They were married and named their son Kumarajiva, combining their names. According to legend, when Kumarayana left India, he brought with him a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is said that by day he carried the statue, and by night the statue carried him.
- kumbhanda** (Skt) A class of demons. They are said to be attendants of Increase and Growth, one of the four heavenly kings.
- K'un-lun Mountains** A mountain range in the western region of China. The K'un-lun Mountains cover an area between Pamir to the west and Tsinghai of western China to the east, and from the Tarim Basin to the north and the Plateau of Tibet to the south. The K'un-luns were traditionally believed to house precious stones or jewels in great abundance.
- Land of Eternally Tranquil Light** Also, the Land of Tranquil Light. The Buddha land, which is free from impermanence and impurity.
- Land of Peace and Sustenance** See **Perfect Bliss**.
- Land of Perfect Bliss** See **Perfect Bliss**.
- Land of Tranquil Light** See **Land of Eternally Tranquil Light**.
- Larger Wisdom Sutra** Another name for the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva. The title "Larger Wisdom Sutra" is used to distinguish it from a much shorter text also called the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra. This shorter scripture, also translated by Kumarajiva, is referred to as the Smaller Wisdom Sutra.
- last five-hundred-year period** Fifth five-hundred-year period or the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law.
- Latter Day of the Law** Also, the Latter Day, the latter age, or the period of the Decadent Law. The last of the three periods following a Buddha's death, when Buddhism falls into confusion and his teachings lose the power to lead people to enlightenment. The Latter Day of the Law of Shakyamuni is said to last for ten thousand years or more. In Japan it was believed that the Latter Day had begun in 1052.
- Law** In Nichiren Daishonin's teaching, specifically, the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and generally, the Buddha's teachings.
- lay nun** (Jpn ama) A female believer of Buddhism who has taken the tonsure as a nun has done, but continues to live as a lay member of society. "Lay nun" is the female equivalent of lay priest (nyudo). "Lay nun" was often affixed to the names of women who had been tonsured and lived a lay life.
- lay priest** (Jpn nyudo) One who is tonsured as a priest but continues to live as a layman. In Japan, from the Heian period (794–1185) on, a distinction was made between lay priests and those who formally renounced the secular world and lived in temples. The term lay priest is a translation of the Japanese term nyudo, which literally means "entering the way," that is, "entering the way of the Buddha."

- Learned Youth** The name of Shakyamuni Buddha when he practiced bodhisattva austerities in a past existence. He offered lotus blossoms to the Buddha Fixed Light and, because of this, was assured of attaining Buddhahood in the future.
- Li** (n.d.) The consort of Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty in China, said to possess matchless beauty.
- Liang dynasty** A Chinese dynasty that existed from 502 through 557. Emperor Wu (r. 502–549), the first ruler of the Liang dynasty, is well known as a devout Buddhist. The capital city was Chien-yeh. The Liang was replaced by the Ch'en dynasty.
- Liang-hsü** (n.d.) The ninth successor to T'ien-t'ai. He taught the doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school to Chisho, the fifth Tendai patriarch in Japan, when he went to China in 853.
- “Life Span” chapter** The sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, regarded as the key chapter of the essential teaching. Shakyamuni reveals here that he first attained enlightenment not in this lifetime but numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, and that ever since then he has been in the saha world, preaching the Law.
- Li Kuang** *See* **General Stone Tiger**.
- Li Ling** (d. 74 B.C.E.) A military commander during the Former Han dynasty who was taken captive by northern barbarians during a battle. When news of his defeat reached the court, Emperor Wu, thinking that Li Ling had revolted against the Han dynasty, ordered his entire family killed. Later, when the emperor realized his mistake, he offered to secure Li Ling's return. But Li Ling refused and eventually died in the land of the northern barbarians.
- Lion Sound King** A Buddha said to have appeared immeasurable kalpas ago. He is mentioned in the Non-substantiality of All Phenomena Sutra. All trees in his land issue the Dharma sound that leads people to attain the way. According to the sutra, in the latter age after his passing, the monk Root of Joy appears and expounds the correct teaching; in spite of being slandered by the monk Superior Intent, Root of Joy persists and attains enlightenment.
- lion throne** Also called lion seat. The place where a Buddha sits, so called because a Buddha is likened to a lion.
- Liu Pang** (247–195 B.C.E.) A native of P'ei in China and later Emperor Kao-tsu, or the founder of the Former Han dynasty. He is often referred to by the title “governor of P'ei.” He and another warlord, Hsiang Yü, contended for power, taking advantage of the confusion following the death of the First Emperor of the Ch'in in order to raise troops and attempt to overthrow the dynasty. A protracted struggle between the two ended in the victory of Liu Pang, who founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C.E.
- long broad tongue** Also, face-covering tongue. One of a Buddha's thirty-two features. It symbolizes the truth of his words. The Buddhas extending their tongues to the Brahma heaven in testimony to the truth of the Lotus Sutra is described in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter.
- lord of the essential teaching** (1) The Buddha who, in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, reveals his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. (2) The eternal Buddha implicit in the “Life Span” chapter—the Buddha who embodies Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.
- Lotus meditation** A meditation based on the Lotus Sutra.
- Lotus school** Another name for the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school and for its counterpart, the Japanese Tendai school. The name derives from the fact that these schools made the Lotus Sutra central to their doctrine. The term Lotus school

also came to refer to the Buddhism established by Nichiren Daishonin, who also asserted the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra over all the other teachings of Shakyamuni.

Lotus Sutra A Mahayana sutra that reveals the true aspect of all phenomena and Shakyamuni's true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. One of the most popular Buddhist scriptures, it maintains that all people can attain Buddhahood. The original Sanskrit title is *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*. Three Chinese translations of the Sanskrit text are extant. Kumarajiva's translation, which is widely honored, is entitled the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. In China and Japan, the name Lotus Sutra usually indicates this translation by Kumarajiva. Nichiren Daishonin often uses the words Lotus Sutra in his writings to indicate Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the Law that he defined as the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

Lotus Treasury World The pure land described in the Flower Garland Sutra, where Vairochana Buddha is said to live.

Madhyantika A disciple of Ananda. He is regarded as the third of the twenty-four successors of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Mahadeva A monk who lived about one hundred years after Shakyamuni and provoked the first division within the Buddhist Order. Before joining the Order, he killed his father, his mother, and an arhat. Later he advanced his own arbitrary views regarding Buddhism, and controversy over them precipitated a schism in the Order.

Mahakashyapa Also known as Kashyapa. One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples; he was known as the foremost in ascetic practices. After Shakyamuni's passing, he became head of the Buddhist Order.

Mahaprajapati Also known as Gautami or Gotami. Foster mother to Shakyamuni and the younger sister of Maya, Shakyamuni's real mother. Mahaprajapati raised Shakyamuni when Maya died shortly after his birth. Later she became the first nun admitted to the Buddhist Order.

mahasattva (Skt) A "great being," another term for a bodhisattva.

Mahavairochana Often referred to as the Thus Come One Mahavairochana. A Buddha mentioned in the Mahavairochana and the Diamond Crown sutras, worshiped by adherents of the esoteric teaching and regarded by them as the Buddha of the Dharma body who personifies the unchanging truth of all phenomena and who is the source from which all Buddhas and bodhisattvas spring.

Mahavairochana Sutra One of the three basic scriptures of esoteric Buddhism. Reference in Nichiren Daishonin's writings is to a Chinese translation done in 725 by Shan-wu-wei with I-hsing's assistance. In this sutra, Mahavairochana Buddha describes the way to obtain Buddha wisdom, defining the aspiration for enlightenment to be the cause, great compassion to be the foundation, and skillful means to be the way of realization.

Mahayana The great vehicle teaching, or the teaching that expounds the enlightenment of all and aims at the salvation of all living beings. It expounds the bodhisattva practice as the means toward the enlightenment of both oneself and others, in contrast to Hinayana, the teaching that aims only at personal salvation, or attaining the state of arhat.

Mahayana ordination platform Also, a Mahayana ordination hall or Mahayana ordination center. A place where the ceremony for conferring Mahayana precepts is conducted. Before Dengyo, priests in Japan had been ordained exclusively in the Hinayana precepts. Dengyo repeatedly sought imperial permission to establish a Mahayana ordination center at Mount Hiei, over the objections of the Buddhist schools at Nara. Permission was finally granted in 822, seven

days after Dengyo's death, and a Mahayana ordination platform was erected there in 827.

Maheshvara A god who reigns over the major world system. Originally he was one of the major Hindu gods. His name means the God of Great Freedom.

Maitreya A bodhisattva predicted to succeed Shakyamuni as a future Buddha. He is said to have been reborn in the Tushita heaven and to reside in the inner court of this heaven. Therein he is now expounding the teaching to the heavenly beings. It is said that he will reappear in this world 5,670 million years after Shakyamuni's death to save people. Traditionally regarded as the teacher of Asanga, a scholar of the Consciousness-Only doctrine, who by means of supernatural powers is said to have ascended to the Tushita heaven in order to receive the bodhisattva's instruction. However, some scholars have come to identify Asanga's teacher with a historical personage named Maitreya.

major world system Also, thousand-millionfold world. One of the world systems in ancient Indian cosmology. A world consists of a Mount Sumeru, its surrounding seas and mountain ranges, a sun, a moon, and other heavenly bodies, extending upward to the first meditation heaven in the world of form and downward to the circle of wind that forms the basis of a world. One thousand worlds make up a minor world system; one thousand minor world systems constitute an intermediate world system; and one thousand intermediate world systems form a major world system. Therefore, one major world system comprises one billion worlds. There were thought to be countless major world systems in the universe.

major world system dust particle kalpas (Jpn sanzen jintengo) An immensely long period of time described in the "Parable of the Phantom City" chapter of the Lotus Sutra to indicate how much time has passed since Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra to his voice-hearer disciples as the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence.

Malaya, Mount (Skt) A mountain in southern India. It was noted for its sandalwood trees.

mandala (Skt) An object of devotion on which Buddhas and bodhisattvas are depicted or on which the mystic doctrine is expressed. It was translated in China as meaning "perfectly endowed" or "cluster of blessings." In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, the Gohonzon is also called a mandala because it embodies all the practices and resulting virtues of all Buddhas.

mani (Skt) A jewel. The mani jewel also refers to a particular kind of jewel, which is said to have the power to remove misfortune, make muddy water clear, and cure illness.

manifested body One of a Buddha's three bodies. It is the physical form in which a Buddha appears in the world to save the people.

mani jewel See **mani**.

Manjushri Leader of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. He represents the virtues of wisdom and enlightenment and, together with Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, is depicted in the sutras as one of the two bodhisattvas who attend Shakyamuni Buddha.

mantra (Skt) A formula consisting of secret words or syllables that is said to embody mystic powers. Mantras are employed in the practice and ritual of esoteric Buddhism, where they are believed to help achieve union with Mahavairochana Buddha. The Sanskrit word mantra was translated into Chinese as "true word" (Jpn shingon).

Many Treasures A Buddha who appeared, seated within the treasure tower at the Ceremony in the Air, in order to lend credence to Shakyamuni's teachings in the

Lotus Sutra. According to the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he lives in the Land of Treasure Purity in the east. While still engaged in bodhisattva practice, he pledged that even after having entered nirvana he would appear in order to attest to the validity of the Lotus Sutra, wherever it might be taught.

Marichi A god originally thought of as a personification of the sun’s rays. In Buddhism, generally represented as going before the god of the sun as a vassal. Marichi was said to possess the power to become invisible and defeat an enemy without being captured and, for this reason, was worshiped particularly by the samurai in Japan. Some statues and writings depict Marichi as female.

markings of the thousand-spoked wheel *See* **thousand-spoked wheel pattern**.

Masakado (d. 940) Taira no Masakado, a distinguished warrior of the Taira clan who exercised great power in eastern Japan. He attacked government offices in Kanto and adopted the title of “New Emperor.” Soon thereafter, however, his forces were routed, and he was killed by his cousin, Taira no Sadamori, with the support of Fujiwara no Hidesato.

Matanga *See* **Kashyapa Matanga**.

Maudgalyayana One of Shakyamuni’s ten major disciples, known as the foremost in transcendental powers. Born to a Brahman family in Magadha, he was a close friend of Shariputra from childhood. They were at first disciples of Sanjaya Belatthiputta, one of the six non-Buddhist teachers, but later became followers of Shakyamuni.

Medicine King A bodhisattva said to possess the power to cure physical and mental diseases. The “Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes how he practiced austerities in a previous lifetime as a bodhisattva called Gladly Seen by All Living Beings.

Medicine Master Also, the Buddha of Medicine or the Buddha of Healing. The Buddha of the Pure Emerald World in the east, he is also known as the Buddha of the Eastern Region or the Thus Come One of the Eastern Region. While a bodhisattva, he made twelve vows to cure all illnesses and to lead all people to enlightenment. Belief in this Buddha was popular in both China and Japan, and many statues were made of him. Bhaishajyaguru, the Sanskrit name of this Buddha, means “teacher of medicine.”

Medicine Master Sutra A sutra that emphasizes the blessings of the Buddha Medicine Master. First, the sutra recounts a previous life of the Buddha Medicine Master in which, as a bodhisattva, he made twelve great vows to benefit the people. The great benefit of invoking his name is then described. The sutra also explains the seven disasters and asserts that making offerings to the Buddha Medicine Master can avert them and restore peace to the land.

meditation master A priest who has attained the level of meditation in which one is able to focus the mind on one point and remain in a state of concentration in order to eradicate illusions and contemplate the truth. “Meditation Master” was often applied as an honorific title, as is the case with the titles “Dharma Teacher” and “Discipline Master.”

Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra Also, the Meditation Sutra. One of the three basic scriptures of the Pure Land school. According to its content, the sutra was expounded by Shakyamuni at Rajagriha in Magadha at the request of Vaidehi, who was grieving over the evil acts of her son, Ajatashatru. Shakyamuni used his supernatural powers to show her the various pure lands, including Amida’s Pure Land. Since Vaidehi preferred Amida’s Pure Land over all the others, Shakyamuni expounded sixteen types of meditation to attain rebirth there.

- meditation on the five elements** An esoteric form of meditation intended to let one realize that self and environment are composed of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space; that the five parts of the body, namely, crown, face, chest, abdomen, and knees, are governed by the five syllables of the esoteric mantra, *avarahakha*; and that one's own life is ultimately one with the five Buddhas who are embodiments of the five aspects of Mahavairochana Buddha's wisdom.
- Meditation Sutra** An abbreviation of the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra. *See* **Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra**.
- medium kalpa** Any of the twenty kalpas that constitute the kalpa of continuance. These kalpas correspond to cyclic changes said to occur in the human life span. A medium kalpa is equal to 15,998,000 years. The term medium kalpa is also used to refer to any of the four kalpas of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration. *See also* **kalpa of continuance**.
- Miao-lo** (711–782) Also known as Chan-jan, the Venerable Ching-hsi, the Great Teacher Ching-hsi, and the Great Teacher Miao-lo. The sixth patriarch of the T'ien-t'ai school, counting from T'ien-t'ai. He is revered as the restorer of the school and wrote commentaries on T'ien-t'ai's major works, contributing to a clarification of the school's teachings. His principal works are *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,"* *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* and *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."*
- Middle Day of the Law** Also, the period of the Counterfeit Law. The second of the three periods following a Buddha's death. During this time the Buddha's teaching gradually becomes formalized, the people's connection to it weakens, and progressively fewer people are able to gain enlightenment through its practice. Some sources define the Middle Day of the Law of Shakyamuni as lasting a thousand years, while others define it as five hundred years.
- Middle Way** The way that transcends polar extremes. Thus the term Middle Way also indicates the true nature of all things, which cannot be defined by the absolutes of existence and nonexistence.
- Mihirakula** (n.d.) A king of the ancient kingdom of Cheka in India. He turned against Buddhism and banished the Buddhist monks. He later attempted to conquer Magadha but was instead captured by King Baladitya, who was a Buddhist. Released by the intercession of Baladitya's merciful mother, Mihirakula then fled to Kashmir and later killed its king. He went on to attack Gandhara where he destroyed temples and stupas and killed half of the people because they were Buddhists. That same year, however, he died and is said to have fallen into the hell of incessant suffering.
- Minamoto clan** Also, the Genji clan. The clan that established the Kamakura shogunate, Japan's first military government. In the late twelfth century, the Minamoto clan defeated the rival Taira clan, and Minamoto no Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto clan, established the Kamakura government. Both the Minamoto clan and the Taira clan were offshoots of the imperial family.
- Minamoto no Yoritomo** (1147–1199) The first shogun of the Kamakura government, who initiated a state administration by the warrior class. He shifted the virtual power of government from the imperial court in Kyoto to Kamakura.
- Mononobe no Moriya** (d. 587) A leading court official who opposed Buddhism and fought against Soga no Umako, another chief official who supported Buddhism.
- Mononobe no Okoshi** (n.d.) A leading court official in the reign of Emperor Kimmei (509–571). He criticized his rival at court, Otomo no Kanamura, also

a member of a prominent family, for his handling of Korean affairs and overthrew the entire Otomo family. Later, concerning Japan's acceptance of Buddhism, he opposed Soga no Iname, another important minister of the court, who maintained the acceptance of Buddhism. Mononobe no Moriya was his son.

Moon of Deliverance A bodhisattva who, during the ceremony described in the Flower Garland Sutra, begged Bodhisattva Diamond Storehouse to preach about the ten stages of development. *See also* **fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice**.

Moriya *See* **Mononobe no Moriya**.

Mother of Demon Children A demoness said to have been a daughter of a yaksha demoness in Rajagriha. She is said to have fed the babies of others to her own children. In the "Dharani" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, however, she and the ten demon daughters pledge to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

mudra (Skt) Signs and gestures made with the hands and fingers, which symbolize the enlightenment and vows of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Mudras are employed in the esoteric True Word school, which regards them as a way of achieving union with Mahavairochana Buddha.

Munemori (1147–1185) Taira no Munemori. The last head of the Taira clan. Under pressure from the rival Minamoto clan, Munemori fled westward from the capital, Kyoto, with the emperor Antoku. The Taira forces were finally defeated, however, at the naval battle of Dannoura. Munemori cast himself into the sea, but was captured and later beheaded.

mutual possession of the Ten Worlds The principle that each of the Ten Worlds contains all the other nine as potential within itself. This is taken to mean that an individual's state of life can be changed, and that all beings of the nine worlds possess the potential for Buddhahood.

