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Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man



PART ONE

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

Alas! Neither young nor old know

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

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

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

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

And yet we have obtained birth in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

are. Please describe them to me in detail."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The flowers carpeting the deep valley bloomed with the hue of the true aspect of the Middle Way, and from the plum blossoms just beginning to open in the broad meadow wafted the fragrance of the three thousand realms. Truly it was beyond the power of words to describe, beyond the scope of the mind to imagine. One might have thought it the place where the Four White-Haired Elders of Mount Shang lived, or the site where some ancient Buddha had walked about after meditation. Auspicious clouds rose up at dawn, a mysterious light appeared in the evening. Ah, the mind cannot grasp it nor words set it forth!

The unenlightened man wandered about, pondering what was before him, now pausing in thought, now resuming his steps. Suddenly he came upon a sage. Observing his actions, he saw that the sage was reciting the Lotus Sutra; his voice stirred the seeker deeply. Peering in at the quiet window of the sage's retreat, he found that the sage was resting his elbows on his desk, pondering the sutra's profound meaning.

The sage, divining that the unenlightened man was searching for the Law, asked in a gentle voice, "Why have you come to this cave among these far-off mountains?"

The other replied, "Because I attach little importance to life but great importance to the Law."

"What practices do you follow?" asked the sage.

The unenlightened man answered: "I have lived all my life amid the dust of the secular world and have not yet learned how to free myself from the sufferings of birth and death. As it happened, however, I encountered various good teachers, from whom I learned first the rules of discipline and then the Nembutsu, True Word, and Zen teachings. But though I have learned these teachings, I am unable to determine their truth or falsity."

The sage said: "When I listen to

your words, I find that it is indeed just as you have said. To hold life lightly but value the Law is the teaching of the sages of former times, and one that I myself know well.

“From the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought²⁶ above the clouds to the very bottom of hell, is there any being who receives life and yet succeeds in escaping death? Thus, even in the unenlightened secular writings we find it said, ‘Though you may set out at dawn on the journey of life with pride in the beauty of your rosy cheeks, by evening you will be no more than a pile of white bones rotting on the moor.’²⁷ Though you may move among the most exalted company of court nobles, your hair done up elegantly like clouds and your sleeves fluttering like eddies of snow, such pleasures, when you stop to consider them, are no more than a dream within a dream. You must come to rest at last under the carpet of weeds at the foot of the hill, and all your jeweled daises and brocade hangings will mean nothing to you on the road to the afterlife. The famed flower-like beauty of Ono no Komachi²⁸ and Soto’ori Hime²⁹ was in time scattered by the winds of impermanence. Fan K’uai and Chang Liang, in spite of their skill in the military arts, in the end suffered beneath the staves of the wardens of hell. That is why men of feeling in former times wrote poems such as these:

How sad, the evening smoke
from Mount Toribe!
Those who see off the dead one—
how long will they remain?³⁰

Dew on the branch tips,
drops on the trunk—
all sooner or later
must vanish from this world.³¹

“This rule of life, that if one does not die sooner one will surely die later, should not at this late date come as a

surprise to you. But the thing that you should desire above all is the way of the Buddha, and what you should continually seek are the teachings of the sutras. Now, from what you have told me about the Buddhist doctrines you have encountered, I can see that some of them belong to the Hinayana division of Buddhism and some to the Mahayana. But, leaving aside for the moment the question of which is superior and which inferior, I can say that, far from bringing you deliverance, the practice of these teachings will lead to rebirth in the evil paths.”

At this the unenlightened man exclaimed in surprise: “But were not all the sacred teachings that the Buddha expounded throughout his lifetime designed to benefit living beings? From the time of the preaching of the Flower Garland Sutra at the seven places and eight assemblies, down to the ceremony in which the Nirvana Sutra was expounded on the banks of the Ajitavati River, all the doctrines were taught by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. Though one may perhaps be able to distinguish certain small degrees of relative merit among them, how could any of them possibly be the cause for rebirth in the evil paths?”

The sage replied: “The sacred teachings that the Thus Come One proclaimed in the course of his lifetime may be divided into the categories of provisional and true, Hinayana and Mahayana. In addition, they may be classified according to the two paths of the exoteric and the esoteric. Thus they are not all of the same sort. Let me for a moment explain the general nature of the teachings and thus relieve you of your misunderstandings.

“When Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings in the threefold world, was nineteen years old, he left the city of Gaya and went into retreat on Mount Dandaka,³² where he carried out various difficult and painful austerities. He

attained enlightenment at the age of thirty and, at that time, instantly banished the three categories of illusion and brought to an end the vast night of ignorance. It might appear that he should at that time have preached the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in order to fulfill his original vow. But he knew that the people varied greatly in their capacities, and that they did not have the receptivity to understand the Buddha vehicle. Therefore, he devoted the following forty years and more to developing the people's inherent capacity. Then, in the last eight years of his life, he fulfilled the purpose of his advent in the world by preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.

"Thus it was that, when the Buddha was seventy-two, he preached the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra and therein stated: 'In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation for six years under the bodhi tree and was able to gain supreme perfect enlightenment. With the Buddha eye I observed all phenomena and knew that this enlightenment could not be explained or described. Why? Because I knew that living beings are not alike in their natures and their desires. And because their natures and desires are not alike, I preached the Law in various different ways. Preaching the Law in various different ways, I made use of the power of expedient means. But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.'

"The meaning of this passage is that, when the Buddha was thirty years of age, seated in the place of enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he observed the inner heart of all living beings with the Buddha eye and realized that it was not the proper time to preach to them the Lotus Sutra, which reveals the direct way to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. Therefore, as one would wave an emp-

ty fist about to humor a little baby, he resorted to various expedient means, and for the following forty years and more he refrained from revealing the truth. Thus he defined the period of the expedient teachings as clearly as the sun rising in the blue sky or the full moon coming up on a dark night.

"In view of this passage, why should we, with the very same faith that could just as easily be directed toward the Lotus Sutra, cling to the provisional teachings of the sutras that preceded the Lotus, those doctrines defined by the Buddha to be empty, and as a result keep returning to the same old dwelling in the threefold world, with which we are already so familiar?

"Therefore, in the 'Expedient Means' chapter in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha says, 'Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.' This passage indicates that one should honestly discard the teachings that the Buddha set forth in the various sutras preached in the previous forty-two years, namely, the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts doctrines to which you referred.

"The meaning of this passage is perfectly clear. And, in addition, we have the warning delivered in the 'Simile and Parable' chapter in the second volume, 'desiring only to accept and embrace the sutra of the great vehicle and not accepting a single verse of the other sutras.' This passage is saying that, no matter what year of the Buddha's life a sutra may have been preached in, one should not accept even a single verse from any of the sutras other than the Lotus Sutra.

"The varying doctrines of the eight schools are as numerous as so many orchids and chrysanthemums, and priests and lay believers differ in appearance, yet they all agree in claiming to cherish the Lotus Sutra. But how do they interpret these passages from

the Lotus Sutra that I have just cited? These passages speak of 'honestly discarding' the earlier teachings and forbid one to accept so much as a single verse from any of the other sutras. But are the doctrines of Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts not based on the 'other sutras'?

"Now this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law I have been speaking of represents the true reason why all Buddhas make their advent in the world and teaches the direct way to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. Shakyamuni Buddha entrusted it to his disciples, Many Treasures Buddha testified to its veracity, and the other Buddhas extended their tongues up to the Brahma heaven, proclaiming, 'All that you [Shakyamuni] have expounded is the truth!'³³ Every single character in this sutra represents the true intention of the Buddhas, and every brushstroke of it is a source of aid to those who repeat the cycle of birth and death. There is not a single word in it that is untrue.

"Is not one who fails to heed the warnings of this sutra in effect cutting off the tongues of the Buddhas and deceiving the worthies and sages? This offense is truly fearful. Thus, in the second volume it says, 'If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, immediately he will destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world.'³⁴ The meaning of this passage is that, if one turns one's back on even one verse or one phrase of this sutra, one is guilty of a crime equal to that of killing all the Buddhas of the ten directions in the three existences of past, present, and future.

"If we use the teachings of the sutras as a mirror in which to examine our present world, we will see that it is a difficult thing to find one who does not betray the Lotus Sutra. And if we understand the true meaning of these matters, we can see that even a person

of disbelief cannot avoid being reborn in the hell of incessant suffering. How much more so is this true, then, for someone like the Honorable Honen, the founder of the Nembutsu school, who urged people to discard the Lotus Sutra in favor of the Nembutsu! Where, may I ask, in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras is there any passage that instructs us to discard the Lotus Sutra?

"The Reverend Shan-tao, who was revered as a practitioner who had gained enlightenment through the attainment of meditation and honored as a living incarnation of Amida Buddha, designated five kinds of sundry practices that are to be discarded, and said of the Lotus Sutra that 'not even one person in a thousand' could be saved by it; by which he meant that if a thousand people put faith in that sutra not a single one of them will attain Buddhahood. And yet the Lotus Sutra itself says, 'If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.'³⁵ This indicates that if they hear this sutra then all beings in the Ten Worlds, along with their environments, will attain the Buddha way. Hence the sutra predicts that Devadatta, though he has committed the five cardinal sins, will in the future become a Buddha called the Thus Come One Heavenly King, and tells how the dragon king's daughter, though as a woman subject to the five obstacles and thought to be incapable of attaining Buddhahood, was able instantly to achieve the Buddha way in the southern realm. Thus even the dung beetle can ascend through the six stages of practice and is in no way excluded from achieving Buddhahood.³⁶

"In fact, Shan-tao's words and the passages of the Lotus Sutra are as far apart as heaven and earth, as different as clouds from mud. Which one are we to follow? If we stop to ponder the logic of the matter, we will realize that

Shan-tao is the deadly enemy of all Buddhas and sutras, and the foe of wise priests and humble lay believers alike. If the words of the Lotus Sutra are true, then how can he escape the hell of incessant suffering?"

At these words, the unenlightened man flushed with anger and said: "You are a person of no more than humble station in life, and yet you dare to utter such ugly accusations. I find it very difficult to judge whether you speak out of true understanding or out of delusion, and to tell whether your words stand to reason or not. It behooves us to remember that the Reverend Shan-tao is said to have been a transformed body of Amida the Well Attained³⁷ or of his attendant Bodhisattva Great Power. And the same is said of the Honorable Honen, or that he was a reincarnation of Shan-tao. These were both outstanding men of antiquity, and in addition they had acquired extraordinary merit through their religious practices and commanded the most profound degree of understanding. How could they possibly have fallen into the evil paths?"

The sage replied: "What you say is quite correct, and I too had great respect for these men and believed in them as you do. But in matters of Buddhist doctrines one cannot jump to conclusions simply on the basis of the eminence of the person involved. The words of the sutras are what must come first. Do not make light of a teaching just because the person who preaches it is of humble station. The fox of the kingdom of Bima who recited the twelve-character verse that goes, 'There are those who love life and hate death; there are those who love death and hate life,' was hailed as a teacher by the god Shakra,³⁸ and the demon who recited the sixteen-character verse that begins, 'All is changeable, nothing is constant,' was treated with great honor by the boy Snow Mountains. This was

done, however, not because the fox or the demon was of such eminence, but simply out of respect for the doctrines they taught.

"Therefore, in the sixth volume of the Nirvana Sutra, his final teaching delivered in the grove of sal trees, our merciful father Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, said, 'Rely on the Law and not upon persons.' Even when great bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy and Manjushri, men who have returned³⁹ to the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, expound the Buddhist teachings, if they do not do so with the sutra text in hand, then one should not heed them.

"The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states, 'That which accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so.'⁴⁰ Here we see that one should accept what is clearly stated in the text of the sutras, but discard anything that cannot be supported by the text. The Great Teacher Dengyo says, 'Depend upon the preachings of the Buddha, and do not put faith in traditions handed down orally,'⁴¹ which expresses the same idea as the passage from T'ien-t'ai's commentary. And Bodhisattva Nagarjuna says that one should rely on treatises that are faithful to the sutras, but not rely on those that distort the sutras.⁴² This passage may be understood to mean that, even among the various sutras, one should discard the provisional teachings put forth prior to the Lotus Sutra and put one's faith in this sutra, the Lotus. Thus both sutras and treatises make it perfectly clear that one should discard all scriptures other than the Lotus.

"Nowhere in all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras listed in the K'ai-yüan era catalog⁴³ do we find a single scriptural passage that expresses disapproval of the Lotus Sutra and advises one to discard it or to cast

it aside, nor any passage that says it is to be classified among the sundry practices and abandoned. If you disagree, you had better find some reliable passage from the sutras that will support your view, so that you may rescue Shan-tao and Honen from their torments in the hell of incessant suffering.

