

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 Vairocana 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].⁷

"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'en 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 Puk'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-hsingssu 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, Dosho, 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 [Kojō], 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 Jōgan (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-chieh, 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 Jambudvīpa 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 Mahavairocana 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 Manjushri 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 Maudgalayana 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 Fayün 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-enge-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 Wutsung¹²⁵ 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 Mahakashyapa 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 Mahakashyapa 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-myōho-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-myōho-renge-kyō, Nam-myōho-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-myōho-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, Maudgalyayana will never become Tamalapatra 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-jui, 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, Nankaikudo, 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. Kampo 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 Kampo.

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 Chinkang-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 Mahavairochana Buddha. In terms of practice, mudras represent the body, mantras, the voice, and meditation on mandalas, the mind.

96. Dosho (799–875) first studied the Three Treatises doctrines but later became a follower of Kobo. 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 To-ji temple. Doyu (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-tung 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.