Myoho-rence-kyo (Jpn) (1) The Mystic Law, or Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. (2) The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, the Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra by Kumarajiva. "Myoho-rence-kyo" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese title.

Myoun (1115–1183) The fifty-fifth and fifty-seventh chief priest of Enryaku-ji, the head temple of the Tendai school in Japan.

Mystic Law The ultimate truth of life and the universe, the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nagabodhi (n.d.) A native of southern India and the fourth in the lineage of the transfer of the esoteric teaching of the True Word school. He is said to have inherited the esoteric teaching from Nagarjuna and transferred it to Chin-kang-chih.

Nagarjuna (n.d.) A Mahayana scholar who lived in southern India between 150 and 250. He wrote many important treatises on a great number of Mahayana sutras and organized the theoretical foundation of Mahayana thought, thus making an inestimable contribution to its development. He is especially known for his systematization of the doctrine of non-substantiality. His treatises include *The Treatise on the Middle Way*, *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, and *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra*.

Nagoe, the lay nun of (n.d.) Also known as Oama (elder nun). A follower of Nichiren Daishonin and the wife of Hojo Tomotoki, a younger brother of Hojo Yasutoki, the third regent of the Kamakura government. Her husband was the lord of Nagasa District in Awa Province where the Daishonin was born. After the Daishonin entered the priesthood, she apparently assisted his parents in some way. Soon after the Daishonin proclaimed the teaching of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Oama became his follower. However, she abandoned her faith around the

time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. After the Daishonin came back from Sado Island and situated himself at Minobu, she again changed her mind and asked the Daishonin to grant her a Gohonzon. He refused, knowing her faith to be unreliable. He did, however, give a Gohonzon to Niiama (younger nun), the wife of Oama's son or grandson.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo The ultimate Law or reality that permeates all phenomena in the universe. It is also the invocation or daimoku in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Namu Amida Butsu "Homage to Amida Buddha." Also known as the Nembutsu. The phrase invoked by followers of the Pure Land school.

Nanda Shakyamuni's disciple and younger half brother, the son of Shuddhodana and Shakyamuni's maternal aunt Mahaprajapati. He is said to have been particularly handsome in appearance.

Nan-yüeh (515–577) Also known as Hui-ssu. T'ien-t'ai's teacher. He entered the priesthood at age fifteen and concentrated on the study of the Lotus Sutra. Later he studied under Hui-wen who taught him the meditation for observing the mind. He was often persecuted by those hostile to him, but he devoted himself to lecturing on the Lotus and Wisdom sutras. And he engaged in the practice of the Lotus Sutra and the training of disciples.

Narayana Originally the god Vishnu in Hindu mythology. He was incorporated into Buddhism as a protective deity said to possess great physical strength.

nayuta (Skt) An Indian numerical unit. Explanations differ according to the source. According to one account, it is one hundred billion (10^{11}), and to another account, ten million (10^7).

near-perfect enlightenment The fifty-first of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. The stage almost equal to the Buddha's perfect enlightenment, the last stage before a bodhisattva attains Buddhahood.

Nembutsu A Japanese term generally meaning to meditate on Amida Buddha or invoke his name. The practice of adherents of the Pure Land school. It was stressed as the means by which to attain rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. The term is also used to refer to the Pure Land school itself.

Nembutsu Chosen above All, The A work written by Honen that constitutes the basic text of the Japanese Pure Land school. In this work Honen explains the doctrine of Nembutsu and, basing himself on the three major sutras of the school, exhorts people to discard all teachings other than Nembutsu teachings. Its Japanese title is *Senchaku shu*.

Nen'a (1199–1287) Also known as Ryochu. The third patriarch of the Japanese Pure Land school, after Honen and Bencho.

Never Disparaging A previous incarnation of Shakyamuni who appears as a bodhisattva in the "Never Disparaging" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. After the death of the Buddha Awesome Sound King in the remote past, he showed respect toward all people for their innate Buddha nature. People ridiculed and attacked him with staves and stones, but he continued his practice. Those who slandered him fell into hell but, after expiating their offenses, were reborn with him and were saved by practicing the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Daishonin often cites the story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging to illustrate the principle of attaining enlightenment through reverse relationship, or connection that one forms with the Law by opposing or slandering it. The Daishonin also refers to the practice carried out by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who was cursed and attacked with staves and stones but thereby expiated his past offenses.

"Never Disparaging" chapter The twentieth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in which Shakyamuni illustrates both the benefit of embracing and practicing the

Lotus Sutra and the gravity of retribution for slandering its votaries with the story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.

Nichiro (1245–1320) One of Nichiren Daishonin's six senior disciples. Also called Chikugo-bo. Born in Shimosa Province, he converted to the Daishonin's teachings together with his father in 1254 and received the tonsure under his uncle Nissho. He was imprisoned at the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution in 1271.

Nikko Shonin (1246–1333) Nichiren Daishonin's closest disciple and immediate successor. Also called Hoki-bo. In 1258, when he was thirteen, he became the Daishonin's disciple. He joined the Daishonin in his two exiles, to Izu and Sado. Later, his propagation efforts led to the Atsuhara Persecution. At Minobu he recorded the lectures on the Lotus Sutra that the Daishonin gave to his disciples and compiled them as *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*. After the Daishonin's passing, Nikko Shonin collected and copied his teacher's writings, which he called the Gosho, or "honorable writings."

nine consciousnesses Nine levels of discernment. The first five consciousnesses correspond to the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. The sixth consciousness integrates the perceptions of the five senses into coherent images and makes judgments about the external world. The seventh consciousness corresponds to the inner spiritual world and generates awareness of the self and the ability to distinguish good from evil. The eighth consciousness, called alaya-consciousness, receives the results of one's good and evil deeds and stores them as karmic potentials or "seeds," which then produce the rewards of either happiness or suffering accordingly. The ninth consciousness, called amala-consciousness, which remains free from all karmic impurity, is defined as the basis of all life's functions and is identified with the true aspect of life, or the Buddha nature.

nine great ordeals Also, the nine great persecutions. The major hardships that Shakyamuni underwent, which are listed in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. They include Devadatta's attempt to crush him by dropping a boulder from atop a cliff and King Ajatashatru's attempt to kill him by loosing drunken wild elephants on him and his disciples.

nine great persecutions See **nine great ordeals**.

nine mountains Mount Sumeru and the eight concentric mountain ranges said to encircle it.

nine mountains and eight seas The mountains and seas that constitute the world, according to the ancient Indian view. The nine mountains are Mount Sumeru at the center of the world and eight concentric mountain ranges that surround it. These mountain ranges are separated by eight seas.

nine schools The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, True Word, plus either the Zen or the Pure Land school. The first eight schools and the Pure Land school appeared in Japan before the Kamakura period (1185–1333), while the Zen school emerged in the early Kamakura period.

ninety-five non-Buddhist schools Schools of Brahmanism said to have existed in Shakyamuni's time. Their names and particular doctrines are unknown. Another view holds that there were ninety-six schools of Brahmanists. The "ninety-five non-Buddhist schools" is also referred to as "the ninety-five schools of Brahmanists."

nine worlds The nine worlds, from hell to the world of bodhisattvas, often contrasted with the world of Buddhahood to indicate the transient and deluded states of life. The Lotus Sutra teaches that all beings of the nine worlds possess the potential for Buddhahood.

ninth period of decrease Usually refers to the ninth period of decrease in the kalpa of continuance. During the kalpa of continuance, the human life span is said to undergo a repeated cycle of decrease and increase. This decrease and increase is repeated twenty times. It is said that Shakyamuni appeared in the kalpa of continuance, in the ninth period of decrease, when the life span of human beings was one hundred years long.

nirvana (Skt) Enlightenment, the goal of Buddhist practice. The word nirvana means “blown out” and is variously translated as extinction, emancipation, cessation, quiescence, or non-rebirth. Nirvana was originally regarded as the state in which all illusions and desires are extinguished and the cycle of birth and death ends. In Mahayana, nirvana means not so much an exit from the phenomenal world as an awakening to the true nature of phenomena, or the perfection of Buddha wisdom. The term nirvana is also used to refer to the death of a Buddha. The Sanskrit words parinirvana and mahaparinirvana are terms similar to nirvana and are often used in reference to the passing away of the physical body of a Buddha.

Nirvana Sutra A compilation of the teachings expounded by Shakyamuni immediately before his death. It teaches that the Dharma body of the Buddha is eternal, that all people possess the Buddha nature, and that even icchantikas, or those of incorrigible disbelief, can attain Buddhahood. It also contains the stories of the boy Snow Mountains, who offered his body to a demon in exchange for the Buddhist teaching, and of Ajatashatru, who put his father to death but later repented and became the Buddha’s disciple.

numberless major world system dust particle kalpas (Jpn gohyaku jintengo) An incredibly long period described in the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra that indicates the time that has elapsed since Shakyamuni’s original attainment of enlightenment. This concept differs from “major world system dust particle kalpas,” in that, while the calculation of “major world system dust particle kalpas” begins with one major world system being reduced to dust particles, as is explained in the “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, that of “numberless major world system dust particle kalpas” begins with countless major world systems being reduced to dust particles. When compared with the period revealed in the “Life Span” chapter, “major world system dust particle kalpas” indicates a very recent past.

Oama See **Nagoe, the lay nun of.**

observers of the precepts Those who uphold the Buddhist precepts. The term also refers to those who emphasize only adherence to the precepts. In the Goshō the Daishōnin often applies this term to those who make an outward show of upholding the precepts but have lost their true spirit. He uses it most often with regard to the priests of the Precepts and the Zen schools.

ocean-imprint meditation A kind of meditation expounded in the Flower Garland Sutra. In this meditation all phenomena of the three existences appear clearly in the mind, just as all things are reflected on the surface of the ocean when the water is calm.

Oishi no Omaru (n.d.) Also called Oishi no Yamamaru but most commonly known as Ayaishi no Omaro. A fifth-century Japanese criminal. He attacked people traveling on the highways and plundered merchant ships but was eventually killed by soldiers dispatched by the emperor.

Oishi no Yamamaru See **Oishi no Omaru.**

Omuro Another name for Ninna-ji, temple of the True Word school in Kyoto in Japan.

one-eyed turtle Also, blind turtle. A reference in the “King Wonderful Adorn-

ment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which says that encountering the Buddha and his teachings is as rare as a one-eyed turtle finding a floating sandalwood log with a hollow in it to hold him. The story behind this reference is found in the parable of the blind turtle, which appears in the Miscellaneous Agama Sutra. A blind turtle, whose life span is immeasurable kalpas, lives at the bottom of the sea. Once every one hundred years, it rises to the surface. There is only one log floating in the sea with a suitable hollow in it. Since the turtle is blind and the log is tossed about by the wind and waves, the likelihood of the turtle reaching the log is extremely remote. It is even rarer, says Shakyamuni, to be born a human being; having succeeded in doing so, one should use the opportunity to master the four noble truths and attain deliverance.

one great reason Also, “one great matter.” The ultimate reason for a Buddha’s appearance in the world. In the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni reveals that the Buddhas make their advent for “one great reason,” to enable all people to attain the same enlightenment as themselves. Specifically they appear in order to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to show it, to cause them to awaken to it, and to induce them to enter into it.

On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land A treatise written in 1260 by Nichiren Daishonin and submitted to Hojo Tokiyori, the retired regent but still the most powerful figure in the ruling clan. In this treatise he attributes the disasters ravaging the country to slander of the correct teaching and belief in false doctrines. He calls upon the government to stop patronizing false schools of Buddhism in order to put an end to the disasters facing Japan. He then predicts that more terrifying calamities—internal strife and foreign invasion—would occur without fail if the government continued its patronage of erroneous doctrines. And he urges that the correct teaching, which is the basis for establishing a peaceful land, be embraced without delay. The submission of this document incurred the wrath of government leaders and other influential believers of the Pure Land doctrine, opening the way for a lifetime of persecution. Its Japanese title is *Rissho ankoku ron*.

one vehicle The teaching that enables all people to attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra teaches that the three vehicles, or the teachings for voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas, are not ends in themselves as was previously taught, but means to lead people to the one vehicle, which encompasses and elevates the three vehicle teachings. The one vehicle is also referred to as the single vehicle, the Buddha vehicle, the one Buddha vehicle, the one vehicle of Buddhahood, the one supreme vehicle, or the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood.

Onjo-ji Also, Mii-dera. The head temple of the Temple school (Jpn Jimon), one of the two divisions of the Tendai school. In 993, as a result of friction between the followers of Jikaku and those of Chisho, the latter left Mount Hiei and moved to Onjo-ji, where they declared their independence from Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei.

opening the near and revealing the distant Refuting the provisional teaching that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood for the first time in India and revealing that he originally gained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. This is disclosed only in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

opening the provisional and revealing the true Abandoning the expedient or provisional teachings and revealing the true teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Ota Jiro Hyoe Details unknown. One theory identifies him as Ota Chikamasa (d. 1279), a follower of the Daishonin, who lived in Kajima in Fuji District of Suruga Province. Chikamasa abandoned his faith and attacked the Daishonin’s

other followers during the Atsuhara Persecution and, at that time, was thrown from his horse and killed.

Ota Jomyo (1222–1283) Also known as Ota Kingo or the lay priest Ota. A lay follower of Nichiren Daishonin. He was converted to the Daishonin's teachings by Toki Jonin. Together with Toki Jonin and Soya Kyoshin, he was a pillar among the believers of Shimosa Province.

Otokoyama, Mount A mountain to the south of Kyoto, where Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine is located.

Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra, The A work by Dengyo, which explains why the Tendai school that is based on the Lotus Sutra is superior to the other schools. It was written to refute the arguments of Tokuitsu, a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school, who asserted that some people are by nature eternally incapable of attaining Buddhahood, and that the three vehicle teachings are true while the one vehicle teaching is provisional. In the work, Dengyo sets forth ten superior characteristics of the Lotus Sutra to show its supremacy over all the other teachings.

ox-head sandalwood A particular kind of sandalwood that grows in southern India. It is reddish in color and has medicinal properties. Ox-head sandalwood is said to have the finest fragrance of all kinds of sandalwood.

Oyama (n.d.) A prince in Japan in the fourth century. He was the eldest son of Emperor Ojin. Displeased with the fact that his younger brother was made crown prince, when the emperor died, he plotted to murder his brother and seize the throne. The plot was discovered, however, and Oyama himself was killed.

Paekche One of three ancient kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula. In the fourth century, Paekche allied itself with Japan to obtain military support against the neighboring kingdoms of Silla and Koguryō. As Paekche was in close contact with Liang-dynasty China, it played an important role in the introduction of Chinese culture to Japan.

Painfully Acquired A follower of the non-Buddhist teacher Nirgrantha Jnataputra (Nigantha Nataputta in Pali), founder of Jainism, who sought liberation through rigorous asceticism.

Papiyas The name of the devil king.

paramita (Skt) Practice that Mahayana bodhisattvas must undertake in order to attain enlightenment. Generally, paramita is interpreted as “perfection” or “having reached the opposite shore.” These practices were so called because, by perfecting them, one was said to be able to cross from the shore of delusion and suffering to the shore of enlightenment. They are usually divided into six or ten.

Parinirvana Sutra A Chinese version of the Nirvana Sutra in six volumes, translated by Fa-hsien and Buddhahadra in 418.

Parshva The tenth of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors. He received the precepts under the guidance of Buddhmitra, the ninth successor. Under the patronage of King Kanishka, together with Vasumitra he summoned some five hundred monks and held the Fourth Buddhist Council to compile the Buddhist scriptures in Kashmir.

P'eng-lai A legendary mountainous island off the eastern coast of China, where immortals possessing the elixir of perennial youth and eternal life are said to dwell.

Perceiver of the World's Sounds A bodhisattva described in the Lotus and other sutras who strives to save people out of profound compassion. He assumes various forms and appears anywhere in the world to save people from danger or suffering. He is the protagonist of the “Perceiver of the World's Sounds” chap-

ter of the Lotus Sutra. According to this chapter, Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds assumes whatever form is required to relieve suffering. The chapter describes thirty-three such forms.

Perfect Bliss The name of the land of Amida Buddha, said to be located in a western region of the universe. It is also called the Pure Land, the Land of Perfect Bliss, the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss, and the Western Paradise. Sukhavati, the Sanskrit name of this land, was translated in China as Perfect Bliss, Peace and Delight, and Peace and Sustenance.

perfect meditation One of the three types of learning based on the teaching for perfect and immediate enlightenment, or the Lotus Sutra, along with perfect wisdom and perfect precepts. According to T'ien-t'ai, perfect meditation means meditation on the true nature of life or the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life that derives from the Lotus Sutra.

perfect teaching The last of the four teachings of doctrine. The perfect teaching is divided into two categories: that expounded in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and that taught in the Lotus Sutra. The term perfect teaching is often used synonymously with the Lotus Sutra.

perfect wisdom The wisdom that dispels illusions and enables one to realize the truth of the Lotus Sutra. Perfect wisdom is also one of the three types of learning based on the Lotus Sutra, along with perfect precepts and perfect meditation.

phoenix A reference to a mythical bird in China whose rare appearance is said to presage some great event or attest to the worthiness of a ruler. A highly idealized bird, it is thought to be five-colored, and to have a song of extraordinary beauty and meaning.

Pi Kan An uncle of Chou, the last ruler of the Yin (Shang) dynasty. He is regarded as a model of the minister who attempts to correct his lord's faults even at the risk of his own life. When Chou became increasingly decadent and disorderly, Pi Kan remonstrated with him. Chou said he had heard that a sage's heart had seven apertures and then cut out Pi Kan's heart.

Platform Sutra, The *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.* A collection of the sermons of Hui-neng (638–713), the sixth patriarch of the Chinese Zen school. It was called a "sutra" by his disciples who compiled the sermons.

Po Chü-i (772–846) One of the most famous and prolific of the T'ang-dynasty poets. He served as a government official for most of his life. He attached great importance to his poetry of social criticism in which he dealt with the social and political ills of his time such as heavy taxation, military conscription, and abuses in government, often contrasting present conditions with the ideal ages of the past. Partly as a result of his criticisms, Po was deprived of his government posts in 815 and exiled to Hsün-yang in Kiangsi on the south bank of the Yangtze River. He was recalled to government office at the end of 818.

Po I See **Po I and Shu Ch'i**.