“The practitioners of the Nembutsu in our present day, priests as well as ordinary lay men and women, not only violate the words of the sutras but also go against the instructions of their own teachers. Shan-tao produced a commentary in which he described five kinds of sundry practices that should be abandoned by practitioners of the Nembutsu. Referring to these sundry practices, *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* says: [Shan-tao states as follows:] “Concerning the first of the sundry practices, that of reading and reciting sutras, with the exception of the recitation of the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra and the other sutras that preach rebirth in the Pure Land, the embracing, reading, and recitation of all other sutras, whether Mahayana or Hinayana, exoteric or esoteric, is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . Concerning the third of the sundry practices, that of worshipping, with the exception of worshipping the Buddha Amida, the worshipping or honoring of any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice. Concerning the fourth of the sundry practices, that of calling on the name, with the exception of calling on the name of the Buddha Amida, calling on the name of any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice. Concerning the fifth of the sundry practices, that of praising and giving offerings, with the exception of praises and offerings directed to the Buddha Amida, the praising of and giving of offerings to any other Buddha or bodhisattva, or deity of

this world is to be regarded as a sundry practice.”’

“This passage of commentary is saying that with regard to the first sundry practice, that of reading and reciting sutras, there are fixed rules for priests and lay believers of the Nembutsu, both men and women, concerning which sutras are to be read and which are not to be read. Among the sutras that are not to be read are the Lotus, Benevolent Kings, Medicine Master, Great Collection, Heart, Woman Born as a Man to Become a Buddha, and Life-Prolonging Northern Dipper sutras, and in particular, among the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, the so-called Perceiver of the World’s Sounds Sutra,⁴⁴ which is commonly read by so many people. If one reads so much as a single phrase or a single verse of these sutras, then, although one may be a devoted practitioner of the Nembutsu, one is in fact grouped among those who follow sundry practices and cannot be reborn in the Pure Land. Yet now, as I observe the world with my own eyes, among those who chant the Nembutsu I see many people who read these various sutras, thus going against their teachers and thereby committing one of the seven cardinal sins.⁴⁵

“In addition, in the passage concerning the third kind of sundry practice, that of worshipping, it is said that with the exception of the worship of Amida flanked by two honored bodhisattvas,⁴⁶ the worshipping or honoring of any of the earlier mentioned Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or heavenly gods and benevolent deities is to be regarded as a sundry practice and is forbidden to practitioners of the Nembutsu. But Japan is a land of the gods. It was created by the august deities Izanagi and Izanami,⁴⁷ the Sun Goddess deigns to have her dwelling here, and the Mimosuso River⁴⁸ for many long ages down to the present has continued to flow [through the grounds on which her

shrine is located]. How could anyone who was born in this country heed such an erroneous doctrine! In addition, as we have been born under the all-encompassing sky and enjoy the benefits of the three kinds of luminous bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars, it would be a most fearful thing if we should show disrespect to the gods of these heavenly bodies.

“Again, in the passage concerning the fourth kind of sundry practice, that of calling on the name, it says that there are certain names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas that the Nembutsu believer is to call on, and certain names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas that he is not to call on. The names he is to call on are those of the Buddha Amida and his two honored attendants. The names he is not to call on are those of Shakyamuni, Medicine Master, Mahavairochana, and the other Buddhas; those of the bodhisattvas Earth Repository, Universal Worthy, and Manjushri, the gods of the sun, moon, and stars; the deities of the shrines in Izu and Hakone, Mishima Shrine, Kumano Shrine, and Haguro Shrine; the Sun Goddess; and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. If anyone so much as once recites any of these names, then, although he may recite the Nembutsu a hundred thousand or a million times, because he committed the error of calling on the name of one of these Buddhas, bodhisattvas, the gods of the sun and moon, and other deities, he will fall into the hell of incessant suffering and fail to be reborn in the Pure Land. But when I look about at the world, I find Nembutsu believers who call on the names of these various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heavenly gods, and benevolent deities. Thus, in this matter as well, they are going against the instructions of their own teachers.

“In the passage concerning the fifth sundry practice, that of praising and giving offerings, the Nembutsu believer is enjoined to make offerings to the

Buddha Amida and his two bodhisattva attendants. But if he should offer even a little bit of incense or a few flowers to the earlier mentioned Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or heavenly gods and benevolent deities, then, although the merit he has gained from the Nembutsu practice may be laudable, because of the error he has committed, he is condemned to be classified among those who carry out sundry practices. And yet, when I look around the world, I see the Nembutsu believers paying visits to various shrines and offering streamers of paper or cloth, or entering various Buddhist halls and bowing in reverence there. In this, too, they are going against the instructions of their teachers. If you doubt what I say, then look at the text of *Nembutsu Chosen above All*. It is very clear on these points.

“Again, *The Teaching on Meditation Sutra*⁴⁹ by the Reverend Shan-tao says: ‘With regard to intoxicants, meat, and the five strong-flavored foods,⁵⁰ one must vow never to lay a hand on them, never to let one’s mouth taste them. One must pledge, “If I should go against these words, then may foul sores break out on both my body and mouth!”’ The meaning of this passage is that the Nembutsu believers, men and women lay believers, nuns and priests alike, must not drink wine and must not eat fish or fowl. In addition, they must not eat any of the five strong-flavored foods, the pungent or strong-smelling foods such as leeks or garlic. If any Nembutsu believers fail to abide by this rule, then in their present life they will find foul sores breaking out on their bodies, and in the next life they will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. In fact, however, we find many Nembutsu laymen and laywomen, nuns and priests, who pay no heed to this prohibition but drink as much wine and eat as much fish and fowl as they please. They are in

effect swallowing knives with which to wound themselves, are they not?"

Thereupon the unenlightened man said: "In truth, as I listen to your description of the doctrine, I can see that, even if the Nembutsu teaching could in fact lead one to rebirth in the Pure Land, its observances and practices are very difficult to carry out. And of course, since the sutras and treatises upon which it is based all belong to the category of provisional expositions, it is perfectly clear that it can never lead to rebirth in the Pure Land. But surely there is no reason to repudiate the True Word teachings. The Mahavairochana Sutra constitutes the secret teaching of Mahavairochana, the King of Enlightenment. It has been handed down in an unbroken line of transmission from the Thus Come One Mahavairochana to Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung. And in Japan the Great Teacher Kobo spread the teachings concerning the mandalas of the Diamond Realm and the Womb Realm. These are secret and arcane teachings that concern the thirty-seven honored ones.⁵¹ Therefore, the most profound doctrines of the exoteric teachings cannot compare even to the elementary stages of the esoteric teachings. Hence the Great Teacher Chisho of Goto-in temple⁵² stated in his commentary, 'Even the Lotus Sutra cannot compare [to the Mahavairochana Sutra], much less the other doctrines.'⁵³ Now what is your view on this matter?"

The sage replied: "At first I too placed my trust in the Thus Come One Mahavairochana and desired to carry out the teachings of the True Word school. But when I investigated the basic doctrines of the school, I found that they are founded on views that in fact are a slander of the correct teaching.

"The Great Teacher Kobo of Mount Koya, of whom you have spoken, was a teacher who lived in the time of

Emperor Saga. He received a mandate from the emperor directing him to determine and explain the relative profundity of the various Buddhist teachings. In response, he produced a work in ten volumes entitled *The Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*. Because this work is so broad and comprehensive, he made a condensation of it in three volumes, which bears the title *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*. This work describes ten stages in the development of the mind, from the first stage, the 'mind of lowly man, goatish in its desire,'⁵⁴ to the last stage, the 'glorious mind, the most secret and sacred.'⁵⁵ He assigns the Lotus Sutra to the eighth stage, the Flower Garland Sutra to the ninth stage, and the True Word teachings [of the Mahavairochana Sutra] to the tenth stage. Thus he ranks the Lotus Sutra as inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra, and as two stages below the Mahavairochana Sutra. In this work, he writes, 'Each vehicle that is put forward is claimed to be the vehicle of Buddhahood, but when examined from a later stage,⁵⁶ they are all seen to be mere childish theory.' He also characterizes the Lotus Sutra as a work of 'wild words and ornate phrases,' and disparages Shakyamuni Buddha as being lost in the region of darkness.

"As a result, Kobo's disciple in a later age, Shokaku-bo, the founder of Dembo-in temple, was led to write that the Lotus Sutra is not fit even to be a sandal-tender for the Mahavairochana Sutra, and that Shakyamuni Buddha is not worthy even to serve as an ox-driver for the Thus Come One Mahavairochana.⁵⁷

"Still your thoughts and listen to what I say. In all the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of sutras that the Buddha preached during his lifetime, or the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist scriptures, is there anywhere a passage clearly stating that the Lotus Sutra is

a doctrine of 'childish theory,' or that it ranks two stages below the Mahavairochana Sutra, being inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra as well, or that Shakyamuni Buddha is lost in the region of darkness and is not worthy even to serve as an ox-driver to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana? And even if such a passage did exist, one would certainly have to examine it with great care.

"When the Buddhist sutras and teachings were brought from India to China, the manner of translation depended upon the inclination of the particular translator, and there were no fixed translations for the sutras and treatises. Hence the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva of the Later Ch'in dynasty always used to say: 'When I examine the Buddhist teachings as they exist in China, I find that in many cases they differ from the Sanskrit originals. If the sutra translations that I have produced are free from error, then, after I am dead and cremated, my body, since it is impure, will no doubt be consumed by the flames, but my tongue alone will not be burned.' And when he was finally cremated, his body was reduced to a pile of bones, but his tongue alone remained, resting on top of a blue lotus blossom and emitting a brilliant light that outshone the rays of the sun. What a wonderful thing!

"Thus it came about that the translation of the Lotus Sutra made by the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva in particular spread easily throughout China. And that is why, when the Great Teacher Kompon [Dengyo] of Enryakuji attacked the teachings of the other schools, he refuted them by saying, 'We have proof in the fact that the tongue of the Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva, the translator of the Lotus Sutra, was not consumed by the flames. The sutras that you rely upon are all in error.'

"Again, in the Nirvana Sutra the Buddha says that, when his teachings are transmitted to other countries,

many errors are bound to be introduced into them. Even if among sutra passages we were to find the Lotus Sutra characterized as useless, or Shakyamuni Buddha described as a Buddha lost in the region of darkness, we should inquire very carefully to see whether the text that makes such statements belongs to the provisional teachings or the true teaching, to the Mahayana or the Hinayana, whether it was preached in the earlier or the later part of the Buddha's life, and who the translator was.

"It is said that Lao Tzu and Confucius thought nine times before uttering a single word, or three times before uttering a single word. And Tan, the Duke of Chou, was so eager to receive his callers that he would spit out his food three times in the course of a meal and wring out his hair three times in the course of washing it [in order not to keep them waiting]. If even the people described in the shallow, non-Buddhist writings behaved with such care and circumspection, then how much more so should those who study the profound doctrines of the Buddhist scriptures!

"Now nowhere in the sutras and treatises do we find the slightest evidence to support this contention [that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to the Mahavairochana Sutra]. The Great Teacher Kobo's own commentary says that one who slanders persons and disparages the correct teaching will fall into the evil paths.⁵⁸ A person like Kobo will invariably fall into hell—there can be no doubt of it."

The unenlightened man seemed to be dazed, and then suddenly began to sigh. After some time, he said: "The Great Teacher Kobo was an expert in both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings and a leader of the masses. In virtuous practices he excelled the others of his time, and his reputation was known everywhere. It is said that when

he was in China he hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder⁵⁹ all the way across the more than eighty thousand *ri* of the ocean until it reached Japan, and that when he expounded the meaning of the Heart Sutra so many sufferers from the plague recovered their health that they filled the streets. Thus he was surely no ordinary person, but a manifestation of a great sage in temporal form. We can hardly fail to hold him in esteem and put faith in his teachings."

The sage replied: "I at first thought the same way. But after I entered the path of the Buddha's teachings and began to distinguish what accords with its principles from what does not, I realized that the ability to perform miraculous acts at will does not necessarily constitute a basis for determining the truth or falsity of Buddhist teachings. That is why the Buddha laid down the rule that we should 'rely on the Law and not upon persons,' which I mentioned earlier.

"The ascetic Agastya poured the Ganges River into one ear and kept it there for twelve years, the ascetic Jinu drank the great ocean dry in a single day, Chang Chieh exhaled fog, and Luan Pa exhaled clouds.⁶⁰ But this does not mean that they knew what is correct and what is not in the Buddhist teachings, or that they understood the principle of cause and effect. In China, when the Dharma Teacher Fa-yün lectured on the Lotus Sutra, in no time at all flowers came raining down from the heavens. But the Great Teacher Miao-lo said, 'Though he could bring about a response in this way, his understanding still did not accord with the truth [of the Lotus Sutra].'⁶¹ Thus Miao-lo accused him of having failed to understand the truth of Buddhism.

"The Lotus Sutra rejects the three categories of preaching—that done by the Buddha in the past, the present, and the future.⁶² It refutes the sutras

preached before it, saying that in them the Buddha had 'not yet revealed the truth.'⁶³ It attacks the sutras of the same period by declaring itself superior to those 'now being preached,' and repudiates the sutras expounded later by stating that it excels all those 'to be preached.' In fact, the Lotus Sutra is first among all sutras preached in the three periods of past, present, and future.

"In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra, we read, 'Medicine King, now I say to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is the foremost!'⁶⁴ This passage means that at the gathering on Eagle Peak the Buddha addressed Bodhisattva Medicine King and told him that, beginning with the Flower Garland Sutra and ending with the Nirvana Sutra, there were countless sutras numbering as many as the sands of the Ganges, but that among all these the Lotus Sutra that he was then preaching held first place. But evidently the Great Teacher Kobo took the word 'first' to mean 'third.'

"In the same volume of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha says, 'For the sake of the Buddha way in immeasurable numbers of lands from the beginning until now I have widely preached many sutras, and among them this sutra is foremost.'⁶⁵ This passage means that Shakyamuni Buddha has appeared in countless lands, taking different names, and assuming varying life spans. And it establishes that, among all the sutras he has preached in the various forms in which he manifested himself, the Lotus Sutra holds first place.

"In the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, it is stated that 'it holds the highest place,'⁶⁶ making clear that this sutra stands above the Mahavairocana, Diamond Crown, and all the other countless sutras. But evidently the Great Teacher Kobo read this as 'it holds the lowest place.' Thus Shakyamuni and Kobo, the Lotus Sutra and *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, are in fact com-

pletely at odds with each other. Do you intend to reject Shakyamuni and follow Kobo? Or will you reject Kobo and follow Shakyamuni? Will you go against the text of the sutra and accept the words of an ordinary teacher? Or will you reject the words of an ordinary teacher and honor the golden words of the Buddha? Think carefully before you decide what to accept and what to reject.

“Furthermore, in the ‘Medicine King’ chapter in volume seven, ten similes are offered in praise of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The first simile concerns water, and in it streams and rivers are likened to the other various sutras and the great ocean to the Lotus Sutra. Thus, if anyone should assert that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior and the Lotus Sutra inferior, he is in effect saying that the great ocean holds less water than does a little stream. Everyone in the world today understands that the ocean exceeds the various rivers in size, and yet they fail to realize that the Lotus Sutra is the foremost among sutras.

“The second simile concerns mountains. Ordinary mountains are likened to the other sutras and Mount Sumeru to the Lotus Sutra. Mount Sumeru measures 168,000 yojanas from top to bottom; what other mountain could compare with it? To say that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra is like saying that Mount Fuji is bigger than Mount Sumeru.

“The third simile deals with the moon and stars. The other sutras are likened to the stars, and the Lotus Sutra is likened to the moon. Comparing the moon and the stars, can anyone be in doubt as to which is superior?

“Later on in the series of similes, we read, ‘This sutra likewise is foremost among all the sutra teachings preached by all the Thus Come Ones, preached by all the bodhisattvas, or preached by all the voice-hearers.’

“This passage tells us that the Lotus Sutra not only is the foremost among all the doctrines preached by Shakyamuni Buddha in the course of his lifetime, but also holds first place among all the teachings and sutras preached by Buddhas such as Mahavairochana, Medicine Master, or Amida, and by bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy or Manjushri. Therefore, if anyone should assert that there exists a sutra superior to the Lotus, you must understand that he is expounding the views of the followers of non-Buddhist teachings or of the heavenly devil.

“Moreover, as to the identity of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, who had been enlightened from remote ages past, for forty-two years dimmed his light and mingled with the dust of the world, adapting himself to the capacities of the people of the time, he, a Thus Come One who unites the three bodies in one, temporarily assumed the form of Vairochana.⁶⁷ Therefore, when Shakyamuni Buddha revealed the true aspect of all phenomena,⁶⁸ it became clear that Vairochana was a temporary form that Shakyamuni had manifested in response to the capacities of the people. For this reason, the Universal Worthy Sutra says that Shakyamuni Buddha is given the name Vairochana Pervading Everywhere, and that the place where that Buddha lives is called Eternally Tranquil Light.

“Now the Lotus Sutra expounds the doctrines of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, a single moment of life comprising the three thousand realms, the unification of the three truths, and the inseparability of the four kinds of lands. Moreover, the very essence of all the sacred teachings expounded by Shakyamuni Buddha in his lifetime—the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles can achieve Buddhahood, and that the Buddha attained

enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past—is found only in this one sutra, the Lotus. Is there any mention of these most important matters in the three esoteric sutras you have been talking about, the Mahavairochana Sutra, the Diamond Crown Sutra, and so forth? Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung stole these most important doctrines from the Lotus Sutra and contrived to make them the essential points of their own sutras. But in fact this is a fraud; their own sutras and treatises contain no trace of these doctrines. You must make haste and remedy your thinking on this point.

“The fact is that the Mahavairochana Sutra includes each of the four types of teachings⁶⁹ and expounds the kind of precepts whose benefit is exhausted

when the bodily form comes to an end.⁷⁰ It is a provisional teaching, designated by Chinese teachers⁷¹ as a sutra belonging to the Correct and Equal category, the group of sutras that, according to T'ien-t'ai's classification, were preached in the third period. How shameful [to hold it above the Lotus]! If you really have a mind to pursue the way, you must hurry and repent of your past errors. In the final analysis, this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law sums up all the teachings and meditational practices of Shakyamuni Buddha's entire lifetime in a single moment of life, and encompasses all the living beings of the Ten Worlds and their environments in the three thousand realms.”

PART TWO

AT this, the unenlightened man looked somewhat mollified and said: “The words of the sutra are clear as a mirror; there is no room to doubt or question their meaning. But although the Lotus Sutra surpasses all the other sutras that the Buddha taught before, at the same time, or after, and represents the highest point in his preaching life, still it cannot compare with the single truth of Zen, which cannot be bound by words or confined in the text of a sutra, and which deals with the true nature of our minds. In effect, the realm where the countless doctrines are all cast aside and where words cannot reach is what is called the truth of Zen.

“Thus, on the banks of the Ajitavati River, in the grove of sal trees, Shakyamuni Buddha stepped out of his golden coffin, twirled a flower, and, when he saw Mahakashyapa's faint smile, entrusted this teaching of Zen to him. Since then, it has been handed down

without any irregularity through a lineage of twenty-eight patriarchs in India, and was widely propagated by a succession of six patriarchs in China. Bodhidharma is the last of the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and the first of the six patriarchs of China. We must not allow this transmission to be lost, and founder in the nets of doctrine.

“So, in the Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma's Questions, the Buddha says: ‘I have a subtle teaching concerning the eye and treasury of the correct teaching, the wonderful mind of nirvana, the true aspect of reality that is without characteristics. It represents a separate transmission outside the sutras, independent of words or writing. I entrust it to Mahakashyapa.’

“Thus we see that this single truth of Zen was transmitted to Mahakashyapa apart from the sutras. All the teachings of the sutras are like a finger pointing at the moon. Once we have seen the

moon, what use do we have for the finger? And once we have understood this single truth of Zen, the true nature of the mind, why should we concern ourselves any longer with the Buddha's teachings? Therefore, a man of past times has said, "The twelve divisions of the scriptures are all idle writings."

"If you will open and read *The Plat-form Sutra* of Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of this school, you will see that this is true. Once one has heard even a single word and thereby grasped and understood the truth, what use does one have for the teachings? How do you consider this principle?"

The sage replied: "You must first of all set aside the doctrines for the moment and consider the logic of the matter. Can anyone, without inquiring into the essential meaning of the Buddha's lifetime teachings or investigating the basic principles of the ten schools, presume to admonish the nation and teach others? This Zen that you are talking about is something that I have studied exhaustively for some time. In view of the extreme doctrines that it teaches, I must say that it is a highly distorted affair.

"There are three types of Zen, known respectively as Thus Come One Zen, doctrinal Zen, and patriarchal Zen.⁷² What you are referring to is patriarchal Zen, and I would therefore like to give you a general idea of it. So listen, and understand what it is about.

"It speaks of transmitting something apart from the teachings. But apart from the teachings there are no principles, and apart from principles there are no teachings. Don't you understand the logic of this, that principles are none other than teachings and teachings none other than principles? This talk about the twirled flower, the faint smile, and something being entrusted to Mahakashyapa is in itself a teaching, and the four-character phrase about its being 'independent of words or writ-

ing' is likewise a teaching and a statement in words. This sort of talk has been around for a long while in both China and Japan. It may appear novel to you, but let me quote one or two passages that will clear up your misconceptions.

"Volume eleven of *The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works* states: 'If one says that we are not to hamper ourselves by the use of verbal expressions, then how, for even an instant in this saha world, can we carry on the Buddha's work? Do the Zen followers themselves not use verbal explanations when they are giving instruction to others? If one sets aside words and phrases, then there is no way to explain the meaning of emancipation, so how can anyone ever hear about it?'

"Farther on, we read: 'It is said that Bodhidharma came from the west and taught the "direct pointing to the mind of man" and "perceiving one's true nature and attaining Buddhahood." But are these same concepts not found in the Flower Garland Sutra and in the other Mahayana sutras? Alas, how can the people of our time be so foolish! You should all put faith in the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, tell no lies!'

"To restate the meaning of this passage: if one objects that we are hampering ourselves with doctrinal writings and tying ourselves down with verbal explanations, and recommends a type of religious practice that is apart from the teachings of the sutras, then by what means are we to carry on the Buddha's work and make good causes in this saha world of ours? Even the followers of Zen, who advocate these views, themselves make use of words when instructing others. In addition, when one is trying to convey an understanding of the Buddha way, one cannot communicate the meaning if one sets aside words and phrases. Bodhidharma came to China from the west,

pointed directly to people's minds, and declared that those minds were Buddha. But this principle is enunciated in various places even in the provisional Mahayana sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra, such as the Flower Garland, Great Collection, and Great Wisdom sutras. To treat it as such a rare and wonderful thing is too ridiculous for words. Alas, how can the people of our time be so distorted in their thinking! They should put their faith in the words of truth spoken by the Thus Come One of perfect enlightenment and complete reward, who embodies the principle of the Middle Way that is the true aspect of all things.

"In addition, the Great Teacher Miao-lo in the first volume of his *Annotations on 'Great Concentration and Insight'* comments on this situation by saying, "The people of today look with contempt on the sutra teachings and emphasize only the contemplation of truth, but they are making a great mistake, a great mistake indeed!"

"This passage applies to the people in the world today who put meditation on the mind and various other things first, and do not delve into or study the teachings of the sutras. On the contrary, they despise the teachings and make light of the sutras. This passage is saying that this is a mistake.

"Moreover, I should point out that the Zen followers of the present age are confused as to the teachings of their own school. If we open the pages of *The Continued Biographies of Eminent Priests*, we find that in the biography of the Great Teacher Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Zen in China, it states, 'By means of the teachings one can understand the essential meaning.' Therefore, one should study and practice the principles embodied in the sacred teachings preached by the Thus Come One in the course of his lifetime and thereby gain an understanding of the substance of the various doctrines

and the nature of the different schools.

"Furthermore, in the biography of Bodhidharma's disciple, Hui-k'o, the second of the six Chinese patriarchs, it states that the Meditation Master Bodhidharma handed over the four volumes of the Lankavatara Sutra to Hui-k'o, saying: 'Observing this land of China, I find only this sutra to be of real worth. If you base your practice on it, you will be able to bring salvation to the world.' Here we see that, when the Great Teacher Bodhidharma came from India to China, he brought the four volumes of the Lankavatara Sutra and handed them over to Hui-k'o, saying: 'When I observe the situation in this country, I see that this sutra is of outstanding superiority. You should abide by it and put it into practice and become a Buddha.'

"As we have just seen, these patriarch-teachers placed primary emphasis on the sutra texts. But if we therefore say that one must rely on the sutras, then we must take care to inquire whether those sutras belong to the Mahayana or the Hinayana, whether they are the provisional teachings or the true teaching.

"When it comes to making use of sutras, the Zen school relies on such works as the Lankavatara Sutra, the Shurangama Sutra, and the Diamond Wisdom Sutra. These are all provisional teachings that were preached before the Lotus Sutra, doctrines that conceal the truth.