Po I and Shu Ch'i Brothers who lived from the end of the Yin (Shang) dynasty through the beginning of the Chou dynasty and are often cited as models of integrity. According to *Records of the Historian*, Po I and Shu Ch'i were elder and younger sons of the ruler of Ku-chu during the Yin dynasty. After their father's death, they abandoned their country and went to the state of Chou. There they learned that King Wen, the ruler of Chou, had died, and that his son, King Wu, intended to attack King Chou of the Yin dynasty. They reprimanded King Wu, saying that the official period of mourning for King Wen had not expired, and that, as a subject, he should not attack his sovereign, King Chou. (In the ruling system of the time, King Wu was one of the feudal lords of the kingdom of the Yin dynasty under King Chou.) However, the admonition of Po I and Shu Ch'i

was not heeded, and they chose to seclude themselves on Mount Shou-yang, where they tried to live by gathering ferns to eat, but finally died of starvation. There are a number of different versions of their story.

poison-drum relationship Another term for a reverse relationship, that is, a bond formed with the Lotus Sutra by opposing or slandering it. The expression poison drum comes from the Nirvana Sutra, meaning a drum daubed with poison. The Nirvana Sutra says that once the poison drum is beaten, all the people who hear it will die, even though they are not of the mind to listen to it. Similarly, when the Lotus Sutra is preached, both those who embrace it and those who oppose it will equally receive the seeds of Buddhahood.

Possessor of Virtue The name of Shakyamuni in a previous lifetime when he was a king in Kushinagara a great many years after the death of the Buddha Joy Increasing. According to the Nirvana Sutra, at that time the teaching of the Buddha Joy Increasing was destined to perish in forty years, and many evil monks who violated the Buddhist precepts armed themselves to attack the monk Realization of Virtue, who embraced the teaching. King Possessor of Virtue rushed to his protection, enabling Realization of Virtue to escape unharmed, but the king received wounds all over his body and died. As a result of giving his life for the Law, he was born in the land of Akshobhya Buddha and became that Buddha's chief disciple, while Realization of Virtue became Akshobhya's second disciple. Later King Possessor of Virtue was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha, and Realization of Virtue, as Kashyapa Buddha.

Potalaka A mountain regarded as the home of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds and said to be located on the southern coast of India.

Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra A commentary on the Lotus Sutra by Tz'u-en, written from the viewpoint of the Consciousness-Only doctrine of the Dharma Characteristics school. It criticizes T'ien-t'ai's interpretation of the Lotus Sutra, asserting that the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the sutra is a mere expedient, and that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth.

Prasenajit The king of Kosala and a follower of Shakyamuni Buddha. Under his rule Kosala rose to prominence as one of the two most powerful kingdoms in India, together with Magadha.

pratyekabuddha (Skt) Also, cause-awakened ones or self-awakened ones. Those who perceive the twelve-linked chain of causation, or the truth of causal relationship. Pratyekabuddha also means one who lives in an age without any Buddha and awakens to the truth of impermanence through personal effort and by observing natural phenomena.

precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment Also, perfect precepts. One of the three types of learning based on the teaching for perfect and immediate enlightenment, or the Lotus Sutra. Dengyo adopted Mahayana precepts for Buddhist practice—specifically the ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts set forth in the Brahma Net Sutra—basing them on the Lotus Sutra. He thus laid the foundation for the establishment of an ordination platform for administering the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment.

Precepts school A reference to the Chinese Lü school and the Japanese Ritsu school. *Ritsu* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word *lii*. A school based on the rules of monastic discipline.

Precious Key to the Secret Treasury, The A work by Kobo, which is a condensed version of his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, setting forth the essential doctrines of the esoteric True Word school. In this work Kobo recapitulates the ten stages of the mind and asserts the superiority of esoteric over exoteric teachings.

pre-Lotus Sutra teachings The teachings Shakyamuni expounded before the

Lotus Sutra. According to T'ien-t'ai's classification of the Buddha's teachings into five periods in the order in which they were taught, the teachings of the Flower Garland, Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods constitute the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, all of which he identified as provisional teachings.

Profound Meaning of the Four Mahayana Treatises, The A work by Chün-cheng of the T'ang dynasty. The four Mahayana treatises are *The Treatise on the Middle Way*, *The One-Hundred-Verse Treatise*, *The Treatise on the Twelve Gates*, and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. This text explains the doctrine of the Three Treatises school and attempts to refute those of the Establishment of Truth school and the Summary of the Mahayana school.

Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra, The One of T'ien-t'ai's three major works. It gives a detailed explanation of the meaning of the title of the Lotus Sutra.

Profound Secrets Sutra Also, the Revelation of the Profound Secrets Sutra. A sutra that deals with such topics as the characteristics of the dharmas, alaya-consciousness, and so forth. It is the basic text of the Dharma Characteristics school.

Protection Sutra A sutra that expounds a dharani, or a mysterious spell, for protecting the sovereign, and the benefit coming from this dharani. This sutra was valued by esoteric schools in Japan.

provisional Buddha (1) A Buddha who does not reveal his true identity but assumes a transient role or aspect in order to save the people. The term is used in contrast to the true Buddha who has revealed his true identity. (2) A Buddha of the provisional teachings such as Amida and Mahavairochana.

provisional Mahayana Mahayana teachings expounded as a means to lead people to the true Mahayana teaching, or the Lotus Sutra. Provisional Mahayana teachings reveal only partial aspects of the truth to which the Buddha was awakened.

provisional teachings All the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings expounded during the first forty-two years following Shakyamuni's enlightenment. T'ien-t'ai divided Shakyamuni's teachings into two categories: provisional and true. The provisional teachings, which include Hinayana and provisional Mahayana, were set forth according to the people's capacity, as a means to lead them to the true teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Pu-k'ung (705-774) (Skt Amoghavajra) The sixth patriarch of the esoteric Buddhist teachings. When young, he journeyed from India to China. He won the patronage of Hsüan-tsung and other T'ang emperors, and is said to have conducted the esoteric rituals for the protection of the nation. He translated many esoteric scriptures.

Punyayashas The eleventh of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors. A native of Pataliputra in Magadha, he was entrusted with the teachings by Parshva and transferred them to Ashvaghosha.

pure and far-reaching voice Also, the brahma sound. The voice of a Buddha. One of his thirty-two features. The voice of a Buddha is pure and reaches all the worlds in the ten directions. It delights those who hear it; it deeply touches people's hearts and inspires reverence.

Pure Eye One of the two sons of the king Wonderful Adornment who appear in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. At the request of his mother, Pure Virtue, he joined efforts with his brother, Pure Storehouse, and converted their father to Buddhism.

pure land A land that is blissful and free from impurity. A Buddha's land. The term is used in contrast to "impure land," meaning this saha world, which is defiled by suffering and desire. Buddhism sets forth two views concerning the relationship of the saha world and the pure land. The first is that the pure land is another realm entirely, physically removed from the saha world. One of the exam-

ples of this view is Amida Buddha's Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the west. The second view as represented in the Lotus and Vimalakirti sutras is that there can be no pure land apart from the saha world. The difference lies in the state of life of the people living there. When people purify their hearts, the world they live in becomes a pure land. The term Pure Land in capitals indicates Amida's land.

Pure Land school A school that teaches the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha by means of the chanting of Amida's name. Honen is the founder of the Japanese Pure Land school. In Japan, the Pure Land school is also called the Nembutsu school. "Nembutsu" refers to the invocation of Amida's name—the words "Namu Amida Butsu"—chanted by this school.

Pure Land teachings The teachings that define this world as a defiled world and assert that, by relying on the power of Amida Buddha, one can attain rebirth in his land, or the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss.

Pure Practices One of the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattva Pure Practices represents purity, one of the four virtues of the Buddha's life, which are true self, eternity, purity, and happiness.

Pure Storehouse One of the two sons of the king Wonderful Adornment described in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In cooperation with his brother, Pure Eye, he persuaded the king, a follower of Brahmanism, to take faith in Buddhism.

Pure Virtue The wife of the king Wonderful Adornment who appears in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. She exhorted her two sons, Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, to convince the king, a follower of Brahmanism, of the righteousness of Buddhism.

Purna One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples. He was noted as the foremost in preaching the Law. Born to a rich Brahman family, he practiced austerities in the Snow Mountains and achieved a kind of enlightenment. Thereafter, when he heard that Shakyamuni had attained Buddhahood, he became the Buddha's disciple.

Pushyamitra (n.d.) A king in India around the second century B.C.E. who became an enemy of Buddhism. A descendant of Ashoka, he originally served as commander in chief to Brihadratha, the last king of the Maurya dynasty, but he murdered Brihadratha and founded the Shunga dynasty, ruling northern India from his capital at Pataliputra. He slandered Buddhism, killed many monks, and destroyed Kukkutarama Monastery, a major center of Buddhism built by Ashoka.

Queen Mother of the West A legendary goddess said to dwell on a mountain in western China. The peaches in her garden are said to bear fruit every three thousand years. They are often cited as an example of that which is rare to encounter.

Rahula Shakyamuni's son. One of the Buddha's ten major disciples, respected as the foremost in inconspicuous practice.

Rajagriha The capital of the kingdom of Magadha in ancient India. It was one of the largest cities in India in Shakyamuni's time and the center of new cultural and philosophical activities. King Bimbisara and his son Ajatashatru lived in this capital, where Shakyamuni often visited and preached. Rajagriha and its environs were also the location of many important Buddhist sites such as the Cave of the Seven Leaves where the First Buddhist Council was held, Eagle Peak, and Bamboo Grove Monastery. Rajagriha means the royal palace.

realization of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena The stage where one realizes the truth that no things or phenomena are either born

or die. More specifically, this enlightenment signifies the state where one perceives the non-birth and non-extinction of the phenomenal world and thereby attains a calm state of mind.

Realization of Virtue A monk who appears in the Nirvana Sutra. When the correct teaching of Buddhism was about to perish, he strove to protect the teaching and was attacked by many evil monks and their followers. The king Possessor of Virtue fought for his defense and died in the battle. It is said that, because of their devotion to Buddhism, the king Possessor of Virtue was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha and the monk Realization of Virtue as Kashyapa Buddha.

Record of the Western Regions, The An account by Hsüan-tsang, recording his travels through Central Asia and India between 629 and 645 in search of Buddhist scriptures. This book describes the culture, legends, history, Buddhism, and politics of 138 states.

Record of Wonders in the Book of Chou, The A Chinese work often cited for the information it contained pertaining to Buddhist events, such as the dates of Shakyamuni's birth and death. It is no longer extant, but quotations from it are found in various Buddhist sources. These place Shakyamuni Buddha's birth in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Chao (1029 B.C.E.) of China's Chou dynasty, and his death in the fifty-second year of the reign of King Mu (949 B.C.E.) of the same dynasty. In China and Japan, this account was traditionally adopted. It is generally agreed that this work was written before the early sixth century C.E.

Records of the Historian A history written by Ssu-ma Ch'ien of the Former Han dynasty, the first great Chinese historian. This work, which consists of one hundred and thirty volumes, was completed in c. 91 B.C.E. It depicts the history from Huang Ti (Yellow Emperor) through Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty. This work was highly esteemed by the later historians in China as a model of historical records. Its original, or Chinese, title is *Shih chi*.

regent In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, "regent" ordinarily refers to the political leader of the Kamakura shogunate. In the early Kamakura period, the official leader of the shogunate was a military general, or shogun, but after the death of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the first shogun, this position had become nominal and ceremonial. Actual power and leadership were transferred to the shogun's regent. The regent possessed both political and military powers and administered the affairs of state. From the inception of the office of regent in 1205, through the end of the Kamakura shogunate in 1333, the regency was held by leaders of the Hojo clan. *See also* Appendix L.

Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra A sutra that explains the repaying of moral obligations from a Mahayana Buddhist standpoint. Shakyamuni Buddha was attacked by Brahmans as unfilial for leaving his parents and entering religious life. The Repaying Debts of Gratitude Sutra refutes this criticism with the argument that, by renouncing the world and awakening to the truth that leads all people to Buddhahood, one can truly repay all one's obligations to others.

replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle Also, "replacing the three vehicles with the one vehicle," "opening the three vehicles and revealing the one vehicle," and "the opening of the three vehicles and the revealing of the one vehicle." A concept revealed in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, where Shakyamuni states that the three vehicles are not ends in themselves, as he had taught in the provisional sutras, but expedient means by which he leads people to the one vehicle of Buddhahood.

Retired Emperor of Oku (1180-1239) The Retired Emperor Gotoba. In 1221, three years after his retirement, he attempted to overthrow the Kamakura shogu-

nate. However, the leader of the shogunate, the regent Hojo Yoshitoki, emerged victorious. As a result, Gotoba was exiled to the island of Oki, hence the designation the Retired Emperor of Oki. This incident, called the Jokyu Disturbance, in effect destroyed the political power of the imperial house and enabled the shogunate to consolidate its nationwide influence.

reverse relation Also, reverse relationship or poison-drum relationship. A bond formed with the Lotus Sutra by opposing or slandering it. That is, even though one should fall into hell for slandering the Lotus Sutra, because of the reverse relationship formed with the sutra, one will eventually attain Buddhahood.

reward body One of the three bodies—the Dharma body, reward body, and manifested body. The reward body is a body obtained as the reward of completing bodhisattva practice. It was thought that each Buddha possesses one or another of the three bodies. Buddhas were classified according to which of these bodies they were said to possess. For example, the Buddhas Amida and Medicine Master are placed in the category of Buddhas of the reward body. Early forms of the theory of the three bodies held that each Buddha possessed one or another of the three bodies. However, later forms described the three bodies as all being possessed by a single Buddha; in this sense the three bodies can be regarded as three properties of a single Buddha.

ri (Jpn) A unit of linear measurement. The exact definition of *ri* (Chin *li*) differed in China and Japan, and from era to era. In Japan at different times it equaled about 450, 545, or 655 meters. In China it equaled about 250, 400, or 530 meters.

Rida An elder brother of Aniruddha in a previous lifetime, when Aniruddha was known by the name of Arida. The story appears in the Storehouse of Various Treasures Sutra and elsewhere. The Sanskrit names for Rida and Arida are unknown.

river of three crossings A river that the dead are said to cross after their death. It has three points of crossing—a bridge, a ford, and a spot where there is only deep, serpent-infested water. Where one crosses depends on the weight of the offenses that one committed while alive.

Roben (689–773) The second patriarch of the Japanese Flower Garland school and the first chief priest of Todai-ji temple. Under the patronage of Emperor Shomu, he devoted himself to the founding of Todai-ji, and in 752 he was appointed its first chief priest.

Root of Joy According to the Non-substantiality of All Phenomena Sutra, a monk who lived in the latter age after the passing of the Buddha Lion Sound King. He did not value ascetic practices but taught only the doctrine of the true aspect of all phenomena and, because of this, was insulted by the monk Superior Intent. Root of Joy upheld his beliefs and attained Buddhahood, while Superior Intent is said to have fallen into hell.

root teaching and branch teachings A classification concerning the superiority of the Flower Garland Sutra over the other sutras including the Lotus Sutra. The Flower Garland school asserts that the Flower Garland Sutra represents the root teaching, and the Lotus and other sutras, the branch teachings.

ryo (Jpn) A unit of weight understood to be equivalent to 37.5 grams. However, the exact weight of one *ryo* (Chin *liang*) differed in China and Japan and varied according to the historical period.

Ryokan (1217–1303) Also known as Ninsho. A priest of the True Word Precepts school who was a contemporary of Nichiren Daishonin. He received the precepts from Eizon, who was revered as a restorer of the Precepts school in Japan. In 1261 Ryokan went to Kamakura, where he was named chief priest of Kosen-ji, a temple founded by a Hojo regent. Later he became chief priest of

Gokuraku-ji, founded by Hojo Shigetoki. During the drought of 1271, he vied with Nichiren Daishonin in praying for rain but failed. After that he contrived to have accusations brought against the Daishonin.

Ryuzo See **Ryuzo-bo**.

Ryuzo-bo (n.d.) Also, Ryuzo. A priest of the Tendai school. He was expelled from Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei for having eaten human flesh but later won the patronage of Ryokan in Kamakura. Ryuzo-bo was defeated at the Kuwagayatsu Debate in 1277 by one of Nichiren Daishonin's disciples.

Sacred Way teachings The teachings that assert that attaining enlightenment depends upon one's own power. The term Sacred Way teachings is used in contrast to the Pure Land teachings, which profess that enlightenment depends upon the power of Amida Buddha. The classification of the Buddhist sutras into the two categories of Pure Land teachings and Sacred Way teachings was formulated by Tao-ch'o of the T'ang dynasty in China.

Sadato (1019–1062) Abe no Sadato, the head of a powerful family in northeastern Japan. He sought independence from imperial rule but was defeated and killed in a battle with the imperial forces.

Sagami, the lord of Governor of Sagami Province, where Kamakura, the seat of the Kamakura government, was located. This post was held by the regent of the Kamakura government or an official subordinate to the regent. In the text, the lord of Sagami refers to Hojo Tokimune (1251–1284), the eighth regent of the Kamakura government.

saha world This world, which is full of sufferings. In the Chinese version of Buddhist scriptures, the Sanskrit saha is translated as "endurance." The term "saha world" suggests that the people who live in this world must endure sufferings. It is also identified as an impure land, in contrast to a pure land. The saha world is the land where Shakyamuni Buddha makes his appearance and, enduring various hardships, instructs living beings. Some Buddhist scriptures, including the Lotus Sutra, hold that the saha world can be transformed into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, or that the saha world is in itself the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.

Saicho See **Dengyo**.

Saimyo-ji, the lay priest of Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263), the fifth regent of the Kamakura government. He was called the lay priest of Saimyo-ji because he had been ordained at Saimyo-ji after formally retiring from office. But as the head of the Hojo clan he remained the most influential leader.

samadhi (Skt) A state of intense concentration of mind, or meditation, said to produce a sense of inner serenity. The word samadhi is rendered as meditation, contemplation, and concentration.

Same Birth and Same Name Two gods that are said to dwell on one's shoulders from the time of one's birth and to report one's actions to heaven. They symbolize the workings of the law of cause and effect in life expounded by Buddhism. Same Birth means "born at the same time," and Same Name, "bearing the same name."

Sammi-bo (n.d.) One of Nichiren Daishonin's earliest disciples. He was highly esteemed among the Daishonin's followers for his great learning and debating skill. His victory over Ryuzo-bo in the Kuwagayatsu Debate is an example of his skill in discussion. However, he tended to be arrogant about his knowledge and to seek worldly status. During the Atsuhara Persecution, he discarded his faith and is said to have died a tragic death.