"These various sutras expound partial truths such as 'the mind itself is the Buddha, and the Buddha is none other than the mind.' The Zen followers have allowed themselves to be led astray by one or two such sentences and phrases, failing to inquire whether they represent the Mahayana or the Hinayana, the provisional teachings or the true teaching, the doctrines that reveal the truth or the doctrines that conceal it. They merely advance the

principle of nonduality without understanding the principle of duality,⁷³ and commit an act of great arrogance, claiming that they themselves are equal to the Buddha. They are following in the tracks of the Great Arrogant Brahman of India and imitating the old ways of the Meditation Master San-chieh of China. But we should recall that the Great Arrogant Brahman, while still alive, fell into the hell of incessant suffering, and that San-chieh, after he died, turned into a huge snake. How frightful, how frightful indeed!

“Shakyamuni Buddha, with his understanding that had penetrated the three existences, and by the light of the clear wisdom-moon of perfect enlightenment and complete reward, peered into the future and, in the Sutra on Resolving Doubts about the Middle Day of the Law, made this prediction: ‘Among the evil monks there will be those who practice meditation and, instead of relying on the sutras and treatises, heed only their own view of things, declaring wrong to be right. Unable to distinguish between what is correct and what is erroneous, all they will do is face monks and lay believers and declare in this fashion, “I can understand what is right, I can see what is right.” You should understand that it is people like this who will destroy my teachings in no time at all.’

“This passage is saying that there will be evil monks who put all their faith in Zen and do not delve into the sutras and treatises. They will base themselves on distorted views and fail to distinguish between false and true doctrines. Moreover, they will address themselves to men and women believers, monks and nuns, declaring, ‘I can understand the doctrines, but other people do not,’ in this way working to spread the Zen teachings. But you should understand that these people will destroy the correct teaching of the Buddha. If we examine this passage and observe the

state of the world today, we see that the two match each other as perfectly as do the two halves of a tally. Be careful! There is much to fear here.

“You spoke earlier of twenty-eight patriarchs of India who orally transmitted this Zen doctrine, but on what evidence is such a statement based? All the texts I have seen speak of twenty-four or, in some cases, twenty-three persons who transmitted the Buddha’s teachings. Where is the translation that establishes the number of patriarchs as twenty-eight? I have never seen such a statement. This matter of the persons who were involved in the line of transmission of the Buddha’s teachings is not something that one can simply write about arbitrarily. The Thus Come One himself left a clear record of what the line of transmission would be.

“Thus, in *A History of the Buddha’s Successors*, it states: ‘There will be a monk by the name of Aryasimha living in the kingdom of Kashmir who will strive vigorously to accomplish the Buddha’s work. At that time the ruler of the kingdom will be named Mirakutsu,⁷⁴ a man who gives himself up wholly to false views and has no reverence or faith in his heart. Throughout the kingdom of Kashmir, he will destroy Buddhist temples and stupas and slaughter monks. He will take a sharp sword and use it to cut off Aryasimha’s head. But no blood will spurt from his neck; only milk will come flowing out. With this, the line of persons who transmit the Law will be cut off.’

“To restate this passage: The Buddha says that, after he passes into nirvana, there will be a succession of twenty-four persons who will transmit his teachings. Among these, the last to carry on the line of transmission will be a monk named Aryasimha, who will work to spread the Buddha’s teachings throughout the kingdom called Kashmir. The ruler of this state will be a

man named King Dammira. He will be a person of false views and profligate ways, who has no faith in the Buddha's teachings and no reverence for the monks. He will destroy Buddhist halls and stupas and use a sword to cut off the heads of the monks. And when he cuts off the head of the monk Aryasimha, there will be no blood in his neck; only milk will come flowing out. The Buddha declares that at this time the line of persons who transmit his teachings will be cut off.

"The actual events did not in any way differ from the Buddha's predictions; the Venerable Aryasimha's head was in fact cut off. And as his head fell to the ground, so too did the arm of the king.

"It is a gross error to speak of twenty-eight patriarchs. This is the beginning of the errors of the Zen school. The reason that Hui-neng lists twenty-eight patriarchs in his *Platform Sutra* is that, when he decided to treat Bodhidharma as the first patriarch of Chinese Zen, he found that there were too many years between the time of Aryasimha and that of Bodhidharma. He therefore arbitrarily inserted the names of three Zen teachers to fill up the interval, so that he could make it seem as though the Law had been transmitted from India to China without any break or irregularity in the line of transmission. It was all a fabrication designed to make people respect the Zen teachings.

"This deception was put forth long ago in China. Thus, the eleventh volume of *Three Major Works* states: 'In our [T'ien-t'ai] school, we recognize a transmission through twenty-three patriarchs. How could there be any error in this view? Concerning the claim that there were twenty-eight patriarchs, we can find no translation of a source that supports such a view. Recently Zen priests have even produced carvings in stone and wood-

block engravings, each with a sacred verse attached, which represent the seven Buddhas and the twenty-eight patriarchs, handing these down to their disciples. Alas, how can there be such blatant falsehoods! If persons of understanding have any power at all, they should do everything they can to correct such abuses.'

"This text is saying that to assert a transmission through a line of twenty-eight patriarchs and to produce stone carvings and wood-block engravings of them to indicate the line of transmission are highly mistaken undertakings, and that anyone who understands this should work to correct such errors. This is why I say that patriarchal Zen is a gravely erroneous affair.

"Earlier, you quoted a passage from the Sutra of the Buddha Answering the Great Heavenly King Brahma's Questions to prove your contention that Zen is 'a separate transmission outside the sutras.' But by quoting a sutra passage you were already contradicting your own assertion. Moreover, this sutra represents the provisional teachings, and in addition, it is not listed either in the K'ai-yüan or the Chen-yüan era catalog of Buddhist works. Thus we see that it is a work unlisted in the catalogs and a provisional teaching as well. Hence the scholars of our time do not refer to it; it cannot be used to prove anything.

"Coming now to the Lotus Sutra, we should note the groups that benefited when it was preached. When the doctrine of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, or three thousand realms in a single moment of life, was expounded in the theoretical teaching, the people of the two vehicles, who had been likened to rotten seeds, had the seeds of Buddhahood sprout. In the previous forty-two years of the Buddha's preaching, these persons had been condemned as incapable of ever attaining Buddhahood. In every gathering

and assembly, they heard nothing but curses and slander spoken against them and were shunned by all those of the human and heavenly realms, until it seemed that they were destined to die of hunger. But now, when the Lotus Sutra was preached, it was predicted that Shariputra would become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Maudgalyayana would become the Thus Come One Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance, that Ananda would become Mountain Sea Wisdom Unrestricted Power King Buddha, that Rahula would become the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers, that the five hundred arhats would become the Thus Come Ones Universal Brightness, and that the two thousand voice-hearers would become the Thus Come Ones Jewel Sign. And on the day when the Buddha's life span from the time he attained enlightenment in the remote past was revealed, the bodhisattvas who were as countless as particles of dust increased in their understanding of the way, discarded their still remaining illusions, and attained the last stage before the level of supreme enlightenment.

"Now, if we examine the commentary of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, it states: 'The other sutras tell us that although the bodhisattvas may become Buddhas those persons of the two vehicles can never do so. Good people can become Buddhas, we are told, but there is no indication that evil ones can do likewise. Men, it is said, can become Buddhas, but women are branded as messengers of hell. Human and heavenly beings can attain Buddhahood, but it is nowhere stated that nonhuman creatures can do so. And yet, in this sutra, it is stated that all of these beings can attain Buddhahood.'⁷⁵

"What a wonderful thing this is! Though we have been born in the impure world in the Latter Day of the Law, we have committed neither the

five cardinal sins nor the three cardinal sins⁷⁶ as Devadatta did. And yet it was predicted that even Devadatta would in time become the Thus Come One Heavenly King, so how much more should it be possible for persons like us, who have committed no such sins, to attain Buddhahood! And the eight-year-old dragon king's daughter, without changing her reptilian form, attained the wonderful fruit of Buddhahood in the southern realm.⁷⁷ Therefore, how much more likely is it that women who have been born into the human realm should be able to do so!

"It is most difficult to be born in human form, and extremely rare to encounter the correct teaching. Now, if you want to rid yourself quickly of erroneous beliefs and adhere to what is correct, transform your status as a common mortal and attain that of Buddhahood, then you should abandon the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts teachings and embrace this wonderful text of the single vehicle.⁷⁸ If you do so, you will without a doubt be able to shake off the dust and defilement of delusion and impurity, and manifest yourself as a pure embodiment of enlightenment."

Then the unenlightened man said: "Listening to the teachings and admonitions of a sage like you, I find that the misunderstandings I have labored under in recent days are all suddenly dispelled. It is as though inherent wisdom had awakened within me. When right and wrong are made so clear, who could fail to take faith?"

"And yet, when I look at the world around me, I find that, from the supreme ruler on down to the numberless common people, all place deep trust in the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts teachings. Since I have been born in this land, how could I go against the example of the ruler?"

"Moreover, my parents and ancestors all put their faith in the principles of

the Nembutsu and other teachings, and in that faith they ended their lives and vanished into the clouds of the other world.

"Here in Japan, there are, to be sure, a great many people, both eminent and humble. Yet, while those who adhere to the provisional teachings and the schools based upon them are numerous, I have yet to hear the name of a single individual who puts faith in the teachings that you have been explaining. Therefore, leaving aside the question of which teachings will lead to good places in the next life and which will lead to bad ones, and not attempting to inquire which teachings are true and which false, we find that the five thousand or seven thousand volumes of the Buddhist scriptures and the three thousand or more volumes of the Confucian and Taoist writings all emphasize the importance of obeying the orders of the ruler and complying with the wishes of one's parents.

"In India, Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, expounded the principles of carrying out filial conduct and repaying one's obligations, and in China, Confucius set forth the way of giving loyal service to the ruler and honoring one's parents as filial offspring should. Persons who are determined to repay the debt of gratitude they owe to their teachers would not hesitate to slice off a piece of their own flesh or cast their bodies away. Among those who were aware of the debt of gratitude they owed to their lords, Hung Yen cut open his stomach, and Yü Jang fell on his sword. And among those who were truly mindful of their obligations to their parents, Ting Lan fashioned a wooden image of his deceased mother, and Han Po-yü wept [upon realizing how feeble his aged mother had become] when she beat him with her staff. Though Confucianism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism all differ in their doctrines, they are alike in teaching

one to repay debts of kindness and give thanks for favors received.

"Thus, if I were to be the first one to place faith in a doctrine that neither the ruler, my teacher, nor my parents put faith in, I would surely be guilty of the charge of turning against them, would I not? At the same time, the passages from the sutras that you have quoted make perfectly clear the truth of this doctrine, and all my doubts about it have been resolved. And if I do not prepare myself for the life hereafter, then in my next existence I will find myself submerged in suffering. Whether I try to go forward or to retreat, my way is beset by difficulties. What am I to do?"

The sage replied: "You understand this doctrine, and yet you can say a thing like that. Have you failed to comprehend the logic of the matter? Or is it simply beyond your understanding?"

"Ever since I began to study the Law handed down from Shakyamuni Buddha and undertook the practice of the Buddhist teachings, I have believed it is most important to understand one's obligations to others, and made it my first duty to repay such debts of kindness. In this world, we owe four debts of gratitude. One who understands this is worthy to be called human, while one who does not is no more than an animal.

"As I wish to assist my father and mother to a better life in their next existence and repay the debt that I owe to my country, I am willing to lay down my life, simply because I understand the debt that I owe them and for no other reason.

"Now let me ask you to close your eyes, still your mind, and apply your thoughts to the logic of the matter. If, knowing the best path, one sees one's parents or sovereign taking an evil path, can one fail to admonish them? If a fool, crazed with wine, is about to

drink poison, can one, knowing this, not try to stop him? In the same way, if one understands the truth of the Buddhist teachings and knows the sufferings of fire, blood, and swords,⁷⁹ can one fail to lament at seeing someone to whom one owes a debt of gratitude about to fall into the evil paths? Rather one should cast away one's body and lay down one's life in an effort to save such a person. One will never grow weary of admonishing him, nor will there be limits to one's grief.

"The sufferings that meet our eyes in this present world are lamentable enough. How much more lamentable are those that one will encounter on the long road of death! How can we fail to be pained at the thought of it? A thing to be boundlessly feared is the life hereafter; a matter of greatest concern is the existence to come.

"And yet you say that, without inquiring into what is right and what is wrong, you will follow your parents' orders; without attempting to determine what is correct and what is erroneous, you will obey the words of the sovereign. To a fool, such conduct may appear to be loyal and filial, but in the opinion of a wise person, there can be no greater disloyalty, no greater departure from filial piety.

"Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was a descendant of wheel-turning kings, the grandson of King Simhahanu, and the heir of King Shuddhodana, and should by rights have become a great ruler of the five regions of India. But he awakened to the truth of the impermanence of life and grew to abhor the world, desiring a way to escape this realm of suffering and attain emancipation. King Shuddhodana, grieving at this, cleverly contrived to have the sights of the four seasons displayed to their best advantage in the four directions so that the prince might be diverted from his intention.

"First, in the east, where a break

appeared in the trailing mist, he pointed out the wild geese crying as they made their way back north; the plums blooming by the window, their fragrance wafting through the beaded blinds; the entrancing hues of the flowers; the countless calls of the bush warblers; and the other sights of spring.

"In the south he showed him the crystal colors of the fountains, the deutzia flowers blooming beside the clear-flowing streams, the cuckoos of Shinoda forest,⁸⁰ and the other signs of summer.

"In the west there were the autumn-reddened leaves mingling with the evergreens to weave a pattern of brocade, the breezes blowing gently over the reed flowers, or the stormy winds that swept wildly through the pines. And as if to remind one of the departed summer, there were the fireflies glimmering by the swampside, so numerous that one might mistake them for the stars in the heavens, and the repeated voices of the pine cricket and the bell cricket, bringing one to tears.

"And in the north, before one knew it, there was the melancholy color of withered fields, the rims of the ponds sealed with ice, and the sad sound of the little streams in the valley.

"Not only did the king attempt to console his son's mind by presenting the world to him in this way, he also assigned five hundred soldiers to guard each of the four gates of the palace. But, in the end, when the prince was nineteen, at midnight on the eighth day of the second month, he summoned his groom Chandaka, ordered him to saddle his horse, Kanthaka, and made his way out of the city of Gaya.

"He entered Mount Dandaka, where for twelve years he gathered firewood on the high slopes, drew water in the deep valleys, and performed various austerities and difficult practices. At the age of thirty he attained the wonderful fruit of enlightenment, becom-

ing the only one worthy of honor in the threefold world and the lord of all the teachings that he expounded throughout his life. He brought salvation to his father and mother and opened the way for all living beings. Could such a man be called unfilial?

"The ninety-five schools of Brahmanists were the ones who accused the Buddha of being unfilial. But by disobeying the command of his father and mother and entering the realm of the unconditioned, he was, on the contrary, able to lead his father and mother to salvation, thus demonstrating that he was in fact a model of filial piety.

"King Wonderful Adornment, the father of Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye, adhered to the non-Buddhist teachings and turned his back on the teachings of the Buddha. His two sons and heirs disobeyed their father's orders and became disciples of Cloud Thunder Sound King Buddha, but in the end they were able to guide their father so that he became a Buddha called Sal Tree King.⁸¹ Could anyone say, then, that these were unfilial sons?

"There is a passage in a sutra that says, 'By renouncing one's obligations and entering the Buddhist life one can truly repay those obligations in full.'⁸² Thus we see that one who casts aside all bonds of indebtedness and love in this present life and enters into the true path of Buddhism is the one who really understands the meaning of obligations.

"Moreover, I know the depth of the obligation owed to one's ruler far better than you do. If you really wish to show that you understand your debt of gratitude, then you should admonish the ruler from the depths of your heart and forcefully advise him. To follow his orders even when these are contrary to what is right is the act of an utter sycophant and the height of disloyalty.

"King Chou of the Yin dynasty was an evil ruler, and Pi Kan, his loyal min-

ister. When Pi Kan saw that the king was going against what was right in ruling the nation, he vigorously admonished him. As a result, Pi Kan's breast was ripped open, but after his death, King Chou was overthrown by the king of the Chou. To the present day, Pi Kan has been known as a loyal minister, and King Chou as an evil ruler.

"When Kuan Lung-feng admonished his sovereign, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, he was beheaded. But King Chieh has come to be known as an evil ruler, and Kuan Lung-feng as a loyal minister. We are taught that, if one admonishes one's sovereign three times and still one's advice is not heeded, then one should retire to the mountain forests.⁸³ Why do you nevertheless remain silent while the ruler commits misdeeds in your full view?

"I have gathered together a few examples of worthies of ancient times who did in fact retire from the world to dwell in the mountain forests. Open your obstinate ears and listen a moment! During the Yin dynasty, T'ai-kung Wang hid himself in a valley called P'o-ch'i; in the Chou dynasty, Po I and Shu Ch'i secluded themselves on Mount Shou-yang; Ch'i Li-chi⁸⁴ of the Ch'in dynasty retired to Mount Shang; Yen Kuang⁸⁵ of the Han dynasty lived in a solitary lodge; and Chieh Tzu-sui⁸⁶ of the state of Chin became a recluse on Mount Mien-shang. Are we to call these men disloyal? Anyone who would do so is a fool. If you understand what it means to be loyal, you will admonish your sovereign, and if you want to be filial, you must speak up.

"Earlier you said that those who adhere to the provisional teachings and to the schools based on them are very numerous, while those who adhere to the school I have been recommending are few, and you ask why one would abandon the teachings favored by many and take up those favored by few. But

the many are not necessarily worthy of honor, nor the few, deserving of contempt.

"People of wisdom and goodness are rare indeed, while fools and evil persons are numerous. A ch'i-lin is the finest of beasts and a phoenix the finest of birds, yet they are very few in number. On the other hand, cows and sheep, crows and pigeons are among the lowlier and commoner of creatures, and yet they are extremely plentiful. If the many are always worthy while the few are to be despised, should one then cast aside a ch'i-lin in favor of cows and sheep, or pass over a phoenix and instead select crows and pigeons?"

"The mani jewel and the diamond are the most wondrous of all precious stones. These gems are rare, while shards and rubble, clods of earth and common stones are the most useless of objects, and at the same time abound. Now if one follows your advice, ought one to discard the precious jewels and instead content oneself with shards and rubble? How pitiful and meaningless that would be!

"A sage ruler is a rare thing, appearing only once in a thousand years, while a worthy minister appears once in five hundred years. The mani jewel is so rare that we have only heard of it, and who, for that matter, has ever actually seen a ch'i-lin or a phoenix? In both secular and religious realms, as is plain to see, good persons are rare while evil persons are numerous. Why, then, do you insist upon despising the few and favoring the many? Dirt and sand are plentiful, but rice and other grains are rare. The bark of trees is available in great quantities, but hemp and silk fabrics are hard to come by. You should put the truth of the teaching before everything else; certainly you should not base your judgment on the number of adherents."

The unenlightened man thereupon moved off his mat in a gesture of

respect, straightened his sleeves, and said: "I have heard what you stated about the principles of the sacred teachings. Truly it is more difficult to be born as a human being than it is to lower a thread from the heavens above and pass it through the eye of a needle at the bottom of the sea, and it is rarer for one to be able to hear the Law of the Buddha than it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log [with a hole in it that fits him exactly]. Now I have already obtained birth in the human realm, something difficult to achieve, and have had the privilege of hearing the Buddhist teachings, which are seldom encountered. If I should pass my present life in idleness, then in what future life could I possibly free myself from the sufferings of birth and death and attain enlightenment?"

"Though, in the course of a kalpa, the bones I have left behind in successive existences may pile up higher than a mountain, to this day I have not yet sacrificed so much as a single bone for the sake of the Buddha's Law. And though, in the course of these many lifetimes, I have shed more tears over those I loved or was indebted to than there is water in the sea, I have never spilled so much as a single tear for the sake of my future existences. I am the most stupid of the stupid, truly a fool among fools. Though I may have to cast aside my life and destroy this body of mine, I am determined to hold life lightly and to enter the path of the Buddha's teachings, to assist in bringing about the enlightenment of my father and mother, and to save my own person from the bonds of hell. Please teach me exactly how I should go about it. How should one practice if one takes faith in the Lotus Sutra? Of the five practices, which one should I concentrate on first? Please give me careful instruction in your worthy teachings."

The sage replied: "You have been

imbued with the fragrance of your orchid-room friend;⁸⁷ you have become upright like mugwort growing in a field of hemp.⁸⁸ Truly, the bare tree is not really bare: once spring comes, it bursts into blossom. The withered field is not really withered. With the coming of summer, it turns fresh and green again. If you have repented of your former errors and are ready to adhere to the correct doctrine, then without doubt you can swim in the calm and quiet depths [of nirvana], and dwell at ease in the palace of the unconditioned.

“Now, in widely propagating the Buddhist teachings and bringing salvation to all people, one must first take into consideration the teaching, the capacity of the people, the time, the country, and the sequence of propagation. The reason is as follows. In terms of the time, there are the periods of the Former, the Middle, and the Latter Days of the Law, and in terms of the teachings, there are the Hinayana and the Mahayana doctrines. In terms of the practices to be adopted, there are shoju and shakubuku. It is a mistake to practice shakubuku at a time when shoju is called for, and equally erroneous to practice shoju when shakubuku is appropriate. The first thing to be determined, therefore, is whether the present period is the time for shoju or the time for shakubuku.

“Shoju is to be practiced when throughout the entire country only the Lotus Sutra has spread, and when there is not even a single misguided teacher expounding erroneous doctrines. At such a time, one may retire to the mountain forests, practice meditation, or carry out the five, the six, or the ten practices.⁸⁹ But the time for shakubuku is very different from this. It is a time when many different sutras and teachings spring up here and there like so many orchids and chrysanthemums, when the various schools command

a large following and enjoy renown, when truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one’s attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku.

“If, failing to understand this principle, one were to practice shoju or shakubuku at an inappropriate time, then not only would one be unable to attain Buddhahood, but one would fall into the evil paths. This is firmly laid down in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras, and is also clearly stated in the commentaries by T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo. It is, in fact, an important principle of Buddhist practice.

“We may compare these two kinds of practice to the two ways of the civil and the military used in governing a nation. There is a time when military measures should take precedence, and a time when civil measures ought to be emphasized. When the world is at peace and calm prevails within the country, then civil measures should take precedence. But when the barbarian tribes to the east, south, west, and north, fired by wild ambitions, rise up like hornets, then military measures should come first.

“Though one may understand the importance of both civil and military arts, if one does not understand the time, donning armor and taking up weapons when all countries are calm and peaceful and there is no trouble anywhere throughout the world, then one’s actions will be wrong. On the other hand, one who lays aside one’s weapons on the battlefield when enemies are marching against one’s ruler and instead takes up a writing brush and inkstone is likewise failing to act in accordance with the time.

“The methods of shoju and shakubuku are also like this. When the correct teaching alone is propagated and

there are no erroneous doctrines or misguided teachers, then one may enter the deep valleys and live in quiet contentment, devoting one's time to reciting and copying the sutra and to the practice of meditation. This is like taking up a writing brush and inkstone when the world is at peace. But when there are provisional schools or slanderers of the correct teaching in the country, then it is time to set aside other matters and devote oneself to rebuking slander. This is like taking up weapons on the battlefield.

"Therefore, the Great Teacher Chang-an in his commentary on the Nirvana Sutra states: 'In past times the age was peaceful, and the Law spread throughout the country. At that time it was proper to observe the precepts and not to carry staves. But now the age is perilous, and the Law is overshadowed. Therefore, it is proper to carry staves and to disregard the precepts. If both past and present were perilous times, then it would be proper to carry staves in both periods. And if both past and present were peaceful times, then it would be proper to observe the precepts in both of them. You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other.' The meaning of this passage of commentary is perfectly clear.

"In past times the world was honest, people were upright, and there were no erroneous teachings or erroneous doctrines. Therefore, one could behave in a proper manner and carry out one's religious practices peacefully and amicably. There was no need to take up staves and berate others, no occasion to attack erroneous teachings.

"But the present age is a defiled one. Because the minds of people are warped and twisted, and provisional teachings and slander alone abound, the correct teaching cannot prevail. In times like these, it is useless to practice the reading, reciting, and copying [of

the Lotus Sutra] or to devote oneself to the methods and practices of meditation. One should practice only the shakubuku method of propagation, and if one has the capacity, use one's influence and authority to destroy slander of the correct teaching, and one's knowledge of the teachings to refute erroneous doctrines.

"As we have seen, it is said that one should let one's choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other. Therefore, we must look at the world today and consider whether ours is a country in which only the correct doctrine prevails, or a country in which erroneous doctrines flourish.

"In answering this we should note that Honen of the Pure Land school says that one should 'discard, close, ignore, and abandon' the Lotus Sutra in favor of the Nembutsu. And Shantao in his writings calls the Lotus Sutra a 'sundry practice,' saying that 'not even one person in a thousand' can be saved by it, by which he means that, if a thousand people take faith in it, not a single one of them will gain enlightenment.

"Kobo of the True Word school states in his writings that the Lotus Sutra is inferior even to the Flower Garland Sutra and ranks two steps beneath the Mahavairochana Sutra, designating it a piece of 'childish theory.' And Shokaku-bo of the same school declares that the Lotus Sutra is not fit even to serve as the sandal-tender of the Mahavairochana Sutra, and that Shakyamuni Buddha is not worthy to be an ox-driver to the Thus Come One Mahavairochana.