San-chieh (540–594) Also known as Hsin-hsing. A priest of the Sui dynasty who founded the Three Stages school (Chin San-chieh-chiao). He asserted that, dur-

ing the third stage in the propagation of Buddhism, or the Latter Day of the Law (that he held had begun in 550), people should not adhere to any particular sutra but revere all teachings without discrimination. This school spread widely, but was proscribed in 600 by imperial decree because its doctrine contradicted those of the earlier schools and ran counter to government policy. It was again suppressed in 725 by imperial decree during the T'ang dynasty. This dealt the school a fatal blow, resulting in its rapid decline.

sandalwood The heartwood of an aromatic tree found in India. The tree grows to be ten meters in height, and its fragrant heartwood is used for making incense. Also, the tree that yields this wood.

Saramati (n.d.) A Mahayana scholar in India who lived during the period from the fourth century through the fifth century C.E. He wrote *The Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood*. Tibetan tradition attributes this work to Maitreya.

Sattva Also, Mahasattva. The name of Shakyamuni in a previous existence when he was the third son of King Maharatha. According to the Golden Light Sutra, Prince Sattva came upon a tigress that was too weak with hunger to feed her cubs and, in pity, gave his body to save them.

sea of the sufferings of birth and death Also, sea of suffering. The sufferings of transmigration in the six paths of existence, which are said to be as endless and difficult to overcome as the ocean is vast and difficult to cross.

Secret Solemnity Sutra A sutra that depicts the Pure Land of Secret Solemnity, a world of bodhisattvas who have overcome the illusions of the threefold world. The sutra teaches that all phenomena originate from the alaya-consciousness, which is equated in this sutra with the matrix of the Thus Come One, or potential for Buddhahood. It also asserts that one must awaken to the alaya-consciousness in order to be reborn in the Pure Land of Secret Solemnity.

Seicho-ji temple A temple located on Mount Kiyosumi in Kominato, Awa Province (in present-day Chiba Prefecture), where Nichiren Daishonin studied Buddhism in his boyhood. On the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in 1253, he declared the teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo at this temple.

Seng-chao (384–414) A priest of the Later Ch'in dynasty and one of Kumarajiva's main disciples.

Sen'yo The name of Shakyamuni in a previous existence. According to the Nirvana Sutra, the king Sen'yo was the ruler of a great kingdom and a believer in the Mahayana sutras. When five hundred Brahmans slandered the Mahayana teachings, he had them put to death. Because of this act, he was never thereafter in danger of falling into hell. This story is not meant to condone killing of slanderers but rather to demonstrate the gravity of slander and the importance of protecting the Law. Sen'yo is the Japanese rendering of his name; his Sanskrit name is unknown.

separate transmission outside the sutras A doctrine of the Zen school that the Buddha's enlightenment and his true teaching have been transmitted apart from the sutras. The Zen school asserts that the Buddha's enlightenment has been wordlessly transmitted from mind to mind and thus handed down from one Zen patriarch to another. This tenet is also referred to by other expressions such as a "special transmission apart from the sutras" and a "separate transmission outside the scriptures."

seven Buddhas of the past Shakyamuni and six Buddhas said to have preceded him. The six Buddhas are Vipashyin, Shikhin, Vishvabhu, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kashyapa. The first three appeared in the past Glorious Kalpa, while the other four including Shakyamuni appeared in the present Wise Kalpa.

seven disasters Disasters said to be caused by slander of the correct teaching. In

the Benevolent Kings Sutra, they are listed as: (1) extraordinary changes of the sun and moon, (2) extraordinary changes of the stars and planets, (3) fires, (4) unseasonable floods, (5) storms, (6) drought, and (7) war, including enemy attacks from without and rebellion from within. The Medicine Master Sutra defines the seven disasters as: (1) pestilence, (2) foreign invasion, (3) internal strife, (4) extraordinary changes in the heavens, (5) solar and lunar eclipses, (6) unseasonable storms, and (7) unseasonable drought. Together with the three calamities, the seven disasters are often referred to as the “three calamities and seven disasters.”

seven expedient means Also, the seven expedients. A principle set forth by the T'ien-t'ai school. There are two different types. One is the seven vehicles, or teachings, preached prior to the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra. These are: teachings for (1) human beings, (2) heavenly beings, (3) voice-hearers, (4) cause-awakened ones, (5) bodhisattvas of the Tripitaka teaching, (6) bodhisattvas of the connecting teaching, and (7) bodhisattvas of the specific teaching. In this context, the seven expedient means also refer to the seven stages or levels attained by practitioners of these teachings. The other of the two types refers to the practitioners, who are: (1) voice-hearers and (2) cause-awakened ones of the Tripitaka teaching; (3) voice-hearers, (4) cause-awakened ones, and (5) bodhisattvas of the connecting teaching; (6) bodhisattvas of the specific teaching; and (7) bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching.

seven expedients See **seven expedient means**.

seven kinds of treasures Also, the seven treasures. Seven precious substances. The list differs among the Buddhist scriptures. In the Lotus Sutra, the seven are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, pearl, and carnelian.

seven major temples See **seven major temples of Nara**.

seven major temples of Nara Also, the seven great temples of Nara. Todai-ji, Kofuku-ji, Gango-ji, Daian-ji, Yakushi-ji, Saidai-ji, and Horyu-ji—the principal Buddhist temples in Nara, the capital of Japan during the Nara period (710–794).

seven marches See **five provinces and seven marches**.

seven parables Seven parables that are recounted in the Lotus Sutra. They are the parables of: (1) the three carts and the burning house, (2) the wealthy man and his poor son, (3) the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees, (4) the phantom city and the treasure land, (5) the gem in the robe, (6) the priceless gem in the topknot, and (7) the skilled physician and his sick children.

seven reigns of heavenly gods and the five reigns of earthly gods A reference to native deities said to have ruled Japan before the time of the legendary first human emperor Jimmu. “Deities” is often used in place of “gods.” The seven generations of heavenly gods are said to have ruled Japan first, followed by the five generations of earthly deities. The first of the earthly deities was the Sun Goddess, who was revered as the progenitor of the imperial line.

seven schools of the north and the three schools of the south See **three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China**.

seven treasures See **seven kinds of treasures**.

Shakra Also known as Indra. Together with Brahma, one of the two principal tutelary gods of Buddhism. He resides in the heaven of the thirty-three gods located on the summit of Mount Sumeru.

shakubuku (Jpn) A method of expounding Buddhism by refuting another's attachment to erroneous teachings and thus leading that person to the correct teaching. Shakubuku also means to conquer the evil in one's mind and bring forth the good. In the deepest sense, evil here means life's fundamental darkness or

ignorance, and good, the Buddha nature or the nature of enlightenment. This self-reformation becomes possible through faith in the correct teaching. The term shakubuku is used in contrast to shoju, which means to lead another gradually to the correct teaching in accord with that person's capacity. These two kinds of practice are described in the Shrimala Sutra, *Great Concentration and Insight*, and other works.

Shakyamuni The founder of Buddhism. Opinions differ as to when he lived. Buddhist tradition in China and Japan has him living between the years 1029 B.C.E. and 949 B.C.E., while some Western studies have placed him nearly five hundred years later. Born as the son of the king of the Shakyas, a tribe whose kingdom was located in the foothills of the Himalayas, he renounced his princely status and set off in search of a resolution to the questions of birth, aging, sickness, and death. He studied influential philosophies and practiced various austerities, but realized that they would not lead to the awakening he sought. Near the city of Gaya, he is said to have sat under a bodhi tree, entered meditation, and attained enlightenment. In order to lead others to the same state of enlightenment, during the succeeding fifty years he expounded numerous teachings, which were later compiled in the form of Buddhist sutras.

Shan-tao (613–681) The third patriarch of the Pure Land school in China. Shan-tao classified Buddhist practices into the categories of correct and sundry. He defined the correct practices to be those directed toward Amida Buddha and regarded all other practices as sundry practices.

Shan-wu-wei (637–735) (Skt Shubhakarasinha) An Indian monk who first introduced the esoteric teachings to China. He also translated numerous esoteric sutras, including the Mahavairochana Sutra. Shan-wu-wei is his Chinese name.

Shariputra One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples, known as the foremost in wisdom. Originally a follower of Sanjaya Belatthiputta, one of the six non-Buddhist teachers, he met with Ashvajit, a disciple of Shakyamuni, who taught him about the law of causation, and became Shakyamuni's disciple.

Shibi The name of Shakyamuni in a past existence when he was a king carrying out the practice of almsgiving. According to *The Garland of Birth Stories*, the god Vishvakarman disguised himself as a dove and the god Shakra changed into a hawk in order to test King Shibi. The hawk pursued the dove, which flew into the king's robes for protection. In order to save the dove, King Shibi offered his flesh to the hungry hawk.

Shiiji Shiro (n.d.) A follower of Nichiren Daishonin who lived in Suruga Province. He is the recipient of the Daishonin's letter *A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering*.

Shiladitya (r. 606–647) Also known as Harsha. A king in central India, who eventually reigned over all of India except the southern part. A believer in Buddhism, he built many temples and stupas and governed with the Buddhist spirit of compassion.

Shinjo (d. 742) (Kor Simsang). A native of Silla on the Korean Peninsula and the founder of the Japanese Flower Garland school. He journeyed from Silla to T'ang China, where he studied the Flower Garland doctrine under Fa-tsang. Later, he went to Japan where he propagated the Flower Garland teaching.

Shitenno-ji The oldest extant Japanese Buddhist temple, founded by Prince Shotoku in 587. It is said that Shotoku built it in gratitude for his victory together with Soga no Umako over Mononobe no Moriya, the leader of the anti-Buddhist faction at court, and that he enshrined statues of the four heavenly kings therein. It is located in the city of Osaka.

sho (Jpn) A unit of volume equivalent to about 1.8 liters.

- Shohei era** The period in Japan from 931 to 938.
- Shoichi** (1202–1280) Also known as Enni or Bennen. A priest of the Rinzaï school of Zen in Japan. He studied Zen in China and, after returning to Japan, propagated its teachings at court and obtained the patronage of the nobility, becoming the first chief priest of Tofuku-ji temple in Kyoto.
- shoju** (Jpn) A method of expounding Buddhism in which one gradually leads another to the correct teaching in accord with that person's capacity. The term is used in contrast to shakubuku, or directly awakening people to the correct teaching by refuting their attachment to inferior teachings. The term shoju is also used to refer to the practice of seeking one's personal enlightenment, in contrast to propagating the Buddhist teachings.
- Shoka era** The period in Japan from 1257 to 1259. In the first year of the Shoka era (1257), a great earthquake struck Kamakura, the seat of the government, and this disaster inspired Nichiren Daishonin to write *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, which he submitted in remonstrance to the de facto leader of the government, Hojo Tokiyori.
- Shokaku-bo** (1095–1143) Another name for Kakuban, a Japanese priest of the True Word school. In 1134, he became the chief priest of Kongobu-ji temple on Mount Koya, but his attempts at rapid reform won him the enmity of the priests of Mount Koya. He and his followers were forced to flee to Mount Negoro, where he founded Emmyo-ji temple. His followers founded the New Doctrine (Jpn Shingi) school, a branch of the True Word school, in opposition to the traditional teachings of Mount Koya and To-ji temple.
- Shomu** (701–756) The forty-fifth emperor of Japan who had deep faith in the power of Buddhism to safeguard the nation. He established a temple and a nunnery in each province throughout the country. Moreover, he built Todai-ji temple in Nara as the center of all provincial temples and erected a great image of Vairocana Buddha there.
- Shore of Suffering** A monk said to have lived in the remote past after the passing of the Buddha Great Adornment. The followers of the Buddha Great Adornment had split into five schools, but only one, led by the monk Universal Practice, maintained the Buddha's teachings correctly. The monk Shore of Suffering was the leader of one of the other four schools that denounced the monk Universal Practice.
- Shotoku** (574–622) Prince Shotoku. Also known as Prince Jōgū. The second son of Emperor Yomei of Japan, Shotoku was famous for his application of the spirit of Buddhism to government. As the regent under the reign of Empress Suiko, he carried out numerous reforms. He promulgated the Seventeen-Article Constitution in 604 and entered into diplomatic relations with the Sui dynasty in China, dispatching Ono no Imoko there as an envoy. He revered the Lotus, Shrimala, and Vimalakirti sutras and is credited with having written commentaries on them.
- shramana** (Skt) A seeker of the way. In India the word originally referred to any ascetic, recluse, mendicant, or religious practitioner who left home and renounced secular life to seek the way. Later it came to mean chiefly one who renounces the world to practice Buddhism.
- Shravasti** The capital of the kingdom of Kosala in ancient India. Shravasti was one of the most prosperous cities in India during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, along with Rajagriha in Magadha. Shakyamuni is said to have made Shravasti his center of activities and to have stayed there for twenty-five years, converting many local people, including King Prasenajit. Shravasti was properly the name of the capital, but it was also used as the name of the kingdom.

- Shrimala Sutra** A sutra that takes the form of preaching by Shrimala, the daughter of King Prasenajit of Kosala, with the help of Shakyamuni's power. It expounds the one vehicle doctrine and makes clear that the Buddha nature is inherent in all sentient beings. Along with the Vimalakirti Sutra, it is valued as a scripture for lay Buddhists.
- Shubin** (n.d.) A ninth-century priest of the True Word school in Japan. In 823 he was given Sai-ji (West Temple) by Emperor Saga, while Kobo was given To-ji (East Temple). In 824, during a drought, Shubin competed with Kobo in praying for rain. It is said that Shubin succeeded in making rain fall but that Kobo failed.
- Shu Ch'i** See **Po I** and **Shu Ch'i**.
- Shuddhodana** A king of Kapilavastu in northern India and the father of Shakyamuni Buddha. He originally opposed his son's desire to renounce the world, but when Shakyamuni returned to Kapilavastu after his awakening, Shuddhodana converted to his teaching.
- Shuen** (771–835) A priest of the Japanese Dharma Characteristics school. He lived at Kofuku-ji temple and was famed as its most learned priest. He protested Dengyo's request to construct a Mahayana ordination platform on Mount Hiei.
- Shun** One of the Five Emperors—legendary sage emperors in ancient China—who were highly respected by the people for their excellent rule.
- Shun-hsiao** (n.d.) A priest of esoteric Buddhism in T'ang China. He studied the esoteric teaching under I-hsing and Pu-k'ung. Shun-hsiao imparted the esoteric teaching to Dengyo when the latter went to China from Japan in 804.
- Shuryasoma** (n.d.) A prince of Yarkand in Central Asia and the teacher of Kumarajiva. Shuryasoma was well versed in the Mahayana sutras and bequeathed the Lotus Sutra to Kumarajiva.
- Siddhartha** Another name for Shakyamuni, possibly his childhood or given name. Siddhartha, or "Goal Achieved," implies someone who has achieved a great goal. Some scholars believe that this is a title bestowed on him by later Buddhists in honor of the enlightenment he attained.
- Silver-Colored Woman Sutra** A sutra that expounds the benefits of the practice of almsgiving. According to this sutra, in a past existence Shakyamuni was a woman called Silver-Colored Woman. She carried out the practice of almsgiving, and as a result, she changed into a man and was chosen to be king. In the next life, he was born as the son of a wealthy man and offered his flesh to feed starving birds and beasts. He was then reborn to a Brahman family and again offered his body to a starving tiger. The sutra says that he never once regretted his acts of almsgiving.
- single vehicle** See **one vehicle**.
- six auspicious happenings** Occurrences that herald the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, depicted in the "Introduction" chapter of the sutra. They are: (1) the Buddha preaches the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, an introductory teaching to the Lotus Sutra; (2) he enters into profound meditation; (3) four kinds of exquisite flowers rain down from the heavens; (4) the earth trembles in six different ways; (5) seeing these portents, the people rejoice and, placing their palms together, single-mindedly behold the Buddha; and (6) the Buddha emits a beam of light from the tuft of white hair between his eyebrows, illuminating eighteen thousand worlds to the east. The "Introduction" chapter goes on to describe six signs occurring in other worlds that differ from the above-mentioned six portents. The six auspicious happenings are also called the six portents and the six omens.
- six difficult and nine easy acts** Comparisons expounded in the "Treasure Tow-

er” chapter of the Lotus Sutra to teach people how difficult it would be to embrace and propagate the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. The six difficult acts are to propagate the Lotus Sutra widely, to copy it or cause someone else to copy it, to recite it even for a short while, to teach it even to one person, to hear of and accept the Lotus Sutra and inquire about its meaning, and to maintain faith in it. The nine easy acts include such feats as teaching innumerable sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, walking across a burning prairie carrying a bundle of hay on one’s back without being burned, and kicking a major world system into a different quarter.

- six forms** A doctrine of the Flower Garland school that, together with that of the ten mysteries, analyzes the phenomenal world from the standpoints of both difference and identity. The six forms are: (1) universality—the whole that is composed of parts; (2) particularity—the separate parts that comprise the whole; (3) similarity—the separate parts are all related to the whole; (4) diversity—though similar in that they all help constitute the whole, each part’s relation to the whole is unique; (5) formation—through the harmonization of the unique parts, the whole is constituted; and (6) differentiation—while uniting to form the whole, each part still retains its own peculiar characteristics.
- six heavens of the world of desire** Heavens located in the world of desire and situated between the earth and the Brahma heaven. They are the heaven of the four heavenly kings, the heaven of the thirty-three gods, the Yama heaven, the Tushita heaven, the Heaven of Enjoying the Conjured, and the Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others. The Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, often called the sixth heaven, is known as the abode of the devil king.
- six major offenses** Violations of the six precepts. They are the offenses of killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, talking about the misdeeds of other Buddhists, and selling liquor.
- six metaphors of the theoretical and essential teachings** Metaphors used by T’ien-t’ai in interpreting the word *renge* (lotus flower) of *Myoho-renge-kyo*, the title of the Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra. The three metaphors of the theoretical teaching illustrate the relationship between the Lotus Sutra (true teaching) and the provisional teachings. The three metaphors of the essential teaching show the relationship between the essential teaching and the theoretical teaching.
- six ministers** Also, six royal ministers. The ministers of King Ajatashatru. When Ajatashatru broke out in virulent sores because of his offense of having killed his father, Bimbisara, a patron of Shakyamuni Buddha, these six ministers exhorted him to consult the six non-Buddhist teachers. However, another minister Jivaka, who was also a noted physician, exhorted the king to go and see the Buddha and receive his instruction.
- six non-Buddhist teachers** Influential thinkers in India during Shakyamuni’s lifetime who openly broke with the old Vedic tradition and challenged Brahman authority in the Indian social order. They were: Purana Kassapa, who denied causality and rejected all concepts of morality; Makkhali Gosala, who espoused an absolute fatalism; Sanjaya Belatthiputta, a skeptic who denied the possibility of certain knowledge in the metaphysical realm; Ajita Kesakambala, a materialist who maintained that life ends when the body dies; Pakudha Kaccayana, who asserted that human beings were composed of seven unchangeable elements: earth, water, fire, wind, suffering, pleasure, and soul; and Nigantha Nataputta, the founder of Jainism, who taught a rigorous asceticism.
- six omens** See **six auspicious happenings**.