"The priests of the Zen school disparage the Lotus Sutra by calling it so much saliva that has been spit out of the mouth, a finger pointing at the moon, or a net of doctrine that serves only to entangle. The priests of the Precepts, a Hinayana school, call the Lotus Sutra an erroneous teaching and label

it the preaching of the heavenly devil.

“Are persons such as these not slanderers of the correct teaching? One can never be too severe in condemning them, or admonish them too strongly.”

The unenlightened man said: “Throughout the more than sixty provinces of Japan, there are many kinds of people and a variety of Buddhist doctrines. What with the Nembutsu priests, the True Word teachers, and the followers of Zen or the Precepts teachings, there is truly hardly a single person who does not slander the correct teaching. But then, why should I criticize other people? My task, it seems to me, is simply to cherish deep faith within my own heart and to look on other people’s errors as no concern of mine.”

The sage replied: “What you say is quite true, and I would be inclined to hold the same opinion. But when we examine the sutras, we find that they tell us not to begrudge our lives [for the sake of the Law], and also say that [one should spread the Buddha’s teachings] even at the cost of one’s life.⁹⁰ The reason they speak in this way is because if one does not hesitate on account of others but propagates the principles of Buddhism just as they are set forth in the sutras, then in an age when there are many people who slander the correct teaching, three types of enemies will invariably appear and in many cases deprive one of life. But if, as the sutras tell us, one observes deviations from the Buddha’s teachings and yet fails to censure them or to appeal to the ruler to take measures against them, then one is being untrue to the teachings and is not worthy to be looked on as a disciple of the Buddha.

“The third volume of the Nirvana Sutra says: ‘If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that

that monk is betraying the Buddha’s teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer.’

“The meaning of this passage is that, if a person striving to propagate the correct teaching of the Buddha should hear and see others propounding the teachings of the sutras in a mistaken manner and fail to reproach them himself or, lacking the power to do that, fail to appeal to the sovereign and in this way take measures to correct them, then he is betraying the Buddha’s teaching. But if, as the sutras direct, he is not afraid of others but censures these slanderers himself and appeals to the sovereign to take measures against them, then he may be called a disciple of the Buddha and a true priest.

“Being therefore determined to avoid the charge of ‘betraying the Buddha’s teaching,’ although I have incurred the hatred of others, I have dedicated my life to Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, extending compassion to all living beings and rebuking slanders of the correct teaching. Those who cannot understand my heart have tightened their lips and glared at me with furious eyes. But if you are truly concerned about your future existence, you should think lightly of your own safety and consider the Law above all. Thus the Great Teacher Chang-an states, ‘[A royal envoy . . . would rather], even though it costs him his life, in the end conceal none of the words of his ruler’⁹¹ means that one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.⁹²

“This passage is saying that, even if one must give up one’s life, one should not conceal the correct teaching; this is because one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. Though one’s body be destroyed, one should strive to propagate the Law.

“How sad is this lot of ours, that all who are born must perish! Though one may live to a great age, in the end one cannot escape this impermanence. In this world of ours, life lasts a hundred years or so at most. When we stop to think of it, it is a mere dream within a dream. Even in the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought, where life lasts eighty thousand years, no one escapes the law of mutability, and in the heaven of the thirty-three gods, too, where life lasts a thousand years, it is swept away at last by the winds of change and decay. How much sadder, then, is the lot of the human beings living on this land of Jambudvīpa, whose life is more fleeting than the dew, more fragile than the plantain leaf, more insubstantial than bubbles or foam! Like the moon reflected in the water, one is not even certain whether one exists or not; like the dew on the grass, one may vanish at any moment.

“Anyone who grasps this principle should know that it is of utmost importance to take thought for the existence to come. In the latter age of the Buddha Joy Increasing, the monk Realization of Virtue propagated the correct teaching. Countless monks who were guilty of violating the precepts deeply resented this votary and attacked him, but the ruler, King Possessor of Virtue, determined to protect the correct teaching, fought with these slanderers. In the end, he lost his life and was reborn in the land of the Buddha Akshobhya, where he became the foremost disciple of that Buddha. Similarly, King Sen’yo, because he honored the Mahayana teachings and punished the slander of five hundred Brahmans, was able to reach the stage of non-regression. How reassuring, that those who respect the monks of the correct teaching and admonish those who are evil and in error receive such blessings as these!

“But if, in our present age, one were to practice shoju [rather than shakubuku], then without doubt that person would fall into the evil paths together with those who slander the correct teaching. The Great Teacher Nan-yüeh in his *Four Peaceful Practices* states, ‘If there should be a bodhisattva who protects evil persons and fails to chastise them . . . then, when his life comes to an end, he will fall into hell along with those evil persons.’

“The meaning of this passage is that, if a practitioner of Buddhism should fail to chastise evil persons who slander the Law but give himself up entirely to meditation and contemplation, not attempting to distinguish between correct and incorrect doctrines, or provisional and true teachings, but rather pretending to be a model of compassion, then such a person will fall into the evil paths along with the other doers of evil. Now a person who fails to correct the True Word, Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts adherents who are slanderers of the correct teaching and instead pretends to be a model of compassion will meet just such a fate as this.”

Thereupon the unenlightened man, cherishing his resolve in mind, spoke out in these words: “To admonish one’s sovereign and set one’s family on the correct course is the teaching of the worthies of former times and is clearly indicated in the texts you have cited. The non-Buddhist writings all emphasize this point, and the Buddhist scriptures are in no way at variance with it. To see evil and fail to admonish it, to be aware of slander and not combat it, is to go against the words of the sutras and to disobey the Buddhist patriarchs. The punishment for this offense is extremely severe, and therefore, from now on, I will devote myself to faith.

“But it is truly difficult to put this sutra, the Lotus, into practice. If there

is some essential point to be observed, could you explain it to me?"

The sage replied: "I can tell that your aspiration for the way is very earnest and sincere. The essential thing the Buddhas needed in order to attain the true way or enlightenment is nothing other than the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. It was solely because of these five characters that King Suzudan relinquished his jeweled throne [and attained Buddhahood], and the dragon king's daughter transformed her reptilian characteristics [into those of a Buddha].⁹³

"When we stop to consider it, we find that the sutra itself says, concerning how much or how little of it is to be embraced, that a single verse or phrase is sufficient, and, concerning the length of practice [necessary to reach enlightenment], that one who rejoices even for a moment on hearing it [is certain to become a Buddha]. The eighty thousand teachings in their vast entirety and the many words and phrases of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra were all expounded simply in order to reveal these five characters. When Shakyamuni Buddha in the clouds above the Sacred Mountain, in the mists of Eagle Peak, summed up the essence of the doctrine and entrusted it to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, what do you suppose that teaching was? It was nothing other than these five characters, the essential Law.

"The six thousand leaves⁹⁴ of commentary by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, like strings of jewels, and the several scrolls of exegesis by Tao-sui and Hsing-man, like so much gold, do not go beyond the meaning of this teaching. If you truly fear the sufferings of birth and death and yearn for nirvana, if you carry out your faith and thirst for the way, then the sufferings of change and impermanence will become no more than yesterday's dream, and the awakening of enlightenment will become today's

reality. If only you chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, then what offense could fail to be eradicated? What blessing could fail to come? This is the truth, and it is of great profundity. You should believe and accept it."

The unenlightened man, pressing his palms together and kneeling respectfully, said: "These priceless words of yours have moved me deeply, and your instruction has awakened my mind. And yet, in light of the principle that superior things encompass those that are inferior, it would seem that the broad should also encompass the narrow and the many should take in the few. However, when we examine the matter, we find that these five characters you have mentioned are few, while the words in the sutra text are many, and that the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra is narrow, while its eight scrolls are very broad. How then can the two be equal in the blessings that they bring?"

The sage said: "How foolish you are! Your attachment to this belief that one should abandon the few in favor of the many towers higher than Mount Sumeru, and your conviction that the narrow should be despised and the broad honored is deeper than the vast ocean. In the course of our discussion, I have already demonstrated that something is not necessarily worthy of honor simply because it is many in number or despicable simply because it is few. Now I would like to go a step farther and explain how the small can actually encompass the great, and the one be superior to the many.

"The seed of the nyagrodha tree, though one-third the size of a mustard seed, can conceal five hundred carts within itself.⁹⁵ Is this not a case of the small containing the large? The wish-granting jewel, while only one in number, is able to rain down ten thousand treasures without a single thing lacking. Is this not a case of the few encompassing the many? The popular

proverb says that 'one is the mother of ten thousand.' Do you not understand the principle behind these matters? The important thing to consider is whether or not a doctrine conforms with the principle of the true aspect of all things. Do not be blindly attached to the question of many or few!

"But since you are so extremely foolish, let me give you an analogy. Myoho-rence-kyo is the Buddha nature of all living beings. The Buddha nature is the Dharma nature, and the Dharma nature is enlightenment. The Buddha nature possessed by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions; by Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth; by Universal Worthy, Manjushri, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and the others; by the great Brahma and the lord Shakra; by the deities of the sun and moon, the morning star, the seven stars in the Big Dipper in the northern sky, the twenty-eight constellations, and the countless other stars; by the heavenly gods, the earthly deities, the dragon deities, the eight kinds of nonhuman beings, and the human and heavenly beings who gathered in the great assembly to hear the Buddha's preaching; by King Yama—in short, by all living beings from the realm where there is neither thought nor no thought above the clouds down to the flames in the lowest depths of hell—the Buddha nature that all these beings possess is called by the name Myoho-rence-kyo. Therefore, if you recite these words of the daimoku once, then the Buddha nature of all living beings will be summoned and gather around you. At that time the three bodies of the Dharma nature within you—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body—will be drawn forth and become manifest. This is called attaining Buddhahood. To illustrate, when a caged bird sings, the many birds flying in the

sky all gather around it at once; seeing this, the bird in the cage strives to get out."

The unenlightened man said, "You have now explained to me in detail the benefits of the daimoku and the significance of the Mystic Law. But I would like to ask whether these matters are explained in this manner in the sutra."

The sage replied: "Since you have already understood the principle involved, there is really no need to go on and inquire what scriptural passages it is based on. However, I will cite a passage from the sutra as you request.

"The 'Dharani' chapter in the eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, 'If you can shield and guard those who accept and uphold the mere name of the Lotus Sutra, your merit will be immeasurable.' In this passage, the Buddha is praising the Mother of Demon Children and the ten demon daughters for their vow to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and saying that the blessings from their vow to protect those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra are beyond even the Buddha wisdom, which completely comprehends the three existences, to fathom. While by rights nothing should be beyond the grasp of the Buddha wisdom, the Buddha says here that the blessings that accrue from accepting and embracing the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra are the one thing that wisdom cannot measure.

"The blessings of the entire Lotus Sutra are all contained solely within the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. While the words in the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra differ according to the contents of the twenty-eight chapters, the five characters of the daimoku remain the same throughout. To illustrate, within the two characters for Japan are included the more than sixty provinces and the two islands. Are there any districts or provinces that

are not contained within this name?

"If one uses the term 'birds,' people know that one is talking about creatures that fly in the sky; if one says 'beasts,' people understand that one is referring to animals that run over the ground. In all things, names are of great importance precisely because they can convey general meanings in this way. This is what the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai meant when he said that names convey the basic nature of a thing while phrases describe how it differs from other things, or when he said that names designate the fundamental character of a thing.

"In addition, names have the virtue of being able to summon the things to which they refer, and things as a matter of function respond to the name that refers to them. In similar fashion, the name, or daimoku, of the Lotus Sutra has the power [to summon the Buddha nature to which it refers]."

The unenlightened man said: "If it is as you say, then the blessings of the daimoku are very great indeed. But these blessings must differ according to whether or not one understands the significance of the daimoku. I am a man who carries a bow and arrows and devotes himself to the profession of arms. I have no understanding of the true nature of the Buddhist teachings. How could a person such as I gain any great amount of good fortune?"

The sage replied: "According to the principle of the perfect and immediate enlightenment, there is no essential difference between the earlier and later stages of practice, and the blessings of the advanced stages are inherent in the initial stages as well. To carry out one practice is to carry out all practices, and there is no blessing that is not included therein.

"If the situation were as you say and one could not obtain good fortune until after one had understood the truth of Buddhism, then no one, from

the bodhisattvas at the stage of near-perfect enlightenment on down to those at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth, would be able to obtain any good fortune at all. This is because, as the Lotus Sutra says, the truth can only be understood "between Buddhas."⁶

"In the 'Simile and Parable' chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares, 'Even you, Shariputra, in the case of this sutra were able to gain entrance through faith alone. How much more so, then, the other voice-hearers!'

"This passage is saying that even Shariputra, who was known for his great wisdom, was, with respect to the Lotus Sutra, able to gain entrance through faith and not through the power of his wisdom. How much more so, therefore, does this hold true with the other voice-hearers!

"Thus, with the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, Shariputra, because he had faith, was able to rid himself of the name of one who could never attain Buddhahood and was told that he would in time become the Thus Come One Flower Glow.

"It is like the case of a baby being given milk to drink. Even though the baby may not understand the flavor of milk, the milk naturally nurtures the baby's growth. Similarly, if a physician gives medicine to a sick person, even though the sick person may not know the origin and nature of the medicine, if he takes it, then in the natural course of events his illness will be cured. But if he objects that he does not know the origin of the medicine that the physician gives him and for that reason declines to take it, do you think his illness will ever be cured? Whether he understands the medicine or not, so long as he takes it, he will in either case be cured.

"The Buddha has already been called a skilled physician, and the Law has been likened to good medicine and

all living beings to people suffering from illness.⁹⁷ The Buddha took the teachings that he had preached in the course of his lifetime, ground and sifted them, blended them together, and compounded an excellent medicine, the pill of the Mystic Law. Regardless of whether one understands it or not, so long as one takes the pill, can one fail to be cured of the illness of delusion? Even though the sick person may not understand the medicine or even know the nature of the disease from which he suffers, if he takes the medicine, he is bound to recover.

"It is the same way with the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra. Though they may not understand the principles of Buddhism and may not know that they are suffering from delusion, if only they have faith, then without a doubt they will be able to free themselves simultaneously from the illnesses of the three categories of illusion—illusions of thought and desire, illusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand, and illusions about the true nature of existence. They will reach the lands of Actual Reward and Tranquil Light, and cause the three bodies of a Thus Come One that they inherently possess to shine.

"Therefore, the Great Teacher Denryo says: 'Neither teacher nor disciples need undergo countless kalpas of austere practice in order to attain Buddhahood. Through the power of the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law they can do so in their present form.'⁹⁸ This means that both the teacher who expounds the principles of the Lotus Sutra and the disciple who receives his teachings will, in no long time, together become Buddhas through the power of the Lotus Sutra.

"The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai produced *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, thirty volumes of commentary on the

Lotus Sutra. And the Great Teacher Miao-lo in addition produced the thirty volumes of *The Annotations on 'The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,' The Annotations on 'The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,'* and *The Annotations on 'Great Concentration and Insight'* to comment on T'ien-t'ai's works. Together these works are known as 'the sixty volumes of the T'ien-t'ai school.'

"In *Profound Meaning*, T'ien-t'ai established the five major principles of name, entity, quality, function, and teaching, and in their light explained the power and efficacy of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo. In the section on the third of the five major principles, that dealing with the quality of the Lotus Sutra, he writes, 'When one pulls on the main cord of a net, there are no meshes that do not move, and when one raises a single corner of a robe, there are no threads in the robe that are not lifted up.' The meaning of this passage is that, when one carries out the single practice of exercising faith in Myoho-enge-kyo, there are no blessings that fail to come to one, and no good karma that does not begin to work on one's behalf. It is like the case of a fishing net: though the net is composed of innumerable small meshes, when one pulls on the main cord of the net, there are no meshes that do not move. Or it is like a garment: though the garment is composed of countless tiny threads, when one pulls on a corner of the garment, there are no threads that are not drawn along.

"In *Words and Phrases*, T'ien-t'ai explains the various words and phrases in the Lotus Sutra, from the opening words 'This is what I heard' to the final words 'they bowed in obeisance and departed.' He explains them in terms of four categories, namely, causes and conditions, correlated teachings, the theoretical and essential teachings, and the observation of the mind.⁹⁹

"Next, in *Great Concentration and*

Insight, he expounds the meditation on the region of the unfathomable, namely, on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, based on his thorough understanding of the Lotus Sutra. This is a practice that derives from the Buddha's original enlightenment and represents a principle of truth inherent in one's being. I will not go into it in detail here.

"What an occasion for rejoicing! Though born into an evil age that is stained with the five impurities, we have been able to see and hear the true words of the one vehicle. We read that a person who has planted roots of good fortune [under Buddhas] equal in number to the sands of the Hiranyavati or the Ganges River is able to encounter this sutra and take faith in it.¹⁰⁰ Now you have aroused the mind that rejoices in faith. Thus without a doubt, just as a box and its lid fit together, so will your own faith evoke the Buddha's compassionate response, and the two will unite as one."

The unenlightened man bowed his head, pressed his palms together, and said: "From now on I will accept and uphold this king of the sutras, the Lotus of the one truth, and revere the Buddha, who in the threefold world is alone worthy of honor, as my true teacher. From my present body as a common mortal until the time when I

attain the body of a Buddha, I will never venture to turn aside from this faith. Though the clouds of the five cardinal sins should hang heavy above me, I will strive to emulate the example of Devadatta in attaining Buddhahood. Though the waves of the ten evil acts should buffet me, I will desire to be like those who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra by listening to the princes' preaching."¹⁰¹

The sage said: "The human heart is like water that assumes the shape of whatever vessel it occupies, and the nature of beings is like the reflection of the moon undulating on the waves. Now you insist that you will be firm in this faith, but another day you are bound to waver. Though devils and demons may come to tempt you, you must not allow yourself to be distracted. The heavenly devil hates the Buddha's Law, and the non-Buddhist believers resent the path of the Buddhist teachings. But you must be like the golden mountain that glitters more brightly when scraped by the wild boar, like the sea that encompasses all the various streams, like the fire that burns higher when logs are added, or like the kalakula insect that grows bigger when the wind blows. If you follow such examples, then how can the outcome fail to be good?"



Background

This treatise is generally thought to have been written in the second year of Bun'ei (1265). Its recipient is unknown. However, toward the end of the work, the unenlightened man refers to himself as "a man who carries a bow and arrows and devotes himself to the profession of arms," so it has been suggested that Nichiren Daisho-

nin may have written it for someone of the samurai class.

The treatise consists of two parts and is written chiefly in question-and-answer form. The "sage" in the title indicates the votary of the Lotus Sutra, or Nichiren Daishonin himself, while the "unenlightened man" represents all ordinary people of the Latter Day

of the Law. In the first part, the unenlightened man, who has realized life's impermanence and is seeking the truth, is visited in succession by a priest of the Precepts school, a lay believer of the Pure Land school, a practitioner of the True Word school, and a priest of the Zen school. Through their conversations, the Daishonin outlines the basic tenets of these four major Buddhist schools of his day.

The Precepts priest, who is the first visitor, asserts that the teachings concerning the precepts are the most important of the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Buddhism. He holds up Ryokan, the chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple, as an example and exhorts the unenlightened man to observe the five precepts and the two hundred and fifty precepts and devote himself to charitable works as Ryokan does.

The next visitor, a Pure Land believer, praises the Nembutsu teachings, which enable one to be reborn in Amida Buddha's Pure Land and thereby gain emancipation from the sufferings of birth and death. He singles out the eighteenth of Amida Buddha's forty-eight vows as the sole source of salvation for ordinary people in the Latter Day and asserts that even persons guilty of the ten evil acts and the five cardinal sins can attain rebirth in the Pure Land by calling on this Buddha's name.

The True Word practitioner, who visits next, says that even the most profound doctrines of the exoteric teachings are no more than an introduction to the esoteric teachings. The exoteric teachings, he says, were expounded by Shakyamuni, the Buddha of the manifested body, in accordance with his disciples' capacities, while the esoteric teachings were preached by Mahavairochana, the Buddha of the Dharma body, out of his spontaneous joy in the Law. He accordingly urges the unenlightened man to discard the exoteric

teachings and take faith in the more profound esoteric teachings.

The last to come calling is a mendicant Zen priest. He likens the sutras to a finger pointing at the moon and denounces the doctrines contained in them as so much nonsense, exhorting the unenlightened man to sit in meditation to perceive the true nature of his mind in accordance with the "wordless teaching" of Zen.

Troubled by the contradictions in what he has heard, and determined to discover which teaching is correct, the unenlightened man then sets out on a journey in search of a teacher who can clarify matters for him. After visiting various temples one after another, he finally encounters a sage who embraces the Lotus Sutra. The title *Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man* refers to the subsequent dialogue that unfolds between them. The unenlightened man confesses that, although he has learned the teachings of the Precepts, Nembutsu, True Word, and Zen schools, he cannot determine whether or not those teachings are true. In reply, the sage declares that the doctrines of all four schools are the cause for rebirth in the evil paths, because they are based on provisional teachings, while only the true teaching, the Lotus Sutra, enables all people without exception to attain Buddhahood.

This comparison of the true and provisional teachings forms the focus of this treatise. The sage refutes the doctrines of those schools that are based on the provisional teachings and cites sutra passages to demonstrate that the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra was set forth by Shakyamuni Buddha himself. His rebuttal of the Nembutsu and True Word doctrines concludes part one of this treatise. Part two begins with his refutation of Zen.

By this time, the unenlightened man has become convinced of the truth of the Lotus Sutra. But he hesitates to

embrace it out of considerations of loyalty and filial piety; he points out that everyone from the ruler on down to the common people has faith in other schools, and his own parents and ancestors embraced the Pure Land teachings. The sage replies that one can best repay one's debts of gratitude to one's parents and sovereign by embracing the correct Buddhist teaching and thus leading them to salvation. Next, one should evaluate the Buddhist teachings on their own merits and not according to the number of their adherents. The sage also explains that there are two ways of Buddhist practice—*shoju* and *shakubuku*—depending upon the time. The present period, when distorted teachings flourish, is the time for *shakubuku*, he says.

Notes

1. The Japanese text could also be construed to mean, "We may be terrified by the prospect of the unknown and lament that the world we are familiar with should pass so quickly."

2. *Chuang Tzu*, "Knowledge Wandered North": "Man's life between heaven and earth is like the passing of a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall—whoosh!—and that's the end."

3. This refers to the great earthquakes, heavy floods, and other disasters that occurred during the Shoka era (1257–1259), claiming many lives.

4. The king of Ch'u is King Huai (r. 328–299 B.C.E.). In a dream he had a romantic encounter with a goddess. When she left, she told the king that she would always be with him as a cloud in the morning and as rain in the evening.

5. In the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 58–75), during the reign of Emperor Ming, Liu Ch'en lost his way on Mount T'ien-t'ai, where he encountered a female immortal being and lived together with her in bliss. When Liu Ch'en returned home after half a year, he found himself in the time of his descendants of the seventh generation.

6. Which poet the Daishonin refers to is uncertain. The implication of the verse alluded to is that, being a lowly woodcutter

The unenlightened man now having resolved to embrace the Lotus Sutra, the sage reveals to him that the essence of the sutra lies in the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo that form its title. Myoho-enge-kyo, he explains, is the Buddha nature inherent in all beings. When one chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the Buddha nature inherent in all things will be summoned forth, and one's own Buddha nature will simultaneously emerge. Even without profound understanding of the Buddhist teachings, one can by this practice attain Buddhahood in one's present form. The sage concludes by exhorting the unenlightened man to maintain faith throughout life, without wavering in his resolve.

and therefore ignorant of religion, the poet hopes he will not be called upon to bear great sorrow in life.

7. The hell of burning heat and the hell of great burning heat are the sixth and seventh of the eight hot hells—the eighth being the hell of incessant suffering.

8. The hell of the crimson lotus and the hell of the great crimson lotus are the seventh and eighth of the eight cold hells. In these two hells, the cold is said to make one's flesh crack open, so that it has the appearance of red lotus flowers.

9. The five components of body and mind refer here to the five components of life: form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness that unite temporarily to form an individual living being.

10. After this opening passage, the text shifts to third-person narrative.

11. Ling Lun was a subject of Huang Ti (the Yellow Emperor), a legendary ruler of ancient China. Endowed with remarkably acute hearing, he is said to have excelled in music and been able to distinguish minute differences in pitch.

12. Li Chu, also called Li Lou, was a legendary figure of ancient China whose sight was so acute that he could see the tip of a hair at a hundred paces.

13. The port of Ijima was the only port

servicing Kamakura in the Daishonin's time. The Mutsura Barrier was a checkpoint at Mutsura in what is presently Yokohama in Kanagawa Prefecture.

14. Seven roads leading to Kamakura.

15. Comparisons by which Shakyamuni Buddha emphasized the superiority of the Mahayana precepts over the Hinayana, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts practiced by voice-hearers do not even produce benefit as small as the print of a cow's hoof, while the Mahayana precepts upheld by bodhisattvas produce benefit as vast as the ocean.

16. "Seventeen differences" refers to the reasons why the Hinayana precepts are inferior to the Mahayana precepts, according to the Pure Monastic Rules Sutra. For example, the Hinayana precepts reflect abhorrence of the threefold world, the realm inhabited by unenlightened beings, while the Mahayana precepts do not; the Hinayana precepts show disdain for benefits, while the Mahayana precepts encompass them all.