- six paramitas** Six practices for Mahayana bodhisattvas in their progress toward Buddhahood—almsgiving, keeping the precepts, forbearance, assiduousness, meditation, and the obtaining of wisdom.
- six paths** Also, the six paths of existence. The realms or worlds in which unenlightened beings transmigrate. They are hell and the realms of hungry spirits, animals, asuras, human beings, and heavenly beings.
- six portents** See **six auspicious happenings**.
- six royal ministers** See **six ministers**.
- six schools** Also, the six schools of Nara. The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, and Flower Garland schools, which were the major Buddhist schools in Japan during the Nara period (710–794).
- six sense organs** Also, the six sensory organs. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
- six stages of practice** Stages in the practice of the Lotus Sutra formulated by T'ien-t'ai. They are: (1) the stage of being a Buddha in theory; (2) the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth; (3) the stage of perception and action; (4) the stage of resemblance to enlightenment; (5) the stage of progressive awakening; and (6) the stage of ultimate enlightenment.
- six teachers of the non-Buddhist doctrines** See **six non-Buddhist teachers**.
- sixteen great states** Also, the sixteen major states or the sixteen great countries. The countries of ancient India—Anga, Magadha, Kashi, Kosala, Vriji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Ashvaka, Avanti, Matsya, Shurasena, Gandhara, and Kamboja.
- sixth heaven** The highest of the six heavens in the world of desire, where the devil king resides.
- six transcendental powers** Also, the six supernatural powers. Powers that Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and arhats are said to possess. They are: (1) the power of being anywhere at will, (2) the power of seeing anything anywhere, (3) the power of hearing any sound anywhere, (4) the power of knowing the thoughts of all other minds, (5) the power of knowing past lives, and (6) the power of eradicating illusions.
- small kalpa** Any of the twenty kalpas that constitute each of the four kalpas of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration. A small kalpa equals 15,998,000 years. However, there are several varying explanations of the length of a small kalpa. See also **kalpa of continuance**.
- Snow Mountains** A reference to various snow-covered mountains. In Buddhist scriptures this name often refers to the Himalayas. The Snow Mountains that appear in *The Dharma Analysis Treasury* are located in the northern part of Jambudvīpa. To the north of the Snow Mountains is Heat-Free Lake, which gives rise to the four rivers nurturing the soil in the four quarters of Jambudvīpa.
- Snow Mountains, the boy** The name of Shakyamuni Buddha in a previous lifetime when he was practicing austerities in the Snow Mountains. His story appears in the Nirvana Sutra. The god Shakra decided to test the boy Snow Mountains' resolve. Disguised as a demon, he recited half a verse from a Buddhist teaching. Hearing this, the boy begged the demon to teach him the second half, but the demon demanded his flesh and blood in payment. After the boy received the latter half of the verse, he jumped from a tree into the demon's mouth. In that moment the demon changed back into Shakra and caught him.
- Soga no Iname** (d. 570) A chief minister of the emperors Senka and Kimmie, and

the father of Soga no Umako. He engaged in a struggle for power with Mononobe no Okoshi, the leader of the anti-Buddhist faction at court. His daughters became consorts of Emperor Kimmei, and through this relationship the foundation of the Soga family's prosperity was secured.

Soga no Umako (d. 626) An imperial court official and head of the pro-Buddhist faction at court. He was a leading official under the emperors Bidatsu, Yomei, and Sushun, and Empress Suiko. His father was Soga no Iname. Umako destroyed Mononobe no Moriya, another leading court official and the head of the anti-Buddhist faction. Later he had Emperor Sushun assassinated.

Soto'ori Hime (n.d.) A woman of great beauty appearing in *The Chronicles of Japan* and *The Records of Ancient Matters*. According to *The Chronicles of Japan*, she was a younger sister of the wife of the nineteenth emperor Ingyo in the fifth century and, according to *Records of Ancient Matters*, a daughter of the emperor. It is said that her beauty was peerless, and that brilliant light shone out through her clothes.

Sovereign Kings Sutra An abbreviation of the Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light Sutra. Translated by I-ching of the T'ang dynasty in China, it dwells on the protection of the four heavenly kings and other benevolent deities.

sowing, maturing, and harvesting The three phases of the process by which a Buddha leads people to Buddhahood, corresponding to the growth and development of a plant. First the Buddha plants the seed of Buddhahood in people's lives, then he nurtures it by helping them practice the teaching, and finally he enables them to reap the fruit of Buddhahood.

specific teaching One of the four teachings of doctrine. A higher level of provisional Mahayana taught exclusively for bodhisattvas.

stage of hearing the name and words of the truth The second of the six stages of practice, stages in the practice of the Lotus Sutra formulated by T'ien-t'ai. The stage at which one hears the name of the truth (that is, a Buddhist term for ultimate reality such as "the true aspect of all phenomena") and/or reads the words of the sutras and thereby understands intellectually that he has the Buddha nature and that all phenomena are manifestations of the universal Law.

string of coins Coins bound together by a string. In Japan in Nichiren Daishonin's time, coins had a square hole in the center and were usually strung together one hundred at a time.

Subhuti One of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples. He was regarded as the foremost in understanding the doctrine of non-substantiality.

Sudatta A merchant of Shravasti in India and the Buddha's lay patron. He is said to have been one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom of Kosala. Since he often made donations to the poor and friendless, he was also called Anathapindada (Supplier of the Needy). Jetavana Monastery, which he donated to Shakyamuni, became an important center for the Buddha's preaching activity.

Sudaya A Brahman master who taught Devadatta the way to acquire supernatural powers.

sudden teaching Those teachings that the Buddha expounded directly from the standpoint of his own enlightenment without giving his disciples preparatory knowledge. In T'ien-t'ai's system of classification, the sudden teaching constitutes one of the four teachings of method and is represented by the Flower Garland Sutra. However, the term sudden teaching was adopted by various schools, and its meaning differs according to their doctrines.

Sumeru The mountain that stands at the center of the world, according to ancient Indian cosmology. It is said to rise to a height of eighty-four thousand yojanas (one yojana is approximately seven kilometers). The god Shakra resides on the

summit, while the four heavenly kings live halfway down its four sides. In the outermost sea surrounding Sumeru lie four continents, the southern of which is Jambudvīpa. *See also* **Sumeru world**.

Sumeru world A world with Mount Sumeru at its center. According to the ancient Indian worldview, a Sumeru world consists of a Mount Sumeru, its surrounding seas and mountain ranges, four continents, a sun, and a moon. Mount Sumeru is located at the center of the world and surrounded concentrically by eight mountain ranges and eight seas. In the outermost sea exist four continents. A sun and a moon move around Mount Sumeru. According to ancient Indian cosmology, the universe is composed of countless Sumeru worlds.

Sumitomo (d. 941) Fujiwara no Sumitomo, a military commander of the Fujiwara clan who subdued a gang of pirates in 936. However, he later became a pirate chief himself and rebelled against the government. He was finally defeated and killed in 941.

Summary of the Mahayana school The She-lun school, one of the thirteen schools in China. A school based upon Asanga's *Summary of the Mahayana*. It prospered in the Ch'en, Sui, and early T'ang dynasties, but was later absorbed by the Dharma Characteristics school.

Summit of Being heaven Another name of the Akanishtha heaven, or the highest heaven in the world of form.

Sunakshatra One of Shakyamuni's disciples. He is said to be a son of Shakyamuni fathered before he renounced the world. He entered the Buddhist Order, but, overcome by distorted views, he lost his mastery of the four stages of meditation and became attached to the mistaken view that there is no Buddha, no Law, and no attainment of nirvana. He is said to have eventually fallen into hell alive.

sundry practices One of two kinds of practices set forth by Shan-tao, a patriarch of the Pure Land school in China. The other is called correct practices. "Sundry practices" means all Buddhist practices not directed toward Amida Buddha, that is, practices directed toward any being other than Amida Buddha. "Correct practices" are those directed toward Amida Buddha, such as reading and reciting the sutras centering on Amida Buddha, worshipping Amida Buddha, and invoking Amida Buddha's name.

Sung dynasty (1) Also, the Liu Sung dynasty. A Chinese dynasty that existed from 420 through 479. The capital city was Chien-k'ang. The dynasty was replaced by the Ch'i dynasty. (2) A Chinese dynasty that existed from 960 through 1279. China was under the rule of this dynasty during Nichiren Daishonin's time. Though the capital had been K'ai-feng, in 1127 that city was conquered by the Chin, the kingdom that ruled northern China. Driven from the capital, the Sung fled to the south and established its capital at Lin-an in southern China. For this reason, the Sung dynasty before 1127 is called the Northern Sung dynasty, and thereafter, the Southern Sung dynasty. Finally it was replaced by the Yüan dynasty.

Sun Goddess The central deity in Japanese mythology and, according to the oldest extant Japanese histories, also the progenitor of the imperial clan. The Sun Goddess was later adopted as a protective deity in Buddhism. In many of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin views the Sun Goddess as a personification of the workings that protect the prosperity of those who have faith in the correct teaching. Her Japanese name is Tensho Daijin or Amaterasu Omikami.

Superior Intent A monk who lived in the latter age after the passing of the Buddha Lion Sound King. According to the Non-substantiality of All Phenomena Sutra, he slandered the monk Root of Joy who taught the correct doctrine, and therefore fell into hell.

- superior manifested body** One of the two types of manifested body, the other being the inferior manifested body. The manifested body is one of the three bodies, and the physical form in which a Buddha appears in the world in order to save the people. The Buddha of the superior manifested body is the Buddha who appears for the sake of bodhisattvas at or above the first stage of development, the forty-first of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. The Buddha of the inferior manifested body is the Buddha who appears for the sake of ordinary people, persons of the two vehicles, and bodhisattvas below the first stage of development.
- Superior Practices** One of the four bodhisattvas and the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. In the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni transfers the essentials of the sutra to Bodhisattva Superior Practices. Several of Nichiren Daishonin's writings refer to his own propagation efforts as the work of Bodhisattva Superior Practices.
- supervisor of priests** One of the official positions conferred by the government on distinguished priests. Under the direction of the administrator of priests, the supervisor of priests was in charge of the priests and nuns. Later "supervisor of priests" became an honorary position and lost its original significance, as was the case with the other ranks. Eventually it became simply a title of respect.
- Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra," The** A commentary by Tao-hsien, a priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in T'ang China.
- Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works, The** A commentary by Ts'ung-i (1042-1091) on T'ien-t'ai's three major works (*Great Concentration and Insight*, *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, and *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*), as well as on Miao-lo's commentaries on them.
- Susiddhikara Sutra** One of the three basic scriptures of esoteric Buddhism. This sutra is especially revered in Tendai esotericism.
- Su Wu** (140-60 B.C.E.) A minister to Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty in China. In 100 B.C.E., Emperor Wu sent Su Wu to the land of the northern barbarians to procure their allegiance. The barbarian chieftain rejected the demand, however, and took Su Wu captive. Kept prisoner in a cave, for a time Su Wu had no choice but to eat snow to survive and endured many other hardships. It was nineteen years before he was able to return home.
- Suzudan** The name of Shakyamuni when he was a king in a past life. He renounced the throne to seek the correct teaching and devoted himself to austerities under the seer Asita for a thousand years in order to learn the Lotus Sutra. This king was later reborn as Shakyamuni, and the seer, as Devadatta. The "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra recounts this story, though the name Suzudan is not mentioned. Suzudan is the Japanese rendering of his name; his Sanskrit name is unknown.
- T'ai-kung Wang** A general who served King Wen, the founder of the Chou dynasty. During the Yin (Shang) dynasty, he was living in seclusion but emerged to lead the army of King Wen at the latter's request. After Wen's death, he served King Wu, Wen's successor, and fought valorously to defeat King Chou of the Yin dynasty.
- Taira clan** Also, the Heike clan. An offshoot of the imperial family in Japan. At the time of Taira no Kiyomori, the head of the Taira clan, it seized absolute power. However, in 1185, at the naval battle of Dannoura, the forces of the Minamoto clan defeated the Taira, marking the end of the Taira hegemony. Minamoto no Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto clan, then proceeded to consolidate his rule, establishing the Kamakura government later that year.
- Taira no Kiyomori** (1118-1181) Leader of the Heike, or Taira clan. After achieving

political preeminence, he dominated the imperial court. He married his daughter to the emperor and eventually installed his grandson as emperor.

T'ai-tsung (598–649) The second emperor (r. 626–649) of the T'ang dynasty in China. He developed and completed the government structure, institutions, and law code that had been established by Kao-tsu, his father and the founder of the dynasty. He was also engaged in organization of the military and in military campaigns against the Turks. During his reign the kingdoms located west of the dynasty and lying along the Silk Road were placed under his rule.

Takahira (1180–1239) The name of Emperor Gotoba. *See also Retired Emperor of Oki.*

Takenouchi Takenouchi no Sukune, a legendary figure who, according to *The Chronicles of Japan*, was the great grandson of the eighth emperor Kogen and served under the five emperors from the twelfth, Keiko, to the sixteenth, Nintoku. Takenouchi is described as having played an active role in the non-reigning empress Jingu's successful expedition to Korea.

Tamura (758–811) Sakanoue no Tamuramaro, a military leader who was designated "Great General Who Subdues the Barbarians" for his successful campaign against the aboriginal Ezo people of northern Japan, through which he established the authority of the imperial court in that region.

Tan, the Duke of Chou *See Duke of Chou.*

T'an-luan (476–542) The founder of the Chinese Pure Land school. He received the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra from Bodhiruchi at Lo-yang and devoted himself to the Pure Land teachings, stressing the practice of calling on the name of Amida Buddha as the "easy-to-practice way" that enables all people to attain rebirth in Amida's Pure Land, and rejecting all other practices as the "difficult-to-practice way."

Tao-an Several different persons are known by the name Tao-an. One is a Chinese priest who lived during the Northern Chou dynasty (557–581). He expounded on the Nirvana Sutra and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. He submitted a treatise to Emperor Wu (r. 560–578) that asserted the superiority of Buddhism over Taoism and also criticized Confucianism. In 574, however, Emperor Wu issued his decree proscribing Buddhism and Taoism, and called for the destruction of Buddhist temples, images, and scriptures. Tao-an escaped from persecution and devoted himself to instructing his disciples.

Tao-ch'o (562–645) The second of the five patriarchs of the Pure Land school in China. He classified the Buddhist sutras into the two categories of Pure Land teachings and Sacred Way teachings. He asserted that the Sacred Way teachings, which expound the achievement of enlightenment through one's own power, are too difficult for common mortals of the latter age, and that only the Pure Land teachings, which expound rebirth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land by reliance on Amida's power, can offer salvation.

Tao-hsien (n.d.) A priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in T'ang China, said to have been a disciple of Miao-lo. In the Ta-li era (766–779), he went to Ch'ang-an, the capital of T'ang China, where he devoted himself to writing. *The Supplement to "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* is one of his works.

Tao-hsüan (596–667) The founder of the Nan-shan branch of the Precepts school in China. The Nan-shan school was the only branch of the Precepts school to survive; therefore, it later became synonymous with the Precepts school. Tao-hsüan assisted Hsüan-tsang in his translation work. He wrote several books on precepts. He is also known as the author of *The Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests*, a collection of the biographies of five hundred eminent priests who lived during the period from 502 to 645.

Tao-sui (n.d.) A priest of the T'ien-t'ai school in T'ang China. He studied T'ien-t'ai's teachings under Miao-lo. In 805 he taught the T'ien-t'ai meditation to Dengyo who had come from Japan.

teachings of the three periods A comparative classification of the Buddha's teachings. This system arranges Shakyamuni's teachings into three categories according to the order of preaching and content. The definition of these categories differs among the Buddhist schools. In the Dharma Characteristics school, the first period consists of the Agama sutras. During this period the Buddha taught the four noble truths to refute attachment to the self or ego. In these teachings he taught that the self is without substance, but that the dharmas or elements of existence themselves are real. The second period is represented by the Wisdom sutras, which teach that all things are non-substantial. This doctrine was intended to refute attachment to belief in the reality of the dharmas as taught in the Hinayana or Agama sutras. The third period includes the Flower Garland Sutra, the Profound Secrets Sutra, and the Lotus Sutra. The teachings in this period are intended to refute attachment both to the idea that the dharmas are non-substantial and to the belief that they are real. They teach that the reality of all things is neither real nor non-substantial; this is called the Middle Way. The teachings of the first two periods are regarded as temporary and imperfect, while those of the third period are considered to reveal the truth. In the Three Treatises school, the teaching of the first period corresponds to Hinayana while those of the second and third are divisions of Mahayana. They are: (1) the teaching that both the mind and objective reality are real; (2) the teaching that objective reality is without substance and the mind alone is real; and (3) the teaching that both the mind and objective reality are without substance. The Three Treatises school defines the teaching of the third period as the complete teaching.

Tendai Lotus school Another name for the Tendai school, so called because it ranks the Lotus Sutra above all other sutras.

Tendai school A school founded by Dengyo in Japan. Its head temple is Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei. In 804 Dengyo made the journey to T'ang China, where he completed his study of the T'ien-t'ai (Jpn Tendai) teachings. He returned to Japan in 805 and officially founded the Tendai school in 806. Jikaku and Chisho, respectively the third and fifth chief priests of Enryaku-ji, incorporated esoteric teachings into the doctrine of the Tendai school. Hence the Tendai school in Japan rapidly assumed the character of esotericism, differing in this respect from the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school.

ten demon daughters The female demons described in the "Dharani" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Together with the Mother of Demon Children, they vowed to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

ten directions The entire dimension of space, that is, the eight directions of a compass, plus up and down.

ten evil acts Killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse, lying, flattery (or random and irresponsible speech), defaming others, duplicity, greed, anger, and foolishness (or the holding of mistaken views).

ten factors A principle clarifying the factors common to all life in any of the Ten Worlds. As listed in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, they are appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end, or the unifying factor that makes all of the previous nine consistent from beginning to end.

Tengi era The period in Japan from 1053 to 1058.

ten good precepts Ten precepts for lay believers of Mahayana. They are prohibi-

tions against the ten evil acts of: (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) unlawful sexual intercourse, (4) lying, (5) flattery (or random and irresponsible speech), (6) defaming, (7) duplicity, (8) greed, (9) anger, and (10) foolishness (or the holding of mistaken views).

ten honorable titles Ten epithets for a Buddha, expressing his power, wisdom, virtue, and compassion.

ten inexhaustible precepts of the Flower Garland Sutra The ten precepts for bodhisattvas. One of them concerns the observance of the ten good precepts, or prohibition of the ten evil acts such as killing, stealing, and unlawful sexual intercourse.

ten major offenses Violations of the ten major precepts. *See also* **ten major precepts**.

ten major precepts Precepts for Mahayana bodhisattvas set forth in the Brahma Net Sutra. They are: (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to engage in sexual misconduct, (4) not to lie, (5) not to sell liquor, (6) not to discuss others' faults, (7) not to praise oneself or disparage others, (8) not to begrudge offerings or spare one's efforts for the sake of Buddhism, (9) not to give way to anger, and (10) not to speak ill of the three treasures.

ten meditations Ten kinds of meditation set forth by T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* as a way to observe the truth of life. They are: (1) the meditation on the region of the unfathomable; (2) the meditation to arouse compassion; (3) the meditation to enjoy security in the realm of truth; (4) the meditation to eliminate attachments; (5) the meditation to discern what leads to the realization of the true aspect of life and what prevents it; (6) the meditation to make proper use of the thirty-seven aids to the way; (7) the meditation to remove obstacles to enlightenment while practicing the six paramitas; (8) the meditation to recognize the stage of one's progress; (9) the meditation to stabilize one's mind; and (10) the meditation to remove attachment to what is not true enlightenment.

ten mysteries Ten aspects of the interrelationship of all phenomena as seen from the standpoint of the Buddha's enlightenment, a doctrine of the Flower Garland school formulated by Chih-yen (602–668), the second patriarch of the school, and revised by the third patriarch Fa-tsang.

ten mystic principles Principles set forth by T'ien-t'ai in interpreting the word *myo* of *Myoho-renge-kyo*, the title of the Lotus Sutra. According to T'ien-t'ai, the ten mystic principles are all implicit in the single word *myo*. There are two categories of ten mystic principles: the ten mystic principles of the theoretical teaching, and the ten mystic principles of the essential teaching, of the Lotus Sutra. The ten mystic principles of the theoretical teaching are based on the concept of the true aspect of all phenomena and the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle revealed in the first half of the Lotus Sutra. The ten mystic principles of the essential teaching are based on the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past, as expounded in the "Life Span" chapter.

ten objects Also, the ten objects of meditation. Objects of meditation set forth by T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* as part of a comprehensive system of meditation for perceiving the truth of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. The ten objects are: (1) the phenomenal world that exists by virtue of the five components, the relationship between the six sense organs and their six objects, and the six consciousnesses arising from this relationship, (2) earthly desires, (3) sickness, (4) karmic effect, (5) diabolical functions, (6) attachment to a certain level of meditation, (7) distorted views, (8) arrogance,

(9) attachment to the two vehicles, and (10) attachment to the state of the bodhisattva.

ten objects of meditation See **ten objects**.

ten peerlessnesses Ten points that assert the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras. One, for example, is that the seeds of enlightenment imparted by the Lotus Sutra are without peer. This concept appears in Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*.

ten precepts Precepts for male and female novices of the Buddhist Order. They are: (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) to refrain from all sexual activity, (4) not to lie, (5) not to drink intoxicants, (6) not to wear ornaments or perfume, (7) not to go to listen to singing or watch dancing, (8) not to sleep on an elevated or broad bed, (9) not to eat at irregular hours, and (10) not to own valuables such as gold and silver. The "ten precepts" can also refer to the ten good precepts and also to the ten major precepts of the Brahma Net Sutra.

ten schools The ten schools in Japan—the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, True Word, Zen, and Pure Land schools.

ten schools of northern and southern China See **three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China**.

ten stages of development Ten stages through which the practitioner conquers the deeper levels of darkness so as to perceive the truth of the Middle Way. In the system of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, they are viewed as the forty-first through the fiftieth stages.

ten stages of devotion The thirty-first through the fortieth of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. These ten stages follow the ten stages of faith, ten stages of security, and ten stages of practice. In these ten stages, one directs one's blessings toward all people and aims to perceive the Middle Way.

ten stages of faith The first ten of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice. The ten stages of faith, from the stage of arousing pure faith through the stage of fulfilling vows, include assiduousness, perceiving the non-substantiality of all things, and guarding the mind against earthly desires.

ten stages of the mind A system of comparative classification formulated by Kobo. He classifies Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings as corresponding to ten stages in the development of religious consciousness, and places a follower of the esoteric teachings of the True Word school in the highest, or tenth, stage.

ten supernatural powers Supernatural powers that Shakyamuni Buddha displays in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, before transferring the essence of the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Ten Worlds Distinct realms or categories of beings. From the lowest to the highest; they are the realms of (1) hell, (2) hungry spirits, (3) animals, (4) asuras, (5) human beings, (6) heavenly beings, (7) voice-hearers, (8) cause-awakened ones, (9) bodhisattvas, and (10) Buddhas. The Ten Worlds are also interpreted as states of life.

theoretical teaching The first fourteen chapters of the twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra, as classified by T'ien-t'ai. In contrast to the essential teaching—the latter fourteen chapters of the sutra, which represent preaching by Shakyamuni as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past, the theoretical teaching represents preaching by the historical Shakyamuni, who first attained enlightenment during his lifetime in India. The core of the theoretical teaching is the "Expedient Means" chapter, which teaches that all phenomena manifest the true aspect and that all phenomena are endowed with the ten factors. The "Expedient Means" chapter also states that the Buddhas' sole purpose is to lead

all people to Buddhahood, and that the three vehicles of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas are no more than expedient means to lead people to the one Buddha vehicle. The theoretical teaching further states that voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones will attain Buddhahood in the future.

thirty-three heavenly gods The gods said to live on a plateau at the top of Mount Sumeru. Shakra rules from his palace in the center, and the other thirty-two gods live on four peaks, eight gods to a peak, in each of the plateau's four corners.

thirty-two features Remarkable physical characteristics possessed by great beings such as Buddhas and wheel-turning kings.

thirty-two features and eighty characteristics The remarkable physical characteristics and extraordinary features possessed by Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

thousand-armed Perceiver of the World's Sounds One of the many forms of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. Images of this form of Perceiver of the World's Sounds usually have only representative forty arms, although some have been made with a full thousand. The thousand-armed Perceiver of the World's Sounds was believed to possess great compassion and the power to prolong life span, eradicate evil karma, and cure illness.

thousand-spoked wheel pattern Also, the markings of the thousand-spoked wheel. One of the thirty-two features that a Buddha is said to possess, it appears on the sole of each foot.

three ascetics Kapila, Uluka, and Rishabha. Kapila was the founder of the Samkhya school, one of the six major schools of Brahmanism in ancient India. Uluka was also called Kanada, the founder of the Vaisheshika school, another of the above six schools. Rishabha is said to have maintained the importance of asceticism, and his teachings are said to have prepared the way for Jainism.

three assemblies The three assemblies described in the Lotus Sutra. The first assembly on Eagle Peak, the Ceremony in the Air, and the second assembly on Eagle Peak. According to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni began preaching the sutra on Eagle Peak, then raised the assembly into midair, where he continued to preach, and finally returned the assembly to Eagle Peak, where the sutra concludes.

three bodies Three kinds of body that a Buddha possesses, namely: (1) the Dharma body, which indicates the fundamental truth or Law to which a Buddha is enlightened; (2) the reward body, which indicates the wisdom; and (3) the manifested body, or the merciful actions of a Buddha to save people and the physical form that he assumes for that purpose. The three bodies are generally considered to be three different types of Buddhas, but in the Lotus Sutra they are shown to be the three aspects of a single Buddha.

three calamities A reference to two sets of three calamities—lesser and greater. The three lesser calamities are warfare, pestilence, and famine. The calamity of famine is also called the calamity of high grain prices or inflation, because inflation was caused by a shortage of grain. The three greater calamities are those of fire, water, and wind. These calamities occur at the end of a kalpa. The three lesser calamities are often referred to in conjunction with the seven disasters as the “three calamities and seven disasters.”

three cardinal sins The three grave sins committed by Devadatta. Constituting three of the five cardinal sins, they are: (1) causing disunity in the Buddhist community, (2) injuring the Buddha, and (3) killing an arhat.

three categories of illusion A classification established by T'ien-t'ai. They are: (1) illusions of thought and desire (the former are distorted perceptions of the truth, while the latter refer to base inclinations such as greed and anger); (2) illu-

sions innumerable as particles of dust and sand, which arise when bodhisattvas try to master innumerable teachings in order to save others; and (3) illusions about the true nature of existence.

three equalities A concept set forth by Vasubandhu—the equality of the vehicle, the equality of the world and nirvana, and the equality of the body. The equality of the vehicle means that the one supreme vehicle is equally given to all people and that the three vehicles are united by the Lotus Sutra into the one supreme vehicle. The equality of the world and nirvana indicates that there is no fundamental distinction between the world of delusion and nirvana, or enlightenment. The equality of the body (of the Buddha) means that, although the Buddha assumes various forms to save people, the state of Buddhahood equally pervades them all. Vasubandhu established these three viewpoints to show that the Lotus Sutra represents the Law of absolute equality.

three evil paths The realms of suffering into which one falls as a result of evil deeds—hell, the realm of hungry spirits, and that of animals.

three existences The past, present, and future. The three aspects of the eternity of life, linked by the law of cause and effect.

threefold contemplation Also, threefold contemplation in a single mind. A method of meditation formulated by T'ien-t'ai and aimed at perceiving the unification of the three truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence, and the Middle Way in a single mind. Through this meditation, one is said to be able to rid oneself of the three categories of illusion and acquire the three kinds of wisdom (the wisdom of the two vehicles, the wisdom of bodhisattvas, and the Buddha wisdom).

threefold world The world of unenlightened beings who transmigrate within the six paths of existence. They are: (1) the world of desire, ruled by various desires; (2) the world of form, whose inhabitants are free from all desires, cravings, and appetites but, still having material form, are subject to certain material restrictions; and (3) the world of formlessness, where the beings are free from both desires and material restrictions.

Three Great Secret Laws The core principles of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism: (1) the object of devotion, (2) the invocation, or daimoku of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and (3) the sanctuary, or the place where one chants the daimoku before the object of devotion.

three groups of voice-hearers Shakyamuni's disciples of superior, intermediate, and inferior capacity, whose attainment of Buddhahood is prophesied in the first half of the Lotus Sutra. Shariputra constitutes the first group. He was the first to understand the Buddha's teaching of "replacing the three vehicles with the one vehicle" expounded in the "Expedient Means" (second) chapter. The "Simile and Parable" (third) chapter predicts his enlightenment. Maudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Katyayana, and Subhuti constitute the second group. They understood the Buddha's teaching through the parable of the three carts and the burning house related in the "Simile and Parable" chapter. Their enlightenment is predicted in the "Bestowal of Prophecy" (sixth) chapter. Purna, Ananda, Rahula, and others comprise the third group. They understood the Buddha's teaching by hearing about their relationship with Shakyamuni since the remote past as explained in the "Parable of the Phantom City" (seventh) chapter. Their future enlightenment is predicted in the next two chapters.

Three Histories The works of the Three Kings—King Yü of the Hsia dynasty, King T'ang of the Yin (Shang) dynasty, and King Wen of the Chou dynasty.

three insights The ability to know the past, foresee the future, and eradicate illusions, which indicates powers that Buddhas and arhats are said to possess.

- Three Kings** Founders of the three dynasties, Hsia, Yin (Shang), and Chou, in China. They are King Yü of the Hsia dynasty, King T'ang of the Yin dynasty, and King Wen of the Chou dynasty. They are said to have realized model governments.
- three metaphors of the lotus blossom** Metaphors used by T'ien-t'ai to clarify the relationship between the Lotus Sutra (likened to the lotus calyx) and the provisional teachings (likened to the blossom), and between the essential teaching (calyx) and the theoretical teaching (blossom). The former relationship is described by the three metaphors of the theoretical teaching, and the latter, by the three metaphors of the essential teaching.
- three mysteries** The three mysteries of body, mouth, and mind. A term of the esoteric True Word school. In terms of practice, the mystery of the body means the making of mudras, which are gestures with the hands and fingers; the mystery of the mouth refers to the recitation of mantras (magical formulas); and the mystery of the mind indicates meditation on an esoteric mandala or one of the figures appearing in it. The True Word school teaches that, through these three practices, the body, mouth, and mind of the common mortal are united with those of Mahavairochana Buddha, thus enabling one to attain Buddhahood in one's present form.
- three obediences** Also known as the three types of obedience. A code of conduct that required women to obey their parents in childhood, their husbands after marriage, and their sons in old age. Together with the five obstacles, they were seen as hindrances that women must confront.
- three obstacles and four devils** Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. The three obstacles are: (1) the obstacle of earthly desires; (2) the obstacle of karma, which may also refer to opposition from one's spouse or children; and (3) the obstacle of retribution, also obstacles caused by one's superiors, such as rulers or parents. The four devils are: (1) the hindrance of the five components; (2) the hindrance of earthly desires; (3) the hindrance of death, because untimely death obstructs one's practice of Buddhism or because the premature death of another practitioner causes doubts; and (4) the hindrance of the devil king.
- three paths** Earthly desires, karma, and suffering. Called "paths" because one leads to the other. Earthly desires, which include greed, anger, foolishness, arrogance, and doubt, inspire actions that create evil karma. The effect of this evil karma then manifests itself as suffering. Suffering aggravates earthly desires, leading to further misguided action, which in turn brings on more evil karma and suffering.
- three poisons** Greed, anger, and foolishness—the fundamental evils inherent in life, which give rise to human suffering. They are also known as three of the six most fundamental earthly desires.
- three powerful enemies** Also, the three types of enemies. Three types of people who persecute those who propagate the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing, as described in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the sutra. They are: (1) lay people ignorant of Buddhism who denounce the votaries of the Lotus Sutra and attack them with swords or staves; (2) arrogant and cunning priests who slander the votaries; and (3) priests respected by the general public who, fearing the loss of fame or profit, induce the secular authorities to persecute the sutra's votaries.
- three-pronged diamond-pounder** One of the three types of diamond-pounders. A diamond-pounder was originally a weapon used in ancient India. It is so called because of its hardness, suggesting that of the diamond that can destroy

anything. In the rituals of esoteric Buddhism, the diamond-pounder is used as a symbol of the resolve to attain enlightenment which can destroy any illusion. This diamond-pounder, usually made of iron or copper, is slender in shape with pointed ends. There are three types, according to the number of prongs at either end: the single-pronged diamond-pounder, the three-pronged one, and the five-pronged one.

three Pure Land sutras The three basic sutras of the Pure Land school: the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, and the Amida Sutra.

three realms of existence A component of the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. (1) The realm of the five components—form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness—which constitute a living being. (2) The realm of living beings. (3) The realm of the environment.

Three Records One of the ancient texts mentioned in early Chinese writings. The *Three Records* is said to have belonged to the time of the three mythical sage rulers Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, and Huang Ti (Yellow Emperor) and to have recorded their deeds. It is not extant, and nothing is known as to whether this text ever existed and, if it did, what its form or content was. Together with the *Five Canons* that concerns the Five Emperors, or the five mythical sage rulers who followed the above-mentioned three rulers, it is often referred to in conjunction as the “*Three Records and Five Canons*.”

three robes The three kinds of robes worn by a monk according to the time or the occasion. Together with a mendicant’s bowl, or begging bowl, these are all that a monk was permitted to possess. Originally the three robes symbolized the ascetic monastic life free from secular attachments and were made from discarded rags. These evolved with the spread of Buddhism to the point where some priests in Japan came to wear robes of silk, brocade, or other luxurious fabrics.

three robes and one begging bowl The only personal belongings that the precepts allow a monk to possess. They exemplify the austere life of the monkhood and the attitude to divest oneself of worldly attachments in order to seek the way. *See also* **three robes**.

Three Sages Three wise men of ancient China. Lao Tzu, Confucius, and Yen Hui, Confucius’s foremost disciple.

three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China T’ien-t’ai’s designation for the ten schools or major systems of comparative classification of the Buddhist sutras employed by various Buddhist teachers in China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (fifth-sixth century). Though their systems differed, each held either the Flower Garland Sutra or the Nirvana Sutra to be supreme among the Buddha’s teachings. T’ien-t’ai refuted their conclusions and demonstrated the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras.

three schools of the south and seven schools of the north *See* **three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China**.

Three Sovereigns Also called the Three Rulers. Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, and Huang Ti (Yellow Emperor), legendary rulers of ancient China. They are usually regarded as having invented fishing, farming, and medicine, respectively. In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin often refers to Shen Nung and Huang Ti as masters of medicine, and refers to the reigns of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung as an age in which an ideal society was realized.

three standards of comparison Three viewpoints from which T’ien-t’ai asserts the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras. The first standard is whether people of all capacities can attain Buddhahood through a particular

sutra. The second standard is whether the process of teaching, that is, the process from planting the seed of Buddhahood in the lives of people through finally leading them to Buddhahood, is revealed from beginning to end. The third standard is whether the original relationship between master and disciple is revealed. The term master refers to the Buddha. The Lotus Sutra reveals that Shakyamuni originally attained enlightenment in the distant past and that ever since he has been teaching the people.

three thousand or more volumes of non-Buddhist writings An expression commonly used to refer to the entire body of the Confucian and Taoist scriptures. The number “three thousand or more” is found in Chinese classics. There are other similar expressions such as the three thousand and more volumes of non-Buddhist literature, the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist writings, the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist scriptures, the more than three thousand volumes of Confucian and Taoist literature, and the three thousand volumes of non-Buddhist writings.

three thousand realms in a single moment of life (Jpn *ichinen sanzen*) A philosophical system established by T’ien-t’ai. The “three thousand realms” indicates the varying aspects and phases that life assumes at each moment. At each moment, life manifests one of the Ten Worlds. Each of these worlds possesses the potential for all ten within itself, thus making one hundred possible worlds. Each of these hundred worlds possesses the ten factors and operates within each of the three realms of existence, thus making three thousand realms.

three thousand rules of conduct Also, three thousand rules of behavior. Strict Hinayana rules of discipline for monks. Accounts differ in how to arrive at the figure of three thousand. According to one account, the figure of three thousand is arrived at by applying the two hundred and fifty precepts—the rules of discipline for fully ordained Hinayana monks—to each of the four activities of daily life: walking, standing, sitting, and lying. The resulting total of one thousand is then applied to each of the three existences of past, present, and future for a total of three thousand rules of conduct. According to another account, the figure three thousand is not intended to be literal but simply indicates a large number.

three treasures The three basic elements of Buddhism—the Buddha, the Law (the Buddha’s teachings), and the Order (community of believers).

Three Treatises school A reference to the Chinese San-lun school and the Japanese Sanron school (*sanron* being the Japanese pronunciation of *san-lun*). A school based on Nagarjuna’s *Treatise on the Middle Way* and *Treatise on the Twelve Gates* and Aryadeva’s *One-Hundred-Verse Treatise*. These three treatises were translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva, and their doctrines were finally systematized by Chi-tsang. The Korean priest Ekan (Kor Hyekwan) is regarded as the first to have formally introduced the Three Treatises doctrine to Japan.

three True Word sutras Also, the three major True Word sutras. The Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras. These sutras are revered by the True Word school and in Tendai esotericism.

three truths The truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence, and the Middle Way—three phases of the truth formulated by T’ien-t’ai. The truth of non-substantiality means that all phenomena are non-substantial and in a state transcending the concepts of existence and nonexistence. The truth of temporary existence means that, although non-substantial in nature, all things possess a temporary reality that is in constant flux. The truth of the Middle Way is that all phenomena are both non-substantial and temporary, yet are in essence neither.

three types of enemies See **three powerful enemies**.

three types of learning The three disciplines that a practitioner of Buddhism should master. They are precepts, meditation, and wisdom and are said to encompass all aspects of Buddhist doctrine and practice.

three types of meditation Meditation taught in *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*. The first is a meditation bound and encumbered by earthly desires, which is designated for lay people; the second is for lay people who are highly advanced in Buddhist practice but whose meditation is still not free from delusions and earthly desires; and the third enables one to obtain wisdom completely free from delusions and earthly desires, designed for those who have become monks.

three types of obedience See **three obediences**.

three vehicles The teachings expounded for voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas. Vehicle means a teaching that “carries” one to a certain state. The term three vehicles is used in contrast to the one vehicle, or the vehicle that carries all people to Buddhahood. In the Lotus Sutra, the three vehicles are encompassed and united into the one vehicle.

three virtues (1) The virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, attributes that a Buddha possesses. The virtue of sovereign is the power to protect all living beings, the virtue of teacher is the wisdom to instruct them and lead them to enlightenment, and the virtue of parent means the compassion to nurture and support them. (2) The three virtues of the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation—virtues possessed by a Buddha. The Dharma body is the truth that the Buddha has realized; wisdom is the capacity to realize this truth; and emancipation is the state of being free from the sufferings of birth and death.

thrice turned wheel of the Law A division of the Buddha’s teachings into three categories, set forth by Chi-tsang. The three categories are: (1) the teachings expounded for bodhisattvas, which correspond to the Flower Garland Sutra; (2) the three vehicle teaching of the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras expounded for those people of inferior capacity who could not understand the teaching of the Flower Garland Sutra; and (3) the teaching of the Lotus Sutra that unites the three vehicles into the one vehicle.

Thus Come One (Skt Tathagata) One of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha, meaning one who has arrived from the world of truth. This title indicates that a Buddha embodies the fundamental truth of all phenomena and has grasped the law of causality spanning past, present, and future.

T’ien-t’ai (538–597) Referred to also as Chih-i, T’ien-t’ai Chih-che, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, and the Great Teacher Chih-che. The founder of the T’ien-t’ai school in China. After studying at Mount Ta-su under Nan-yüeh, he became known for his profound lectures on the Lotus Sutra. He refuted the scriptural classifications formulated by the ten major Buddhist schools of his day, and classified all of Shakyamuni’s sutras into five periods and eight teachings, demonstrating the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. His principal works, *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, were all recorded and compiled by his immediate disciple Chang-an. In *Great Concentration and Insight*, T’ien-t’ai set forth the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and the practice of meditation to realize it.

T’ien-t’ai, Mount A mountain in Chekiang Province in China where the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai lived and the T’ien-t’ai school was based.

to (Jpn) A unit of volume equivalent to about eighteen liters, about a half of one bushel.

Tofuku-ji The head temple of the Tofuku-ji branch of the Japanese Rinzaï school of Zen, one of the five major Rinzaï temples of Kyoto. It was built in 1239 by

Fujiwara no Michiie, who invited Enni (also known as Bennen) to become its first chief priest.

To-ji The head temple of the To-ji branch of the True Word school, located in Kyoto in Japan. In 823 it was given by the imperial court to Kobo and became a center of esoteric practice.

Tokuitsu (n.d.) Also called Tokuichi. A priest of the Dharma Characteristics school in Japan during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. His dispute with Dengyo regarding the one vehicle doctrine and the three vehicle doctrine is well known. This debate continued until Dengyo's death.

Toshihito (n.d.) Fujiwara no Toshihito. A distinguished warrior of the Fujiwara clan who lived during the Heian period (794–1185). In 915 he became the chief of the military headquarters in northern Japan.

treasure tower A tower adorned with treasures. A treasure tower often appears in Buddhist scriptures. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, the treasure tower primarily indicates the tower of the Buddha Many Treasures that appears from beneath the earth in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. He also equated this with the Gohonzon and human life.

Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine, The A reference to *The Treatise on the Establishment of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*, written by Dharmapala, a prominent Consciousness-Only scholar, and translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang. Also a reference to one or another of Vasubandhu's treatises on the Consciousness-Only doctrine, such as *The Twenty-Stanza Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine* and *The Thirty-Stanza Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*, as well as to Chinese translations of these treatises. Dharmapala's *Treatise on the Establishment of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine* is a commentary on Vasubandhu's *Thirty-Stanza Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine*. *Twenty-Stanza Treatise* and *Thirty-Stanza Treatise* were translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang.

Treatise on the Discipline for Attaining Enlightenment, The A treatise consisting of original verses attributed to Nagarjuna and a prose commentary added later. It sets forth the six paramitas and other various bodhisattva practices for attaining enlightenment.

Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom, The A comprehensive commentary on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, traditionally attributed to Nagarjuna. Only the Chinese version translated by Kumarajiva exists today. The work explains the concepts of wisdom and of non-substantiality, and the bodhisattva ideal and the six paramitas, among others. It also incorporates concepts from the Lotus Sutra and other Mahayana sutras, and is considered an extremely important work of Mahayana thought in general.

Treatise on the Lotus Sutra, The A commentary by Vasubandhu on the Lotus Sutra. In this work, Vasubandhu asserts the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras in terms of the seven parables, three equalities, and ten peerlessnesses. According to Paramartha's account, in India more than fifty people wrote commentaries on the Lotus Sutra, but among them, only the commentary by Vasubandhu was brought to China and translated into Chinese. *See also seven parables, three equalities, and ten peerlessnesses.*

Treatise on the Middle Way, The One of Nagarjuna's principal works, translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva, which develops the concept of non-substantiality and the practice of the Middle Way on the basis of the Wisdom sutras. Nagarjuna's idea of non-substantiality formed a major theoretical basis of Mahayana Buddhism.

Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment, The A work attributed to Nagarjuna and translated by Pu-k'ung from Sanskrit into Chinese. Another account

attributes it not to Nagarjuna but to Pu-k'ung. It teaches the importance of a mind that seeks enlightenment. Because the work distinguishes between esoteric and exoteric teachings, it is valued by the True Word school. Kobo, the founder of the Japanese True Word school, quoted it frequently to assert the superiority of the esoteric teachings over the exoteric teachings including the Lotus Sutra.

Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra, The A commentary on the Lotus Sutra by Chi-tsang, written from the viewpoint of the Three Treatises school. In this work, Chi-tsang cites many sutras and treatises such as the Flower Garland, the Nirvana, and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, and introduces the content of these texts as well as his own views on the Lotus Sutra.

Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice, The A work attributed to either Maitreya or Asanga (around the fourth century) and translated into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang. One of the basic treatises of the Dharma Characteristics school. It elucidates seventeen stages through which the practitioner of the Consciousness-Only doctrine advances toward enlightenment.

Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind, The A work written around 830 by Kobo, founder of the Japanese True Word school. In this work, he places the mind of a believer in the Lotus Sutra and that of a believer in the Flower Garland Sutra in the eighth and the ninth stages, respectively. And he places the mind of a follower of the True Word teaching in the tenth, or highest, stage, because such a person has obtained the esoteric teaching.

Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra school The Chinese Ti-lun school. A school founded based on Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra*. The school prospered in the Liang, Ch'en, and Sui dynasties but was absorbed by the Flower Garland school during the T'ang dynasty.

Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood, The A work by Saramati translated into Chinese by Ratnamati of the Northern Wei dynasty. It asserts that all beings possess the matrix of the Thus Come One or the Buddha nature, and that even icchantikas—those of incorrigible disbelief—can attain Buddhahood eventually. Tibetan tradition attributes this work to Maitreya. *The Treatise on the Treasure Vehicle of Buddhahood* is generally thought to have been written sometime around the end of the fourth century through the beginning of the fifth century.

Tripitaka master An honorific title given to those who were well versed in the three divisions of the Buddhist canon. It was often bestowed on eminent Chinese priests as well as on those monks from India and Central Asia who went to China and translated Buddhist scriptures into Chinese.

Tripitaka teaching (1) Tripitaka (Skt) means the three baskets or collections of sacred writings. The Tripitaka teaching is so called because it consists of the three divisions of the Buddhist canon—sutras, rules of discipline, and doctrinal treatises. (2) One of the four teachings of doctrine formulated by T'ie-t'ai. The teachings of this category are Hinayana and aim at awakening people to the sufferings of birth and death in the threefold world, and urge the practitioner to rid himself of desire and attachment in order to escape the cycle of rebirth.

true aspect of all phenomena The ultimate truth or reality that permeates all phenomena and is in no way separate from them. The "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra defines this as the ten factors of life, and Nichiren Daishonin defined it as Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

true Buddha The Buddha who has revealed his true identity.

true cause See **true effect**.

true effect Often refers to the enlightenment Shakyamuni attained numberless major world dust particle kalpas ago. In contrast, the true cause means the cause for that enlightenment. From another viewpoint, the "true effect" indicates the

eternal Buddhahood, while the “true cause” indicates the eternal nine worlds. Both are eternally inherent in all life.

- true Mahayana** The Lotus Sutra. Mahayana teachings are divided into provisional and true. True Mahayana reveals Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment in the remote past and the possibility of all people’s enlightenment.
- True Word school** A reference to the Chinese Chen-yen school and the Japanese Shingon school. (*Shingon*, or true word, is the Japanese pronunciation of *chen-yen*.) The school that follows the esoteric doctrines found in the Mahavairochana and the Diamond Crown sutras. “True word” comes from the Sanskrit mantra (secret word, mystic formula) and indicates the words said to have been uttered by Mahavairochana Buddha. The chanting of these secret words is one of the school’s basic esoteric rituals for the attainment of enlightenment. In the eighth century, three Indian monks introduced the esoteric teachings to China. They were naturalized in China and named Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung. These teachings were later introduced to Japan by Kobo.
- Tsukushi** The provinces of Chikuzen and Chikugo in Kyushu, a southern island in Japan. The term was also used to indicate Kyushu in its entirety.
- Ts’ung-i** (1042–1091) A priest of the T’ien-t’ai school in China. He wrote many works including *The Supplement to T’ien-t’ai’s Three Major Works*. He asserted the supremacy of the T’ien-t’ai doctrine over the doctrines of the Zen, Flower Garland, and Dharma Characteristics schools.
- Tsun-shih** (964–1032) A priest of the T’ien-t’ai school in Sung-dynasty China. He enhanced the fame of the T’ien-t’ai school and successfully petitioned the throne to have the school’s texts and commentaries included in the official Chinese Buddhist canon. He left behind a number of commentaries on both T’ien-t’ai and Pure Land doctrines.
- Tsushima** A small southern island of Japan. In the tenth month of 1274, the Mongols launched a massive military attack against Tsushima and another island, Iki.
- tuft of white hair** A tuft of white hair between a Buddha’s eyebrows, one of a Buddha’s thirty-two features. A beam of light is said to emanate from this tuft of white hair.
- Tung-ch’un** Another name of *The Supplement to the Meanings of the Commentaries on the Lotus Sutra*. A work by Chih-tu, a T’ien-t’ai priest of the T’ang dynasty in China. This work was called *Tung-ch’un* after the place where the author lived.
- Tushita heaven** The Heaven of Satisfaction. The fourth of the six heavens in the world of desire. It is said that bodhisattvas are reborn there just before their last rebirth in the world when they will attain Buddhahood. This heaven consists of an inner court and an outer court. The inner court is said to be the abode of Bodhisattva Maitreya.
- Tu-shun** (557–640) The founder of the Chinese Flower Garland school.
- twelve divisions of the scriptures** A classification of all the Buddhist sutras according to their content and style of presentation. The term twelve divisions of the scriptures is often used in the same meaning with the “eighty thousand teachings,” indicating all the sutras and all of the Buddha’s teachings.
- twelve great vows** The vows that the Buddha Medicine Master made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice. They are vows to cure all illnesses and lead all people to enlightenment.
- twelve hundred and more honored ones** Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other venerable figures represented in the Diamond Realm and Womb Realm mandalas of the esoteric teaching of the True Word school.
- twelve-linked chain of causation** Also, twelve-linked chain of dependent origination. An early doctrine of Buddhism showing the causal relationship between

ignorance and suffering. The first link in the chain is ignorance. Then ignorance causes action; action causes consciousness; consciousness causes name and form; name and form cause the six sense organs; the six sense organs cause contact; contact causes sensation; sensation causes desire; desire causes attachment; attachment causes existence; existence causes birth; and birth causes aging and death.

twenty-eight constellations Celestial houses of heavenly bodies as conceived in ancient India and China. They had names such as Chitra (Chiao in China) and Anuradha (Fang in China). The twenty-eight constellations, or the twenty-eight divisions of the sky, derive from the lunar mansions in which the moon was considered to stay on successive nights.

twenty-five preparatory exercises Practices to be undertaken in preparation for entering meditation on the truth of life. These preliminary practices were set forth in *Great Concentration and Insight* by T'ien-t'ai, including the regulation of one's daily life by observing the precepts and obtaining the appropriate food and clothing.

twenty-four successors Those who successively inherited the lineage of Shakyamuni's Buddhism and propagated it in the Former Day of the Law. Differing lists exist. According to one, they are: (1) Mahakashyapa, (2) Ananda, (3) Madhyantika, (4) Shanavasa (or Shanakavasa), (5) Upagupta, (6) Dhritaka, (7) Mikkaka, (8) Buddhananda, (9) Buddhamitra, (10) Parshva, (11) Punyayashas, (12) Ashvaghosha, (13) Kapimala, (14) Nagarjuna, (15) Aryadeva, (16) Rahulata, (17) Samghanandi, (18) Samghayashas, (19) Kumarata, (20) Jayata, (21) Vasubandhu, (22) Manorhita, (23) Haklenayashas, and (24) Aryasimha.

twenty outstanding principles Principles enumerated by Miao-lo in his *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,"* clarifying the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras. Among them are the revelation of the Buddha's attainment of Buddhahood numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, the bestowal of a prophecy of Buddhahood upon persons of the two vehicles, and the revelation that one who hears even a single verse or phrase of the Lotus Sutra will without fail attain Buddhahood.

two hundred and fifty precepts Rules of discipline to be observed by fully ordained Hinayana Buddhist monks.

two places and three assemblies A description of the setting in which Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra, as depicted in the sutra. The two places are atop Eagle Peak and in the air. The three assemblies are: the first assembly at Eagle Peak, which continues from the "Introduction" (first) chapter through the first half of the "Treasure Tower" (eleventh) chapter; the assembly in the air, which lasts from the latter half of the "Treasure Tower" chapter to the "Entrustment" (twenty-second) chapter; and the second assembly at Eagle Peak, which lasts from the "Medicine King" (twenty-third) chapter to the "Universal Worthy" (twenty-eighth) chapter.

two storehouses of teachings The summation of the teachings expounded for persons of the two vehicles, and that of the teachings expounded for bodhisattvas. The former corresponds to Hinayana teachings such as the four noble truths and the twelve-linked chain of causation. The latter indicates the Mahayana teachings such as the six paramitas.

two vehicles The teachings expounded for voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones. Persons of the two vehicles indicate these two kinds of people.

Two-Volumed Sutra Another title of the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra. The Buddha Infinite Life Sutra is so called because it consists of two volumes. *See also* **Buddha Infinite Life Sutra**.

Tz'u-en (632–682) Also known as K'uei-chi. The founder of the Dharma Charac-

teristics school in China. One of the outstanding disciples of Hsüan-tsang, he collaborated with him on the translation of many important texts and wrote several commentaries on the Consciousness-Only doctrine.

Udayana A king of Kaushambi in India. He converted to Buddhism at the urging of his wife and became a patron of the Buddha. When Shakyamuni ascended to the heaven of the thirty-three gods to preach the teaching to his mother, King Udayana lamented that he could no longer see the Buddha and fell ill. Thereupon he ordered his retainers to fashion an image of the Buddha, the first such image ever made.

udumbara (Skt) A mythical plant said to bloom only once every three thousand years to herald the advent of a gold-wheel-turning king or a Buddha. The udumbara is often referred to in the Buddhist scriptures to symbolize the rarity of encountering a Buddha.

Uluka Also called Kanada. The founder of the Vaisheshika school, one of the six major schools of Brahmanism in ancient India. Uluka is also known as one of the three ascetics, together with Kapila and Rishabha.

unconditioned, the That which is not created, that is, the eternal, unchanging, and pure. "The unconditioned" refers to Buddhist truths and ideals such as nirvana and enlightenment. Its opposite is the conditioned, which refers to all phenomena that are produced through causation, that are changeable and impermanent.

unification of the three truths A principle expounded by T'ien-t'ai on the basis of the Lotus Sutra, explaining the three truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence, and the Middle Way as an integral whole, each of the three possessing all three within itself. It teaches that these three are inseparable phases of all phenomena.

Universal Brightness (1) (Skt Shrutasoma) The name of Shakyamuni in a past existence when he was a king engaged in the paramita of observing precepts. This king appears in the Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish, *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, and elsewhere. The king Universal Brightness and 99 other kings (999 kings according to another source) had been captured by the king called Spotted Feet and were about to be beheaded. The king Universal Brightness asked Spotted Feet to let him first carry out a promise he had made to give offerings to a certain monk. Spotted Feet granted him seven days' grace to fulfill his promise, and the king Universal Brightness returned to his country, where he gave the monk offerings and transferred the throne to his son. After proclaiming to his people that keeping one's promise is the most important precept, he returned to the king Spotted Feet; the latter was so impressed by the king Universal Brightness's integrity that he released him and the other kings and then converted to Buddhism. (2) The name that Kaundinya and other voice-hearer disciples will assume when they attain Buddhahood, according to the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In this chapter, Shakyamuni predicts that a group of five hundred arhats and another group of seven hundred will in the future all become Buddhas named Universal Brightness.

Universal Worthy One of the two bodhisattvas, with Manjushri, who attend Shakyamuni Buddha and lead the other bodhisattvas. He represents the virtues of truth and practice. In the "Universal Worthy" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he vows to protect the sutra and its votaries.

Universal Worthy Sutra A one-volume sutra that was preached three months before Shakyamuni's passing. This sutra is regarded as a continuation of the last, "Universal Worthy," chapter of the Lotus Sutra and as the epilogue to the Lotus

Sutra. It describes how to meditate on Bodhisattva Universal Worthy and explains the benefit of this practice.

- unseen crown of the head** The top of a Buddha's head, which no one can see. One of a Buddha's eighty characteristics. This feature is generally identified as a protuberant knot of flesh—one of a Buddha's thirty-two features—on the crown of a Buddha's head.
- Usa Shrine** A shrine in Kyushu, a southern island of Japan, dedicated to Emperor Ojin, Empress Jingu, and the goddess Himegami. It is also called Usa Hachiman Shrine.
- Utpalavarna** A nun and follower of Shakyamuni Buddha. She is said to have attained the state of arhat under the guidance of Mahaprajapati. She was beaten to death by Devadatta when she reproached him for his evil acts.
- Vaidehi** The consort of Bimbisara, king of Magadha in Shakyamuni's time, and the mother of Ajatashatru. She is said to have been the sister of King Prasenajit of Kosala.
- Vairochana** A Buddha who appears in the Flower Garland and Brahma Net sutras. The Flower Garland Sutra describes his pure land, the Lotus Treasury World. The True Word school equates Vairochana with its central deity, Mahavairochana.
- Vaishali** One of six great cities in ancient India. Shakyamuni Buddha often visited Vaishali to preach. The Second Buddhist Council was held there about a century after the Buddha's death.
- Vaishravana** One of the four heavenly kings. He is said to live halfway down the northern side of Mount Sumeru and protect the north, accompanied by the two classes of demons called yaksha and rakshasa. Also called Hearer of Many Teachings, this god is said to always protect the place where the Buddha preaches and listen to the Buddha's teachings.
- Vajrasattva** The second of the first eight patriarchs of the True Word school. He is said to have received the esoteric teaching directly from Mahavairochana Buddha. According to the esoteric tradition, Vajrasattva compiled Mahavairochana's esoteric teachings in the form of scripture and sealed it in an iron tower in southern India. This tower was opened several centuries later by Nagarjuna; at that time Vajrasattva transferred the esoteric teachings to him.
- Varshakara** A minister who served King Ajatashatru. He conspired with Devadatta in persuading Ajatashatru when the latter was a prince to kill King Bimbisara, his father and a lay supporter of Shakyamuni. Varshakara also encouraged Ajatashatru to harass Shakyamuni. Later on, however, he repented and converted to Buddhism along with Ajatashatru and assisted him in administering the kingdom.
- Vasubandhu** (n.d.) A Buddhist scholar in India thought to have lived around the fourth or fifth century. He is known as the author of *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*. He originally studied Hinayana but was later converted to Mahayana by his elder brother Asanga. He wrote numerous treatises designed to clarify the Mahayana teachings.
- Vimalakirti** A wealthy man of Vaishali who appears in the Vimalakirti Sutra. He represents the ideal Mahayana lay believer. The Vimalakirti Sutra depicts him as eloquently refuting the Hinayana views held by Shakyamuni's disciples with the Mahayana doctrine of non-substantiality.
- Vimalamitra** (n.d.) A Hinayana monk and native of Kashmir, India. He vowed to destroy Vasubandhu's reputation and ruin the credibility of Mahayana Buddhism, but instead it is said that his tongue split in five pieces, and, tormented by remorse, he fell into the hell of incessant suffering.

- Virtue Victorious** A child who, together with the boy Invincible, is said to have offered a mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha when the Buddha was begging for alms in Rajagriha. Having nothing else to give, they offered a mud pie as an expression of their sincerity. It is said that the blessings the two boys received from this offering enabled them to be reborn as King Ashoka and his consort, respectively.
- Virudhaka** A king of the state of Kosala in India during Shakyamuni's lifetime. His father was Prasenajit. It is said that his mother was originally a servant from the Shakya tribe, a fact that apparently caused him great humiliation. For this reason he bore a grudge against the Shakya tribe and killed the majority of its members.
- Vishvakarman** A god who lives in the heaven of the thirty-three gods on the summit of Mount Sumeru and serves Shakra. According to *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, when Shakyamuni was practicing Buddhist austerities as King Shibi in a past existence, the god Shakra assumed the form of a hawk, and Vishvakarman, that of a dove, in order to test the king's sincerity.
- voice-hearers** (Skt shravaka) Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples. Those who listen to his preaching and strive to attain enlightenment. In this sense, voice-hearers are also called voice-hearer disciples. Voice-hearers also denote those who hear the teaching of the four noble truths and aim at attaining the state of arhat.
- votary of the Lotus Sutra** One who propagates and practices the Lotus Sutra in exact accordance with its teachings.
- Wake no Kiyomaro** (733–799) A court official in Japan. He thwarted the attempts of the priest Dokyo, Empress Shotoku's favorite, to ascend the throne. As a result, he incurred the wrath of Dokyo and was condemned to exile. After Dokyo was stripped of power, Kiyomaro was recalled to service at court. He contributed to the transfer of the capital to Kyoto in 794.
- Wang Chao-chün** (n.d.) A court lady in China at the time of the tenth ruler, Emperor Yüan, of the Former Han dynasty, who reigned from 49 to 33 B.C.E. Emperor Yüan had so many ladies in his palace that he could not become familiar with them all, and so he had his court painter make portraits of them in order that he could summon the ones that pleased him on the basis of their image. All the other ladies bribed the court painter to depict them in a favorable manner, but Lady Wang, evidently confident of her beauty, failed to do so. As a result, she was depicted in an unflattering manner and was never summoned into the emperor's presence. When the emperor came to select a bride for a barbarian chief in the north, he chose Lady Wang. But when he caught a glimpse of her as she was taking her departure, he discovered how beautiful she was and, after investigating the matter, had the court painter put to death in punishment.
- Wei** (1) A state in China that existed from the late eleventh century B.C.E. through 209 B.C.E. It was destroyed by the Ch'in dynasty. (2) A state in China that existed from 403 B.C.E. through 225 B.C.E. It was also destroyed by the Ch'in dynasty. (3) A kingdom in the period of the Three Kingdoms in China that existed from 220 through 265. The capital city was Lo-yang. (4) The Northern Wei dynasty in China, which existed from 386 through 534. In 534, it split into the Eastern Wei and the Western Wei, which perished in 550 and in 556, respectively.
- Wei Yüan-sung** (n.d.) A Buddhist priest in sixth-century China. Out of a desire for fame and profit, he began to associate with a group of Taoists and eventually returned to lay life. His memorial to the throne was instrumental in influencing Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou dynasty to enact the abolition of Buddhism.

- Wen** The ruler who laid the basis for the founding and long prosperity of the Chou dynasty (c. 1100–256 B.C.E.), paving the way for the conquest of the Yin (Shang) dynasty by his son King Wu. King Wen governed with benevolence and was revered as a man of outstanding virtue.
- wheel-turning kings** Also known as wheel-turning sage kings. Ideal rulers in Indian mythology. In Buddhism, they are kings who rule by justice rather than by force. They were said to possess the thirty-two features and rule the four continents by turning the wheels they were given by heaven. These wheels are of four kinds: gold, silver, copper, and iron—one for each of the four wheel-turning kings.
- wisdom mudra** The mudra, or sign made with the hands and fingers, of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana of the Diamond Realm. The wisdom mudra is a form in which the upward straightened first finger of the left hand is grasped with the closed right hand. This mudra is believed to enable one to eradicate illusions and gain the Buddha wisdom.
- Wisdom sutras** Higher provisional Mahayana sutras belonging to the fourth of the five periods into which T'ien-t'ai classified Shakyamuni's teachings. These sutras deal with the teaching of the perfection of wisdom and expound the concept of non-substantiality.
- Wise Kalpa** The present major kalpa in which a thousand Buddhas of great wisdom, including Shakyamuni, appear in order to save the people.
- wish-granting jewel** A jewel said to possess the power to produce whatever one desires. It symbolizes the greatness and virtue of the Buddha and the sutras.
- Womb Realm mandala** Also expressed as the Womb World mandala. One of the two mandalas of the esoteric True Word school, the other being the Diamond Realm mandala. Based on the Mahavairochana Sutra, it represents the fundamental principle of the universe, that is, the Dharma body of Mahavairochana Buddha. In contrast, the Diamond Realm mandala, based on the Diamond Crown Sutra, depicts the Diamond Realm, which represents Mahavairochana Buddha's wisdom.
- Wonderful Adornment** A king who appears in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Though originally a believer in Brahmanism, he went at the urging of his wife Pure Virtue and his two sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye to see the Buddha, and finally joined the Buddhist Order together with his wife, two sons, and many followers.
- wonderful Law** (1) The teachings of the Lotus Sutra. (2) The essence of the Lotus Sutra, or the Mystic Law which is the ultimate Law of life and the universe.
- Wonderful Sound** A bodhisattva described in the "Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, who is said to assume thirty-four different forms in order to save people.
- Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra, The** One of T'ien-t'ai's three major works. In it he divides the Lotus Sutra into two parts, the theoretical teaching and the essential teaching, and explains passages from each chapter of the sutra. Thus he elucidates such profound doctrines of the sutra as the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle and the revelation of the Buddha's original enlightenment.
- World-Honored One** (Skt bhagavat) One of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha. The Sanskrit bhagavat is usually translated as "blessed one." In Chinese Buddhist scriptures, bhagavat was translated as World-Honored One. A Buddha is so called because he is widely revered in the world.
- World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment** An honorific title of Buddhas, particularly Shakyamuni Buddha. "Great Enlightenment" indicates the enlight-

enment of the Buddha. "World-Honored One" is one of the Buddha's ten honorable titles, meaning one who is revered by the people of the world.

world of desire The first division of the threefold world. It is called the world of desire because its inhabitants are ruled by various desires, such as sexual desire and the desire for food. The world of desire comprises the four evil paths of existence (the realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, and asuras), the four continents (the realm of human beings) surrounding Mount Sumeru, and the six heavens (the realm of heavenly beings) of the world of desire. In the sixth, or highest, of these six heavens dwells the devil king of the sixth heaven, who is said to have a strong desire to control others and prevent them from attaining enlightenment.

world of form The second division of the threefold world, located above the world of desire. Beings in this realm have physical bodies and are subject to certain material restrictions, but they have no desire and feed on light. The world of form consists of the four meditation heavens and is further subdivided into eighteen heavens (sixteen or seventeen according to other explanations).

world of formlessness The third division of the threefold world. The world of formlessness is the realm beyond form or matter, in other words, a purely spiritual and nonmaterial realm. This world comprises four realms, which are, in an ascending order of quality: the realm of boundless empty space; the realm of boundless consciousness; the realm of nothingness; and the realm of neither thought nor no thought. With regard to the life span of beings in these four realms, it is 20,000 kalpas in the first realm, 40,000 kalpas in the second realm, 60,000 kalpas in the third realm, and 80,000 kalpas in the fourth realm. Nevertheless, beings in these realms are not free from the sufferings of birth and death.

Wu, Empress (624–705) Also known as Empress Wu Tse-t'ien. First the concubine of T'ai-tsung, second emperor of the T'ang dynasty, and later consort of the third emperor, Kao-tsung. Finally she ascended the throne in 690, but she had long before been in virtual control of the government.

Wu, King Son of King Wen of the Chou dynasty (c. 1100–256 B.C.E.) in China. He is regarded as the founder of the dynasty along with King Wen. Carrying out the will of his father King Wen, he defeated Chou, the ruler of the Yin (Shang) dynasty, who flagrantly misgoverned the country.

Yadoya (n.d.) Yadoya Mitsunori, an official of the Kamakura government through whose offices Nichiren Daishonin submitted *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* to Hojo Tokiyori. He was often called "the lay priest Yadoya." He served the regents Hojo Tokiyori and Hojo Tokimune. He is known as one of the seven persons who were permitted access to Hojo Tokiyori when the latter was on his deathbed.

yaksha (Skt) One of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings. Originally, beings who served Kubera, the god of wealth in Indian mythology. Yakshas were incorporated into Buddhism as one of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings who work to protect Buddhism. Yakshas are regarded as followers of the heavenly king Vaishravana and are said to protect the north, though some sutras depict them as demons who torment and harm human beings.

Yama Often called King Yama. The lord of hell, who judges the dead for the deeds they did while alive and sentences them accordingly. In Vedic mythology, Yama was looked upon as the first dead human being and as the discoverer of the way to heaven, the paradisiacal abode of the dead over which he was king. Later he came to be thought of as the lord of hell and judge of the dead.

Yang Kuei-fei (719–756) A concubine of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, sixth emperor of the T'ang dynasty. Because of her beauty, intelligence, and talent at singing and

dancing, she won great favor with Emperor Hsüan-tsung, who increasingly neglected affairs of government. A rebellion that broke out in 755 forced the emperor and his court to flee. The imperial troops, blaming the troubles of the empire upon the members of the Yang family, threatened to revolt if the emperor did not have Yang Kuei-fei executed. The emperor was thus forced to stand by while his favorite concubine was put to death.

Yao One of the Five Emperors, legendary sage emperors of ancient China highly respected by the people for their excellent rule. Yao abdicated his throne to Ch'ung-hua, or Emperor Shun.

Yashodhara Shakyamuni's wife before he renounced secular life.

Yellow Springs In China and Japan, the land where the dead were thought to go.
yojana (Skt) A unit of measurement used in ancient India, equal to the distance that the royal army was thought to be able to march in a day. One yojana is considered equivalent to seven kilometers.

Yokan (1032–1111) Also called Eikan. A precursor of the Pure Land school and superintendent of Todai-ji temple in Japan. He studied the doctrines of various schools such as the Three Treatises, Flower Garland, and Dharma Characteristics schools, but later took faith in the Pure Land teachings.

Yoritomo See **Minamoto no Yoritomo**.

Yoshiie (1039–1106) Minamoto no Yoshiie, a military leader of the late Heian period (794–1185) in Japan. When the Abe, a powerful family in northeastern Japan, turned against the imperial court, Minamoto no Yoshiie helped his father, Minamoto no Yoriyoshi, subdue the Abe family.

Yoshimori (1147–1213) Wada Yoshimori, a military leader, who helped Minamoto no Yoritomo defeat the Taira clan and found the Kamakura shogunate. Later, however, the Hojo regents who headed the Kamakura government came to fear his influence and eventually provoked him to revolt. After Yoshimori was killed in battle against government forces, his entire family was also put to death.

Yoshinaka (1154–1184) Minamoto no Yoshinaka, a powerful commander of the Minamoto clan in Japan. He is also called Kiso Yoshinaka.

Yoshino A mountainous district in the southern part of Nara Prefecture in Japan, famous as a stronghold of the Shugendo, a religious order that combines elements of pre-Buddhist worship of mountains with those of esoteric Buddhism and engages in ascetic practices in the mountains. The Totsu River, which is referred to in Nichiren Daishonin's writings, flows through the Yoshino district.

Yoshitoki (1163–1224) Hojo Yoshitoki, the second regent of the Kamakura government. He is also called Ema Koshiro. In 1221, the Retired Emperor Gotoba issued a command to attack Yoshitoki, who instead defeated the imperial army. Known as the Jokyu Disturbance, this battle solidified the rule of the Kamakura government as well as the regency. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, Hojo Yoshitoki is often referred to by the title Acting Administrator. Hojo Shigetoki, who is often referred to as the lay priest of Gokuraku-ji, was a son of Hojo Yoshitoki. Ema Mitsutoki, also known as Hojo Mitsutoki, who was the lord of Shijo Kingo, was a grandson of Hojo Yoshitoki.

Yoshitomo (1123–1160) Minamoto no Yoshitomo, a military leader and the father of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura shogunate. At the time of the Hogen Disturbance, a conflict arising from rivalries within the imperial family, he fought victoriously on the side of the reigning emperor Goshirakawa, while his father Tameyoshi backed the Retired Emperor Sutoku, who was defeated. Tameyoshi received a death sentence, which was carried out soon afterward by Yoshitomo.

Yüan-cheng (n.d.) A priest of the True Word school in T'ang China.

Yü Jang (n.d.) A native of the state of Chin in the fifth century B.C.E. Yü Jang first served the Fan and Chung-hang families but was not given an important position. He then became a retainer of Chih Po, who treated him with great favor. However, Chih Po was later destroyed by Hsiang-tzu. Intent on avenging his lord, Yü Jang disguised himself as a leper by lacquering his body and made himself mute by drinking lye. In this way he attempted to approach Hsiang-tzu. However, he failed in his assassination attempt and was captured. Hsiang-tzu, understanding his feeling of loyalty, gave his robe to Yü Jang, who stabbed it three times to show his enmity for the man who had killed his lord, and then turned his sword upon himself.

Zen school A reference to the Chinese Ch'an school and the Japanese Zen school. A school that maintains that enlightenment is not to be found in the pursuit of doctrinal studies but rather in the direct perception of one's mind through the practice of seated meditation. Bodhidharma is regarded as the founder. In Japan, Zen enjoyed great favor with the Hojo regents in the early Kamakura period (1185-1333), when Eisai went to Sung China and brought back the teachings of the Lin-chi (Jpn Rinzai) school of Zen.