17. Nirvana Sutra.

18. One of the five meditations to extinguish miscellaneous thoughts, meditation on a corpse was thought to extinguish sexual desire.

19. The Daishonin uses an image from chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra, in which the provisional teachings are likened to a phantom city magically conjured by a guide to allow his party of weary travelers to rest en route to the treasure land (one Buddha vehicle), which is their true destination.

20. *The Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land.*

21. The forty-eight vows that Amida Buddha is said to have made while still engaged in bodhisattva practice as Bodhisattva Dharma Treasury.

22. The first vow states, "If, after I attain Buddhahood, there are any beings of hell, the realm of hungry spirits, or the realm of animals to be found in my land, then let me not attain supreme enlightenment." So there are said to be no beings of the three evil paths in Amida's Pure Land. The three types of perception are: (1) one understands the truth one hears, (2) one follows the truth, and (3) one realizes the true aspect of things that neither is born nor dies.

23. This refers to a phrase used by the

poet Po Chü-i to describe his secular writings. Buddhists and Confucians often used this expression in reference to poetry and prose that were lacking in didactic worth.

24. The three esoteric sutras are the Mahavairochana, Diamond Crown, and Susiddhikara sutras.

25. The twenty-eight patriarchs inherited and passed on that teaching of Shakyamuni that was not expounded in words but instead was transmitted from mind to mind. The first is Mahakashyapa, and the last, Bodhidharma, the founder of Chinese Zen. The six patriarchs are Bodhidharma, Hui-k'o, Seng-ts'an, Tao-hsin, Hung-jen, and Hui-neng.

26. This refers to the last of the four realms into which the realm of formlessness is divided, the realm of formlessness being the highest division of the threefold world.

27. A poem by Fujiwara no Yoshitaka, appearing in *A Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing*, compiled around 1013.

28. A poet of the mid-ninth century. Many romantic legends have grown up around her.

29. A legendary woman appearing in *The Chronicles of Japan* and *The Records of Ancient Matters*.

30. The original source of this poem is unknown. Mount Toribe, located in Kyoto, was used as a cremation site.

31. A poem by the Administrator of Priests Henjo (816-890), which appears in *Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing*.

32. In other writings, the Daishonin speaks of the nineteen-year-old Shakyamuni as leaving his father's palace in the capital of Kapilavastu, which description is consistent with the traditional account. It is not certain why he says here that the young prince "left the city of Gaya." However, it is generally held that, after leaving Kapilavastu, Shakyamuni first went south to the kingdom of Magadha where Gaya was located. Mount Dandaka was said to be in Gandhara in northern India.

33. These words are actually spoken by Many Treasures Buddha in the "Treasure Tower" chapter. However, since the Buddhas' act of extending their tongues, described in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, was also meant to affirm the truth of the sutra, the Daishonin attributes this statement to all the Buddhas.

34. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

35. *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

36. The statement to this effect appears in Ssu-ming Chih-li's commentary on the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra.

37. The Well Attained is one of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha, meaning one who has gone to the world of enlightenment.

38. This story appears in the Unheard-of Causal Relationship Sutra. Countless kalpas ago, a fox in the country of Bima fell into a well while fleeing from a lion. Faced with the prospect of starvation, he awakened to the impermanence of all things and recited a verse to this effect. Hearing this verse, Shakra came down from heaven and honored the fox as his teacher.

39. The Japanese text reads, "have returned," but it may simply mean to "have reached." The original text of this piece is no longer extant.

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

41. *The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra.*

42. *The Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra.*

43. The K'ai-yüan era catalog refers to *The K'ai-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*, a comprehensive index of Buddhist texts in Chinese compiled by Chih-sheng and finished in 730, the eighteenth year of the K'ai-yüan era, during the reign of the T'ang emperor Hsüan-tsung.

44. Another name for the "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It was also used as an independent sutra.

45. Seven cardinal sins: According to *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight,"* killing a priest and killing a teacher, plus the five cardinal sins. The "teachers" referred to here are Shan-tao and Honen.

46. Two honored bodhisattvas are Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Great Power.

47. Izanagi and Izanami are a male deity and a female deity who appear in Japanese mythology as the progenitors of Japan and of its gods.

48. A river flowing through the compound of the Inner Shrine of Ise, which is dedicated to the Sun Goddess. That the Mimosuso River has continued to flow implies that the imperial lineage, said to

originate with the Sun Goddess, has continued unbroken.

49. Actually it is not a sutra but a work on the benefits gained by meditation on Amida Buddha.

50. The five strong-flavored foods refer to five kinds of pungent roots—leek, scallions, onions, garlic, and ginger. They were said to produce irritability, anger, or sexual desire and were accordingly forbidden for Buddhist monks and nuns.

51. The thirty-seven honored ones refer to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who constitute the central section of the Diamond Realm mandala, which is composed of nine sections.

52. Literally Later T'ang Hall, a building that Chisho, the fifth chief priest of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, the head temple of the Tendai school, erected on the grounds of Mii-dera temple in what is now Shiga Prefecture. To-in (T'ang Hall) on the grounds of Enryaku-ji, which had been erected earlier by Jikaku, the third chief priest of Enryaku-ji, is referred to as Zento-in (Former T'ang Hall).

53. *The Essentials of the Mahavairochana Sutra.*

54. This refers to the stage of the human mind, before the awakening of moral or religious consciousness, in which one is governed, like an animal, by passions and instincts.

55. This refers to the supreme stage at which one unlocks the immeasurable benefits inherent in one's life through the secret doctrine of Mahavairochana Buddha.

56. "A later stage" means the tenth and supreme stage of the ten stages of the mind, that is, the stage of realizing the esoteric teaching.

57. *The Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics.*

58. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury.*

59. A ritual implement used for prayers in esoteric True Word Buddhism. This story appears in *The Biography of the Great Teacher Kobo.* According to this work, before Kobo left China, he hurled a three-pronged diamond-pounder into the air. Returning to Japan, he went to Mount Koya to carry out the practice of the esoteric teachings. There he found the same diamond-pounder resting in a tree's branches.

60. Agastya is an Indian ascetic who practiced the Brahmanistic teachings. His occult powers are mentioned in the Nir-

vana Sutra. Jinu is another Brahmanist ascetic of India, also mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra. According to *The History of the Later Han Dynasty*, Chang Chieh of the Later Han dynasty excelled in the occult arts of Taoism and caused a thick fog to appear, extending over five Chinese *ri* (about 2 km). According to *Lives of Saints with Mysterious Powers*, Luan Pa of the Later Han dynasty drank wine at a banquet and blew it out facing southwest. He explained that he had done so to extinguish a fire that had broken out in the city of Ch'eng-tu, which lay in that direction. On investigation, it was found that rain, mixed with wine, had fallen heavily in that city and extinguished a fire there.

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

62. In *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, T'ien-t'ai interprets those sutras preached in the past as the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, preached over forty-two years; those preached at the same time as the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra; and those preached in the future as the Nirvana Sutra.

63. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

64. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

65. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

66. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

67. A Buddha mentioned in the Flower Garland, Mahavairochana, and other sutras. In esoteric True Word Buddhism, he is identified with Mahavairochana Buddha.

68. A reference to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra.

69. The four types of teachings are the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, the specific teaching, and the perfect teaching. The point here is that the Mahavairochana Sutra is not a pure perfect teaching. See eight teachings in Glossary.

70. A reference to the Hinayana precepts.

71. A reference to Kuang-hsiu (771-843) and Wei-chüan (n.d.). Kuang-hsiu was the eighth patriarch in the lineage of the T'ien-t'ai school, and Wei-chüan was his leading disciple.

72. "Thus Come One Zen" refers to the Buddha's meditation as described in the sutras. According to the Lankavatara Sutra, this meditation gives rise to the mystic powers with which the Buddha saves the people. "Doctrinal Zen" refers to the methods of meditation formulated on the basis of the sutras, and "patriarchal Zen," to

the Zen teaching deriving from Bodhidharma, in which enlightenment is said to be transmitted wordlessly from master to disciple.

73. Here "nonduality," as taught by the Zen school, refers to the oneness of the Buddha and the ordinary person. The Daishonin says that the Zen followers do not understand "duality," that is, the difference between the Buddha who is awakened to the ultimate truth and ordinary people who are deluded about it.

74. Mirakutsu's Sanskrit name is unknown. King Dammira, mentioned in the subsequent paragraph, is another name for the same individual.

75. *Words and Phrases*. The Daishonin slightly rephrases the original passage. "This sutra" in the quotation refers to the Lotus Sutra.

76. Three of the five cardinal sins: (1) injuring a Buddha, (2) fomenting disunity within the Buddhist Order, and (3) killing an arhat. Devadatta committed these three.

77. This is described in chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra.

78. "This wonderful text of the single vehicle" refers to the Lotus Sutra.

79. The sufferings of fire, blood, and swords are the sufferings of the three evil paths, which represent hell, the realm of animals, and the realm of hungry spirits, respectively.

80. A forest on Mount Shinoda in Izumi in the Osaka area of Japan, known for its scenic beauty.

81. This story appears in chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra.

82. Salvation by Men of Pure Faith Sutra, cited in *The Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Law*. The sutra itself is no longer extant. "The Buddhist life" in the sutra's context means a monastic life, but here the Daishonin interprets it as a life based on faith in the Mystic Law.

83. This appears in *The Book of Rites*.

84. Ch'i Li-chi (n.d.) was one of the Four White-Haired Elders who, grieved by the social turmoil at the end of the Ch'in dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.), secluded themselves on Mount Shang. After the Ch'in dynasty was replaced by the Han dynasty, they were invited by Empress Lü, the consort of Emperor Kao-tsu, founder of the Han dynasty, to become advisers to Emperor Hui, who was her son and Kao-tsu's successor.

85. Yen Kuang (39 B.C.E.—C.E. 41) was a companion in study to Liu Hsiu, who later became Emperor Kuang-wu, the first emperor of the Later Han dynasty. After Liu Hsiu became emperor, Yen Kuang changed his name and went into seclusion. Emperor Kuang-wu begrudged the loss of Yen Kuang's abilities and entreated him to serve as his minister. However, Yen Kuang refused and spent the rest of his life in seclusion on Mount Fu-ch'un.

86. Chieh Tzu-sui (n.d.) was a retainer of Duke Wen in the Spring and Autumn period (770–403 B.C.E.), who served the duke in exile for nineteen years. When Duke Wen returned and assumed the rulership of Chin, he gave rewards to those who had followed him in exile. However, he overlooked Chieh Tzu-sui. The latter reproached him by saying that rewards should be dispensed by heaven and not by humans. Then he retired to Mount Mien-shang.

87. An "orchid-room friend" indicates a person of virtue. The implication is that the company of a virtuous person works as a good influence, just as one is imbued with fragrance on entering a room filled with orchids.

88. It is said that mugwort in a field of hemp is supported by the hemp plants and thus grows upright.

89. The six practices, mentioned in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, are accepting, upholding, reading, reciting, teaching, and transcribing. In the five practices, accepting and upholding are combined as one practice. The ten practices, set forth in the Heavenly King Supremacy Wisdom Sutra, are transcribing, making offerings, disseminating and transmitting, listening, reading, bearing in mind, widely preaching, reciting, contemplating, and self-exertion.

90. These admonitions appear in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras.

91. Nirvana Sutra.

92. *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*.

93. This means that the dragon king's daughter acquired the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics of a Buddha.

94. The six thousand leaves comprise T'ien-t'ai's three major works, *Profound Meaning, Words and Phrases*, and *Great Concentration and Insight*, and Miao-lo's commentaries on them.

95. *Great Perfection of Wisdom* states that the nyagrodha, or banyan tree, is large enough to provide shade for five hundred carts, yet the seed from which it grows is only one-third the size of a mustard seed.

96. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

97. The Daishonin refers here to the parable of the skilled physician in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

98. *Outstanding Principles*.

99. T'ien-t'ai's four guidelines for interpreting the words and phrases of the Lotus Sutra. "Causes and conditions" means to interpret the words and phrases of the sutra in terms of the causes and conditions that brought the Buddha to expound them. "Correlated teachings" means to interpret the sutra's words and phrases in terms of the four teachings of doctrine and the five periods. "Theoretical and essential teachings" is to interpret them in light of the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra; and "the observation of the mind" is to perceive their truth within one's own life through the practice of meditation.

100. The Daishonin slightly modifies the wording of the Nirvana Sutra, which says that one who has aroused the aspiration for enlightenment under Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Hiranyavati River will be able to embrace a sutra such as this in the evil age.

101. A reference to the sixteen sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, who appears in chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra.