

The Opening of the Eyes



PART ONE

THESE are three categories of people that all human beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher, and the parent. There are three types of doctrines that are to be studied. They are Confucianism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism.

Confucianism describes the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and the Three Kings, whom it calls the Honorable Ones of Heaven. These men are depicted as the heads of the government officials and the bridges for the populace. In the age before the Three Sovereigns, people were no better than birds and beasts in that they did not even know who their own fathers were. But from the time of the Five Emperors on, they came to know who their fathers and mothers were, treating them according to the dictates of filial piety. Thus Ch'ung-hua¹ served his father with reverence, though the latter was stubborn and hardheaded. Also, the governor of P'ei,² after he became the emperor, continued to pay great respect to his father, the Venerable Sire. King Wu of the Chou dynasty made a wooden image of his father, the Earl of the West,³ and Ting Lan fashioned a statue of his mother.⁴ All of these men are models of filial piety.

The high minister Pi Kan, seeing that the Yin dynasty was on the path to

ruin, strongly admonished the ruler, though it cost him his head. Hung Yen, finding that his lord, Duke Yi, had been killed, cut open his own stomach and inserted the duke's liver in it before he died. These men may serve as models of loyalty.

Yin Shou was the teacher of Emperor Yao, Wu Ch'eng was the teacher of Emperor Shun, T'ai-kung Wang was the teacher of King Wen,⁵ and Lao Tzu was the teacher of Confucius.⁶ These teachers are known as the four sages. Even the Honorable Ones of Heaven bow their heads to them in respect, and all people press their palms together in reverence. Sages such as these have left behind writings that run to over three thousand volumes in such works as the *Three Records*, the *Five Canons*, and the *Three Histories*. But all these writings in the end do not advance beyond the three mysteries. The first of the three mysteries is Being. This is the principle taught by the Duke of Chou and others. The second mystery is Non-Being, which was expounded by Lao Tzu. The third is Both Being and Non-Being, which is the mystery set forth by Chuang Tzu. Mystery denotes darkness. Some say that, if we ask what existed before our ancestors were born, we will find that life was born out of the primal

force, while others declare that eminence and ignobility, joy and sorrow, right and wrong, gain and loss occur simply as part of the natural order.

These are theories that are cleverly argued, but that fail to take cognizance of either the past or the future. Mystery, as we have seen, means darkness or obscurity, and it is for this reason that it is called mystery. It is a theory that deals with matters only in terms of the present. Speaking in terms of the present, the Confucians declare that one should abide by the principles of benevolence and righteousness,⁷ and thereby insure safety to oneself and peace and order to the state. If one departs from these principles, they say, then one's family will be doomed and one's house overthrown. But although the wise and worthies who preach this doctrine are acclaimed as sages, in their lack of knowledge about the past they are like ordinary people unable to see their own backs, and in their understanding about the future they are like a blind man unable to see what lies before him.

If, in terms of the present, one brings order to one's family, carries out the demands of filial piety, and faithfully practices the five constant virtues, then one's associates will respect one, and one's name will become known throughout the country. If there is a worthy ruler on the throne, he will invite such a person to become his minister or his teacher, or may even cede his position to him. Heaven too will come to protect and watch over such a person. Such were the so-called Five Elders⁸ who gathered about and assisted King Wu of the Chou dynasty, or the twenty-eight generals of Emperor Kuang-wu of the Later Han, who were likened to the twenty-eight constellations of the sky. But since such persons know nothing about the past or the future, they cannot assist their parents, their sovereign, or their teacher

in making provisions for their future lives, and are therefore unable to repay the debt they owe them. Such persons are not true worthies or sages.

Confucius declared that there were no worthies or sages in his country, but that in the land to the west there was one named Buddha who was a sage.⁹ This indicates that non-Buddhist texts should be regarded as a first step toward Buddhist doctrine. Confucius first taught propriety and music¹⁰ so that, when the Buddhist scriptures were brought to China, the concepts of the precepts, meditation, and wisdom¹¹ could be more readily grasped. He taught the ideals of ruler and minister so that the distinction between superior and subordinate could be made clear, he taught the ideal of parenthood so that the importance of filial piety could be appreciated, and he explained the ideal of the teacher so that people might learn to follow.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo says, "The propagation of Buddhism truly depends on this. First the teachings on propriety and music were set forth, and later the true way was introduced."¹² T'ien-t'ai states, "In the Golden Light Sutra it is recorded that 'all the good teachings that exist in the world derive from this sutra. To have a profound knowledge of this world is itself Buddhism.'¹³ In *Great Concentration and Insight* we read, "I [the Buddha] have dispatched the Three Sages¹⁴ to educate the land of China." In *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* we read: "The Practice of the Pure Law Sutra states that Bodhisattva Moonlight appeared in that land under the name Yen Hui, Bodhisattva Bright Pure appeared there as Confucius, and Bodhisattva Kashyapa appeared as Lao Tzu. Since the sutra is speaking from the point of view of India, it refers to China as 'that land.'"

Secondly, we come to the non-Buddhist teachings of India. In Brahmanism

we find the two deities: Shiva, who has three eyes and eight arms, and Vishnu. They are hailed as the loving father and compassionate mother of all living beings and are also called the Honorable Ones of Heaven and sovereigns. In addition, there are three men, Kapila, Uluka, and Rishabha,¹⁵ who are known as the three ascetics. These ascetics lived somewhere around eight hundred years before the time of the Buddha. The teachings expounded by the three ascetics are known as the four Vedas and number sixty thousand.

Later, in the time of the Buddha, there were the six non-Buddhist teachers who studied and transmitted these non-Buddhist scriptures and acted as tutors to the kings of the five regions of India. Their teachings split into ninety-five or ninety-six different lines, forming school after school. The banners of their pride were raised higher than the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought,¹⁶ and their dogmatic rigidity was harder than metal or stone. But in their skill and depth of understanding, they surpassed anything known in Confucianism. They were able to perceive two, three, or even seven existences, a period of eighty thousand kalpas, into the past, and they likewise knew what would happen eighty thousand kalpas in the future. As the fundamental principle of their doctrine, some of these schools taught that causes produce effects, others taught that causes do not produce effects, while still others taught that causes both do and do not produce effects. Such were the fundamental principles of these non-Buddhist schools.

The devout followers of the non-Buddhist teachings observe the five precepts and the ten good precepts, practice the kind of meditation that is still accompanied by outflows, and, ascending to the worlds of form and formlessness,¹⁷ believe they have attained nirvana when they reach the highest of the heavens.

But although they make their way upward bit by bit like an inchworm, they fall back from the heaven where there is neither thought nor no thought, and descend instead into the three evil paths. Not a single one succeeds in remaining on the level of the heavens, though they believe that once having attained that level they will never descend from it. Each approves and practices the doctrines taught by his teacher and firmly abides by them. Thus some of them bathe three times a day in the Ganges even on cold winter days, while others pull out the hairs on their head, fling themselves against rocks, expose themselves to fire, burn their bodies, or go about stark naked. Again there are those who believe they can gain good fortune by sacrificing many horses, or who burn grasses and trees, or make obeisance to every tree they encounter.

Erroneous teachings such as these are too numerous to be counted. Their adherents pay as much respect and honor to the teachers who propound them as the heavenly deities pay to the lord Shakra, or the court ministers pay to the ruler of the empire. But not a single person who adheres to these ninety-five types of higher or lower non-Buddhist teachings ever escapes from the cycle of birth and death. Those who follow teachers of the better sort will, after two or three rebirths, fall into the evil paths, while those who follow evil teachers will fall into the evil paths in their very next rebirth.

And yet the main point of these non-Buddhist teachings constitutes an important means of entry into Buddhism. Some of them state, "A thousand years from now, the Buddha will appear in the world,"¹⁸ while others state, "A hundred years from now, the Buddha will appear in the world."¹⁹ The Nirvana Sutra remarks, "All of the non-Buddhist scriptures and writings in society are themselves Buddhist teach-

ings, not non-Buddhist teachings." And in the Lotus Sutra it is written, "Before the multitude they seem possessed of the three poisons or manifest the signs of distorted views. My disciples in this manner use expedient means to save living beings."²⁰

Thirdly, we come to Buddhism. One should know that the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment is a great leader for all living beings, a great eye for them, a great bridge, a great helmsman, a great field of good fortune. The four sages and three ascetics of the Confucian and Brahmanical scriptures and teachings are referred to as sages, but in fact they are no more than ordinary people who have not yet been able to eradicate the three categories of illusion. They are referred to as wise men, but in fact they are no more than infants who cannot understand the principles of cause and effect. With their teachings for a ship, could one ever cross over the sea of the sufferings of birth and death? With their teachings for a bridge, could one ever escape from the maze of the six paths? But the Buddha, our great teacher, has advanced beyond even transmigration with change and advance, let alone transmigration with differences and limitations.²¹ He has wiped out even the very root of fundamental darkness, let alone the illusions of thought and desire that are as minor as branches and leaves.

This Buddha, from the time of his enlightenment at the age of thirty until his passing at the age of eighty, expounded his sacred teachings for a period of fifty years. Each word, each phrase he spoke is true; not a sentence, not a verse is false. The words of the sages and worthies preserved in the scriptures and teachings of Confucianism and Brahmanism, as we have noted, are free of error, and the words match the spirit in which they were spoken. But how much more true is

this in the case of the Buddha, who had spoken not a false word for countless kalpas! In comparison to the non-Buddhist scriptures and teachings, the doctrines that he expounded in a period of fifty or so years represent the great vehicle, the true words of the great man.²² Everything that he preached, from the dawn of his enlightenment until the evening that he entered into nirvana, is none other than the truth.

However, when we examine the eighty thousand teachings of Buddhism expounded during a period of fifty or so years and recorded in scriptures, we find that they fall into various categories such as Hinayana and Mahayana, provisional and true sutras, exoteric and esoteric teachings, detailed and rough discourses, true words and false words, correct and incorrect views. But among these, the Lotus Sutra alone represents the correct teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, the truthful words of the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions. The World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment designated a specific period of the preceding forty years and more, and defined the various sutras preached during that period, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as the sutras in which he had "not yet revealed the truth."²³ He designated the Lotus Sutra preached during the eight years as the sutra in which he "now must reveal the truth."²⁴ Thus Many Treasures Buddha came forth from beneath the earth to testify that "all that you have expounded [in the Lotus Sutra] is the truth,"²⁵ and the Buddhas who are emanations of Shakyamuni gathered together and extended their long tongues up to the Brahma heaven in testimony.²⁶ These words are perfectly clear, perfectly understandable, brighter than the sun on a clear day, or like the full moon at midnight. Look up to them and believe them, and

when you turn away, cherish them in your heart!

The Lotus Sutra contains two important teachings.²⁷ The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, and Three Treatises schools have never heard even so much as the name of these teachings. The Flower Garland and True Word schools, on the other hand, have surreptitiously stolen these doctrines and made them the heart of their own teachings. The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu were aware of it but did not bring it forth into the light. T'ien-t'ai Chih-che alone embraced it and kept it ever in mind.

The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life begins with the concept of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. But the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools speak only of eight worlds and know nothing of the entirety of the Ten Worlds, much less of the concept of their mutual possession. The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools derive their teachings from the Agama sutras. They are aware only of the six worlds and know nothing of the other four worlds. They declare that in all the ten directions there is only one Buddha, and do not even preach that there is any other Buddha in any of the ten directions. Of the principle that "all sentient beings alike possess the Buddha nature,"²⁸ they of course say nothing at all. They refuse to acknowledge that even a single person possesses the Buddha nature. In spite of this, one will sometimes hear members of the Precepts and Establishment of Truth schools declaring that there are Buddhas in the ten directions, or that all liv-

ing beings possess the Buddha nature. This is because the teachers of these schools who appeared after the passing away of the Buddha had stolen these Mahayana doctrines and incorporated them into the teachings of their own schools.

To illustrate, in the period before the appearance of Buddhism, the proponents of the non-Buddhist teachings in India were not so bound up in their own views. But after the appearance of the Buddha, when they had listened to and observed the Buddhist teachings, they became aware of the shortcomings of their own doctrines. They then conceived the clever idea of appropriating Buddhist teachings and incorporating them into their own doctrines, and as a result they fell into even deeper error than before. These are examples of the errors known as "appropriating Buddhism" or "plagiarizing Buddhism."²⁹

The same thing occurred in the case of non-Buddhist scriptures in China. Before Buddhism was brought to China, Confucianism and Taoism were rather naive and childish affairs. But in the Later Han, Buddhism was introduced to China and challenged the native doctrines. In time, as Buddhism became more popular, there were certain Buddhist priests who, because they had broken the precepts, were forced to return to secular life, or who elected to join forces with the native creeds. Through such men, Buddhist doctrines were stolen and incorporated into the Confucian and Taoist teachings.

In volume five of *Great Concentration and Insight* we read: "These days there are many devilish monks who break the precepts and return to lay life. Fearing that they will be punished for their action, they then go over to the side of the Taoists. Hoping to gain fame and profit, they speak extravagantly of the merits of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, usurping Buddhist concepts and reading them into their erro-

neous scriptures. They twist what is lofty and force it into a mean context; they destroy what is exalted and drag it down among the base, striving to put the two on an equal level."

On "*Great Concentration and Insight*" comments on this passage as follows: "Though they are monks, they destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Some break the precepts and return to lay life, as Wei Yüan-sung did. Then, as laymen, they work to destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Men of this kind steal and usurp the correct teachings of Buddhism and use them to supplement and bolster the erroneous writings. The passage on 'twisting what is lofty . . .' means that, adopting the outlook of the Taoists, they try to place Buddhism and Taoism on the same level, to make equals of the correct and the erroneous, though reason tells us that this could never be. Having once been followers of Buddhist teachings, they steal what is correct and use it to bolster what is incorrect. They twist the lofty eighty thousand teachings of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist canon and force them into the mean context of Lao Tzu's two chapters and five thousand words, using them to interpret the base and mistaken teachings of that text. This is what is meant by 'destroying what is exalted and dragging it down among the base.'" These comments should be carefully noted, for they explain the meaning of the foregoing description of events.

The same sort of thing happened within Buddhism itself. Buddhism was introduced to China during the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 58-75) of the Later Han dynasty, and in time established its supremacy over Confucian and Taoist teachings. But differences of opinion developed within Buddhism, resulting in the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north, which sprang up here and there like so many orchids or chrysanthemums. In the

time of the Ch'en and Sui dynasties, however, the Great Teacher Chih-che defeated these various schools and returned Buddhism once more to its primary objective of saving all living beings.

Later, the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics and True Word schools were introduced from India, and the Flower Garland school also made its appearance. Among these schools, the Dharma Characteristics school set itself up as an arch opponent of the T'ien-t'ai school, because their teachings are as contradictory to each other as fire is to water. However, when the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz'u-en closely examined the works of T'ien-t'ai, they came to realize that the views of their own school were in error. Although they did not openly repudiate their own school, it appears that in their hearts they switched their allegiance to the T'ien-t'ai teachings.

From the beginning the Flower Garland and True Word schools were both provisional schools based upon provisional sutras. But the Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei and Chin-kang-chih [who introduced the esoteric True Word teachings to China] usurped the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and made it the core of the teachings of their school, adding the practice of mudras and mantras and convincing themselves that their teachings surpassed T'ien-t'ai's. As a result, students of Buddhism, unaware of the real facts, came to believe that the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life was to be found in the Mahavairochana Sutra that had been brought from India. Similarly, in the time of the Flower Garland patriarch Ch'eng-kuan, the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life was surreptitiously incorporated and used to interpret the

passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, "The mind is like a skilled painter." People were unaware that this was what had happened.

In the case of our own country of Japan, the Flower Garland and the other schools that comprised the six schools of Nara were introduced to Japan before the T'ien-t'ai (or Tendai) and True Word schools. The Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics schools argued and contended, as inimical to one another as water and fire. When the Great Teacher Dengyo appeared in Japan, he not only exposed the errors of the six schools, but also made it clear that the True Word school had stolen the principles of the Lotus Sutra as expounded by T'ien-t'ai and made them the heart of the teachings of its own school. The Great Teacher Dengyo set aside the various tenets propounded by the leaders of the other schools and, solely in the light of the sutras, attacked their views. As a result, he was able to defeat eight eminent priests of the six schools, then twelve priests, then fourteen, then over three hundred, as well as the Great Teacher Kobo. Soon there was not a single person in all Japan who did not acknowledge allegiance to the Tendai school, and the great temples of Nara, To-ji, and other temples throughout all the provinces became subordinate to the head temple of the Tendai school at Mount Hiei. The Great Teacher Dengyo also made it clear that the founders of the various other schools in China, by acknowledging allegiance to the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai, had escaped committing the error of slandering the correct teachings of Buddhism.

Later, however, conditions in the world declined, and people became increasingly shallow in wisdom. They no longer studied or understood the profound doctrines of the Tendai school, and the other schools became

more and more firmly attached to their own prejudiced views. Eventually, the six schools and the True Word school turned upon and attacked the Tendai school. The latter, growing ever weaker, in the end found that it was no match for the other schools. To aggravate the situation, absurd new schools such as Zen and Pure Land appeared and began attacking the Tendai school as well, and more and more of its lay supporters transferred their allegiance to these erroneous schools. In the end, even those priests of the Tendai school who were looked up to as men of eminent virtue all admitted defeat and lent their support to these schools. Not only Tendai but True Word and the six schools as well were forced to yield their lands and estates to these new misguided schools, and the correct teachings [of the Lotus Sutra] fell into oblivion. As a result, the Sun Goddess, the god Hachiman, the Mountain King of Mount Hiei, and the other great benevolent deities who guard the nation, no longer able to taste the flavor of the correct teaching, departed from the land. Demons came forward to take their place, and it became apparent that the nation was doomed.

Here, with my humble outlook, I have considered the differences between the teachings expounded by the Buddha Shakyamuni during the first forty and more years and those expounded in the Lotus Sutra during the last eight years of his life. Although both differ in many ways, contemporary scholars have already expressed the opinion, and it is my conviction as well, that the chief difference lies in the fact that the Lotus Sutra teaches that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, and that the Buddha Shakyamuni in reality attained enlightenment at an inconceivably distant time in the past.

When we examine the text of the Lotus Sutra, we see that it predicts that

Shariputra will become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright, Subhuti will become the Thus Come One Rare Form, Katyayana will become the Thus Come One Jambunada Gold Light, Maudgalyayana will become Tamalapattra Sandalwood Fragrance Buddha, Purna will become the Thus Come One Law Bright, Ananda will become Mountain Sea Wisdom Unrestricted Power King Buddha, Rahula will become the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers, the five hundred and seven hundred voice-hearers will become Thus Come Ones Universal Brightness, the two thousand who have more to learn or do not have more to learn will become Thus Come Ones Jewel Sign, the nuns Mahaprajapati and Yashodhara will become Thus Come Ones Gladly Seen by All Living Beings and Endowed with a Thousand Ten Thousand Glowing Marks, respectively.

Thus, if we examine the Lotus Sutra, we will realize that these persons are worthy of great honor. But when we search through the scriptures expounded in the period previous to the Lotus Sutra, we find to our regret that the situation is far different.

The Buddha, the World-Honored One, is a man of truthful words. Therefore, he is designated the sage and the great man. In the non-Buddhist scriptures of India and China, there are also persons called worthies, sages, or heavenly ascetics because they speak words of truth. But because the Buddha surpasses all these, he is known as the great man.

[When he expounded the Lotus Sutra,] this great man said, "The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone."³⁰ He also said, "I have not yet revealed the truth,"³¹ "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth,"³² and "Hon-

estly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]."³³ Many Treasures Buddha added his testimony to the words of the Buddha, and the emanations of the Buddha put forth their tongues as a token of assent. Who, then, could possibly doubt that Shariputra will in the future become the Thus Come One Flower Glow, that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright, or that the other predictions made by the Buddha will come true?

Nevertheless, all the sutras preceding the Lotus Sutra also represent the true words of the Buddha. The Great and Vast Buddha Flower Garland Sutra states: "There are only two places where the Great Medicine King Tree, which is the wisdom of the Thus Come One, will not grow and bring benefit to the world. It will not grow in the vast void that is the deep pit into which persons of the two vehicles fall, or in the profoundly distorted and craving-filled waters wherein drowned beings unfit for Buddhahood who destroy their own roots of goodness."

This passage may be explained as follows. In the Snow Mountains, there is a huge tree that has numberless roots. It is called the Great Medicine King Tree and is the monarch of all the trees that grow in the land of Jambudvīpa. It measures 168,000 yojanas in height. All the other trees and plants of Jambudvīpa depend upon the roots, branches, flowers, and fruit of this tree to attain their own flowering and fruition. Therefore, this tree is employed as a metaphor for the Buddha nature, and the various other trees and plants stand for all living beings. But this great tree will not grow in a fiery pit or in the watery circle.³⁴ The fiery pit is used as a metaphor for the mind of persons of the two vehicles, and the watery circle is used as a metaphor for the mind of icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. The scripture is saying

that these two categories of beings will never attain Buddhahood.

The Great Collection Sutra states: "There are two types of persons who are destined to die and not to be reborn, and who in the end will never be able to understand or repay their obligations. One is the voice-hearer, and the other is the cause-awakened one. Suppose that a person falls into a deep pit. That person will be unable to benefit himself or to benefit others. The voice-hearer and the cause-awakened one are like this. They fall into the pit of emancipation and can benefit neither themselves nor others."

The more than three thousand volumes of Confucian and Taoist literature of China on the whole stress two principles, namely, filial piety and loyalty to the sovereign. But loyalty is nothing more than an extension of filial piety. Filial piety may be described as lofty. Though heaven is lofty, it is no loftier than the ideal of filial piety. Filial piety may be called deep. Though earth is deep, it is no deeper than filial piety. Sages and worthies are the product of filial piety. It goes without saying, therefore, that persons who study the teachings of Buddhism must also [observe the ideal of filial piety and] understand and repay their obligations. The disciples of the Buddha must without fail understand the four debts of gratitude³⁵ and know how to repay them.

In addition, Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, and the other disciples who were persons of the two vehicles carefully observed the two hundred and fifty precepts and the three thousand rules of conduct, mastered the three types of meditation—known as flavor meditation, pure meditation, and free-of-outflows meditation—and the Agama sutras, and freed themselves from the illusions of thought and desire in the threefold world. They must therefore have been models in the under-

standing and repaying of obligations.

And yet the World-Honored One declared that they were men who did not understand obligation. He said this because, when a man leaves his parents and home and becomes a monk, he should always have as his goal the salvation of his father and mother. But these men of the two vehicles, although they thought they had attained emancipation, did nothing to benefit others. And even if they had done a certain amount to benefit others, they had led their parents to a path whereby they could never attain Buddhahood. Thus, contrary to what one might expect, they became known as men who did not understand their obligations.

In the Vimalakirti Sutra we read: "Vimalakirti once more questioned Manjushri, saying, 'What are the seeds of Buddhahood?' Manjushri replied, 'All the delusions and defilements are the seeds of Buddhahood. Even though a person commits the five cardinal sins and is condemned to the hell of incessant suffering, he is still capable of conceiving the great desire for the way.'"

The same sutra also says: "Good man, let me give you a metaphor. The plains and highlands will never bring forth the stems and blossoms of the blue lotus or the water lily. But the muddy fields that are low-lying and damp—that is where you will find these flowers growing."

It also says: "One who has already become an arhat and achieved the level of truth that goes with arhatship can never conceive the desire for the way and gain Buddhahood. He is like a man who has destroyed the five sense organs and therefore can never again enjoy the five delights that go with them."

The point of this sutra is that the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness can become the seeds of Buddhahood, and the five cardinal sins such as the killing of one's father can like-

wise become the seeds of Buddhahood. Even if the high plains should bring forth blue lotus flowers, the persons of the two vehicles would never attain Buddhahood. The text is saying that, when the goodness of the persons of the two vehicles is compared with the evils of ordinary people, it will be found that, though the evils of ordinary people can lead to Buddhahood, the goodness of the persons of the two vehicles never can. The various Hinayana sutras censure evil and praise good. But this sutra, the Vimalakirti, condemns the goodness of persons of the two vehicles and praises the evils of ordinary people. It would almost appear that it is not a Buddhist scripture at all, but rather the teachings of some non-Buddhist school. But the point is that it wants to make absolutely clear that the persons of the two vehicles can never become Buddhas.

The Correct and Equal Dharani Sutra states: "Manjushri said to Shariputra, 'Can a withered tree put forth new blossoms? Can a mountain stream turn and flow back to its source? Can a shattered rock join itself together again? Can a scorched seed send out sprouts?' Shariputra replied, 'No.' Manjushri said, 'If these things are impossible, then why do you come with joy in your heart and ask me if Buddhahood has been predicted for you in the future?'"

The passage means that, just as a withered tree puts forth no blossoms, a mountain stream never flows backward, a shattered rock cannot be joined, and a scorched seed cannot sprout, so the persons of the two vehicles can never attain Buddhahood. In their case the seeds of Buddhahood have been scorched.

The Larger Wisdom Sutra reads: "All you sons of gods, if you have not yet conceived a desire for perfect enlightenment, now is the time to do so. If you should once enter the realm of the enlightenment of voice-hearers,

you would no longer be capable of conceiving such a desire for perfect enlightenment. Why is this? Because you would be outside the world of birth and death, which itself would constitute an obstacle." This passage indicates that the Buddha³⁶ is not pleased with the persons of the two vehicles because they do not conceive the desire for perfect enlightenment, but that he is pleased with the heavenly beings because they do conceive such a desire.

The Shurangama Sutra states: "If a person who has committed the five cardinal sins should hear of this shurangama meditation and should conceive the desire for supreme enlightenment, then he would still be capable of attaining Buddhahood. But, World-Honored One, an arhat who has put an end to outflows is like a broken vessel, and will never be capable of receiving and upholding this meditation."³⁷

The Vimalakirti Sutra says, "Those who give alms to you are cultivating for themselves no field of good fortune. Those who give alms to you will fall into the three evil paths." This passage means that the human and heavenly beings who give alms to the sage monks such as Mahakashyapa and Shariputra will invariably fall into the three evil paths. Sage monks such as these, one would suppose, must be the eyes of the human and heavenly beings and the leaders of all living beings, second only to the Buddha himself. It must have been very much against common expectation that the Buddha spoke out time and again against such men before the great assemblies of human and heavenly beings, as we have seen him do. Was he really trying to reprimand his own disciples to death? In addition, he employed countless different metaphors in expressing his condemnation of the persons of the two vehicles, calling them donkey's milk as compared to cow's milk, clay vessels as compared to vessels of gold, or the

glimmer of a firefly as compared to the light of the sun.

He did not speak of this in one word or two, in one day or two, in one month or two, in one year or two, or in one sutra or two, but over a period of more than forty years, in countless sutras, addressing himself to great assemblies of countless persons, condemning the persons of the two vehicles without a single extenuating word. Thus everyone learned that his condemnation was true. Heaven learned it and earth learned it. Not only one or two, but hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of people; the heavenly beings, dragon gods, and the asuras of the threefold world; all the human and heavenly beings, persons of the two vehicles, and great bodhisattvas gathered in assembly from the five regions of India, the four continents, the six heavens of the world of desire, the worlds of form and formlessness, and the worlds of the ten directions, and learned and heard of it. Then all these beings returned to their own lands, explaining the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha of the saha world one by one to the inhabitants of their respective lands, so that there was not a single being in the countless worlds of the ten directions who did not understand that Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, and those like them would never attain Buddhahood, and that it was wrong to give them alms and support.

In the Lotus Sutra preached during the last eight years of his life, however, the Buddha suddenly regretted and retracted his earlier position and instead taught that persons of the two vehicles can in fact attain Buddhahood. Could the human and heavenly beings gathered in the great assembly to listen to him be expected to believe this? Would they not rather reject it and in addition begin to entertain doubts about all the sutras preached in this and earlier periods? They would wonder if all the

teachings put forward in the entire fifty years of the Buddha's preaching were not, in fact, false and erroneous doctrines.

To be sure, there is a sutra passage that says, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."³⁸ Nevertheless, one might wonder if the heavenly devil had not taken on the Buddha's form and preached this sutra of the last eight years, the Lotus. In the sutra, however, the Buddha describes quite specifically how his disciples of the two vehicles will attain Buddhahood and reveals the kalpas and the lands in which they will appear, the names they will bear, and the disciples they will teach. Thus it becomes apparent that Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, is saying two different things. This clearly means that he is contradicting his own words. This is why the Brahmanists laugh at the Buddha and call him the great prevaricator.

But just as the human and heavenly beings in the great assembly were feeling downcast in the face of this contradiction, the Thus Come One Many Treasures, who dwells in the World of Treasure Purity in the east, appeared in a huge tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures and measuring five hundred yojanas high and two hundred and fifty yojanas wide. The human and heavenly beings in the great assembly accused Shakyamuni Buddha of contradicting his own words, and although the Buddha answered in one way or another, he was in considerable embarrassment, being unable to dispel their doubts, when the treasure tower emerged out of the ground before him and ascended into the sky. It came forth like the full moon rising from behind the eastern mountain in the dark of night. The tower of seven kinds of treasures ascended into the sky, clinging neither to the earth nor to the roof of the heavens, but hanging in midair, and from within the tower a

pure and far-reaching voice issued, speaking words of testimony. [As the Lotus Sutra describes it:] “At that time a loud voice issued from the treasure tower, speaking words of praise: ‘Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth!’”³⁹

[Elsewhere the Lotus Sutra says:] “At that time the World-Honored One, in the presence of Manjushri and the other immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who from of old had dwelled in the saha world, as well as . . . human and nonhuman beings—before all these he displayed his great supernatural powers. He extended his long broad tongue upward till it reached the Brahma heaven, and from all his pores [he emitted immeasurable, countless beams of light that illuminated] all the worlds in the ten directions.

“The other Buddhas, seated on lion seats underneath the numerous jeweled trees, did likewise, extending their long broad tongues and emitting immeasurable beams of light.”⁴⁰

And it also says: “Shakyamuni Buddha caused the Buddhas who were emanations of his body and had come from the ten directions to return each one to his original land, saying, [Each of these Buddhas may proceed at his own pleasure.] The tower of Many Treasures Buddha may also return to its former position.”⁴¹

In the past, when the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment first attained the way,⁴² Buddhas appeared in the ten directions to counsel and encourage him, and various great bodhisattvas were dispatched to him. When

he preached the Wisdom Sutra, he covered the major world system with his long tongue, and a thousand Buddhas appeared in the ten directions. When he preached the Golden Light Sutra, the four Buddhas⁴³ appeared in the four directions, and when he preached the Amida Sutra, the Buddhas of the six directions⁴⁴ covered the major world system with their tongues. And when he preached the Great Collection Sutra, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions gathered in the Great Treasure Chamber.

But when we compare the auspicious signs that accompanied these sutras with those accompanying the Lotus Sutra, we find that they are like a yellow stone compared to gold, a white cloud to a white mountain, ice to a silver mirror, or the color black to the color blue—the bleary-eyed, the squint-eyed, the one-eyed, and the wrong-viewed will be likely to confuse them.

Since the Flower Garland Sutra was the first sutra to be preached, there were no previous words of the Buddha for it to contradict, and so it naturally raised no doubts. In the case of the Great Collection Sutra, the Larger Wisdom Sutra, the Golden Light Sutra, and the Amida Sutra, the Buddha, in order to censure the ideal of the two vehicles demonstrated in the various Hinayana sutras, described the pure lands of the ten directions, and thereby inspired ordinary people and bodhisattvas to aspire to attain them. Thus he caused the persons of the two vehicles to feel confounded and vexed.

Again, because there are certain differences between the Hinayana sutras and the Mahayana sutras mentioned above, we find that in some cases Buddhas appeared in the ten directions, in others great bodhisattvas were dispatched from the ten directions, or it was made clear that the particular sutra was expounded in the worlds of the ten directions, or that various Buddhas

came from the ten directions to meet in assembly. In some cases, it was said that Shakyamuni Buddha covered the major world system with his tongue, while in others it was the various Buddhas who put forth their tongues. All of these statements are intended to combat the view expounded in the Hinayana sutras that in the worlds of the ten directions there is only one Buddha.

But in the case of the Lotus Sutra, it differs so greatly from the previous Mahayana sutras that Shariputra and the other voice-hearers, the great bodhisattvas, and the various human and heavenly beings, when they heard the Buddha preach it, were led to think, "Is this not a devil pretending to be the Buddha?"⁴⁵ And yet those bleary-eyed men of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, True Word, and Nembutsu schools all seem to think that their own particular sutras are exactly the same as the Lotus Sutra. That is what I call wretched perception indeed!

While the Buddha was still in this world, there were undoubtedly those who set aside the sutras he had taught during the first forty and more years of his teaching life and embraced the Lotus Sutra. But after he passed away, it must have been difficult to find persons who would open and read this sutra and accept its teachings. To begin with, the sutras preached earlier run to countless words, while the Lotus Sutra is limited in length. The earlier sutras are numerous, but the Lotus Sutra is no more than a single work. The earlier sutras were preached over a period of many years, but the Lotus Sutra was preached in a mere eight years.

Moreover, the Buddha, as we have seen, has been called the great liar, and therefore one can hardly be expected to believe his words. If one makes a great effort to believe the unbelievable, one can perhaps bring oneself to be-

lieve in the earlier sutras but not in the Lotus Sutra. The people today appear to believe in the Lotus Sutra, but in fact they do not really believe in it. The reason is this: When someone assures them that the Lotus Sutra is the same as the Mahavairochana Sutra, or that it is the same as the Flower Garland Sutra or the Amida Sutra, they are pleased and place their faith in this person. If someone tells them that the Lotus Sutra is completely different from all the other sutras, they will not listen to him, or even if they should listen, they would not think that the person was really speaking the truth.

Nichiren has this to say. It is now over seven hundred years since Buddhism was introduced to Japan. During that time, only the Great Teacher Dengyo truly understood the Lotus Sutra, but no one is willing to heed this fact that Nichiren has been teaching. It is just as the Lotus Sutra says: "If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed!"⁴⁶

The powerful assertions I am putting forward are in complete accord with the sutra itself. But as the Nirvana Sutra, which is intended to propagate the Lotus Sutra, states: in the defiled times of the latter age, those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions, while those who uphold the correct teaching will be as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail. What do you think of that? Would you say that the people of Japan can be squeezed into the space of a fingernail? Would you say that I, Nichiren, occupy the ten directions? Consider the matter carefully.

In the reign of a worthy ruler, what

is reasonable will prevail, but when a foolish ruler reigns, then what is unreasonable will have supremacy. One should understand that, in similar fashion, when a sage is in the world, then the true significance of the Lotus Sutra will become apparent.

In my remarks here, I have been contrasting the early sutras with the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and it would appear as though the early sutras are in a position to prevail. But if they really win out over the theoretical teaching, then it means that Shariputra and the other persons of the two vehicles will never be able to attain Buddhahood. That would surely be lamentable!

I turn now to the second important teaching of the Lotus Sutra.⁴⁷ Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was born in the kalpa of continuance, in the ninth period of decrease, when the span of human life measured a hundred years. He was the grandson of King Simhahanu and the son and heir of King Shuddhodana. As a boy he was known as Crown Prince Siddhartha, or the Bodhisattva All Goals Achieved. At the age of nineteen he left his family, and at thirty he attained enlightenment. At his place of enlightenment, the World-Honored One first revealed the ceremony of Vairochana Buddha of the Lotus Treasury World, a Land of Actual Reward, and expounded the ten mysteries, the six forms, the perfect interfusion of all things, and the subtle and wonderful great teaching for immediate attainment of the ultimate fruit. At that time the Buddhas of the ten directions appeared on the scene, and all the bodhisattvas gathered about like clouds. In view of the place where Shakyamuni preached, the capacity of the listeners, the presence of the Buddhas, and the fact that it was the first sermon, is there any reason the Buddha could have concealed or held back the great doctrine? Therefore, the Flower

Garland Sutra says, "He displayed his power freely and expounded a sutra of perfection and fullness."

The work, which consists of sixty volumes, is indeed a sutra of perfection and fullness in its every character and stroke. It may be compared to the wish-granting jewel that, though it is a single jewel, is the equal of countless such jewels. For the single jewel can rain down ten thousand treasures, which are equal to the treasures brought forth by ten thousand jewels. In the same way, one character of the Flower Garland Sutra is equal to ten thousand characters. The passage that expounds the identity of "the mind, the Buddha, and all living beings" represents the core not only of Flower Garland teachings, but of the teachings of the Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, True Word, and Tendai schools as well.

In such a superb sutra, how could there be any truths that are hidden from the hearer? And yet we find the sutra declaring that persons of the two vehicles and icchantikas can never attain Buddhahood. Here is the flaw in the jewel. Moreover, in three places the sutra speaks of Shakyamuni Buddha as attaining enlightenment for the first time in this world. It thus hides the fact that Shakyamuni Buddha actually attained enlightenment in the remote past, as revealed in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, the Flower Garland Sutra is in fact a chipped jewel, a moon veiled in clouds, a sun in eclipse. A strange thing indeed!

The sutras of the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, such as the Mahavairochana Sutra, since they were expounded by the Buddha, are splendid works, and yet they cannot begin to compare with the Flower Garland Sutra. Therefore, one could hardly expect that doctrines concealed even in the Flower Garland Sutra

would be revealed in these sutras. Thus we find that the Miscellaneous Agama Sutra speaks of Shakyamuni Buddha as having attained the way for the first time in his present existence; the Great Collection Sutra says, "It is sixteen years since the Thus Come One first attained the way"; and the Vimalakirti Sutra states, "For the first time the Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree and through his might conquered the devil." Likewise, the Mahavairochana Sutra describes the Buddha's enlightenment as having taken place "long ago when I sat in the place of meditation," and the Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra refers to it as an event of "twenty-nine years" in the past.

It is hardly surprising that these sutras should speak in this fashion. But there is something that is an astonishment to both the ear and the eye. This is the fact that the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra also speaks in the same way. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha denies the great doctrines, such as the Flower Garland Sutra concept of the phenomenal world as created by the mind alone, the concept of the ocean-imprint meditation set forth in the sutras of the Correct and Equal period, and the Wisdom Sutra concept of mutual identification and nonduality, when he declares, "I have not yet revealed the truth." The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra regards the practices taught in the previous sutras as practices that require many kalpas to complete. However, the same sutra says, "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation for six years under the bodhi tree and was able to gain supreme perfect enlightenment," using the same type of language as the Flower Garland Sutra, the first sutra Shakyamuni preached after his enlightenment, when it talks of the Buddha having attained enlightenment for the first time in this world.

Strange as this may seem, we may

suppose that, since the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra is intended to serve as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, it deliberately refrains from speaking about doctrines to be revealed in the Lotus Sutra itself. But when we turn to the Lotus Sutra, we find that, in the sections where the Buddha discusses in both concise and expanded form the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, he says, "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas,"⁴⁸ "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines [and now must reveal the truth]," and "Honestly discarding expedient means, [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]." Moreover, Many Treasures Buddha testifies to the verity of the eight chapters⁴⁹ of the theoretical teaching, declaring that these are all true. We would suppose, therefore, that in them there would be nothing held back or concealed. Nevertheless, the Buddha hides the fact that he attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, for he says, "I first sat in the place of meditation and gazed at the tree and walked around it."⁵⁰ This is surely the most astounding fact of all.

In the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, a multitude of bodhisattvas who had not been seen previously in the more than forty years of the Buddha's preaching life suddenly appear, and the Buddha says, "I taught and converted them, and caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way." Bodhisattva Maitreya, puzzled by this announcement, says: "[World-Honored One], when the Thus Come One was crown prince, you left the palace of the Shakyas and sat in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya, and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. Barely forty years or more have passed since then. World-Honored One, how in that short time could you have accom-

plished so much work as a Buddha?"

In order to dispel this doubt and puzzlement, Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, then preaches the "Life Span" chapter. Referring first to the version of the events presented in the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, he says: "In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment." But then, in order to dispel their doubts, he says, "But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood."

All the other sutras such as the Flower Garland, Wisdom, and Mahavairochana not only conceal the fact that people of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, but they also fail to make clear that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. These sutras have two flaws. First, because they teach that the Ten Worlds are separate from one another, they fail to move beyond the provisional doctrines and to reveal the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life as it is expounded in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Second, because they teach that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in this world, referring only to his provisional aspect, they fail to reveal the fact stressed in the essential teaching that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago. These two great doctrines are the core of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, and the very heart and marrow of all the sutras.

The "Expedient Means" chapter, which belongs to the theoretical teaching, expounds the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of

life, making clear that persons of the two vehicles can achieve Buddhahood. It thus eliminates one of the two errors found in the earlier sutras. But it nevertheless retains the provisional aspect, and fails to reveal the eternal aspect, of the Buddha's enlightenment. Thus the true doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life remains unclear, and the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles is not properly affirmed. Such teachings are like the moon seen in the water, or rootless plants that drift on the waves.

When we come to the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, then the belief that Shakyamuni first obtained Buddhahood during his present lifetime is demolished, and the effects of the four teachings are likewise demolished. When the effects of the four teachings are demolished, the causes⁵¹ of the four teachings are likewise demolished. Thus the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds as expounded in the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are wiped out, and the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds⁵² in the essential teaching are revealed. This is the doctrine of original cause and original effect. It reveals that the nine worlds are all present in beginningless Buddhahood and that Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds. This is the true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the true hundred worlds and thousand factors, the true three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

When we consider the matter in this light, we can see that Vairochana Buddha seated on the lotus pedestal of the ten directions as described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the little Shakyamuni described in the Agama sutras,⁵³ and the provisional Buddhas described in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods such as the Golden Light, Amida, and Mahavairochana sutras are no more than reflections of

the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter. They are like fleeting reflections of the moon that float on the surfaces of various large and small bodies of water. The scholars of the various schools of Buddhism, confused as to [the nature of the Buddhas of] their own school and, more fundamentally, ignorant of [the Buddha of] the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, mistake the reflection in the water for the actual moon, some of them entering the water and trying to grasp it in their hands, others attempting to snare it with a rope. As T'ien-t'ai says, "They know nothing of the moon in the sky, but gaze only at the moon in the pond."⁵⁴

Having pondered this, I am of the opinion that, though the Lotus Sutra teaches that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, this view tends to be overshadowed by the opposite view propounded in the sutras that precede the Lotus. How much more so is this the case with the doctrine that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past! For in this case, it is not the Lotus Sutra as a whole that stands in contradiction to the earlier sutras, but the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra that stands in contradiction both to the earlier sutras and to the first fourteen chapters of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus. Moreover, of the latter fourteen chapters of the essential teaching, all of them with the exception of the "Emerging from the Earth" and "Life Span" chapters retain the view that the Buddha first attained enlightenment in his present lifetime.

The forty volumes of the Mahāparinirvāna Sutra, preached by the Buddha in the grove of sal trees just before his passing, as well as the other Mahāyāna sutras except the Lotus Sutra, have not one single word [to say about the fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past]. They speak of the Dharma body of the Buddha as being without beginning

and without end, but they do not reveal the true nature of the other two bodies, the reward body and the manifested body.⁵⁵ How, then, can we expect people to cast aside the vast body of writings represented by the earlier Mahāyāna sutras, the Nirvāna Sutra, and the major portion of the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and put all their faith simply in the two chapters "Emerging from the Earth" and "Life Span"?

If we examine the origins of the school called Dharma Characteristics, we find that, nine hundred years after the Buddha passed away in India, there was a great scholar called Bodhisattva Asanga. At night, he ascended to the inner court of the Tushita heaven, where he came before Bodhisattva Maitreya and resolved his doubts concerning the sacred teachings propounded by the Buddha during his lifetime. In the daytime, he worked to propagate the Dharma Characteristics doctrines in the state of Ayodhya.⁵⁶ Among his disciples were various great scholars such as Vasubandhu, Dharmapala, Nanda, and Shīlabhadra.⁵⁷ The great ruler, King Śīladitya, bowed his head in reverence, and the people of all the five regions of India abandoned their arrogance and declared themselves followers of his teaching.

The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang of China journeyed to India, spending seventeen years visiting 130 or more Indian states. He rejected all the other teachings of Buddhism, but brought back the doctrines of the Dharma Characteristics school to China and presented them to the worthy sovereign, Emperor T'ai-tsung. Hsüan-tsang numbered among his disciples such men as Shen-fang, Chia-shang, P'u-kuang, and K'uei-chi. He preached his teachings in Ta-tz'u-en-ssu temple and spread them through more than 360 districts of China.

In the reign of Emperor Kotoku, the thirty-seventh sovereign of Japan, Doji,

Dosho, and other priests went to China and studied these doctrines, and on their return preached them at Yamashina-dera temple.⁵⁸ In this way, the Dharma Characteristics school was regarded as the leading school of Buddhism throughout all three lands of India, China, and Japan.

According to this school, in all the teachings of the Buddha, from the Flower Garland Sutra, the earliest of the sutras, to the Lotus and Nirvana sutras, which were preached last, it is laid down that those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment and those predestined for the two vehicles can never become Buddhas. The Buddha, they say, never contradicts himself. Therefore, if he has once declared that these people will never be able to attain Buddhahood, then, even should the sun and moon fall to the earth or the great earth itself turn upside down, that declaration can never be altered. In the earlier sutras, those sentient beings without the nature of enlightenment and those predestined for the two vehicles were said to be incapable of attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, they conclude, even in the Lotus or Nirvana Sutra it is never said that they can in fact do so.

“Close your eyes and consider the matter,” the members of the Dharma Characteristics school would say. “If it had in fact been plainly stated in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras that those who possess no innate nature of enlightenment or those predestined for the two vehicles can actually attain Buddhahood, then why would the great scholars such as Asanga and Vasubandhu or the Tripitaka masters and teachers such as Hsüan-tsang and Tz’u-en not have taken notice of this fact? Why did they not mention it in their own writings? Why did they not accept the belief and transmit it to later ages? Why did Asanga not question Bodhisattva Maitreya about it? People like you,

Nichiren, claim that you are basing your assertions on the text of the Lotus Sutra, but in fact you are simply accepting the biased views of men like T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo and interpreting the text of the sutra in the light of their teachings. Therefore, you claim that the Lotus Sutra is as different from the earlier sutras as fire from water.”

Again, there are the Flower Garland and True Word schools, which are of an incomparably higher level than the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools. They claim that the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles may attain Buddhahood and that the Buddha achieved enlightenment in the remote past are to be found not only in the Lotus Sutra, but in the Flower Garland and Mahavairocana sutras as well.

According to these schools, the Flower Garland patriarchs Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch’eng-kuan, and the True Word masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k’ung were far more eminent than T’ien-t’ai or Dengyo. Moreover, they claim that Shan-wu-wei’s teachings descend in an unbroken line from the Thus Come One Mahavairocana. How could men like this, who are manifestations of the Buddha, possibly be mistaken? they ask. They point to the passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, “Some people perceive that immeasurable numbers of kalpas have passed since Shakyamuni attained the Buddha way,” or the passage in the Mahavairocana Sutra that says, “I [Mahavairocana Buddha] am the source and beginning of all things.” Why, they ask, would anyone claim that it is the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra alone that expounds the doctrine that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment long ago? Persons who do so are like frogs at the bottom of a well who have never seen the great sea, or like mountain dwellers who know nothing of the capital. “You

people look only at the 'Life Span' chapter and know nothing of the Flower Garland, the Mahavairochana, and the other sutras! Do you suppose that, in India and China, and in Silla and Paekche [in Korea], people believe that these two doctrines are limited to the Lotus Sutra alone?"

As we have seen, the Lotus Sutra, which was preached over a period of eight years, is quite different from the earlier sutras preached over a period of some forty years. If one had to choose between the two, one ought by rights to choose the Lotus Sutra that was preached later, and yet the earlier sutras in many ways appear to carry greater weight.

While the Buddha was still alive, there would have been good reasons for choosing the Lotus Sutra. But in the ages since his passing, the teachers and scholars have in most cases shown a preference for the earlier sutras. Not only is the Lotus Sutra itself difficult to believe, but in addition, with the coming of the latter age, sages and worthies gradually disappear from the scene, and deluded people increase in number. People are prone to make mistakes even in shallow, worldly affairs, so how much more likely are they to be mistaken about the profound Buddhist teachings that lead to enlightenment?

Vatsa and Vaipulya⁵⁹ were keen and perceptive, but still they confused the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras. Vimalamitra and Madhava were very clever by nature, but they could not distinguish properly between the provisional teachings and the true teaching. These men lived during the thousand-year period known as the Former Day of the Law, not far removed in time from the Buddha himself, and in the same country of India, and yet they fell into error, as we have seen. How much more likely, therefore, that the people of China and Japan should do so, since these countries are far removed from India and

speak different languages from it?

Now human beings have grown increasingly dull by nature, their life span diminishes steadily,⁶⁰ and the poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness continue to multiply. Many ages have passed since the Buddha's demise, and the Buddhist scriptures are all misunderstood. Who these days has the wisdom to interpret them correctly?

Therefore, the Buddha predicted in the Nirvana Sutra that in the Latter Day of the Law those who abide by the correct teaching will be as few as the specks of dirt that can be placed on a fingernail, while those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions.

In the Decline of the Law Sutra we find a passage stating that those who slander the correct teaching will be as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, but those who abide by the correct teaching will be no more than one or two pebbles. Though five hundred or a thousand years go by, it will be difficult to find even a single person who believes in the correct teaching. Those who fall into the evil paths because of secular crimes will be as insignificant in number as the specks of dirt placed on a fingernail, but those who do so because of violations of the Buddhist teachings will be equal in number to the specks of dirt in all the lands of the ten directions. More monks than laymen, and more nuns than laywomen, will fall into the evil paths.

Here Nichiren considers as follows: Already over two hundred years have passed since the world entered the Latter Day of the Law. I was born in a remote land, and moreover, I am a person of low station and a priest of humble learning. While being born again and again amid the six paths, I have perhaps at times been born as a great ruler in the human or heavenly world, and have bent the multitudes

to my will as a great wind bends the branches of small trees. And yet at such times I was not able to become a Buddha.

I studied the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras, beginning as an ordinary practitioner with no understanding at all and gradually moving upward to the position of a great bodhisattva. For one kalpa, two kalpas, countless kalpas I devoted myself to the practices of the bodhisattva, until I almost reached the stage of non-regression. And yet I was dragged down by the powerful and overwhelming influences of evil, and I never attained Buddhahood. I do not know whether I was among the third group⁶¹ who failed to take faith when the sons of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra and again failed to attain Buddhahood during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha, or whether I faltered and fell away from the teachings that I heard numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago and thus have been reborn in this age.

While one is practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, one may surmount all kinds of difficulties occasioned by the evil forces of worldly life, or by the persecutions of rulers, non-Buddhists, or the followers of the Hinayana sutras. And yet one may encounter someone like Tao-ch'ò, Shan-tao, or Honen, priests who seemed thoroughly conversant with the teachings of the provisional and the true Mahayana sutras but who were in fact possessed by devils. Such men seem to praise the Lotus Sutra most forcefully, but in fact they belittle the people's capacity to understand it, claiming that its principles are very profound but human understanding is slight.⁶² They mislead others by saying that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood" through that sutra, or that "not even one person in a thousand"⁶³ can be saved by it. Thus, over a period of countless life-

times, people are deceived as often as there are sands in the Ganges, until they [abandon their faith in the Lotus Sutra and] descend to the teachings of the provisional Mahayana sutras, abandon these and descend to the teachings of the Hinayana sutras, and eventually abandon even these and descend to the teachings and scriptures of the non-Buddhist doctrines. I understand all too well how, in the end, people have come in this way to fall into the evil paths.

I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this. But if I utter so much as a word concerning it, then parents, brothers, and teachers will surely censure me, and the ruler of the nation will take steps against me.⁶⁴ On the other hand, I am fully aware that if I do not speak out I will be lacking in compassion. I have considered which course to take in the light of the teachings of the Lotus and Nirvana sutras. If I remain silent, I may escape persecutions in this lifetime, but in my next life I will most certainly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose.

If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out. While thinking this over, I recalled the teachings of the "Treasure Tower" chapter on the six difficult and nine easy acts. Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline;⁶⁵ and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. But such acts are not diffi-

cult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts.

It is already over twenty years since I began proclaiming my doctrines. Day after day, month after month, year after year I have been subjected to repeated persecutions. Minor persecutions and annoyances are too numerous even to be counted, but the major persecutions number four. Among the four, twice I have been subjected to persecutions by the rulers of the country.⁶⁶ The most recent one has come near to costing me my life. In addition, my disciples, my lay supporters, and even those who have merely listened to my teachings have been subjected to severe punishment and treated as though they were guilty of treason.

In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra we read, "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?"⁶⁷ The second volume states, "If this person [should slander a sutra such as this], or on seeing those who read, recite, copy, and uphold this sutra, should despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them . . ."⁶⁸ And the fifth volume says, "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe."⁶⁹ It also states, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us,"⁷⁰ and "They will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmins, and householders, [as well as the other monks], slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, 'These are men of perverted views [who preach non-Buddhist doctrines]!'" It is also stated in the same volume, "Again and again we will be banished,"⁷¹ and [in the seventh vol-

ume] "Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him."⁷²

The Nirvana Sutra records: "At that time there were innumerable non-Buddhists who plotted together and went as a group to Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha, and said: 'At present there is a man of incomparable wickedness, a monk called Gautama. . . . All sorts of evil people, hoping to gain profit and alms, have flocked to him and become his followers. These people do not practice goodness, but instead use the power of spells and magic to win over men like Mahakasyapa, Shariputra, and Maudgalyayana.'"

T'ien-t'ai says, "It will be much worse in the future because the principles [of the Lotus Sutra] are so hard to teach."⁷³ Miao-lo says, "'Hatred' refers to those who have not yet freed themselves from impediments, and 'jealousy,' to those who take no delight in listening to the doctrine."⁷⁴ The teachers of the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north in China, as well as the countless other scholars of China, all regarded T'ien-t'ai with resentment and animosity. Thus Tokuitsu said, "See here, Chih-i, whose disciple are you? With a tongue less than three inches long you slander the teachings that come from the Buddha's long broad tongue that can cover even his face!"⁷⁵

In *Tung-ch'un* we read: "Question: While the Buddha was in the world, there were many who were resentful and jealous. But in the age after his passing, when someone preaches this [Lotus] sutra, why do so many oppose that person? Answer: It is said that good medicine tastes bitter. This sutra, which is like good medicine, dispels attachments to the five vehicles and establishes the one ultimate principle. It reproaches those in the ranks of ordinary beings and censures those in the ranks of sagehood, denies [provisional]

Mahayana and refutes Hinayana. It speaks of the heavenly devils as poisonous insects and calls non-Buddhists⁷⁶ demons. It censures those who cling to Hinayana teachings, calling them mean and impoverished, and it dismisses bodhisattvas as beginners in learning. For this reason, heavenly devils hate to listen to it, non-Buddhists find their ears offended, persons of the two vehicles are dumbfounded, and bodhisattvas flee in terror. That is why all these types of people try to make hindrances [for a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra]. The Buddha was not speaking nonsense when he declared that hatred and jealousy would abound.”

A Clarification of the Precepts states: “The superintendents of priests [in the capital of Nara] say in their memorial to the throne: ‘Just as in a land west of China there was a Brahman named Demon Eloquence, so now in this eastern realm of Japan there is a shaved monk who spits out crafty words. Evil spirits invisibly invite such people to deceive and mislead the world.’ I [Dengyo] reply to these charges by saying: ‘Just as in the Ch’i dynasty of China we heard of the arrogant superintendent of priests, Hui-kuang, so now in our own country we see these six superintendents of priests.’⁷⁷ How true was [the Buddha’s prediction in] the Lotus Sutra that the situation would be much worse after his passing.’ ”

The Outstanding Principles of the Lotus Sutra states: “Speaking of the age, [the propagation of the true teaching will begin] in the age when the Middle Day of the Law ends and the Latter Day opens. Regarding the land, it will begin in a land to the east of T’ang and to the west of Katsu. As for the people, it will spread among people stained by the five impurities who live in a time of conflict. The sutra says, ‘Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more

will this be so after his passing?’ There is good reason for this statement.”

When a little boy is given moxibustion treatment, he will invariably resent his mother; when a seriously ill person is given good medicine, he will complain without fail about its bitterness. And we meet with similar complaints about the Lotus Sutra, even in the lifetime of the Buddha. How much more severe is the opposition after his passing, especially in the Middle and Latter Days of the Law and in a far-off country like Japan? As mountains pile upon mountains and waves follow waves, so do persecutions add to persecutions and criticisms augment criticisms.

During the Middle Day of the Law, one man alone, T’ien-t’ai, understood and expounded the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras. The other Buddhist leaders of both northern and southern China hated him for it, but the two sage rulers of the Ch’en and Sui dynasties gave him an audience so he could establish the correctness of his views in debate with his opponents. Thus in time he ceased to have any more opponents. At the end of the Middle Day of the Law, one man alone, Dengyo, grasped the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras just as the Buddha had expounded them. The seven major temples of Nara rose up like hornets against him, but the two worthy sovereigns, Emperor Kammu and Emperor Saga, themselves investigating the views of both sides, made clear which was correct, and thereafter there was no further trouble.

It is now over two hundred years since the Latter Day of the Law began. The Buddha predicted that conditions would be much worse after his passing, and we see the portents of this in the quarrels and wranglings that go on today because unreasonable doctrines are prevalent. And as proof of the fact that we are living in a muddied age, I was not summoned for a doctrinal

debate with my opponents, but instead I was sent into exile and my very life imperiled.

When it comes to understanding the Lotus Sutra, I have only a minute fraction of the vast ability that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo possessed. But as regards my ability to endure persecution and the wealth of my compassion for others, I believe they would hold me in awe. [As a votary of the Lotus Sutra] I firmly believe that I should come under the protection of the gods, and yet I do not see the slightest sign of this. On the contrary, I am subjected to increasingly severe punishments. In view of this, am I perhaps then not a votary of the Lotus Sutra after all? Or have the heavenly gods and benevolent deities perhaps taken leave and departed from this land of Japan? I find myself in much perplexity.

But then I recall the twenty lines of verse in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra.⁷⁸ If I, Nichiren, had not been born in this land of Japan, then the words of the World-Honored One predicting such persecutions would have been a great prevarication, and those eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas would have been guilty of the same offense as that of Devadatta, of lying and misleading others.

The sutra says, "There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, with rocks and tiles."⁷⁹ Look around you in the world today—are there any priests other than Nichiren who are cursed and vilified because of the Lotus Sutra or who are attacked with swords and staves? If it were not for Nichiren, the prophecy made in this verse of the sutra would have been sheer falsehood.

The same passage says, "In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked,"⁸⁰ and "They will preach

the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers."⁸¹ If it were not for the priests of the Nembutsu, Zen, and Precepts schools of our present age, then the World-Honored One would have been a teller of great untruths.

The passage likewise says, "Because in the midst of the great assembly . . . they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders . . . [slandering and speaking evil of us]." If the priests of today did not slander me to the authorities and have them condemn me to banishment, then this passage in the sutra would have remained unfulfilled.

"Again and again we will be banished," says the sutra. But if Nichiren had not been banished time and again for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, what would these words "again and again" have meant? Even T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo were not able to fulfill this prediction represented by the words "again and again," much less was anyone else. But because I have been born at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, the "age of fear and evil" described in the sutra, I alone have been able to live these words.

As other examples of prophecies that were fulfilled, in the Buddha's Successors Sutra it is recorded that the World-Honored One said that one hundred years after his passing a ruler named Ashoka the Great would appear. In the Maya Sutra he said that six hundred years after his passing a man named Bodhisattva Nagarjuna would appear in southern India. And in the Great Compassion Sutra he said that sixty years after his passing a man named Madhyantika would establish his base in the dragon palace. All of these prophecies came true. Indeed, if they had not, who would believe in the Buddha's teachings?

Thus the Buddha decided the time [when the votary of the Lotus Sutra should appear], describing it as “an age of fear and evil,” “the latter age hereafter,” “the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish,” and “the last five-hundred-year period,” as attested by the two Chinese versions of the Lotus Sutra, the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law and the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law.⁸² At such a time, if the three powerful enemies predicted in the Lotus Sutra did not appear, then who would believe in the words of the Buddha? If it were not for Nichiren, who could fulfill the Buddha’s prophecies concerning the votary of the Lotus Sutra? The three schools of southern China and seven schools of northern China, along with the seven major temples of Nara, were numbered among the enemies of the Lotus Sutra in the time of the Middle Day of the Law. How much less can the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu priests of the present time hope to escape a similar label?

With this body of mine, I have fulfilled the prophecies of the sutra. The more the government authorities rage against me, the greater is my joy. For instance, there are certain Hinayana bodhisattvas, not yet freed from delusion, who draw evil karma to themselves by their own compassionate vow. If they see that their father and mother have fallen into hell and are suffering greatly, they will deliberately create the appropriate karma in hopes that they too may fall into hell and share in and take their suffering upon themselves. Thus suffering is a joy to them. It is the same with me [in fulfilling the prophecies]. Though at present I must face trials that I can scarcely endure, I rejoice when I think that in the future I will escape being born into the evil paths.

And yet the people doubt me, and I too have doubts about myself. Why do the gods not assist me? Heavenly gods

and other guardian deities made their vow before the Buddha. Even if the votary of the Lotus Sutra were an ape rather than a man, they should address him as the votary of the Lotus Sutra and rush forward to fulfill the vow they made before the Buddha. Does their failure to do so mean that I am in fact not a votary of the Lotus Sutra? This doubt lies at the heart of this piece I am writing. And because it is the most important concern of my entire life, I will raise it again and again here, and emphasize it more than ever, before I attempt to answer it.

Prince Chi-cha in his heart had promised to give the lord of Hsü the precious royal sword that he wore. Therefore [when he later found that the lord of Hsü had died], he placed the sword on his grave.⁸³ Wang Shou, having drunk water from a river, carefully tossed a gold coin into the water as payment.⁸⁴ Hung Yen, finding that his lord had been killed, cut open his stomach and inserted his lord’s liver in it before he died. These were worthy men, and they knew how to repay a debt of gratitude. How much more so, then, should this be the case with great sages like Shariputra and Mahakashyapa, who observed every one of the two hundred and fifty precepts and the three thousand rules of conduct, and had cut themselves off from the illusions of thought and desire and separated themselves from the threefold world? They are worthy to be the leaders of Brahma, Shakra, and the other heavenly gods, and the eyes of all living beings. During the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching, these men were disliked and pushed aside with admonitions that they could never attain Buddhahood. But when they had tasted the medicine of immortality in the Lotus Sutra, they were like scorched seeds that sprout, a shattered rock joined together again, or withered trees that put forth blossoms and fruit.

Through the Lotus Sutra, it was revealed that they would attain Buddhahood after all, though they had yet to enter the eight phases of a Buddha's existence. How, then, can they not do something to repay the profound debt of gratitude that they owe to the sutra? If they do not do so, they will show themselves to be inferior to the worthy men I mentioned earlier and, in fact, be no more than animals who have no understanding of a debt of gratitude.

The turtle that Mao Pao saved did not forget to repay the kindness of the past.⁸⁵ The great fish of K'un-ming Pond, in order to repay the man who had saved his life, presented a bright jewel in the middle of the night.⁸⁶ Even these creatures understood how to repay a debt of gratitude, so why shouldn't men who are great sages?

The Venerable Ananda was the second son of King Dronodana, and the Venerable Rahula was the grandson of King Shuddhodana. Both men were born into very distinguished families and even attained arhatship. However, they were declared to be unable to attain Buddhahood. And yet, during the eight-year assembly at Eagle Peak [when the Lotus Sutra was preached], it was revealed that they would become Buddhas with names such as the Thus Come One Mountain Sea Wisdom [Unrestricted Power King] and the Thus Come One Stepping on Seven Treasure Flowers. No matter how distinguished their families or what great sages they were, if it had not been for the revelation in the Lotus Sutra, who would have paid them respect?

King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and King Chou of the Yin dynasty were lords of an army of ten thousand chariots and commanded the allegiance of the entire populace of their kingdoms. But because they governed despotically and brought about the downfall of their dynasties, people speak of Chieh

and Chou as the epitome of evil men.⁸⁷ Even a person of low station or a leper, if he is likened to Chieh and Chou, will be enraged at the insult.

If it had not been for the Lotus Sutra, then who would ever have heard of the twelve hundred voice-hearers⁸⁸ and the countless other voice-hearers [who would attain Buddhahood through the sutra, and] who would have listened to their voices? No one would have read the Buddhist sutras compiled by the thousand voice-hearers,⁸⁹ nor would there be any paintings or wooden statues of them set up and worshiped. It is entirely due to the power of the Lotus Sutra that these arhats are revered and followed. If these voice-hearers were to separate themselves from the Lotus Sutra, they would be like a fish without water, a monkey without a tree, a baby without the breast, or a people without a sovereign. How then can they abandon the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

Through the sutras that precede the Lotus Sutra, the voice-hearers have acquired the heavenly eye and the wisdom eye in addition to their physical eyes. Through the Lotus Sutra, they have been provided with the Dharma eye and the Buddha eye.⁹⁰ Their eyesight can penetrate any of the worlds in the ten directions. How then could they fail to see me, the votary of the Lotus Sutra, right here in the saha world? Even if I were an evil man who had said a word or two against them, or even if I cursed and reviled the voice-hearers for a year or two, a kalpa or two, or a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million kalpas, and went so far as to threaten to take up swords and staves against them, so long as I maintain my faith in the Lotus Sutra and act as its votary, then they should never abandon me.

A child may curse his parents, but would the parents for that reason cast him aside? The young owls eat their

mother, but the mother nevertheless does not abandon them. The hakei beast kills its father, but the father does nothing to prevent this. If even animals behave like this, then why should great sages abandon the votary of the Lotus Sutra?

The four great voice-hearers, in the passage that expresses their understanding, proclaimed: "Now we have become voice-hearers in truth, for we will take the voice of the Buddha way and cause it to be heard by all. Now we have become true arhats, for everywhere among the heavenly and human beings, devils, and Brahmas of the various worlds we deserve to receive offerings. The World-Honored One in his great mercy makes use of a rare thing, in pity and compassion teaching and converting, bringing benefit to us. In numberless millions of kalpas who could ever repay him? Though we offer him our hands and feet, bow our heads in respectful obeisance, and present all manner of offerings, none of us could repay him. Though we lift him on the crown of our heads, bear him on our two shoulders, for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands reverence him with all our hearts; though we come with delicate foods, with countless jeweled robes, with articles of bedding, various kinds of potions and medicines; with ox-head sandalwood and all kinds of rare gems, construct memorial towers and spread the ground with jeweled robes; though we were to do all this by way of offering for kalpas numerous as Ganges sands, still we could not repay him."⁹¹

In the various sutras preached during the earlier period of the Buddha's teaching life, which have been compared to the first four flavors, the voice-hearers were depicted on countless occasions as being subjected to all kinds of abuse and shamed before the great assembly of human and heavenly beings. Thus we are told that the sound

of the Venerable Mahakashyapa's weeping and wailing echoed throughout the major world system,⁹² that the Venerable Subhuti was so dumbfounded that he almost went off and left the alms bowl⁹³ he had been carrying, that Shariputra spat out the food he was eating,⁹⁴ and that Purna was berated for being the kind who would put filth in a precious jar.⁹⁵

When the World-Honored One was at Deer Park, he extolled the Agama sutras and enjoined his disciples to rely on the two hundred and fifty precepts as their teacher, warmly praising those who did so, and yet before long, as we have seen, he turned about and began condemning such men. He is guilty, we would have to say, of making two different and completely contradictory pronouncements.

Thus, for example, the World-Honored One cursed Devadatta, saying, "You are a fool who licks the spit of others!" Devadatta felt as though a poison arrow had been shot into his breast, and he cried out in anger, declaring: "Gautama is no Buddha! I am the eldest son of King Dronodana, the elder brother of the Venerable Ananda, and kin to Gautama. No matter what kind of evil conduct I might be guilty of, he ought to admonish me in private for it. But to publicly and outrageously accuse me of faults in front of this great assembly of human and heavenly beings—is this the behavior appropriate to a great man or a Buddha? He showed himself to be my enemy in the past when he stole the woman I intended to marry,⁹⁶ and he has shown himself my enemy at this gathering today. From this day forward, I will look upon him as my archenemy for lifetime after lifetime and age after age to come!"⁹⁷

When we stop to consider, we note that, of the great voice-hearers, some were originally from non-Buddhist Brahman families, or were leaders of

various non-Buddhist orders who had converted kings to their teachings and were looked up to by their followers. Others were men of noble families or the possessors of great wealth. But they abandoned their exalted positions in life, lowered the banners of their pride, cast off everyday clothing, and wrapped their bodies in the humble, dingy-hued robes of a Buddhist monk. They threw away their white fly whisks, their bows and arrows, and took up a solitary alms bowl, becoming like paupers and beggars and following the World-Honored One. They had no dwellings to protect them from the wind and rain, and very little in the way of food or clothing by which to sustain life. Moreover, all the people of the five regions and the four seas of India were disciples or lay supporters of the non-Buddhist teachings, so that even the Buddha himself was on nine occasions forced to suffer major hardships.

Thus, for example, Devadatta hurled a great stone at him, and King Ajatashatru loosed a drunken elephant on him. Failing to receive alms from King Agnidatta, the Buddha was forced to eat horse fodder, and at a Brahman city, he was offered stinking rice gruel. Again, Chinchā, the daughter of a Brahman, tying a bowl to her belly, claimed to be pregnant with his child.⁹⁸

Needless to say, the Buddha's disciples were likewise forced to suffer frequent hardships. Thus, countless numbers of the Shakya clan were killed by King Virudhaka, and ten million of the Buddha's followers were trampled to death by drunken elephants that were set upon them. The nun Utpalavarna was killed by Devadatta, the Venerable Kalodayin was buried in horse dung, and the Venerable Maudgalyayana was beaten to death by members of a Brahman group named Bamboo Staff.⁹⁹ In addition, followers of the six non-Buddhist teachers banded together and slandered the Buddha before King

Ajatashatru and King Prasenajit, saying: "Gautama is the most evil man in the whole land of Jambudvīpa. Wherever he may be, the three calamities and seven disasters rampage without fail. As the numerous rivers gather together in the great sea and the groves of trees cluster on the great mountains, so crowds of evil men gather about Gautama. The men called Mahakashyapa, Shariputra, Maudgalyayana, and Subhuti are examples. All those who are born in human form should place loyalty to the sovereign and filial piety above all else. But these men have been so misled by Gautama that they disregard the lessons of their parents, abandon their families, and, defying the commandments of the king, go to live in the mountain forests. They should be expelled from this country. It is because they are allowed to remain that the sun, moon, and stars manifest sinister phenomena, and many strange happenings occur in the land."¹⁰⁰

The voice-hearers did not know how they could possibly bear such persecutions. Then, as if to add to their hardship, [the Buddha himself began to denounce them]. They found it difficult to follow him. Now and then, hearing him condemn them repeatedly in great assemblies of human and heavenly beings, and not knowing how to behave, they only became more confused.

On top of all this, they had to face the greatest hardship of all, as revealed in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, [when the Buddha addressed the voice-hearers], saying, "Those who give alms to you are cultivating for themselves no field of good fortune. Those who give alms to you will fall into the three evil paths." These words were spoken when the Buddha was staying at Ambapali Garden.¹⁰¹ There Brahma, Shakra, the deities of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the heavenly gods of the threefold world, along with

earthly gods, dragon gods, and other beings as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, had gathered in this great assembly, when the Buddha said, "The heavenly and human beings who give alms to Subhuti and the other monks will fall into the three evil paths." After the heavenly and human beings had heard this, would they be likely to go on giving alms to the voice-hearers? It would almost appear as though the Buddha were deliberately attempting through his words to inflict death upon those who upheld the two vehicles. The more sensible persons in the assembly were no doubt repelled by the Buddha's action. Nevertheless, the voice-hearers were able to obtain enough of the alms given to the Buddha to keep themselves alive, meager though the amount was.

When I consider the situation, it occurs to me that, if the Buddha had passed away after preaching the various sutras delivered in the first forty and more years of his teaching life and had not lived to preach the Lotus Sutra in the following eight years, then who would ever have offered alms to these venerable ones? They would have been living in the realm of hungry spirits.

But after more than forty years of preaching various sutras, it was as though the bright spring sun emerged to melt the frigid ice, or a great wind arose to dispel the dew from countless grasses. With one remark, in one moment, the Buddha wiped away his earlier pronouncements, saying, "I have not yet revealed the truth." Like a great wind scattering the dark clouds or the full moon in the vast heavens, or like the sun shining in the blue sky, he proclaimed, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth." With the brilliance of the sun or the brightness of the moon, it was revealed in the Lotus Sutra that Shariputra would become the Thus Come One Flower Glow and

Mahakashyapa would become the Thus Come One Light Bright. Because of the Lotus Sutra, the phoenix among scriptures and the mirror that reflects the teachings, after the Buddha's passing, the voice-hearers were looked up to by the human and heavenly supporters of Buddhism just as the Buddha would be.

If the water is clear, then the moon will not fail to be reflected there. If the wind blows, then the grass and trees will not fail to bow before it. And if there is a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the sages, the voice-hearers, should not fail to go to his side, though they might have to pass through a great fire or make their way through a great rock to do so. Though Mahakashyapa may be deep in meditation, he should not ignore the circumstances.¹⁰² Why does he do nothing about the situation? I am completely perplexed. Is this not the last five-hundred-year period? Is the prediction that the Lotus Sutra will spread abroad widely mere nonsense?¹⁰³ Is Nichiren not the votary of the Lotus Sutra? Are the voice-hearers protecting those who disparage the Lotus Sutra as a mere written teaching and who put forth their great lies about what they call a special transmission?¹⁰⁴ Are they guarding those who write "Discard, close, ignore, abandon!"¹⁰⁵ urging people to close the gate to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and to throw away its scrolls, and who cause the ruin of the temples dedicated to the practice of the Lotus Sutra? The various heavenly deities swore before the Buddha to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra, but now that they see how fierce are the great persecutions of this muddied age, do they fail to come down? The sun and the moon are still up in the sky. Mount Sumeru has not collapsed. The ocean tides ebb and flow, and the four seasons proceed in their normal order. Why then is there no sign of aid for the votary of the

Lotus Sutra? My doubts grow deeper than ever.

In the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha is shown predicting that various great bodhisattvas and heavenly and human beings will attain Buddhahood in the future. But trying to realize such predictions is like trying to grasp the moon in the water, like mistaking the reflection for the actual object—it has the color and shape of the object but not the reality. Likewise, the Buddha would seem to be displaying profound kindness in making such predictions, but in fact it is little kindness at all.

When the World-Honored One had first attained enlightenment and had not yet begun to preach, more than sixty great bodhisattvas, including Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse, appeared from the various Buddha lands of the ten directions and came before Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. There, at the request of the bodhisattvas Chief Wise, Moon of Deliverance, and others, they preached the doctrines of the ten stages of security, the ten stages of practice, the ten stages of devotion, the ten stages of development,¹⁰⁶ and so forth. The doctrines that these great bodhisattvas preached were not learned from Shakyamuni Buddha. At that time, Brahma and other deities of the worlds of the ten directions came together and preached the various teachings, but again those were not what they had learned from Shakyamuni.

These great bodhisattvas, deities, dragons, and others who appeared at the assembly described in the Flower Garland Sutra were beings who had dwelt in “inconceivable emancipation”¹⁰⁷ since before Shakyamuni Buddha began preaching. Perhaps they were disciples of Shakyamuni when he was carrying out bodhisattva practices in previous existences, or perhaps they were disciples of previous Buddhas of

the worlds of the ten directions. In any event, they were not disciples of the Shakyamuni who first attained enlightenment in this world and expounded his lifetime teachings.

It was only when the Buddha set forth the four teachings in the Agama, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods that he finally acquired disciples. And although they were doctrines preached by the Buddha himself, they were not doctrines that revealed his true intention. Why do I say this? Because the specific and perfect teachings, as set forth in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods, do not differ in meaning from the specific and perfect teachings as set forth in the Flower Garland Sutra. The specific and perfect teachings given in the Flower Garland Sutra are not the specific and perfect teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. They are the specific and perfect teachings of Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas mentioned earlier. These great bodhisattvas may appear to most people to have been disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, but in fact it would be better to call them his teachers. The World-Honored One listened to these bodhisattvas’ preaching and, after gaining wisdom and understanding, proceeded to set forth the specific and perfect teachings of the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods. But these differ in no way from the specific and perfect teachings of the Flower Garland Sutra.

Therefore, we know that these great bodhisattvas were the teachers of Shakyamuni. These bodhisattvas are mentioned in the Flower Garland Sutra, where they are called “good friends.” To call a person a good friend means that that person is neither one’s teacher nor one’s disciple. The two types of teachings called Tripitaka and connecting teachings are offshoots of the specific and perfect teachings. Anyone who understands the specific and per-

fect teachings will invariably understand the Tripitaka and connecting teachings as well.

A teacher is someone who teaches his disciples things that they did not previously know. For example, in the ages before the Buddha, the heavenly and human beings and followers of Brahmanism were all disciples of the two deities¹⁰⁸ and the three ascetics. Though their doctrines branched off to form ninety-five different schools, these did not go beyond the views of the three ascetics. Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, also studied these doctrines and for a time became a disciple of the Brahmanic teachers. But after spending twelve years in various painful and comfortable practices,¹⁰⁹ he came to understand the principles of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. Therefore, he ceased to call himself a disciple of the Brahmanic teachings and instead proclaimed himself the possessor of a wisdom acquired from no teacher at all. Thus in time the human and heavenly beings came to look up to him as a great teacher.

It is clear, therefore, that during the teaching period of the first four flavors Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, was a disciple of Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas. Similarly, he was the ninth disciple of Bodhisattva Manjushri.¹¹⁰ This is also the reason why the Buddha repeatedly declares in the earlier sutras, "I never preached a single word."

When Shakyamuni Buddha was seventy-two, he preached the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra on Eagle Peak in the kingdom of Magadha. At that time he denied all the sutras he had preached during the previous more than forty years, and all the fragmentary teachings derived from those sutras, saying, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth." At that time, the great bodhisattvas and the various heavenly and human beings

hastened to implore the Buddha to reveal the true doctrine. In fact, in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra he made a single pronouncement that appeared to suggest the true doctrine,¹¹¹ but he did not elaborate on it. It was like the moment when the moon is about to rise. The moon is still hidden behind the eastern hills, and though its glow begins to light the western hills, people cannot yet see the body of the moon itself.

In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in the section that concisely reveals the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, the Buddha briefly explained the concept of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the doctrine that he had kept in mind for his final revelation. But because this was the first time he had touched on the subject, it was only dimly apprehended, like the first note of the cuckoo heard by someone drowsy with sleep, or like the moon appearing over the rim of the hill but veiled in thin clouds. Shariputra and the others, startled, called the heavenly beings, dragon deities, and great bodhisattvas together and, begging for instruction, said: "The heavenly beings, dragons, spirits, and the others, their numbers like Ganges sands, the bodhisattvas seeking to be Buddhas in a great force of eighty thousand, as well as the wheel-turning kings [who] come from ten thousands of millions of lands, all press their palms and with reverent minds wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment."¹¹²

The passage indicates that they requested to hear a doctrine such as they had not heard in the previous more than forty years, one that differed from the four flavors and the three teachings. With regard to the part "[they] wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment," it may be noted that the Nirvana Sutra states, "*Sad*¹¹³ indicates perfect endowment." *The Profound Meaning of*

the *Four Mahayana Treatises* states, “*Sad* connotes six. In India the number six implies perfect endowment.” In his commentary Chi-tsang writes, “*Sad* is translated as perfect endowment.”¹¹⁴ In the eighth volume of his *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* T’ien-t’ai remarks, “*Sad* is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as *myo*, or wonderful.” Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, in the heart of his thousand-volume *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, comments, “*Sad* signifies six.” Nagarjuna was thirteenth in the lineage of the Buddha’s successors, the founder of the True Word, Flower Garland, and the other schools, a great sage of the first stage of development, and the person whose true identity was the Thus Come One Dharma Clouds Freedom King.

The characters *Myoho-enge-kyo* are Chinese. In India, the Lotus Sutra is called *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*. The following is the mantra concerning the heart of the Lotus Sutra composed by the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei:

*namah samanta-buddhanam
om a a am ah
sarva-buddha-jna-sakshebhyah
gagana-sambhavalakshani
saddharma-pundarika-sutra
jah hum bam hoh vajrarakshaman
hum svaha*

Hail to all the Buddhas! Three-bodied Thus Come Ones! Open the door to, show me, cause me to awaken to, and to enter into the wisdom and insight of all the Buddhas. You who are like space and who have freed yourself from form! Oh, Sutra of the White Lotus of the Correct Law! Cause me to enter into, to be everywhere within, to dwell in, and to rejoice in you. Oh, Adamantine Protector! Oh, empty, aspect-free, and desire-free sutra!¹¹⁵

This mantra, which expresses the heart of the Lotus Sutra, was found in

the iron tower in southern India.¹¹⁶ In this mantra, *saddharma* means “correct Law.” *Sad* means correct. Correct is the same as *myo* [wonderful]; *myo* is the same as correct. Hence the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law and the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. And when the two characters for *namu* are prefixed to Myoho-enge-kyo, or the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, we have the formula Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.¹¹⁷

Myo means perfect endowment. Six refers to the six paramitas representing all the ten thousand practices. When people ask to hear the teaching of perfect endowment, they are asking how they may gain the perfect endowment of the six paramitas and ten thousand practices of the bodhisattvas. In the phrase “perfect endowment,” endowment refers to the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, while perfect means that, since there is mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, then any one world contains all the other worlds, indicating that this is “perfect.” The Lotus Sutra is a single work consisting of eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters. Each and every character is endowed with the character *myo*, each being a Buddha who has the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics. Each of the Ten Worlds manifests its own Buddhahood. As Miao-lo writes, “Since even Buddhahood is present in all living beings, then all the other worlds are of course present, too.”¹¹⁸

The Buddha replied to the request of his listeners by saying that “the Buddhas wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings.”¹¹⁹ The term “all living beings” here refers to Shariputra, and it also refers to icchantikas, persons of incorrigible disbelief. It also refers to the nine worlds. Thus the Buddha fulfilled his words, “Living beings are numberless. I vow to save them all,”¹²⁰ when he declares, “At the start I took a vow, hoping to make all

persons equal to me, without any distinction between us, and what I long ago hoped for has now been fulfilled.”

All the great bodhisattvas, heavenly beings, and others, when they had heard the doctrine of the Buddha and comprehended it, said, “Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One’s preaching, but we have never heard this kind of profound, wonderful, and superior Law.”¹²¹

The Great Teacher Dengyo comments: “‘Since times past often we have heard the World-Honored One’s preaching’ refers to the fact that they had heard him preach the great doctrines of the Flower Garland Sutra and other sutras in the time previous to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. ‘We have never heard this kind of profound,

wonderful, and superior Law’ means that they had never heard the teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood propounded in the Lotus Sutra.”¹²²

They understood, that is, that none of the previous Mahayana sutras—which are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and include those of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods, such as the Profound Secrets and Mahavairochana sutras—had ever made clear the great principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the core of the Buddha’s lifetime teachings. Nor had they clarified the bone and marrow of those teachings, the doctrines that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood and that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the remote past.

PART TWO

FROM this time forward, the great bodhisattvas, as well as Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, became the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Thus, in the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha treats these great bodhisattvas as his disciples, admonishing and instructing them in these words: “So I say to the great assembly: After I have passed into extinction, who can guard and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!” This was the solemn way he addressed them. Then, among the great bodhisattvas, it was “as though a great wind were tossing the branches of small trees.”¹²³ Like the kusha grass¹²⁴ bending before a great wind or like rivers and streams drawn to the great ocean, so were they drawn to the Buddha.

But it was still a relatively short time since the Buddha had begun to preach the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak, and what he said seemed to his listeners dreamlike and unreal. The treasure tower had first appeared to confirm the correctness of the theoretical teaching in the first half of the Lotus Sutra, and after that the treasure tower prepared the way for the expounding of the essential teaching in the latter half. The Buddhas of the ten directions gathered in assembly, Shakyamuni Buddha announcing that all of these were emanations of himself. The treasure tower hung in the air, with Shakyamuni and Many Treasures seated in it side by side, as though both the sun and moon had appeared side by side in the blue sky. The great assembly of human and heavenly beings were clustered in the sky like stars, and the Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha were on the ground, seated on

their lion seats under jeweled trees.

In the Lotus Treasury World described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the Buddhas in their reward bodies all dwell in their separate lands. Buddhas of other worlds do not come to this world and call themselves emanations [as happened in the case of the Lotus Sutra], nor do Buddhas of this world go to other worlds. Only Dharma Wisdom and the other great bodhisattvas come and go.

As for the nine honored ones on the eight-petaled lotus and the thirty-seven honored ones¹²⁵ described respectively in the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras, although they appear to be transformation bodies of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, they are not Buddhas enlightened since the remote past or endowed with the three bodies.

The thousand Buddhas described in the Larger Wisdom Sutra and the Buddhas of the six directions represented in the Amida Sutra never assembled in this world [as did the Buddha's emanations in the Lotus Sutra]. The Buddhas who assembled when the Great Collection Sutra was preached were not emanations of Shakyamuni. The four Buddhas of the four directions depicted in the Golden Light Sutra are transformation bodies of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Thus, in the various sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni does not assemble Buddhas who carry out different austerities and practices and who possess the three bodies, nor does he identify them as emanations of himself. [Only in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra does he do so.] This chapter, then, is intended as an introduction to the "Life Span" chapter that follows later. Shakyamuni Buddha, who was believed to have attained enlightenment for the first time only some forty years previously, calls together Buddhas who had become enlightened as long as one or even ten

kalpas ago, and declares that they are emanations of himself. This is a far cry indeed from the Buddha's usual preaching on the equality of all Buddhas [in their Dharma bodies], and in fact a cause of great astonishment. If Shakyamuni had attained enlightenment for the first time only some forty years earlier, there could hardly have been so many beings in the ten directions who had received his instruction. And even if he was privileged to possess emanations, there would have been no benefit in his showing them to his listeners. T'ien-t'ai, describing what went on in the astonished minds of the assembly, says, "It was evident to them that Shakyamuni Buddha possessed numerous emanations. Therefore, they understood that he must have attained enlightenment in the far distant past."¹²⁶

In addition, the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds appeared, rising up out of the ground. Even Universal Worthy and Manjushri, who had been regarded as the leading disciples of Shakyamuni, could not compare to them. The great bodhisattvas present in the assemblies described in the sutras of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom periods and in the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, or Vajrasattva and the rest of the sixteen great bodhisattvas of the Mahavairochana [and Diamond Crown] sutras, when compared with these newly arrived bodhisattvas, seemed like a pack of apes or monkeys, with the new bodhisattvas appearing among them like so many Shakras. It was as though great ministers of court had mingled with humble mountain folk. Even Maitreya, who was to be the next Buddha after Shakyamuni, was perplexed by them, to say nothing of the lesser personages in the assembly.

Among these great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a

thousand worlds there were four great sages called Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices. In the presence of these four, the other bodhisattvas suspended in the air or seated on Eagle Peak could not bear to gaze on them face to face or begin to fathom their dignity. Even the four bodhisattvas of the Flower Garland Sutra,¹²⁷ the four bodhisattvas of the Mahavairocana Sutra,¹²⁸ or the sixteen great bodhisattvas of the Diamond Crown Sutra,¹²⁹ when in the presence of these four, were like bleary-eyed men trying to peer at the sun, or like humble fishermen appearing in audience before the emperor. These four were like T'ai-kung Wang and the others of the four sages of ancient China,¹³⁰ who towered above the multitude. They were like the Four White-Haired Elders¹³¹ of Mount Shang who assisted Emperor Hui. Solemn, dignified, they were beings of great and lofty stature. Aside from Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanations of Shakyamuni from the ten directions, they were worthy of being good friends upon whom all beings could rely.

Then Bodhisattva Maitreya began to consider the matter in his mind. He said to himself: "Since the time Shakyamuni Buddha was a crown prince, and during the forty-two years since he gained enlightenment at the age of thirty up until this gathering on Eagle Peak, I have known all the bodhisattvas of this world, and all the great bodhisattvas who have come from the worlds of the ten directions to attend the assemblies. Moreover, I have visited the pure and impure lands of the ten directions, sometimes as the Buddha's emissary, at other times on my own initiative, and I have become acquainted with all the great bodhisattvas of those various lands. As for these great bodhisattvas who have appeared from the earth, what kind of Buddha is their teacher? Surely he must

be a Buddha who is incomparably superior to Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanation Buddhas from the ten directions! From the fury of the rain, we can judge the greatness of the dragon that caused it to fall; from the size of the lotus flower, we can tell the depth of the pond that produced it. Now from what land did these great bodhisattvas come, what Buddha did they follow, and what great teaching have they practiced?"

Thus did Bodhisattva Maitreya wonder to himself, becoming so puzzled that he was unable to utter a sound. But, perhaps through the Buddha's power, he was at last able to put his doubts into words, saying: "Immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions, a great host of bodhisattvas such as was never seen in the past . . . This host of bodhisattvas with their great dignity, virtue, and diligence—who preached the Law for them? Who taught and converted them and brought them to this? Under whom did they first set their minds on enlightenment, what Buddha's Law do they praise and proclaim? . . . World-Honored One, from times past I have seen nothing like this! I beg you to tell me where they come from, the name of the land. I have constantly journeyed from land to land but never have I seen such a thing! In this whole multitude there is not one person that I know. Suddenly they have come up from the earth—I beg you to explain the cause."¹³²

[Paraphrasing Maitreya's statement,] T'ien-t'ai comments: "Since the time of the Buddha's enlightenment at the place of meditation, up until the present gathering, great bodhisattvas unceasingly came from the worlds in the ten directions to attend the various assemblies. Their numbers are unlimited, but I, with the wisdom and power appropriate to the next Buddha, have been able to see and know every single one of them. And yet, among the newly

arrived multitude, I do not know a single person—this in spite of the fact that I have traveled in the ten directions, have served the various Buddhas, and am well known among their audiences.”¹³³

Miao-lo comments, “Wise men can perceive the cause of things, as snakes know the way of snakes.”¹³⁴

The meaning of these passages of scripture and commentary is perfectly clear. In effect, from the time of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment up until the present assembly [on Eagle Peak], in this land and in all the lands of the ten directions, Bodhisattva Maitreya had never seen or heard of these bodhisattvas who came forth from the earth.

The Buddha, replying to Maitreya’s doubts, said: “Ajita,¹³⁵ these bodhisattvas . . . whom you have never seen before in the past—when I had attained supreme perfect enlightenment in this saha world, I converted and guided these bodhisattvas, trained their minds, and caused them to develop a longing for the way.”¹³⁶

He also said: “When I was in the vicinity of the city of Gaya, seated beneath the bodhi tree, I attained the highest, the correct enlightenment and turned the wheel of the unsurpassed Law. Thereafter I taught and converted them, and caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way. Now all of them dwell in the stage of non-regression . . . Ever since the long distant past I have been teaching and converting this multitude.”

But Maitreya and the other great bodhisattvas were further perplexed by these words of the Buddha. When the Buddha preached the Flower Garland Sutra, Dharma Wisdom and countless other great bodhisattvas appeared in the assembly. Maitreya and the others wondered who they could be, but the Buddha said, “They are my good friends,” and they thought this must be true. Later, when the Buddha preached

[the Great Collection Sutra] at the Great Treasure Chamber and [the Larger Wisdom Sutra] at White Heron Lake,¹³⁷ great bodhisattvas appeared in the assembly, and Maitreya and the others supposed that they too were good friends of the Buddha.

But these great bodhisattvas who had newly appeared out of the earth looked incomparably more venerable than those earlier bodhisattvas. One might conclude that they were the teachers of Shakyamuni Buddha, and yet the Buddha had “caused them for the first time to set their minds on the way,” and, when they were still immature, had converted them and made them his disciples. It was this that Maitreya and the others found so profoundly perplexing.

Prince Shotoku of Japan was the son of Emperor Yomei, the thirty-second sovereign. When he was six years old, elderly men came to Japan from the states of Paekche and Koguryō in Korea and from the land of China. The six-year-old prince thereupon exclaimed, “These are my disciples!” and the old men in turn pressed their palms together in reverence and said, “You are our teacher!” This was a strange happening indeed.

There is a similar story found in a secular work. According to this work, a man was walking along a road when he saw by the roadside a young man of about thirty who was beating an old man of about eighty. When he asked the reason, the young man replied, “This old man is my son.”

Bodhisattva Maitreya, continuing to doubt, said: “World-Honored One, when the Thus Come One was crown prince, you left the palace of the Shakyas and sat in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya, and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. Barely forty years or more have passed since then. World-Honored One, how in that short time

could you have accomplished so much work as a Buddha?"¹³⁸

The various bodhisattvas who had attended the numerous assemblies held in the forty-some years since the Buddha preached the Flower Garland Sutra had raised doubts at each assembly, asking the Buddha to dispel these doubts for the benefit of the multitude. But this present doubt was the greatest doubt of all. It surpassed even the doubt entertained by Great Adornment and the others of the eighty thousand bodhisattvas described in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra when the Buddha, after declaring in the previous forty-some years of his teaching that enlightenment was something that required countless kalpas to attain, now announced that it could be attained quickly.

According to the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra, King Ajatahatru, led astray by Devadatta, imprisoned his father and was on the point of killing his mother, Lady Vaidehi. Reprimanded by the court ministers Jivaka and Chandraprabha, however, he spared his mother's life. At that time she begged that the Buddha appear to her,¹³⁹ and then she began by posing this question: "What offense have I committed in the past that I should have given birth to this evil son? And, World-Honored One, through what cause have you come to be related to a person as evil as your cousin Devadatta?"

Of the doubts raised here, the second is the more perplexing, the question of why the Buddha should be related to an evil person like Devadatta. A wheel-turning king, we are told, is never born into the world along with his enemies, nor is the god Shakra to be found in the company of demons. The Buddha had been a merciful personage for countless kalpas. Yet the fact that Shakyamuni was born together with his archenemy might make one doubt whether he was indeed a Bud-

dha at all. The Buddha, however, did not answer the question of Lady Vaidehi. Therefore, if one reads and recites only the Meditation Sutra and does not examine the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, one will never know the truth of the matter.¹⁴⁰

In the Nirvana Sutra, Bodhisattva Kashyapa posed thirty-six questions to the Buddha, but even these cannot compare to this question posed by Maitreya. If the Buddha had failed to dispel Maitreya's doubts, the sacred teachings of his entire lifetime would have amounted to no more than froth on the water, and all living beings would have remained tangled in the snare of doubt. That was why it was so important for him to preach the "Life Span" chapter.

Later, when the Buddha preached the "Life Span" chapter, he said: "In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment." This passage expresses the view held by all the great bodhisattvas and the rest of the multitude from the time of the Buddha's first preaching at the place of enlightenment until his preaching of the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. "But, good men," the Buddha continued, "it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood."¹⁴¹

In three places the Flower Garland Sutra says that the Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence. In the Agama sutras he speaks of having attained the way for the first time in his present existence; the Vimalakirti Sutra states, "For the first time the Buddha sat beneath the bodhi tree"; in the Great Collec-

tion Sutra, "It is sixteen years [since the Thus Come One first attained the way]"; in the Mahavairochana Sutra, "long ago when I sat in the place of meditation"; in the Benevolent Kings Sutra, "twenty-nine years [since his enlightenment]"; in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, "In the past I sat upright in the place of meditation"; and in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "I first sat in the place of meditation." But now all these passages have been exposed as gross falsehoods by this single pronouncement in the "Life Span" chapter.

When Shakyamuni Buddha revealed that he had gained enlightenment in the far distant past, it became apparent that all the other Buddhas were emanations of Shakyamuni. When the Buddha preached the earlier sutras and the first half, or theoretical teaching, of the Lotus Sutra, the other Buddhas were pictured as standing on an equal footing with Shakyamuni, after completing their respective practices and disciplines. Therefore, the people who take one or another of these Buddhas as their object of devotion customarily look down on Shakyamuni Buddha. But now it becomes apparent that Vairochana Buddha, who is described in the Flower Garland Sutra as being seated on a lotus pedestal, and the various Buddhas who appear in the sutras of the Correct and Equal and the Wisdom periods, such as the Mahavairochana Sutra, are all in fact followers of Shakyamuni Buddha.

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained the way at the age of thirty, he seized the saha world away from the great heavenly king Brahma and the devil king of the sixth heaven, who had both ruled it previously, and made it his own. In the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, he called the regions of the ten directions pure lands and spoke of the present world as an impure land. But now, in

the "Life Span" chapter, he has reversed this, revealing that this world is the true land and that the so-called pure lands of the ten directions are impure lands, mere provisional lands.

Since the Buddha [of the "Life Span" chapter] is revealed as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past [and all the other Buddhas as his emanations], it follows that not only the great bodhisattvas whom Shakyamuni himself taught in his transient status, but the great bodhisattvas from other realms [who were taught by the Buddhas of their own realms] are also in fact disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. If, among all the numerous sutras, this "Life Span" chapter should be lacking, it would be as though there were no sun or moon in the sky, no supreme ruler in the nation, no gems in the mountains and rivers, and no spirit in human beings.

Nevertheless, Ch'eng-kuan, Chia-hsiang, Tz'u-en, Kobo, and others, seemingly learned men of provisional schools such as the Flower Garland and the True Word, in order to praise the various sutras upon which their provisional doctrines are based, go so far as to say, "The Buddha of the Flower Garland Sutra is the Buddha of the reward body, while the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra is merely the Buddha of the manifested body."¹⁴² Or they say, "The Buddha of the 'Life Span' chapter of the Lotus Sutra is in the region of darkness, while the Buddha of the Mahavairochana Sutra occupies the position of enlightenment."¹⁴³

As clouds obscure the moon, so calumnious ministers can obscure a person of true worth. A yellow stone, if people praise it, may be mistaken for a jewel, and ministers who are skilled in flattery may be mistaken for worthies. In this impure age, scholars and students are confused by the slanderous assertions of the kind of men I have

mentioned above, and they do not appreciate the true worth of the jewel of the "Life Span" chapter. Even among the men of the Tendai school there are those who have become so deluded that they cannot distinguish gold from mere stones.

One should consider the fact that, if the Buddha had not attained enlightenment in the distant past, there could not have been so many disciples who were converted and instructed by him. The moon is not selfish with its reflection, but if there is no water, then its reflection will not be seen. The Buddha may be very anxious to convert all people, but if the connection he shares with them is not strong enough, then he cannot exhibit the eight phases of a Buddha's existence. For example, the voice-hearers attained the first stage of security or the first stage of development, but so long as they followed the teachings that preceded the Lotus Sutra and sought only to regulate and save themselves, they had to postpone the attainment of the eight phases of a Buddha's existence to some future lifetime.

If Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, had attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence, then when he preached the Lotus Sutra, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, though they had ruled over this world since the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, would have been disciples of the Buddha for no longer than forty-some years. These beings would then have established their connection with the Lotus Sutra for the first time during the eight years of preaching at Eagle Peak. They would thus have been like newcomers unable to unreservedly approach their lord, kept at a distance by those who had been present longer.

But now that it has become apparent that Shakyamuni Buddha attained en-

lightenment countless kalpas ago, then the bodhisattvas Sunlight and Moonlight, who attend the Thus Come One Medicine Master of the eastern region, and the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World's Sounds and Great Power, who attend the Thus Come One Amida of the western region, along with the disciples of all the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions, and the great bodhisattvas who are disciples of the Thus Come One Mahavairochana as they are shown in the Mahavairochana and Diamond Crown sutras—all of these beings are disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. Since the various Buddhas themselves are emanations of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, it goes without saying that their disciples must be disciples of Shakyamuni. And of course the various deities of the sun, moon, and stars, who have dwelt in this world since the beginning of the kalpa of continuance, must likewise be disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Nevertheless, the schools of Buddhism other than Tendai have gone astray concerning the true object of devotion. The Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts schools take as their object of devotion the Shakyamuni Buddha who eliminated illusions and attained the way by practicing thirty-four kinds of spiritual purification.¹⁴⁴ This is comparable to a situation in which the heir apparent of the supreme ruler of a state mistakenly believes himself to be the son of a commoner. The four schools of Flower Garland, True Word, Three Treatises, and Dharma Characteristics are all Mahayana schools of Buddhism. Among them the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools honor a Buddha who is comparable to the Buddha of the superior manifested body.¹⁴⁵ This is like the heir of the supreme ruler supposing that his father was a member of the warrior class. The

Flower Garland and True Word schools look down upon Shakyamuni Buddha and declare the Buddha Vairocana and the Buddha Mahavairocana to be their respective objects of devotion. This is like the heir looking down upon his own father, the supreme ruler, and paying honor to one who is of obscure origin simply because that person pretends to be the sovereign who abides by the principles of righteousness. The Pure Land school considers itself to be most closely related to the Buddha Amida, who is an emanation of Shakyamuni, and abandons Shakyamuni himself who is the lord of teachings. The Zen school behaves like a person of low birth who makes much of his small achievements and despises his father and mother. Thus the Zen school looks down upon both the Buddha and the sutras. All of these schools are misled concerning the true object of devotion. They are like the people who lived in the age before the Three Sovereigns of ancient China and did not know who their own fathers were. In that respect, the people of that time were no different from birds and beasts.

The people of these schools who are ignorant of the teachings of the "Life Span" chapter are similarly like beasts. They do not understand to whom they are obligated. Therefore, Miao-lo states: "Among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, there is no place [other than the 'Life Span' chapter] where the true longevity of the Buddha is revealed. A person ought to know how old his father and mother are. If a son does not even know how old his father is, he will also be in doubt as to what lands his father presides over. Though he may be idly praised for his talent and ability, he cannot be counted as a son at all!"¹⁴⁶

The Great Teacher Miao-lo lived in the T'ien-pao era (742-756) in the latter part of the T'ang dynasty.¹⁴⁷ He

made a deep and thorough examination of the Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, True Word, and other schools, and the sutras upon which they are based. Then, he concluded that, if one fails to become acquainted with the Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter, one is no more than a talented animal who does not even know what lands one's father presides over. "Though he may be idly praised for his talent and ability" refers to men like Fa-tsang and Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school or the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei of the True Word school. These teachers had talent and ability, yet they were like sons who do not even know their own father.

The Great Teacher Dengyo was the patriarch of both esoteric and exoteric Buddhism in Japan.¹⁴⁸ In his *Outstanding Principles* he writes: "The sutras that the other schools are based upon give expression in a certain measure to the mother-like nature of the Buddha. But they convey only a sense of love and are lacking in a sense of fatherly sternness. It is only the Tendai Lotus school that combines a sense of both love and sternness. The Lotus Sutra is 'father of all sages, worthies, those still learning, those who have completed their learning, and those who set their minds on becoming bodhisattvas.'" ¹⁴⁹

The sutras that form the basis of the True Word and Flower Garland schools do not even contain the terms "sowing," "maturing," and "harvesting," much less the doctrine to which these terms refer. When the sutras of the Flower Garland and True Word schools assert that their followers will enter the first stage of development in this lifetime and achieve Buddhahood in their present form, they are putting forth the teachings of the provisional sutras alone, teachings that conceal [the seeds sowed in] the past.¹⁵⁰ To expect to harvest [the fruit of Buddhahood] without

knowing the seed first sowed is like the minister Chao Kao attempting to seize the throne or the priest Dokyo trying to become emperor of Japan.

The various schools argue with one another, each claiming that its sutra contains the true seeds of enlightenment. I do not intend to enter the argument. I will let the sutras speak for themselves. Thus Bodhisattva Vasubandhu, speaking of the seeds of enlightenment implanted by the Lotus Sutra, designates them "the seeds without peer."¹⁵¹ And these seeds of enlightenment are the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life as expounded by T'ien-t'ai.

The seed of enlightenment for the various Buddhas described in the Flower Garland Sutra, the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the other various Mahayana sutras is the one doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. And the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai Chih-che was the only person who was capable of perceiving the truth of this doctrine. Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school usurped the doctrine and made it the soul of the passage in the Flower Garland Sutra that reads, "The mind is like a skilled painter."

The Mahavairochana Sutra of the True Word school contains no mention of the fact that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, that the Buddha Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment in the distant past, or of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. But after the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei came to China, he had occasion to read *Great Concentration and Insight* by T'ien-t'ai and came to gain wisdom and understanding. He then stole the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, using it to interpret the passages in the Mahavairochana Sutra on "the reality of the mind" or the one that reads, "I am the source and

beginning of all things," making it the core of the True Word teachings but adding to it the practice of mudras and mantras. And in comparing the relative merits of the Lotus Sutra and the Mahavairochana Sutra, he declared that, while the two agree in principle, the latter is superior in practice. The mandalas of the two realms,¹⁵² the True Word teachers claim, symbolize the attaining of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, but are these doctrines to be found anywhere in the Mahavairochana Sutra? Those who claim so are guilty of the grossest deception.

Therefore, the Great Teacher Denryo states: "The True Word school of Buddhism that has recently been brought to Japan deliberately obscures how its transmission was falsified in the recording [by I-hsing, who was deceived by Shan-wu-wei], while the Flower Garland school that was introduced earlier attempts to disguise the fact that it was influenced by the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai."¹⁵³

Suppose someone were to go to some wild region like the island of Ezo and recite the famous poem:¹⁵⁴

How I think of it—
dim, dim in the morning mist
of Akashi Bay,
that boat moving out of sight
beyond the islands.

If the person told the ignorant natives of Ezo that he himself had composed the poem, they would probably believe him. The Buddhist scholars of China and Japan are equally gullible.

The Reverend Liang-hsü states that the doctrines of the True Word, Zen, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, and other schools, when compared with the Lotus Sutra, serve as none other than an introduction to the true teachings [of the Lotus Sutra]. We are told that the Tripitaka Master Shan-wu-wei

was subjected to torments by Yama because of his mistaken view [that the Mahavairochana Sutra is superior to the Lotus Sutra]. Later, he had a change of heart and became a supporter of the Lotus Sutra, which is why he was spared further torments. As evidence, when he, Pu-k'ung, and the others devised the Womb Realm mandala and the Diamond Realm mandala of the True Word school, they placed the Lotus Sutra in the center of the two mandalas as the supreme ruler, with the Mahavairochana Sutra depicting the Womb Realm and the Diamond Crown Sutra depicting the Diamond Realm to the left and right as ministers to the ruler.

When Kobo of Japan drew up a theoretical statement of the True Word teachings, he was attracted by the Flower Garland school and assigned [the Flower Garland Sutra to the ninth stage of advancement and] the Lotus Sutra to the eighth stage.¹⁵⁵ But when he taught the practices and ceremonies to his disciples Jitsue, Shinga, Encho, Kojo, and the others, he placed the Lotus Sutra in a central position, between the two realms of the Womb and the Diamond, as Shan-wu-wei and Pu-k'ung had done.

In a similar case, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, in his ten-volume *Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, assigned the Lotus Sutra to the fourth of the five periods of teachings,¹⁵⁶ claiming that it repudiated the two vehicles to reveal the one vehicle of the bodhisattva and then incorporated the former as the means to attain the latter. Later, however, he became converted to the teachings of T'ien-t'ai. He ceased giving lectures, dismissed his disciples, and instead served T'ien-t'ai for a period of seven years, personally carrying T'ien-t'ai on his back [when T'ien-t'ai mounted an elevated seat for preaching].

Again, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Char-

acteristics school, in his seven-volume and twelve-volume *Forest of Meanings in the Garden of the Law*, states that the one vehicle doctrine set forth in the Lotus Sutra is an expedient means, and that the three vehicle doctrine represents the truth. He also makes many similarly absurd pronouncements. But in the fourth volume of *The Essential Meaning of "Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra,"* he is represented as saying that "both doctrines are to be accepted," thus bringing flexible interpretation to the tenets of his own school. Although he said that both doctrines were acceptable, in his heart he supported the T'ien-t'ai teachings on the Lotus Sutra.

Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school wrote a commentary on the Flower Garland Sutra in which he compared the Flower Garland and Lotus sutras and seems to have declared that the Lotus Sutra is an expedient means. But later he wrote: "The T'ien-t'ai school defines this teaching [of three thousand realms in a single moment of life] as the truth. The doctrines of my own school, on matters of principle, do not disagree in any way with those of the T'ien-t'ai school." From this it would appear, would it not, that he regretted and reversed his earlier pronouncement.

Kobo is a similar example. If one has no mirror, one cannot see one's own face, and if one has no opponents, one cannot learn of one's own errors. The scholars of the True Word and the other various schools were unaware of their errors. But after they were fortunate enough to encounter the Great Teacher Dengyo, they became conscious of the mistakes of their own particular schools.

The various Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly and human beings described in the sutras that preceded the Lotus may seem to have gained enlightenment through the particular

sutras in which they appear. But in fact they attained enlightenment only through the Lotus Sutra. The general vow taken by Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas to save countless living beings finds fulfillment through the Lotus Sutra. That is the meaning of the passage of the sutra that states that the vow “has now been fulfilled.”¹⁵⁷

In view of these facts, I believe that the devotees and followers of the Flower Garland, Meditation, Mahavairochana, and other sutras will undoubtedly be protected by the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly beings of the respective sutras that they uphold. But if the votaries of the Mahavairochana, Meditation, and other sutras should set themselves up as the enemies of the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly beings will abandon them and will protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the case of a filial son whose father opposes the ruler of the kingdom. The son will abandon his father and support the ruler, for to do so is the height of filial piety.

The same thing applies to Buddhism. The Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the ten demon daughters described in the Lotus Sutra will not fail to lend their protection to Nichiren. And in addition, the Buddhas of the six directions and the twenty-five bodhisattvas of the Pure Land school, the twelve hundred honored ones¹⁵⁸ of the True Word school, and the various honored ones and benevolent guardian deities of the seven schools¹⁵⁹ are also certain to protect Nichiren. It is like the case of the Great Teacher Dengyo, who was protected by the guardian deities of the seven schools.

I, Nichiren, think as follows. The gods of the sun and moon and the other deities were present in the two places and three assemblies when the Lotus Sutra was preached. If a votary of the Lotus Sutra should appear, then,

like iron drawn to a magnet or the reflection of the moon appearing in the water, they will instantly come forth to take on his sufferings for him and thereby fulfill the vow that they made in the presence of the Buddha. But they have yet to come and inquire of my well-being. Does this mean that I am not a votary of the Lotus Sutra? If that is so, then I must examine the text of the sutra once more in the light of my conduct and see where I am at fault.

Question: What eye of wisdom allows you to perceive that the Nembutsu, Zen, and other schools of our time are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra and evil companions who are ready to mislead all people?

Answer: I do not state personal opinions, but merely hold up the mirror of the sutras and commentaries so that the slanderers of the Law may see their ugly faces reflected there and perceive their errors. But if they are incurably “blind,” it is beyond my power.

In the “Treasure Tower” chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra we read: “At that time Many Treasures Buddha offered half of his seat in the treasure tower to Shakyamuni Buddha . . . At that time the members of the great assembly [saw] the two Thus Come Ones seated cross-legged on the lion seat in the tower of seven treasures . . . And in a loud voice he [Shakyamuni Buddha] addressed all the four kinds of believers, saying: ‘Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this saha world? Now is the time to do so, for before long the Thus Come One will enter nirvana. The Buddha wishes to entrust this Lotus Sutra to someone so that it may be preserved.’”

This is the first pronouncement of the Buddha.

Again the chapter reads: “At that time the World-Honored One, wish-

ing to state his meaning once more, spoke in verse form, saying: "This holy lord, this World-Honored One, though he passed into extinction long ago, still seats himself in the treasure tower, coming here for the sake of the Law. You people, why then do you not also strive for the sake of the Law? . . . In addition, these emanations of my body, Buddhas in immeasurable numbers like Ganges sands, have come, desiring to hear the Law . . . Each has abandoned his wonderful land, as well as his host of disciples, the heavenly and human beings, dragons, and spirits, and all the offerings they give him, and has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure. . . . as though a great wind were tossing the branches of small trees. Through this expedient means they make certain that the Law will long endure. So I say to the great assembly: After I have passed into extinction, who can guard and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!" "

This is the second proclamation of the Buddha. The passage continues: "The Thus Come One Many Treasures, I myself, and these emanation Buddhas who have gathered here, surely know this is our aim. . . . All you good men, each of you must consider carefully! This is a difficult matter—it is proper you should make a great vow. The other sutras number as many as Ganges sands, but though you expound those sutras, that is not worth regarding as difficult. If you were to seize Mount Sumeru and fling it far off to the measureless Buddha lands, that too would not be difficult. . . . But if after the Buddha has entered extinction, in the time of evil, you can preach this sutra, that will be difficult indeed! . . . If, when the fires come at the end of the kalpa, one can load dry grass on his back and enter the fire without being

burned, that would not be difficult. But after I have passed into extinction if one can embrace this sutra and expound it to even one person, that will be difficult indeed! . . . All you good men, after I have entered extinction, who can accept and uphold, read and recite this sutra? Now in the presence of the Buddha let him come forward and speak his vow!"

This is the third admonition from the Buddha. The fourth and fifth admonitions are found in the "Devadatta" chapter, and I will deal with them later.

The meaning of these passages from the sutra is right before our eyes, obvious as the sun suspended in the blue sky or a mole on a white face. And yet the blind ones, those with perverse eyes, the one-eyed, those who believe no one but their own teachers, and those who cling to biased views cannot see it.

For those who earnestly seek the way, in spite of all difficulties, I will try to demonstrate what these passages mean. But they must understand that the truth is more rarely met with than the peaches of immortality that grow in the garden of the Queen Mother of the West, or the udumbara flower that blooms only when a wheel-turning king appears.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the conflict [between Nichiren and the various schools] surpasses the eight years of warfare when the governor of P'ei and Hsiang Yü¹⁶¹ battled for the empire of China, the seven years when Yoritomo and Munemori¹⁶² fought for the islands of Japan, the struggles between Shakra and the asuras, or between the dragon king and the garuda birds at Anavatapta Lake.¹⁶³

The truth of the Lotus Sutra has made its appearance twice in the country of Japan. You should understand that it appeared once with the Great Teacher Dengyo and again with Nichiren. But the sightless ones doubt this; it

is beyond my power to convince them. Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions gathered together and judged the relative merits of all the sutras of Japan, China, India, the palace of the dragon king, the heavens, and all the other worlds of the ten directions, and this is the sutra they chose.

Question: Do sutras such as the Flower Garland, the sutras of the Correct and Equal period, Wisdom, Profound Secrets, Lankavatara, Mahavairochana, and Nirvana belong to the "nine easy acts" group or the "six difficult acts" group?¹⁶⁴

Answer: Tu-shun, Chih-yen, Fa-tsang, and Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, who were all masters of the three divisions of the canon, state that both the Flower Garland Sutra and the Lotus Sutra belong to the "six difficult acts" category. Though in name they are two different sutras, they are identical in their teachings and principles. It is similar to the statement, "Though the four perceptions of reality are separate, the truth they point to is identical."¹⁶⁵

The Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang and the Great Teacher Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school state that the Profound Secrets Sutra and the Lotus Sutra both expound the Consciousness-Only doctrine. They date from the third period of the Buddha's teaching¹⁶⁶ and belong to the "six difficult acts" category.

Chi-tsang of the Three Treatises school asserts that the Wisdom Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are different names for a single entity, two sutras that preach one teaching.

The Tripitaka masters Shan-wu-wei, Chin-kang-chih, and Pu-k'ung [of the True Word school] say that the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra are identical in principle and that both belong to the "six difficult" category. But the Japanese [True Word leader]

Kobo says that the Mahavairochana Sutra belongs neither to the "six difficult" nor to the "nine easy" category. The Mahavairochana Sutra, according to him, stands apart from all the sutras preached by Shakyamuni Buddha, since it was preached by the Thus Come One Mahavairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body. Likewise, some persons assert that, since the Flower Garland Sutra was preached by the Thus Come One of the reward body, it stands outside the categories of "six difficult" and "nine easy."

Such, then, are the views put forth by the founders of these four schools. The thousands of students of these schools likewise subscribe to the same views.

I must observe sadly that, although it would be simple enough to point out the error of the views propounded by these men, if I did so, the people of today would not even look in my direction. They would go on in their erroneous ways and, in the end, would slander me to the ruler of the country and put my life in jeopardy. Nevertheless, our merciful father Shakyamuni Buddha, when he faced his end in the grove of sal trees, stated as his dying instructions that we are to "rely on the Law and not upon persons."¹⁶⁷ "Not relying upon persons" means that when persons of the first, second, third, and fourth ranks¹⁶⁸ preach, even though they are bodhisattvas such as Universal Worthy and Manjushri who have attained the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, if they do not preach with the sutra in hand, then they are not to be accepted.

It is also laid down that one should "rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final."¹⁶⁹ We must therefore look carefully among the sutras to determine which are complete and final and which are not, and put our faith in the former. Bodhisattva Nagarjuna in his *Commentary on the Ten Stages*

Sutra states, "Do not rely on treatises that distort the sutras; rely on those that are faithful to the sutras." The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai says, "That which accords with the sutras is to be written down and made available. But put no faith in anything that in word or meaning fails to do so."¹⁷⁰ The Great Teacher Dengyo says, "Depend upon the preachings of the Buddha, and do not put faith in traditions handed down orally."¹⁷¹ Enchin, also known as the Great Teacher Chisho, says, "In transmitting the teachings, rely on the written words [of scriptures]."¹⁷²

To be sure, the leaders of the various schools whose opinions I have quoted above all appear to base themselves on some groups of sutras and treatises in attempting to establish which teachings are the most superior. But these men all cling firmly to the doctrines of their own school and perpetuate the erroneous views handed down from their predecessors, so that their judgments are characterized by twisted interpretations and personal feelings. Their doctrines are no more than private opinions that have been dressed up and glorified.

The non-Buddhist schools of such men as Vatsa and Vaipulya, which appeared in India after the Buddha's passing, are even more wrong in their views and more cunning in their doctrines than their counterparts before the Buddha [because they borrowed ideas from Buddhism]. Similarly, since the introduction of Buddhism to China in the Later Han dynasty, non-Buddhist views and writings have become even more wrong and cunning than the pre-Buddhist writings of Confucianism that deal with the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors of antiquity. Also the teachers of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, True Word, and other schools, jealous of the correct doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school, brazenly interpret the words of the true sutra in such

a way that they will accord with the provisional teachings.

Those who seek the way, however, should reject such one-sided views, transcending disputes between one's own school and others, and should not treat others with contempt.

In the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says, "Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, [this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand]."¹⁷³

Miao-lo remarks: "Though other sutras may call themselves the king among sutras, there is none that announces itself as foremost among all the sutras preached in the past, now being preached, or to be preached in the future."¹⁷⁴ He also says: "Concerning [the Buddha's statement] that this wonderful sutra surpasses all those of past, present, and future, there are those who persist in going astray. Thus they commit the grave fault of slandering the sutra and for many long kalpas are subjected to sufferings."¹⁷⁵

Startled by these passages in the sutra and its commentaries, I examined the entire body of sutras and the expositions and commentaries of the various teachers, and found that my doubts and suspicions melted away. But now those foolish True Word priests rely upon their mudras and mantras and believe that the True Word school is superior to the Lotus Sutra, simply because the Great Teacher Jikaku and their other teachers have assured them that the True Word is superior. Their views are not worthy of discussion.

The Secret Solemnity Sutra says: "The Ten Stages,¹⁷⁶ Flower Garland, Kimnara King Great Tree, Supernatural Powers, Shrimala, and the other sutras all derive from this sutra. Thus the Secret Solemnity Sutra is the greatest of all sutras."

The Great Cloud Sutra states: "This sutra is the wheel-turning king among

all sutras. Why is this? Because in this sutra is set forth the doctrine of the constancy of the Buddha nature as the true nature of all beings.”

The Six Paramitas Sutra says: “All the correct teachings expounded by the countless Buddhas of the past and the eighty-four thousand wonderful teachings that I have now expounded may as a whole be divided into five categories: first, sutras (the Buddha’s teachings); second, vinaya (monastic rules); third, abhidharma (treatises); fourth, prajna-paramita (the teachings of the perfection of wisdom); and fifth, dharani (mystic formulas). The works in these five collections will instruct sentient beings. Among sentient beings there may be those who cannot accept and abide by the sutras, vinaya, abhidharma, and prajna-paramita, or there may be sentient beings who commit various evil acts such as the four major offenses, the eight major offenses, or the five cardinal sins that lead to the hell of incessant suffering, or slander the correct and equal sutras, or are icchantikas who disbelieve Buddhism itself. In order to wipe out such crimes, give quick release to the offenders, and allow them to enter into nirvana at once, I preached for their sake this collection of dharanis.

“These five divisions of the Dharma are compared to the flavors of milk, cream, curdled milk, butter, and ghee, respectively, with ghee as the finest. The division containing the dharanis compares to ghee. Ghee has the finest and most subtle flavor among the five substances enumerated above and is capable of curing various sicknesses and easing the minds and bodies of sentient beings. Similarly, the dharani division stands foremost among the five divisions of the teachings because it can do away with grave offenses.”

The Profound Secrets Sutra states: “At that time Bodhisattva Superlative Truth Appearing addressed the Bud-

dha, saying: ‘World-Honored One, in the first period of your teaching when you were in the forest Sage Ascetics-Gathering, or Deer Park, in Varanasi, for the sake of those who wished merely to seek the vehicle of the voice-hearers, you expounded the doctrine of the four noble truths, in this way turning the wheel of the correct Law. This was a very wonderful thing, a very rare thing. No heavenly or human being in any of the countless worlds had ever been able to expound such a doctrine as this before. And yet the wheel of the Law that you turned at that time left room for improvement, left room for doubt. It was not yet final in meaning and offered ample opportunity for dispute.

“‘Then, World-Honored One, in the second period of your teaching, for the sake of those who wished merely to seek the great vehicle,¹⁷⁷ you taught that all phenomena are without distinctive natures of their own, that there is no birth or death, that all things are basically in a state of quietude, and that the nature of beings as they exist constitutes nirvana. You turned the wheel of the correct Law, although you did not reveal the whole truth. This was even more wonderful, an even rarer thing. But the wheel of the Law that you turned at that time left room for improvement, left room for doubt. It was not yet final in meaning and offered ample opportunity for dispute.

“‘Now, World-Honored One, in the third period of your teaching, for the sake of those who wish to practice the vehicle that saves all beings, you taught that all phenomena are without distinctive natures, that there is no birth or death, that all things are basically in a state of quietude, and that the nature of beings as they exist constitutes nirvana—and then you have taught that the “nature” you spoke of itself lacks anything that can be called a nature. You have turned the wheel of

the correct Law and expounded these doctrines in their perfect form. This is most wonderful, the rarest thing of all. This wheel of the Law that you have turned leaves no room for improvement, no room for doubt. It is truly complete and final in meaning and offers no opportunity for dispute.”

The Great Wisdom Sutra says: “When one regards whatever teachings one hears, either secular or Buddhist, as an expedient means, one is brought to understand that these can be incorporated into the profound principles that *prajna*, or Buddha wisdom, alone can grasp. When, with the same wisdom, one understands that all secular matters and actions represent the essential nature of things, one will see not a thing that is outside that essential nature.”

The first volume of the Mahavairochana Sutra states: “Master of Secrets [Vajrasattva], there is a great vehicle practice that arouses the mind that is without attachment to things and leads one to understand that all phenomena are without individual natures. Why is this? Because in past times those who practiced this way were able to observe the *alaya*-consciousness within the five components, and to realize that individual natures are illusory.”

The same sutra also says: “Master of Secrets, these men in this way cast aside the concept of non-self and came to realize that the mind exists in a realm of complete freedom, and that the individual mind has from the beginning never known birth [or death].”

It also says: “Emptiness is by nature removed from the sense organs and their objects. It has no form or boundaries; beyond any futile theory, it is equal to space. It represents the ultimate in the absence of individual nature.”

It also says: “The Buddha Mahavairochana addressed the Master of Secrets, saying, ‘Master of Secrets, what is the

meaning of enlightenment? It means to understand one’s own mind as it truly is.’”

The Flower Garland Sutra states: “Among the various beings of all the different worlds, there are few who seek to practice the vehicle of the voice-hearers. There are still fewer who seek that of the cause-awakened ones, and those who seek the great vehicle are extremely rare. To seek the great vehicle is relatively easy to do, but to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. And how much more difficult it is to uphold this sutra, keep its teachings correctly in mind, practice them as directed, and understand their true meaning.

“To take the major world system and hold it on the top of your head without moving for the space of a kalpa is not such a difficult thing to do. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. To offer musical instruments for the space of a kalpa to all the living beings who are as countless as the dust particles of the major world system will not gain one much merit. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra will gain one merit in great quantity. To hold ten Buddha lands in the palm of one’s hand and remain stationary in the midst of the air for the space of a kalpa is not so difficult to do. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra is difficult in the extreme. To offer musical instruments for the space of a kalpa to all the living beings who are as countless as the dust particles of those ten Buddha lands will not gain one much merit. But to believe in the doctrines of this sutra will gain one merit in great quantity. For the space of a kalpa one may honor and give alms to the various *Thus Come Ones* who are as countless as the dust particles of those ten Buddha lands. But if one can accept and abide by the doctrines of this chapter,¹⁷⁸ one will gain vastly greater merit.”

The Nirvana Sutra says: "Although the various correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle will bring inestimable merit, there is no way to describe how much greater is the merit gained through this sutra. It is a hundred times, a thousand times, a billion times greater, greater in a way that is beyond calculation or simile. Good man, milk comes from the cow, cream is made from milk, curdled milk is made from cream, butter is made from curdled milk, and ghee is made from butter. Ghee is the finest of all. One who eats it will be cured of all illnesses, just as if all kinds of medicinal properties were contained in it. Good man, the Buddha is like this. The Buddha brought forth the twelve divisions of discourse. From among these twelve divisions he brought forth the sutras, from among the sutras he brought forth the correct and equal sutras, from the correct and equal sutras he brought forth the doctrine of prajna-paramita (the perfection of wisdom), and from the prajna-paramita he brought forth the Nirvana Sutra. The Nirvana Sutra is comparable to ghee. Ghee here is a metaphor for the Buddha nature."

When we compare these sutra passages that I have just quoted with those of the Lotus Sutra that describe it as the greatest among the sutras the Buddha "has preached, now preaches, and will preach," and deal with the six difficult and nine easy acts, the latter stand out like the bright moon beside the stars, or Mount Sumeru beside the other eight mountain ranges that surround it. And yet Ch'eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Tz'u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, and Kobo of the True Word school, all men who were believed to possess the Buddha eye, did not understand the above passages of the Lotus Sutra. How then could the ordinary scholars of the time, who appear to be quite blind, be ex-

pected to judge the difference between the Lotus Sutra and the other sutras! This difference is as plain as black and white, or Mount Sumeru side by side with a mustard seed, yet these men go astray. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they are also confused by principles that are as elusive as air. Unless one can perceive the relative profundity of the various writings, one cannot judge the worth of the principles they reveal.

The passages [from the eight sutras] quoted above appear in separate volumes and are out of sequence [in terms of their relative depth]. Since this makes it difficult to discern the worth of the various teachings, I will explain these passages to help the ignorant understand.

When it comes to kings, there are great kings and petty kings, and in any matter whatsoever, there are parts and there is the whole. We have talked about the simile of the five flavors of milk, but we must understand when this simile is being applied to Buddhist teachings as a whole and when it is being applied to one part of those teachings.

The Six Paramitas Sutra teaches that sentient beings can attain enlightenment, but it refuses to apply this to those without the nature of enlightenment. And of course it mentions nothing about the doctrine that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment countless ages in the past.

The Six Paramitas Sutra cannot in fact even compare with the Nirvana Sutra, which compares itself with ghee among the five flavors, much less with the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra. And yet the Great Teacher Kobo of Japan, misled by the above-quoted passage of the Six Paramitas Sutra, assigned the Lotus Sutra to the fourth flavor, or that of butter. If the so-called ghee of the dharanis (mystic formulas) cannot even match

the so-called ghee of the Nirvana Sutra, then how could he possibly make such an obvious mistake? And yet he writes that “the Buddhist teachers of China vied with one another to steal the ghee,”¹⁷⁹ calling T’ien-t’ai and others thieves. And in a boastful vein, he declares, “What a pity it is that the worthies of ancient times were not able to taste this ghee.”

Putting all this aside, I will point out the truth for the sake of my followers. Because others do not choose to believe it now, they are persons who thereby form a reverse relation. By tasting a single drop, one can tell the flavor of the great ocean, and by observing a single flower in bloom, one can predict the advent of spring. One does not have to cross the water to far-off Sung China, spend three years traveling to Eagle Peak in India,¹⁸⁰ enter the palace of the dragon king the way Nagarjuna did, visit Bodhisattva Maitreya [in the Tushita heaven] the way Bodhisattva Asanga did,¹⁸¹ or be present at the two places and three assemblies when Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra, in order to judge the relative merits of the Buddha’s lifetime teachings. It is said that snakes can tell seven days in advance when a flood is going to occur. This is because they are akin to dragons [who make the rain fall]. Crows can tell what lucky or unlucky events are going to take place throughout the course of a year. This is because in a past existence they were diviners. Birds are better at flying than human beings. And I, Nichiren, am better at judging the relative merits of sutras than Ch’eng-kuan of the Flower Garland school, Chia-hsiang of the Three Treatises school, Tz’u-en of the Dharma Characteristics school, and Kobo of the True Word school. That is because I follow in the footsteps of the teachers T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo. If Ch’eng-kuan and the others had not accepted the teachings of T’ien-t’ai and

Dengyo, how could they have expected to escape the sin of slandering the Law?¹⁸²

I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day Japan. I have dedicated my life to the Lotus Sutra, and my name will be handed down in ages to come. If one is lord of the great ocean, then all the gods of the various rivers will obey one. If one is king of Mount Sumeru, then the gods of the various other mountains cannot help but serve one. If a person fulfills the teaching of “the six difficult and nine easy acts” of the Lotus Sutra, then, even though he may not have read the entire body of sutras, all should follow him.

In addition to the three pronouncements of the Buddha in the “Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the “Devadatta” chapter contains two enlightening admonitions. [The first reveals that Devadatta will attain Buddhahood.] Devadatta was a man of incorrigible disbelief, of the type called *icchantika*, and yet it is predicted that he will in the future become a Buddha called the Thus Come One Heavenly King. The forty volumes of the Nirvana Sutra state that [all beings, including the *icchantikas*, possess the Buddha nature, but] the actual proof of that is found in this chapter of the Lotus Sutra. There are countless other persons such as the monk Sunakshatra or King Ajatashatru who have committed the five cardinal sins and slandered the Law, but Devadatta is cited as one example to represent all the countless others; he is the chief offender, and it is assumed that all lesser offenders will fare as he does. Thus it is revealed that all those who commit the five or the seven cardinal sins¹⁸³ or who slander the Law or who are *icchantikas* inherently opposed to taking faith will become Buddhas like the Thus Come One Heavenly King. Poison turns into sweet dew, the finest of all flavors.

[The second admonition concerns

the fact that the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood.] When she attained Buddhahood, this does not mean simply that one person did so. It reveals the fact that all women will attain Buddhahood. In the various Hinayana sutras that were preached before the Lotus Sutra, it is denied that women can ever attain Buddhahood. In the Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, it would appear that women can attain Buddhahood or be reborn in the pure land. But they may do so only after they have changed into some other form. It is not the kind of immediate attainment of Buddhahood that is based on the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Thus it is an attainment of Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land in name only and not in reality. The dragon king's daughter represents "one example that stands for all the rest."¹⁸⁴ When the dragon king's daughter attained Buddhahood, it opened up the way to attaining Buddhahood for all women of later ages.

Confucianism preaches filial piety and care for one's parents, but it is limited to this present life. It provides no way for one to assist one's parents in their future lives, and the Confucian sages and worthies are therefore sages and worthies in name only and not in reality. Brahmanism, though it recognizes the existence of past and future lives, similarly offers no means to assist one's parents to a better life in the future. Buddhism alone can do so, and thus it is the true way of sages and worthies. But in the Hinayana and Mahayana sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra, and in the schools based on these sutras, to gain the way even for oneself is impossible. One can hardly hope to do anything for one's parents either. Though the texts of these sutras may say [that they can bring about enlightenment], in reality that is not the case. Only with the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, in which the dragon

king's daughter attained Buddhahood, did it become evident that the attainment of Buddhahood was a possibility for all mothers. And when it was revealed that even an evil man such as Devadatta could attain Buddhahood, it became evident that Buddhahood was a possibility for all fathers. The Lotus Sutra is *The Classic of Filial Piety of Buddhism*. This ends my discussion of the two admonitions contained in the "Devadatta" chapter.

Awed by the five proclamations of the Buddha [made in the "Treasure Tower" and "Devadatta" chapters], the countless bodhisattvas promised the Buddha that they would propagate the Lotus Sutra, as described in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter. I will hold up this passage of the sutra like a bright mirror so that all may see how the present-day priests of the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools and their lay supporters are guilty of slandering the Law.

On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded.¹⁸⁵ It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado and, in the second month of the following year, snowbound, is writing this to send to his close disciples. [The description of the evil age in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter seems] terrible, but [one who cares nothing about oneself for the sake of the Law has] nothing to be frightened about. Others reading it will be terrified. This scriptural passage is the bright mirror that Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions left for the future of Japan, and in which the present state of the country is reflected. It may also be regarded as a keepsake from me.

The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter states: "We beg you not to worry. After the Buddha has passed into extinction, in an age of fear and evil we will preach far and wide. There will be

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

The eighth volume of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"* comments as follows: "In this passage, three types of arrogance are cited. First, there is a section that exposes people of mistaken views. This

represents [the arrogance and presumption of] lay people. Next, there is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of members of the Buddhist clergy. Third is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of those who pretend to be sages. Of these three, the first can be endured. The second exceeds the first, and the third is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are."

The Dharma Teacher Chih-tu writes in *Tung-ch'un*: "First, regarding the verse section that begins with 'There will be many ignorant people': The first part tells how the votaries of the Lotus Sutra must endure evils inflicted by the body, mouth, and mind of their opponents. This refers to non-Buddhists and evil lay Buddhists. The next part that begins with 'In that evil age' deals with arrogant members of the Buddhist clergy. The third part that begins, 'Or there will be forest-dwelling monks,' deals with members of the clergy who [pretend to be sages and use their positions so that they can] act as leaders of all the other evil people." And the same text goes on to say: "The section that begins, 'Because in the midst of the great assembly,' describes how these men will appeal to the government authorities, slandering the Law and its practitioners."

In the ninth volume of the Nirvana Sutra we read: "Good man, there are icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. They pretend to be arhats, living in deserted places and speaking slanderously of the correct and equal sutras of the great vehicle. When ordinary people see them, they all suppose that they are true arhats and speak of them as great bodhisattvas." It also says: "At that time, this sutra will be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa. In that age there will be evil monks who will steal this sutra and divide it into

many parts, losing the color, scent, and flavor of the correct teaching that it contains. These evil men will read and recite this sutra, but they will ignore and put aside the profound and vital principles that the Thus Come One has expounded in it and replace them with ornate rhetoric and meaningless talk. They will tear off the first part of the sutra and stick it on at the end, tear off the end and put it at the beginning, put the end and the beginning in the middle and the middle at the beginning or the end. You must understand that these evil monks are the companions of the devil.”

The six-volume Parinirvana Sutra¹⁸⁶ states: “There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds. There are also arhats who resemble icchantikas but display merciful hearts. The icchantikas who look like arhats spend their time slandering the correct and equal sutras to the populace. The arhats who look like icchantikas, on the other hand, are critical of the voice-hearers and go about preaching the correct and equal sutras. They address the populace, saying, ‘You and I are all bodhisattvas. Why? Because each living being possesses the Buddha nature.’ But the populace will probably call such men icchantikas.”

In the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha speaks as follows: “After I have passed away . . . After the Former Day of the Law has ended and the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice. And they will constantly reiterate these words, ‘I have

attained arhatship!’ Outwardly they will seem to be wise and good, but within they will harbor greed and jealousy. [And when they are asked to preach the teachings, they will say nothing,] like Brahmans who have taken a vow of silence. They are not true monks—they merely have the appearance of monks. Consumed by their erroneous views, they slander the correct teaching.”

In the light of the sun and moon that are [the Lotus Sutra preached on] Eagle Peak and [the Nirvana Sutra preached at] the sal grove, or in the bright mirrors that are the commentaries by Miao-lo of P’i-ling and Chih-tu of Tung-ch’un, we can discern without a trace of obscurity the ugly faces of the priests of the various schools of present-day Japan, especially the Zen, Precepts, and Nembutsu schools. The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law says [in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter], “After the Buddha has passed into extinction, in an age of fear and evil,” and the “Peaceful Practices” chapter says, “In the evil age hereafter,” “in the latter age,” and “in the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish.” The “Distinctions in Benefits” chapter says, “In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law”; the “Medicine King” chapter says, “In the last five-hundred-year period.” The “Exhortation to Preach” chapter of the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law says, “In the latter age hereafter” and “in the latter age to come.” The same type of language is found in the Supplemented Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. T’ien-t’ai states, “In the Middle Day of the Law, the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra.”¹⁸⁷ And Dengyo states, “At the end of the Middle Day of the Law, the scholars of the six Nara schools are the enemies of the Lotus Sutra.”¹⁸⁸

In the time of T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo, [the three types of enemies men-

tioned above] had not yet appeared. But we must recall that, when Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and Many Treasures Buddha sat side by side in the treasure tower like the sun and moon, and the Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni had come from the ten directions and were ranged beneath the trees like so many stars, then it was said that after the thousand years of the Former Day of the Law and the thousand years of the Middle Day of the Law, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, there would be three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra. How could this pronouncement made by the eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas have been an empty or a false prediction?

It is now some twenty-two hundred years since the Thus Come One passed away. Even if it were possible to point straight at the earth and miss it, if the flowers were to cease blooming in spring, still I am certain that these three powerful enemies exist in the land of Japan. If so, then who is to be numbered among the three enemies? And who is to be accounted a votary of the Lotus Sutra? It is a troubling question. Are we—I and my disciples—to be numbered among the three enemies? Or are we to be numbered among the votaries of the Lotus Sutra? A troubling question.

In the twenty-fourth year of the reign of King Chao, the fourth ruler of the Chou dynasty, with the cyclical sign *kinoe-tora*, on the night of the eighth day of the fourth month, a five-colored light spread across the sky from north to south until all was as bright as noon. The earth shook in six different ways, and though no rain fell, the rivers and streams, wells and ponds brimmed with water. All the trees and plants bloomed and bore fruit. It was a wondrous happening indeed. King Chao was greatly surprised. The Grand

Historian Su Yu performed divinations and announced, "A sage has been born in the western region." "What about our country?" asked King Chao, to which Su Yu replied, "Nothing particular will happen for now. But one thousand years from now, the words of this sage will be brought to this country and will bring benefit to all living beings." Su Yu was a scholar of non-Buddhist texts who had not in the slightest degree freed himself from illusions of thought and desire, and yet he was able to know what would happen a thousand years in the future. And just as he predicted, 1,015 years after the Buddha's passing, in the reign of Emperor Ming, the second ruler of the Later Han dynasty, in the tenth year of the Yung-p'ing era (C.E. 67), with the cyclical sign *hinoto-u*, the doctrines of Buddhism were introduced to China.¹⁸⁹

On quite a different level is the prediction I have described above that was made by the various bodhisattvas in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas from the ten directions that were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha. In view of this prediction, how could the three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra help but be present in Japan today?

In the Buddha's Successors Sutra, the Buddha is recorded as saying: "After my passing, during the one thousand years of the Former Day of the Law, there will be twenty-four persons in succession¹⁹⁰ who will spread abroad the correct teachings as I have taught them." Mahakashyapa and Ananda [were contemporaries of the Buddha and so] we will pass them over. But a hundred years later there was the monk Parshva, six hundred years later Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha, and seven hundred years later Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, along with others, all appearing just as the prophecy had said they would.

If so, how could the prophecy [in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter of the Lotus Sutra] be in vain? If this prophecy were at variance with the truth, then the whole Lotus Sutra would be at variance with the truth. Then the predictions that Shariputra will in the future become the Thus Come One Flower Glow and that Mahakashyapa will become the Thus Come One Light Bright would all be mere lies. In that case, the teachings put forward in the sutras that preceded the Lotus Sutra would be absolutely correct, and the voice-hearers would be destined never to achieve Buddhahood. If it were true that one should give alms to a dog or a fox before giving them to a voice-hearer such as Ananda, then where would we stand?

[The passage from the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter mentions three groups of people,] saying first that “there will be many ignorant people,” second that “in that evil age there will be monks,” and referring third to “monks wearing clothing of patched rags.” The first category of ignorant people are the important lay believers who support monks in the second and third categories. Accordingly, the Great Teacher Miao-lo, commenting on the people in the first group, says they represent the arrogance and presumption of lay people. And *Ting-ch’un* says that they will “appeal to the government authorities,¹⁹¹ slandering the Law and its practitioners.”

Concerning the second group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra, the sutra says: “In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked who will suppose they have attained what they have not attained, being proud and boastful in heart.”

Similarly, the Nirvana Sutra says: “In that age there will be evil monks . . . These evil men will read and recite this sutra, but they will ignore and put

aside the profound and vital principles that the Thus Come One has expounded in it.”

Great Concentration and Insight says: “If one lacks faith [in the Lotus Sutra], one will object that it pertains to the lofty realm of the sages, something far beyond the capacity of one’s own wisdom to comprehend. If one lacks wisdom, one will become puffed up with arrogance and will claim to be the equal of the Buddha.”

We see an example of this in the statement by the Meditation Master Tao-ch’o: “The second reason [for the difficulty in understanding the Lotus Sutra] is that its principles are very profound but human understanding is slight.”¹⁹² Honen says, “Religious practices other than the Nembutsu do not accord with the people’s capacities. They are not appropriate for the times.”¹⁹³

[To combat such views] the tenth volume of *On “The Words and Phrases”* reads: “Probably those who are mistaken in their understanding fail to realize how great is the benefit gained even by a beginner [in the practice of the Lotus Sutra]. They assume that benefit is reserved for those who are far advanced in practice and disparage beginners. Therefore, the sutra here demonstrates its power by revealing that practice is shallow but the benefit that results is profound indeed.”

The Great Teacher Dengyo declares: “The Former and Middle Days are almost over, and the Latter Day is near at hand. Now indeed is the time when the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra will prove how perfectly it fits the capacities of all people. How do we know this is true? Because the ‘Peaceful Practices’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, ‘In the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, [accept and embrace the Lotus Sutra].’”¹⁹⁴ And Eshin says, “Throughout Japan, all people share the same capacity to

attain Buddhahood through the perfect teaching.”¹⁹⁵

Now which opinion should we believe, that of Tao-ch’o and Honen or that of Dengyo and Eshin? The former has not a scrap of evidence in the sutras to support it. The latter is based firmly upon the Lotus Sutra.

Moreover, the Great Teacher Dengyo of Mount Hiei is, for all priests throughout Japan, the master of ordination into the priesthood. How could any priests turn their hearts toward a person like Honen, who is possessed by the heavenly devil, and reject the Great Teacher Dengyo, the master of ordination? If Honen was a truly wise man, why did he not, in his *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, mention the passages of explanation by Dengyo and Eshin such as I have quoted above, and resolve the contradiction? He did not do so because he is the kind of person who hides the teachings of others. When the Lotus Sutra speaks of the second type of enemy, saying, “in that evil age there will be monks,” it is referring to men like Honen who disregard the precepts and hold perverse views.

The Nirvana Sutra says: “[World-Honored One, today I have learned the correct view for the first time. World-Honored One, up till today] we all have been people of mistaken views.” Miao-lo explains this by saying, “They themselves referred to the three teachings [they had practiced until that time] as mistaken views.”¹⁹⁶ And *Great Concentration and Insight* says, “The Nirvana Sutra says, ‘Up till today we all have been people of mistaken views.’ ‘Mistaken’ is bad, is it not?” *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* says: “‘Mistaken’ is bad. Therefore, let it be known that only the perfect teaching is good. There are two meanings involved here. First, what accords with the truth is to be accounted good, and what goes against the truth is to be accounted bad. This is the meaning

from the relative viewpoint. [Second,] attachment [to this viewpoint] is bad, and transcending it is good. [This is the meaning from the absolute viewpoint.] From both the relative and absolute viewpoints, we should abandon all that is bad. To be attached to the perfect teaching is bad, and to be attached to the other [three] teachings is of course even worse.”

The goods and evils of non-Buddhist creeds, when compared with the Hinayana sutras, all represent a bad way. Similarly, the good ways of Hinayana teachings, and the four flavors and three teachings as well, when compared with the Lotus Sutra, are all mistaken and bad. The Lotus Sutra alone is correct and good. The perfect teaching of the sutras preached before the Lotus Sutra is so called from the relative viewpoint; from the absolute viewpoint, it must still be counted as bad. Fundamentally it falls into the category of the three teachings, and therefore it is bad in that sense as well. To practice the highest principles of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings according to the sutras is still bad. How much more so, then, is someone who would take a work of insignificant doctrines like the Meditation Sutra, which cannot compare even with the Flower Garland and Wisdom sutras, as the fundamental teaching? Such a person incorporates [the ideas of] the Lotus Sutra into the Meditation Sutra and urges people to “ignore, abandon, close, and discard” the Lotus and believe only in the Nembutsu. That is what Honen, his disciples and lay supporters do, and they deserve to be called slanderers of the correct teaching.

Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions came to this world to “make certain the Law will long endure.”¹⁹⁷ Honen and the other Nembutsu priests throughout Japan declare that in the Latter Day of the Law the

Lotus Sutra will disappear before the Nembutsu. Are such persons not the enemy of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas?

Concerning the third group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra, the sutra says: "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement . . . they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers." And the six-volume Parinirvana Sutra states: "There are also icchantikas who resemble arhats but who commit evil deeds. There are also arhats who resemble icchantikas but display merciful hearts. The icchantikas who look like arhats spend their time slandering the correct and equal sutras to the populace. The arhats who look like icchantikas, on the other hand, are critical of the voice-hearers and go about preaching the correct and equal sutras. They address the populace, saying, 'You and I are all bodhisattvas. Why? Because each living being possesses the Buddha nature.' But the populace will probably call such men icchantikas."

The Nirvana Sutra says: "After I have passed away . . . [After the Former Day of the Law has ended and] the Middle Day of the Law has begun, there will be monks who will give the appearance of abiding by the rules of monastic discipline. But they will scarcely ever read or recite the sutras, and instead will crave all kinds of food and drink to nourish their bodies. Though they wear the clothes of a monk, they will go about searching for alms like so many huntsmen who, narrowing their eyes, stalk softly. They will be like a cat on the prowl for mice. And they will constantly reiterate these words, 'I have attained arhatship!' Outwardly they will seem to be wise and good, but within they will harbor

greed and jealousy. [And when they are asked to preach the teachings, they will say nothing,] like Brahmans who have taken a vow of silence. They are not true monks—they merely have the appearance of monks. Consumed by their erroneous views, they slander the correct teaching."

Miao-lo writes, concerning people of this type: "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are." And *Tung-ch'un* states: "The third part that begins, 'Or there will be forest-dwelling monks,' deals with members of the clergy who [pretend to be sages and use their positions so that they can] act as leaders of all the other evil people."

As for these "members of the clergy who act as leaders of all the other evil people"—where in Japan at the present time should we look for them? On Mount Hiei? In Onjo-ji [in Otsu]? In To-ji [in Kyoto]? In the temples of Nara? In Kennin-ji [in Kyoto] or Jufuku-ji and Kencho-ji [in Kamakura]? We must examine this carefully. Do the words refer to the monks of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei who wear helmets on their heads and are dressed in armor? Do they refer to the monks of Onjo-ji who wear suits of mail on their fivefold bodies of the Law¹⁹⁸ and carry weapons? But these men do not resemble the monks "wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement" that are described in the sutra, nor do they seem to be the type who are "respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers." They are not like the men of the third group who [Miao-lo said] are "increasingly harder to recognize." It would appear, therefore, that the words refer to men such as Shoichi of Kyoto and Ryokan of Kamakura. [Even if they are identified as such,] they should not hate

others. If they have eyes, they should examine the sutra texts and compare their own behavior with them.

The first volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "There has never been anything to compare to the brightness and serenity of concentration and insight." The first volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* states, "From the time when Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty dreamed at night of the Buddha down to the Ch'en dynasty [when the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai lived], there were many who participated in the Zen school and received the robe and bowl that were handed down." *The Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works* explains this by saying, "The handing down of the robe and bowl refers to the succession of Zen patriarchs from Bodhidharma on down."

The fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states, "There is a type called Zen men, but their masters and disciples are blind [to the truth] and lame [in practice], and both masters and disciples will fall into hell." In the seventh volume we read: "[There are ten ways necessary for understanding and practicing Buddhism correctly. Of these, except one], the nine ways have nothing in common with the ordinary priests of the world who concentrate on the written word, nor do they have anything in common with the Zen masters who concentrate on practice. Some Zen masters give all their attention to meditation alone. But their meditation is shallow and false, totally lacking in the nine ways. This is no empty assertion. Worthy persons of later ages who have eyes to see will understand the truth of what I say."

The seventh volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* states: "'Priests who concentrate on the written word' refers to men who gain no inner insight or understanding through meditation, but concern themselves

only with characteristics of the doctrine. 'Zen masters who concentrate on practice' refers to men who do not learn how to attain the truth and the corresponding wisdom, but fix their minds on the mere techniques of breath control. Theirs is the kind of [non-Buddhist] meditation that fundamentally still retains outflows. 'Some Zen masters give all their attention to meditation alone' means that, for the sake of discussion, T'ien-t'ai gives them a certain degree of recognition, but from a stricter viewpoint they lack both insight and understanding. The Zen men in the world today value only meditation [as the way to realize the truth] and have no familiarity with doctrinal teachings. In relying upon meditation alone, they interpret the sutras in their own way. They put together the eight errors and the eight winds, and talk about the Buddha as being sixteen feet in height.¹⁹⁹ They lump together the five components and the three poisons, and call them the eight errors. They equate the six sense organs with the six transcendental powers, and the four elements with the four noble truths. To interpret the sutras in such an arbitrary manner is to be guilty of the greatest falsehood. Such nonsense is not even worth discussing."

The seventh volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* states: "In the past, the Zen master of Yeh and Lo²⁰⁰ became renowned throughout the length and breadth of China. When he arrived, people gathered around him from all directions like clouds, and when he left for another place, they formed a great crowd along the roads. But what profit did they derive from all this bustle and excitement? All of them regretted what they had done when they were on their deathbed."

In the seventh volume of *On "Great Concentration and Insight"* we read: "The text speaks of the 'Zen master of

Yeh and Lo.' Yeh is in Hsiang-chou and was the capital of the Ch'i and Wei dynasties. The founder of Zen caused Buddhism to flourish there and converted the people of the region. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, out of deference to the people of his time, refrains from naming anyone specifically. Lo refers to the city of Lo-yang."

The six-volume Parinirvana Sutra says, "The extreme is impossible to see. That is, the extremely evil deeds done by the icchantika are all but impossible to perceive." Or, as Miao-lo has said, "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because [the second and third ones are] increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are."

Those without eyes, those with only one eye, and those with distorted vision cannot see these three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra who have appeared at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. But those who have attained a portion of the Buddha eye can see who they are. "They will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders." And *Tung-ch'un* states, "These men will appeal to the government authorities, slandering the Law and its practitioners."

In the past, when the Middle Day of the Law was coming to an end, Gomyo, Shuen, and other priests presented petitions to the throne in which they slandered the Great Teacher Den-kyo. Now, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, Ryokan, Nen'a, and others drew up false documents and presented them to the shogunate. Are they not to be counted among the third group of enemies of the Lotus Sutra?

Nowadays the teachers of the Nembutsu address the "rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders" who support the Tendai Lotus school, saying, "The principles of the Lotus Sutra are very profound, but our understanding is slight. The doctrine it teaches is

extremely deep; our capabilities are extremely shallow." [Just as *Great Concentration and Insight* says,] they "object that it pertains to the lofty realm of the sages, something far beyond the capacity of one's own wisdom to comprehend."

Again, the men of the Zen school say: "The Lotus Sutra is a finger pointing at the moon, but the Zen school is the moon itself. Once one has the moon, of what use is the finger? Zen is the mind of the Buddha. The Lotus Sutra is the word of the Buddha. After the Buddha had finished preaching the Lotus Sutra and all the other sutras, he held up a single flower and through this gesture conveyed his enlightenment to Mahakashyapa alone.²⁰¹ As a token of this tacit communication, the Buddha presented Mahakashyapa with his own robe, which together with the enlightenment has been handed down through the twenty-eight patriarchs of India and so on through the six patriarchs of China." For many years now, the whole country has been intoxicated and deceived by this kind of falsehood.

Again, the eminent priests of the Tendai and True Word schools, though nominally representatives of their respective schools, are in fact quite ignorant of their teachings. In the depths of their greed and out of fear of the courtiers and warriors, they compromise with the assertions of the Nembutsu and Zen followers and sing their praises. Long ago, Many Treasures Buddha and the various Buddhas who were emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha acknowledged their allegiance to the Lotus Sutra, saying that they would "make certain that the Law will long endure." But now the eminent leaders of the Tendai school acknowledge the assertion that the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra are very profound but that human understanding is slight. As a result, the Lotus Sutra exists in Japan today in name

only—there is not a single person who actually practices it and attains enlightenment. Who can be called a votary of the Lotus Sutra? We see priests who burn down temples and pagodas and are exiled in numbers too great to count. And we see numerous eminent priests who fawn on the courtiers and warriors and are hated for it by the people. Can men such as these be called the votaries of the Lotus Sutra?

Because the predictions of the Buddha are not false, the three types of enemies of the Lotus Sutra already fill the country. And yet, as though to belie the golden words of the Buddha, there seems to be no votary of the Lotus Sutra. How can this be? How can this be?

But let us consider. Who is it who is cursed and spoken ill of by the populace? Who is the priest who is attacked with swords and staves? Who is the priest who, because of the Lotus Sutra, is accused in petitions submitted to the courtiers and warriors? Who is the priest who is “again and again banished,” as the Lotus Sutra predicted? Who else in Japan besides Nichiren has fulfilled these predictions?

But I, Nichiren, am not a votary of the Lotus Sutra, because, contrary to the prediction, the gods have cast me aside. Who, then, in this present age will be the votary of the Lotus Sutra and fulfill the prophecy of the Buddha?

The Buddha and Devadatta are like a form and its shadow—in lifetime after lifetime, they are never separated. Prince Shotoku and his archenemy Moriya²⁰² appeared at the same time, like the blossom and the calyx of the lotus. If there exists a votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the three types of enemies are bound to exist as well. The three types of enemies have already appeared. Who, then, is the votary of the Lotus Sutra? Let us seek him out and make him our teacher. [As the Lotus Sutra says, to find such a person is as

rare as for] a one-eyed turtle to chance upon a piece of driftwood [with a hole just the right size to hold him].²⁰³

Someone may raise this question: It would surely appear that the three types of enemies are present today, but there is no votary of the Lotus Sutra. If one were to say that you [Nichiren] are the votary of the Lotus Sutra, then the following serious discrepancies would become apparent. The Lotus Sutra states, “The young sons of heavenly beings will wait on him and serve him. Swords and staves will not touch him and poison will have no power to harm him.”²⁰⁴ It also reads, “If people speak ill of and revile him, their mouths will be closed and stopped up.”²⁰⁵ And it states, “They [who have heard the Law] will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.”²⁰⁶ It also states, “[If there are those who . . . trouble and disrupt the preachers of the Law], their heads will split into seven pieces like the branches of the arjaka tree.”²⁰⁷ Furthermore, it reads, “In this present existence they [the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra] will gain the reward of good fortune.”²⁰⁸ And it adds: “If anyone sees a person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person, whether what he speaks is true or not, he will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy.”²⁰⁹ [How do you explain these discrepancies?]

Answer: These doubts of yours are most opportune. I will take the occasion to clear up the points that puzzle you. The “Never Disparaging” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “They spoke ill of him [Bodhisattva Never Disparaging] and cursed him.” And again, “Some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him.” The Nirvana Sutra states, “[They will] even kill him or do him injury.” The Lotus Sutra states, “Since hatred and jealousy toward this

sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, [how much more will this be so after his passing?]"

The Buddha encountered acts of hostility, known as the nine great ordeals, such as being wounded on the toe by Devadatta, and yet he was a votary of the Lotus Sutra, was he not? And Bodhisattva Never Disparaging [who, as we have seen above, was cursed and beaten]—was he not a votary of the one vehicle teaching? Maudgalyayana was beaten to death by a Brahman group called Bamboo Staff sometime after the Lotus Sutra predicted that he would attain Buddhahood in a future life. Among the [twenty-five] leaders in the lineage of Buddhism, the fourteenth, Bodhisattva Aryadeva, and the twenty-fifth, the Venerable Aryasimha,²¹⁰ were murdered. Were these men not votaries of the Lotus Sutra? Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, and Fa-tao was branded on the face and exiled south of the Yangtze River. Were these men not upholders of the one vehicle teaching? Among scholars of secular learning, both Po Chü-i and Sugawara no Michizane, who was posthumously revered as the god of Kitano Shrine, were exiled to distant places, and yet were they not worthy men?

If we consider the second part of your question, we must note the following points. Those who did not commit the error of slandering the Lotus Sutra in their previous existences will become votaries of the Lotus Sutra in their present lives. If such persons should be subjected to persecution under a false charge of having committed worldly offenses, then those who persecute them ought to suffer some kind of immediate retribution. It should be like the case of the asuras who shoot arrows at Shakra or the garuda birds that try to eat the dragon of Anavatapta Lake, but who both invariably suffer injury themselves in-

stead. And yet T'ien-t'ai says, "The ills and pains I suffer at present are all due to causes in the past, and the meritorious deeds that I do in my present life will be rewarded in the future."²¹¹ Likewise, the Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra states: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present." The "Never Disparaging" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "when his offenses had been wiped out."²¹² This indicates that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was attacked with tiles and stones because he had in the past committed the offense of slandering the Lotus Sutra.

Next, we should note that persons who are inevitably destined to fall into hell in their next existence, even though they commit grave offenses in this life, will suffer no immediate punishment. The icchantikas are examples of this.

The Nirvana Sutra states, "Bodhisattva Kashyapa said to the Buddha, 'World-Honored One, as you have described, the rays of the Buddha's great nirvana enter the pores of all living beings.'" It also states, "Bodhisattva Kashyapa said to the Buddha, 'World-Honored One, how can those who have not yet conceived a desire for enlightenment create the causes that will lead to enlightenment?'" In reply, "the Buddha said to Kashyapa: 'There may be persons who listen to the Nirvana Sutra and yet claim that they have no need to conceive a desire for enlightenment, and instead slander the correct teaching. Such persons will immediately dream at night of demons, and their hearts will be filled with terror. The demons will say to them, 'How foolish you are, my friend! If you do not set your mind on enlightenment now, your life span will be cut

short!" These persons quake with fear, and as soon as they wake from the dream, they set their minds on enlightenment. And you should know that such persons will become great bodhisattvas.' In other words, although one might slander the correct teaching, if one is not an unspeakably evil person, one will be warned at once in a dream and will have a change of heart.

[According to the Nirvana Sutra, the icchantikas, on the other hand, are likened to] "dead trees or stony mountains" that can never bring forth growth. They are "scorched seeds that, although they encounter the sweet rain," will not grow. "Bright pearls have the power, when put into turbid water, to change it into clear water . . . But when thrown into the mud of icchantika, they cannot purify it." They are [like persons without a wound on their hands when the sutra says], "If a person with a wound on his hand handles poison,²¹³ it will enter his body, but it will not enter the body of a person without a wound." "Just as torrents of rain cannot remain suspended in the sky, [so the rain of the Law cannot remain in the sky of icchantika]."²¹⁴ Through these various similes we can know that icchantikas of the most evil type will invariably fall into the hell of incessant suffering in their next life. Therefore, they do not suffer any immediate punishment in this life. They are like the evil rulers of ancient China, King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty and King Chou of the Yin dynasty. During their reigns, heaven did not display any unusual manifestations as a warning. That was because their offenses were so grave that their dynasties were already destined to perish.

Third, it would appear that the guardian deities have deserted this country, and this is probably one reason why offenders do not suffer any immediate punishment. In an age that slanders the Law, guardian deities will take

their leave, and the various heavenly gods will cease to lend their protection. That is why the votaries of the correct teaching do not receive any sign of divine favor but, on the contrary, encounter severe difficulties. The Golden Light Sutra says, "Those who perform good deeds day by day languish and dwindle in number." We are living in an evil country and an evil age. I have discussed all this in detail in my work entitled *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*.

This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law. Shariputra practiced the way of the bodhisattva for sixty kalpas, but he abandoned the way because he could not endure the ordeal of the Brahman who begged for his eye.²¹⁵ Of those who received the seeds of Buddhahood in the remote past and those who did so from the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, many abandoned the seeds and suffered in hell for the long periods of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas and major world system dust particle kalpas, respectively, because they followed evil companions.

Whether tempted by good or threatened by evil, if one casts aside the Lotus Sutra, one destines oneself for hell. Here I will make a great vow. Though I might be offered the rulership of Japan if I would only abandon the Lotus Sutra, accept the teachings of the Meditation Sutra, and look forward to rebirth in the Pure Land, though I might be told that my father and mother will have their heads cut off if I do not recite the Nembutsu—whatever obstacles I might encounter, so long as persons of wisdom do not prove my teachings to be false, I will never yield! All other troubles are no more to me than dust before the wind.

I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great

ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it!

Question: How can you be certain that the exiles and sentences of death imposed on you are the result of karma created in the past?

Answer: A bronze mirror will reflect color and form. The First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty had a lie-detecting mirror that would reveal offenses committed in this present life. The mirror of the Buddha's Law makes clear the causal actions committed in the past. The Parinirvana Sutra states: "Good man, because people committed countless offenses and accumulated much evil karma in the past, they must expect to suffer retribution for everything they have done. They may be despised, cursed with an ugly appearance, be poorly clad and poorly fed, seek wealth in vain, be born to an impoverished and lowly family or one with erroneous views, or be persecuted by their sovereign. They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions. It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution."

This sutra passage and my own experience tally exactly. By now all the doubts that I have raised earlier should be dispelled, and thousands of difficulties are nothing to me. Let me show you phrase by phrase how the text applies to me. "They may be despised," or, as the Lotus Sutra says, people will "despise, hate, envy, or bear grudges against them"—and in exactly that manner I have been treated with contempt and arrogance for over twenty years. "They may be cursed with an ugly appearance," "They may be poorly clad"—these too apply to me. "They may be poorly fed"—that applies to me. "They may seek wealth in vain"—that applies to me. "They may be born to an impoverished and lowly family"—that applies to me. "They may be per-

secuted by their sovereign"—can there be any doubt that the passage applies to me? The Lotus Sutra says, "Again and again we will be banished," and the passage from the Parinirvana Sutra says, "They may be subjected to various other sufferings and retributions." [These passages also apply to me.]

The passage also says, "It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that they can diminish in this lifetime their suffering and retribution." The fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* has this to say on the subject: "The feeble merits produced by a mind only half intent on the practice cannot alter [the realm of karma]. But if one carries out the practice of concentration and insight so as to observe 'health' and 'illness,'²¹⁶ then one can alter the cycle of birth and death [in the realm of karma]." It also says, "[As practice progresses and understanding grows], the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere."

From the beginningless past I have been born countless times as an evil ruler who deprived the votaries of the Lotus Sutra of their robes and rations, their fields and crops, much as the people of Japan in the present day go about destroying the temples dedicated to the Lotus Sutra. In addition, countless times I cut off the heads of the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. Some of these grave offenses I have already paid for, but there must be some that are not paid for yet. Even if I seem to have paid for them all, there are still ill effects that remain. When the time comes for me to transcend the sufferings of birth and death, it will be only after I have completely freed myself from these grave offenses. My merits are insignificant, but these offenses are grave.

If I practiced the teachings of the provisional sutras, then these retributions for my past grave offenses would not appear. When iron is heated, if it is

not strenuously forged, the impurities in it will not become apparent. Only when it is subjected to the tempering process again and again will the flaws appear. When pressing hemp seeds, if one does not press very hard, one will not get much oil from them. Likewise, when I vigorously berate those throughout the country who slander the Law, I meet with great difficulties. It must be that my actions in defending the Law in this present life are calling forth retributions for the grave offenses of my past. If iron does not come into contact with fire, it remains black, but if it contacts fire, it turns red. If you place a log across a swift stream, waves will pile up like hills. If you disturb a sleeping lion, it will roar loudly.

The Nirvana Sutra says: "It is like the case of a poor woman. She has no house to live in and no one to aid or protect her, and in addition she is beset by illness, hunger, and thirst; she wanders through various places, begging for a living. While staying at an inn, she gives birth to a baby, but the master of the inn drives her away. Though the baby has just been born, she takes it up in her arms and sets out, hoping to journey to another land. But along the way, she encounters fierce wind and rain, and she is troubled by cold and bitten by mosquitoes, gadflies, hornets, and poisonous insects. Coming at length to the Ganges River, she clasps her child in her arms and begins to cross it. Although the current is very swift, she will not let go of her child, and in the end both mother and child are drowned. But through the merit that the woman gained by her loving tenderness, she is reborn after her death in the Brahma heaven.

"Manjushri, if there are good men who wish to defend the correct teaching, they should emulate this poor woman crossing the Ganges who sacrificed her life because of her love for her child. Good man, the bodhisattvas

who guard the Law should behave in this way. They should not hesitate to give up their lives. Then, although they do not seek emancipation, emancipation will come of itself, just as the poor woman, though she did not seek to be reborn in the Brahma heaven, was nevertheless reborn there."

The Great Teacher Chang-an interprets this story from the Nirvana Sutra in terms of the three obstacles.²¹⁷ Observe how he does this. The fact that the woman is called "poor" indicates that the person does not have the treasure of the Law. The fact that she is identified as a woman indicates that the person has a measure of tenderness. The "inn" signifies an impure land. The child she bears is the heart that has faith in the Lotus Sutra, or the wisdom that perceives one's inherent Buddha nature. Being driven out of the inn by its master signifies that the person is exiled. The fact that the baby has just been born means that very little time has passed since the person began to have faith in the Lotus Sutra. The fierce wind the woman encounters is the imperial decree sentencing the person to exile. The mosquitoes, gadflies, and other insects are the "many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of" the votary of the Lotus Sutra. The fact that both mother and child are drowned indicates that, though in the end the person had his head cut off, he never renounced his faith in the Lotus Sutra. Being reborn in the Brahma heaven means being reborn in the realm of Buddhahood.

The power of karmic rewards extends to all of the Ten Worlds, even to the realm of Buddhahood. Even though one might go around killing people throughout the provinces of Japan and China, if one does not commit any of the five cardinal sins or does not slander the Law, one will not fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Yet one must go through other evil paths for a period of

numerous years. Even if one observes ten thousand precepts and performs ten thousand good deeds, if one does so with a mind only half intent, one cannot be reborn in any heaven of the world of form. To be born a king in the Brahma heaven of that world, one must add the spirit of compassion to one's karma that is laden with outflows and draws one to the world of humanity. The poor woman in the sutra passage was reborn in the Brahma heaven because of her concern for her child. Her case is different from the nature of causality that is commonly known. Chang-an offers two interpretations of it, but in the end it is nothing other than the loving kindness with which the woman cares for her child that makes the difference. Her concern concentrates on one thing just like the Buddhist practice of concentration. She thinks of nothing but her child, which is similar to Buddhist compassion. That must be why, although she created no other causes to bring it about, she was reborn in the Brahma heaven.

The path to Buddhahood is not to be found in the Flower Garland doctrine of the phenomenal world as created by the mind alone, in the eight negations of the Three Treatises school, in the Consciousness-Only doctrine of the Dharma Characteristics school, or in the True Word type of meditation on the five elements of the universe. Only the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is the path to Buddhahood. Even in the case of this doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, we do not possess the kind of wisdom and understanding to comprehend it fully. Nevertheless, among all the sutras preached by the Buddha during his lifetime, the Lotus Sutra alone contains this jewel that is the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. The doctrines of the other sutras are merely yellow stones that appear to

be jewels. They are like sand, from which you can extract no oil no matter how hard you squeeze it, or a barren woman who can never bear a child. Even a wise person cannot become a Buddha through the other sutras, but with the Lotus Sutra, even fools can plant the seeds that lead to Buddhahood. As the sutra passage I have quoted earlier puts it, "Although they do not seek emancipation, emancipation will come of itself."

Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not have doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith.

Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes. Some of them feel pity for their wives and children and grieve at the thought of parting from them in this life. In countless births throughout many long kalpas they have had wives and children but parted from them in every existence. They have done so unwillingly and not because of their desire to pursue the way of the Buddha. Since they must part with them in any case, they should remain faithful to their belief in the Lotus Sutra and make their way to Eagle Peak, so that they may lead their wives and children there as well.

Question: You insist that the followers of the Nembutsu and Zen schools will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. This shows that you have a contentious heart. You yourself are in danger of falling into the realm of the asuras. Moreover, it is said in the "Peaceful Practices" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "He should not delight in

speaking of the faults of other people or scriptures. He should not display contempt for other teachers of the Law." It is because you are going against this passage in the sutra that you have been abandoned by heaven, is it not?

Answer: *Great Concentration and Insight* says: "There are two ways to spread the Buddha's teachings. The first is called shoju and the second is called shakubuku. When the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter says that one should not speak of the shortcomings of others, it is referring to the shoju method. But when the Nirvana Sutra says that one should carry swords and staves or that one should cut off their heads, it is referring to the shakubuku method. They differ in approach in that one is lenient and the other severe, but they both bring benefit."

On "*Great Concentration and Insight*" states: "With regard to the two ways of spreading the Buddha's teachings, the passage from the Nirvana Sutra, 'carry swords and staves,' is found in the third volume where it says, 'Defenders of the correct teaching need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. [Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows, halberds and lances.]' . . . And later on, the sutra tells of King Sen'yo [who put to death those who slandered the correct teaching]. It also mentions how the new physician, [explaining that the medicine from milk prescribed by the old physician was dangerous], forbade its usage, saying, 'If anyone takes any more of this medicine, he shall have his head cut off.'²¹⁸ These passages also demonstrate how the method of shakubuku should be applied to persons who go against the Law. All the sutras and treatises deal with one or the other of these two methods."

The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra reads: "Question: The Nirvana Sutra clearly states that one should associate closely with the ruler, bearing bows and

arrows and helping overthrow evil persons.²¹⁹ And yet [the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter of] the Lotus Sutra says that one should stay away from persons in power and should behave with humility and loving kindness. There seems to be a major contradiction between the sternness of one approach and the gentleness of the other. Why should they differ so?

"Answer: The Nirvana Sutra speaks mostly about the shakubuku approach. But it also mentions dwelling in the state where one looks on all living beings as one's own children. Could it say so if it did not have the shoju approach? The Lotus Sutra is mainly concerned with the shoju approach [as in the 'Peaceful Practices' chapter]. But [in the 'Dharani' chapter] there is also the curse [on those who trouble the preachers of the Law] that says they will have their heads split into seven pieces. Could it say so if it did not have the shakubuku approach? Both sutras employ one or the other of the two methods depending on the context. The method chosen should be that which accords with the time."

The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra states: "When monks or laymen are defending the Law, the most important thing is for them to adopt the proper basic mental attitude. They should disregard external details, stick to the principles, and in this way spread the teachings of the Nirvana Sutra. Therefore, it says that defenders of the correct teaching need not abide by petty regulations. And that is why it says they need not practice the rules of proper behavior. In past times the age was peaceful, and the Law spread throughout the country. At that time it was proper to observe the precepts and not to carry staves. But now the age is perilous, and the Law is overshadowed. Therefore, it is proper to carry staves and to disregard the precepts. If both past and present were perilous times,

then it would be proper to carry staves in both periods. And if both past and present were peaceful times, then it would be proper to observe the precepts in both of them. You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other.”

I suppose the learned priests of the time think it is only natural that one should have doubts about this. Therefore, no matter how I explain and try to persuade my own disciples, they still cannot seem to overcome their doubts, but behave like icchantikas, or persons of incorrigible disbelief. Therefore, I have quoted these passages of explanation from T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo, and others in order to silence their ungrounded criticisms.

These two methods of shoju and shakubuku are like water and fire. Fire hates water, water detests fire. The practitioner of shoju laughs with scorn at shakubuku. The practitioner of shakubuku laments at the thought of shoju. When the country is full of evil people without wisdom, then shoju is the primary method to be applied, as described in the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. But at a time when there are many people of perverse views who slander the Law, then shakubuku should come first, as described in the “Never Disparaging” chapter. It is like using cold water to cool yourself in the hot weather, or longing for a fire when the weather turns cold. Grass and trees are kindred to the sun—they suffer in the cold moonlight. Bodies of water are followers of the moon—they lose their true nature when the hot weather comes.

In the Latter Day of the Law, however, both shoju and shakubuku are to be used. This is because there are two kinds of countries, the country that is passively evil,²²⁰ and the kind that actively seeks to destroy the Law. We must consider carefully to which category Japan at the present time belongs.

Question: If one applies the shakubuku method at a time when the shoju method would be appropriate, or shoju at a time when shakubuku would be appropriate, is there any merit to be gained?

Answer: The Nirvana Sutra says: “Bodhisattva Kashyapa addressed the Buddha, saying, ‘The Dharma body of the Thus Come One is as indestructible as a diamond. But I do not yet understand the means by which you acquired it. Would you tell me?’

“The Buddha replied: ‘Kashyapa, it is because I was a defender of the correct teaching that I have been able to attain this diamond-like body. Kashyapa, because [in the past] I devoted myself to the correct teaching, I have been able to achieve this diamond-like body that abides forever and is never destroyed. Good man, defenders of the correct teaching need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows . . .

“‘The monks [whom you are speaking of] preach various teachings, but still they are not able to utter “the lion’s roar.” . . . Nor are they able to refute and convert evil persons who go against the correct teaching. Monks of this kind can bring no benefit either to themselves or to the populace. You should realize that they are in fact shirkers and idlers. Though they are careful in observing the precepts and maintain spotless conduct, you should realize that they cannot achieve anything. [Then a monk raises “the lion’s roar.” . . .] Those who break the precepts, upon listening to his preaching, are all enraged to the point where they attack him. This preacher of the Law, though he may in the end lose his life, is still worthy of being called a person who observes the precepts and brings benefits to both himself and others.’”

In the passage from *On the Nirvana*

Sutra quoted earlier, Chang-an says, "You should let your choices be fitting and never adhere solely to one or the other." And T'ien-t'ai, as we have seen, declared that "the method chosen should be that which accords with the time." If it is not, you will be like someone who plants seeds at the end of autumn. Though you may carefully tend the field, you are not likely to harvest any rice or grain.

During the Kennin era (1201-1204), two men came to prominence, Honen and Dainichi, who spread the teachings of the Nembutsu and Zen schools, respectively. Honen denied the worth of the Lotus Sutra now that the world has entered the Latter Day of the Law, saying that "not a single person has ever attained Buddhahood" through that sutra, and that "not even one person in a thousand" can be saved by its teachings. Dainichi for his part claimed that the true teachings of Buddhism had been transmitted apart from the sutras. These two doctrines have now spread throughout the entire country. The learned priests of the Tendai and True Word schools fawn on the lay supporters of the Nembutsu and Zen schools the way a dog wags its tail before its master or fear them the way a mouse fears a cat. These men enter the service of the ruler and the military leader, where they preach in such a way as to bring about the destruction of the Buddhist Law and the ruin of the country. These Tendai and True Word leaders in their present existence will fall into the realm of hungry spirits and, after death, will find themselves in the Avichi hell. Even if they retire to the mountain forests and engage intensely in the meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, or retire to a quiet spot and concentrate on the three mysteries [of body, mouth, and mind], if they do not understand the time or the people's capacity and perceive which of the two meth-

ods, shoju or shakubuku, is appropriate, then they can never free themselves from the sufferings of birth and death.

Question: When you berate the followers of the Nembutsu and Zen schools and arouse their enmity, what merit does that bring?

Answer: The Nirvana Sutra says: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice-hearer."

Chang-an comments on this as follows: "One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is betraying them. If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender is a voice-hearer who defends the Buddha's teachings, a true disciple of the Buddha. One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent. Those who reproach offenders are disciples of the Buddha. But those who do not oust offenders are betraying the Buddha's teachings."²²¹

If we examine the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha gathering together. And why? As the sutra itself says, "Each . . . has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure." Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas intend to insure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra so that it can be made available to all the children of the Buddha in times to come. We may surmise from this that their concern and compassion are even greater than those of

a father and mother who see their only child inflicted with great suffering. Honen, however, shows not the least concern about their compassion, but would tightly shut the gates to the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law so that no one would have access to it. Like a person who tricks a demented child into throwing away a treasure, he tries to induce people to discard the Lotus Sutra, a shameless thing to do indeed!

If someone is about to kill your father and mother, shouldn't you try to warn them? If a bad son who is insane with drink is threatening to kill his father and mother, shouldn't you try to stop him? If some evil person is about to set fire to the temples and pagodas, shouldn't you try to stop him? If your only child is gravely ill, shouldn't you try to cure him or her with moxibustion treatment? To fail to do so is to act like those people who see but do not try to put a stop to the Zen and Nembutsu followers in Japan. [As Chang-an says,] "If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy."

I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan. But the men of the Tendai school [who do not refute misleading teachings] are all great enemies of the people. [As Chang-an has noted,] "One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent."

One who has not conceived a desire for the way can never free oneself from the sufferings of birth and death. Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was cursed by all the followers of non-Buddhist teachings and labeled as a man of great evil. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was regarded with intense enmity by the three schools of the

south and seven schools of the north, and Tokuitsu of Japan criticized him for using his three-inch tongue to try to destroy the five-foot body of the Buddha²²². The Great Teacher Dengyo was disparaged by the priests of Nara, who said, "Saicho has never been to the capital of T'ang China!"²²³ But all of these abuses were incurred because of the Lotus Sutra, and they are therefore no shame to the men who suffered them. To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame. Now that I, Nichiren, have incurred the wrath of the authorities, the priests of the Tendai and True Word schools are no doubt delighted. They are strange and shameless men.

Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the saha world, Kumarajiva journeyed to the Ch'in dynasty in China,²²⁴ and Dengyo likewise went to China [all for the sake of the Lotus Sutra]. Aryadeva and Aryasimha sacrificed their bodies. Bodhisattva Medicine King burned his arms as an offering, and Prince Jogu stripped off the skin on his hand [and copied the sutra on it].²²⁵ Shakyamuni, when he was a bodhisattva, sold his flesh to make offerings,²²⁶ and another time, when he was a bodhisattva named the ascetic Aspiration for the Law, he used one of his bones as a pen [to write down the Buddha's teaching].

T'ien-t'ai has said that "the method chosen should be that which accords with the time." The propagation of the Buddhist teachings should follow the time. For what I have done, I have been condemned to exile, but it is a small suffering to undergo in this present life and not one worth lamenting. In future lives I will enjoy immense happiness, a thought that gives me great joy.



Background

This treatise is one of Nichiren Daishonin's five most important writings, in which he reveals his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent. In the second month of the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), still in exile under harsh conditions on Sado Island, the Daishonin completed this work in two volumes and addressed it to Shijo Kingo, one of his leading disciples in Kamakura and a samurai who was in the employ of the ruling Hojo clan, on behalf of all his followers. When the Daishonin was taken to Tatsunokuchi in Kamakura in 1271, Shijo Kingo accompanied him, having resolved to die by his side, and personally witnessed his triumph over execution. Also, he had journeyed to Sado to visit the Daishonin in exile and sent his messengers to him with writing materials and other necessities.

The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind, written in 1273, clarifies, from the viewpoint of the Law, the object of devotion that enables all people to attain Buddhahood. *The Opening of the Eyes* treats the same subject in terms of the Person; that is, it shows Nichiren Daishonin to be the Buddha who would establish the object of devotion for all humankind to achieve Buddhahood. The object of devotion is the embodiment of the Daishonin's enlightenment to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Law implied in the depths of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin's life on the forbidding island of Sado was full of hardship; his hut was open to wind and snow, and he lacked food, clothing, and writing materials. In addition to his physical suffering, he was greatly troubled by the news that many of his followers in Kamakura had abandoned their faith. Feeling himself constantly facing the shadow of death, the Dai-

shonin wrote this treatise to encourage his disciples as though it were his last will and testament.

Nichiren Daishonin later described his motives behind the work in his *Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra*: "After everyone had gone, I began to put into shape a work in two volumes called *The Opening of the Eyes*, which I had been working on since the eleventh month of the previous year. I wanted to record the wonder of Nichiren, in case I should be beheaded. The essential message in this work is that the destiny of Japan depends solely upon Nichiren. A house without pillars collapses, and a person without a soul is dead. Nichiren is the soul of the people of this country" (p. 772).

The title *The Opening of the Eyes* means to enable people to see the truth, in other words, to free people from illusions and distorted views and awaken them to an understanding of the correct teaching and its correct teacher. The work describes the role the Daishonin played in championing the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra and in spreading its teachings, as he himself viewed and experienced it. A passage from this treatise reads: "On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year, between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded. It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado" (p. 269). It was through the Tatsunokuchi Persecution that Nichiren Daishonin revealed his true identity as the eternal Buddha. This passage refers to the death of a common person named Nichiren and indicates that from then on the Daishonin was to reveal in full his enlightenment as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

Nichiren Daishonin begins this treatise with the words, "There are three categories of people that all human

beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher, and the parent” (p. 220). The three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent are equated with the qualifications of a Buddha. The virtue of sovereign is the power to protect all living beings; the virtue of teacher is the wisdom to lead all to enlightenment, and the virtue of parent means compassion to nurture and support them. These three virtues constitute a theme that runs throughout this treatise, and at the conclusion of this work the Daishonin declares, “I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan” (p. 287).

At the outset Nichiren Daishonin discusses Confucianism, Taoism, Brahmanism, Hinayana, and provisional Mahayana Buddhism, and then moves on to the Lotus Sutra. He attributes the disasters ravaging Japan to the confusion in Buddhism and the failure by both rulers and subjects to recognize the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. Here he cites two reasons why the sutra is supreme. One is that the theoretical teaching (the first half of the sutra) reveals that people of the two vehicles can attain enlightenment, a possibility utterly denied in the previous forty-two years of the Buddha’s preaching. This substantiates the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and the statement that Buddhahood is open to all. The other reason is that, in the essential teaching (the latter half of the sutra), Shakyamuni Buddha proclaims that he first attained enlightenment in an unfathomably remote past.

The Daishonin states that Shakyamuni Buddha himself declared that the Lotus Sutra is “the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” In this sutra the Buddha implied the supreme teaching, as stated: “The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the ‘Life Span’ chapter of the

essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra” (p. 224). The Daishonin takes the position that only the revelation of the truth of Buddhism can save the nation and the people. This conviction, he says, has moved him to propagate the essence of the Lotus Sutra in spite of the persecution that he knew he would incur. He realized that his followers might doubt him because of the apparent failure of the gods to protect a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he stated: “This doubt lies at the heart of this piece I am writing. And because it is the most important concern of my entire life, I will raise it again and again here, and emphasize it more than ever, before I attempt to answer it” (p. 243).

The second part of this treatise discusses the “Emerging from the Earth” and the “Life Span” chapters of the Lotus Sutra, where Shakyamuni Buddha summons forth countless bodhisattvas from beneath the earth and reveals that he actually attained enlightenment in the remote past, and that all the Buddhas of the other sutras are his emanations and all the bodhisattvas, his disciples. Nichiren Daishonin clarifies that the Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter is the teacher of all Buddhas.

At this point, an implicit analogy begins to emerge. The doubt held by Shakyamuni’s disciples about how he could possibly have taught the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth in this life leads to the revelation of his true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago. Similarly, the doubt held by the Daishonin’s followers about why he has been exiled and suffered so many persecutions leads to an understanding of his true identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day.

Then the Daishonin mentions the principle of sowing, maturing, and harvesting. He points to the unsurpassed Law whereby all Buddhas attain en-

lightenment—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*. This Law is what lies in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter. Nichiren Daishonin directly teaches this Law, the true cause for attaining Buddhahood, and his Buddhism is called the Buddhism of sowing because it implants this “seed of enlightenment” in the lives of those who practice it. In this light, he possesses the virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for humanity as a whole.

Nichiren Daishonin explains that each sutra has its own claim to excellence; he also gives examples of statements in which various sutras assert their own superiority to other teachings. But the Lotus Sutra alone declares that it is supreme among all sutras, and the Daishonin reconfirms its supremacy. The Lotus Sutra speaks of the three powerful enemies of the sutra and prophesies opposition and hostility toward the sutra and its votary. All this the Daishonin had himself encountered; all this is predicted in the sutra. As the votary of the Lotus Sutra, he vows to stake his life on the cause of saving all people, saying: “Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law. . . . I will be the pillar of

Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it” (pp. 280–81). Then he assures his disciples that they will definitely attain Buddhahood as long as they do not permit themselves to be overcome by doubts, even when difficulties befall them.

In the final section of this treatise, Nichiren Daishonin explains that there are two ways to propagate the Lotus Sutra: *shoju*, or gentle persuasion, and *shakubuku*, or strict refutation. Here, the Daishonin argues that both methods should be used, because there are two kinds of countries, those whose people are ignorant of the correct teaching of Buddhism and those whose people deliberately oppose it. But Japan, as a nation that slanders the correct teaching, requires the *shakubuku* method. Then he concludes that to remove suffering and give joy to the people is the Buddha’s teaching. The Daishonin has devoted himself to refuting and rooting out the causes of human misery. For him, the exile to Sado was only a “small suffering” in this life. Indeed, he feels “great joy” because of the results he is confident will come in the future.

Notes

1. Also known as Yü Shun. He is the last of the Five Emperors, legendary rulers of ancient China.

2. The governor of P’ei refers to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.E.), the founder of the Former Han dynasty.

3. When King Wu decided to overthrow the tyrant Chou of the Yin dynasty, before setting out on his campaign, he carved a wooden figure of his father, who had cherished the same desire to save the people. The Earl of the West refers to King Wen of the Chou dynasty, the third of the Three Kings who reigned after the Five Emperors.

4. During the Later Han dynasty, Ting Lan, who had lost his mother at the age of

fifteen, made a statue of her and served it as if she had been still alive.

5. Yin Shou and Wu Ch’eng are legendary figures. T’ai-kung Wang was a general who served King Wen and, after the king’s death, served King Wu, Wen’s son. He fought valorously with King Chou of the Yin dynasty and contributed to the prosperity of the Chou dynasty.

6. This assertion is found in *Chuang Tzu* and *Records of the Historian*.

7. The principles refer to the first two of the five constant virtues taught by Confucius.

8. Their names are unknown.

9. This is found in *Lieh Tzu*, an early Taoist text.

10. Propriety and music were regarded as instrumental in enhancing people's sense of morality, and in maintaining social order.

11. The three types of learning or disciplines essential for the Buddhist practitioner.

12. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight."* "The true way" here refers to Buddhism.

13. *Great Concentration and Insight.*

14. Confucius, his disciple Yen Hui, and Lao Tzu.

15. Kapila and Uluka were the respective founders of the Samkhya and Vaishe-shika schools, two of the six major schools of Brahmanism in ancient India. Rishabha's teachings are said to have prepared the way for Jainism. They were called the three ascetics.

16. The world of formlessness being divided into four realms, this refers to the uppermost.

17. "Outflows" here means illusions or defilements. The worlds of form and formlessness are the two highest worlds of the threefold world.

18. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

19. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

20. Lotus Sutra, chap. 8.

21. "Transmigration with differences and limitations" refers to the transmigration of unenlightened beings through the six paths. In this repeating cycle of rebirth through the six lower deluded worlds, living beings are born with limited spans of life and in different forms in accordance with their karma. "Transmigration with change and advance" refers to the transmigration of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas. In this transmigration, they change, or emancipate, from the body subject to transmigration of delusion with differences and limitations, while gradually removing illusions leading to sufferings.

22. The great man refers here to the Buddha.

23. A passage from the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra that reads, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."

24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. It reads, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth."

25. *Ibid.*, chap. II.

26. This is described in chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra.

27. This refers to the theory of three thousand realms in a single moment of life based on the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra, and the actuality of three thousand realms in a single moment of life based on the essential teaching (latter half) of the sutra.

28. Nirvana Sutra.

29. "Appropriating Buddhism" refers to the incorporating of the Hinayana teachings by non-Buddhists into their own doctrine, claiming it as their own teaching. "Plagiarizing Buddhism" refers to the plagiarizing of Buddhist teachings by non-Buddhists who set forth Mahayana teachings as the doctrine of their own school. They are described in *Great Concentration and Insight.*

30. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

31. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. *See* n. 23.

32. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

33. *Ibid.*

34. According to ancient Indian cosmology, the watery circle is one of three circles, made respectively of gold, water, and wind, that supported Mount Sumeru and the surrounding continents.

35. The debts owed to one's parents, teacher, sovereign, and the three treasures of Buddhism.

36. In the Larger Wisdom Sutra, these words are spoken by Subhuti, a disciple of the Buddha, but the Daishonin is treating them here as the words of Shakyamuni Buddha himself, who expounded the sutra.

37. This is the statement that the heavenly beings made with tears of joy, when they heard the Buddha preaching. The shurangama meditation is supposed to prevent one from being troubled by earthly desires and illusions.

38. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, regarded as an introduction to the Lotus Sutra.

39. Lotus Sutra, chap. II.

40. *Ibid.*, chap. 21.

41. *Ibid.*, chap. 22.

42. This indicates the preaching of the Flower Garland Sutra.

43. The four Buddhas are Akshobhya (east), Jewel Sign (south), Infinite Life (west), and Subtle and Wonderful Voice (north).

44. The six directions refer to east, west, north, south, up, and down.

45. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

46. *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

47. The revelation that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. This appears in the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The first important teaching is that persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood. This is explained in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

48. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. In this chapter Shakyamuni expounded the ten factors to indicate that all people are endowed with the Buddha nature; this provided a theoretical basis for the assertion that all people can become Buddhas. Later in the same chapter Shakyamuni declares that all the teachings he expounded serve to reveal the one vehicle leading all to Buddhahood.

49. The eight chapters from the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter to the “Prophecies” (9th) chapter.

50. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

51. The “causes” refers to the practice of the four teachings—the Tripitaka, connecting, specific, and perfect teachings—leading to the attainment of enlightenment. See also eight teachings in Glossary.

52. By revealing that the Buddha still retains all the nine worlds even after achieving enlightenment, the “Life Span” chapter of the essential teaching demonstrates that cause (nine worlds) and effect (Buddhahood) exist simultaneously.

53. In the Agama sutras Shakyamuni preaches Hinayana or lesser teachings. Hence the “little Shakyamuni.”

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

55. The “Emerging from the Earth” and “Life Span” chapters reveal that Shakyamuni’s enlightenment actually occurred in the far distant past, and that the three bodies—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body—are eternally inherent in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha.

56. A state in northeast India. Asanga was a native of Gandhara but lived most of his life in Ayodhya.

57. Dharmapala, Nanda, and Shilabhadra were scholars of the Yogachara, or Consciousness-Only school, associated with Nalanda Monastery in India.

58. An old name of Kofuku-ji, the head temple of the Dharma Characteristics

school, one of the seven major temples of Nara.

59. Vatsa was the founder of the Hinayana Vatsiputriya school, and Vaipulya incorporated Mahayana into non-Buddhist teachings. Vimalamitra, who appears in the next sentence, is said to have opposed Vasubandhu, and Madhava was a scholar of the Samkhya school.

60. This age is a period of decrease, in which the human life span was diminishing. According to *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*, during the kalpa of continuance, the human life span is said to undergo a repeated cycle of increase and decrease.

61. The third group refers to the story of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha and his sixteen sons, which appears in the “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Major world system dust particle kalpas ago, Great Universal Wisdom Excellence preached the Lotus Sutra to his sixteen sons. These sons then preached the sutra to the people. Among the people, the third group comprises those who heard the Lotus Sutra at that time but did not take faith in it and could not attain enlightenment even when the sixteenth son appeared in India as Shakyamuni Buddha and preached it to them again.

62. *The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight*, by Tao-ch’o, the second patriarch of the Pure Land school in China.

63. The first quotation is from *On the World of Peace and Delight*, and the second quotation, from *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land* by Shan-tao, the third patriarch of the Pure Land school in China.

64. The Japanese text may also read, “Then the ruler of the nation will surely take steps against my parents, brothers, and teachers.”

65. A world was said to go through a continuous cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration, each of these four phases lasting one medium kalpa. The end of the kalpa of decline is marked by a great fire that consumes the world.

66. These persecutions refer to the exiles to the Izu Peninsula and Sado Island.

67. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

68. *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

69. *Ibid.*, chap. 14.

70. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. The quotation that follows is from the same chapter.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, chap. 20.

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

74. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."*

75. *An Essay on the Protection of the Nation.* Tokuitsu (n.d.), a priest of the Dharma Characteristics school, carried on a long-standing controversy with Dengyo. Chih-i is another name for T'ien-t'ai.

76. Non-Buddhists: This term generally refers to Brahmanists in the text of the sutras and, furthermore, to Confucians and Taoists in the context of *Tung-ch'un*.

77. The six superintendents of priests were the priests of the temples in the city of Nara, who opposed Dengyo in 819. They were Jo'e of Kofuku-ji, Buan of Toshodai-ji, Shuen of Kofuku-ji, Taien of Saidai-ji, Sebyo of Gango-ji, and the Chief Superintendent Gomyo of Gango-ji.

78. In the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, eight hundred thousand million nayutas of bodhisattvas describe the persecutions they will endure after the Buddha's passing for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.

79. In the twenty-line verse of the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, the countless assembled bodhisattvas vow to brave various hardships in propagating the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. These hardships were later categorized by Miao-lo as the work of the three powerful enemies. This passage refers to the first of the three powerful enemies. The "Encouraging Devotion" chapter itself refers only to "swords and staves." "Rocks and tiles" is an interpolation from the "Never Disparaging" chapter.

80. This passage refers to the second of the three powerful enemies.

81. This passage refers to the third of the three powerful enemies: monks who enjoy the respect of the general public but, in fear of losing fame and profit, induce the authorities to persecute the votaries.

82. Two of the three extant Chinese versions of the Lotus Sutra are mentioned here. The three are the Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law translated by Dharmaraksha, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law by Kumarajiva, and the Supplemental Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law by Jnanagupta and Dharmagupta. Among these versions, Kumarajiva's is by far the most widely used.

83. In 544 B.C.E. Chi-cha, the son of Shou-meng, king of Wu, was ordered to

visit other countries as an envoy. At that time he was given a valuable sword. When he happened to be passing through the country of Hsü, the lord of the state saw Chi-cha's sword and wanted it, though he did not dare to say so. Chi-cha, however, understood the lord's desire and in his heart promised to give him the sword after he had fulfilled his mission and returned to Hsü. But when he returned, he found that the lord had already died. True to his promise, he offered the sword at the lord's grave.

84. The details of the story are unknown; it symbolizes Wang Shou's deep gratitude for the natural environment and sense of integrity.

85. When Mao Pao was walking along the Yangtze River, he saw a fisherman catch a turtle and prepare to kill it. He bought the turtle and put it back in the water. Later, Mao Pao was defeated by a powerful general named Shih Hu. When he fled in retreat to the Yangtze River, the turtle that he had saved appeared and carried him on its back to the opposite shore.

86. A pond constructed by Emperor Wu of the Former Han dynasty. One day he saw a fish in the pond suffering because of a hook caught in its throat. The emperor felt pity for the fish and removed the hook, putting the fish back into the water. Later, to repay its obligation, the fish offered a bright jewel to the emperor.

87. Because King Chieh, the seventeenth ruler of the Hsia dynasty, tyrannically perpetrated various atrocities, he was overthrown by his enemies, and the Hsia dynasty perished. King Chou, the last ruler of the Yin dynasty, enslaved by his love for his consort Ta Chi, totally misgoverned the country. He was destroyed by King Wu of the Chou dynasty.

88. The twelve hundred voice-hearers refer to the arhats who received a prophecy of attaining Buddhahood in the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Each of them was given the same designation: the Thus Come One Universal Brightness.

89. The thousand voice-hearers refer to the disciples who gathered at the First Buddhist Council convened shortly after Shakyamuni's death in Magadha to compile his teachings.

90. The five types of vision are given

here. "Eye" here means perceptive faculty. See five types of vision in Glossary.

91. Lotus Sutra, chap. 4. "A rare thing" in the quotation refers to the Lotus Sutra, and "offer him our hands and feet" means to serve the Buddha and practice his teachings.

92. This story appears in the Vimalakirti Sutra. When Mahakashyapa heard Vimalakirti speak about enlightenment, he could not understand it at all and wept over the fact that he did not inherently possess the seed of Buddhahood. The sutra relates that the sound of his weeping echoed throughout the major world system.

93. This story is also found in the Vimalakirti Sutra. One day Subhuti came to Vimalakirti asking for alms. Vimalakirti filled Subhuti's bowl but told him that he did not deserve to receive alms and that those who offered alms to him would invariably fall into the three evil paths. At that time Subhuti was so shocked that he almost went off without his alms bowl.

94. This story is found in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. When Shakyamuni Buddha reproached Shariputra for eating impure food, Shariputra was so surprised that he spat it out. Impure food indicates what is not an offering made from the heart.

95. This story appears in the Vimalakirti Sutra. When Shakyamuni Buddha saw Purna preaching the Hinayana teachings to the people, he told Purna that he should not put impure things into a precious vessel.

96. In the period before Shakyamuni renounced the secular life, he married Yashodhara, a beautiful woman whom Devadatta had wished to marry. As a result, Devadatta nurtured a grudge against Shakyamuni.

97. Based on a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

98. The above stories are included among the nine great ordeals or persecutions suffered by Shakyamuni Buddha. They are described in *Great Perfection of Wisdom* and other texts.

99. The story of King Virudhaka appears in *The Monastic Rules on Various Matters* and elsewhere; it is also included in the nine great ordeals mentioned above. The story of the nun Utpalavarna is found in *Great Perfection of Wisdom*; because she reproved Devadatta for being a great enemy

of Buddhism, he was so enraged that he beat her to death. Kalodayin's disaster is described in *The Ten Divisions of Monastic Rules*: one day when he was going about begging, a woman offered him alms, but her jealous and enraged husband killed him. The fate of Maudgalyayana is found in *Monastic Rules on Various Matters*. All of these stories appear also in the various Agama sutras.

100. Adapted from a passage in the Nirvana Sutra.

101. The garden of mango trees in the city of Vaishali in India.

102. *A History of the Buddha's Successors* states that, when Mahakashyapa felt that death was approaching, he transferred the teachings to Ananda and went to Mount Kukkutapada in Magadha, where he entered into meditation and died. It is said that not until Bodhisattva Maitreya appears in the world 5,670 million years after the Buddha's death will Mahakashyapa reappear.

103. Reference is to a passage in the "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads, "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off."

104. Reference is to a special transmission outside the scriptures, not dependent on words and phrases, an expression commonly used in Zen.

105. Honen does not use these words in this particular form, however. Nichiren Daishonin took these words from *The Nembutsu Chosen above All* and put them together as a set.

106. These four types of ten stages are divisions of the fifty-two stages through which a bodhisattva advances from his first resolve to his attainment of perfect enlightenment.

107. "Inconceivable emancipation" is defined as awakening to the profound and subtle principle of Mahayana. Described in the Vimalakirti Sutra.

108. The two deities are Shiva and Vishnu.

109. After he renounced secular life, Shakyamuni engaged in various practices for twelve years until he attained enlightenment. It is said that for the first six years he carried out ascetic practices (painful), and for the second six years he persevered in the practice of meditation (comfortable).

110. This story appears in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In the distant past, Manjushri appeared as Bodhisattva Wonderfully Bright, a disciple of Sun Moon Bright Buddha. After the Buddha's demise, Wonderfully Bright continued to embrace the Lotus Sutra, which his teacher had expounded. The Buddha had fathered eight sons before renouncing the world. Wonderfully Bright led the princes to enlightenment. The last of them to attain Buddhahood was Burning Torch Buddha, under whom Shakyamuni practiced the sutra for enlightenment in a previous existence. This is why Shakyamuni is called "the ninth disciple of Bodhisattva Manjushri."

111. In the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha says, "These immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law," although he does not clarify what this Law is.

112. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

113. *Sad* corresponds to *sad* of *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, the Sanskrit name of the Lotus Sutra.

114. The quotation has not been identified. Chi-tsang (549–623) was a priest of the Three Treatises school in China.

115. The English translation is based on this reconstruction made from versions of the mantra found in *The Writings of Kakuzen* and other sources.

*namaḥ samanta-buddhānām
oṃ a ā aṃ ḥ
sarva-buddha-jña-sākṣebhyaḥ
gaḡana-sambhavālakṣaṇi
saddharma-puṇḍarika-sūtra
jaḥ hūṃ baṃ hoḥ vajrarakṣaman
hūṃ svāhā*

116. The True Word tradition holds that Nagarjuna received the Mahavairochana Sutra from Bodhisattva Vajrasattva along with other esoteric teachings preserved in an iron tower in southern India.

117. "Nam" is a phonetic contraction of "Namu."

118. On "Great Concentration and Insight."

119. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

120. One of the four universal vows of a bodhisattva. The others are to eradicate countless earthly desires, to master immeasurable Buddhist teachings, and to attain supreme enlightenment. The following quotation is from chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra.

121. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

122. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation.*

123. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

124. A kind of lily used in religious ceremonies.

125. Symbolism found in the True Word sutras. On four of the eight petals four Buddhas are seated with four bodhisattvas on the other four petals. Mahavairochana Buddha is seated in the center of the lotus; this scene is described in the Mahavairochana Sutra. The Diamond Crown Sutra depicts thirty-seven Buddhas and bodhisattvas including Mahavairochana Buddha.

126. *Profound Meaning.*

127. Dharma Wisdom, Forest of Merits, Diamond Banner, and Diamond Storehouse.

128. Manjushri, Universal Worthy, Maitreya, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

129. The sixteen bodhisattvas who attend on the Buddhas of the four quarters of the universe.

130. T'ai-kung Wang is the title of a general who served the kings Wen and Wu of the Chou dynasty. The other three sages are Yin Shou, Wu Ch'eng, and Lao Tzu.

131. Emperor Kao-tsu (247–195 B.C.E.), founder of the Former Han dynasty, tried to disown his son, the future Emperor Hui. Hui's mother, Empress Lü, persuaded four eminent elders who lived on Mount Shang to become his advisers. They were known as Master Tung-yüan, Scholar Lu-li, Ch'i Li-chi, and Master Hsia-hüang. On seeing these four elders, the emperor was impressed by their dignity and accepted Hui as his successor.

132. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

133. *Words and Phrases.*

134. On "The Words and Phrases."

135. An epithet of Maitreya, meaning "invincible."

136. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15. The following quotation is a continuation of this passage.

137. A lake on the grounds of Bamboo Grove Monastery in Rajagriha, Magadha.

138. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

139. According to the Meditation Sutra, when Ajatashatru killed his father and confined Vaidehi to the interior of the palace, she faced Eagle Peak where Shakyamuni was preaching and prayed to him. Out of compassion, he appeared in her chamber and taught her how to reach the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

140. The “Devadatta” chapter describes the teacher-disciple relationship between Devadatta and Shakyamuni in their previous existence. The chapter refers to a king, who, in order to seek the great Law, served a seer named Asita for one thousand years. After relating this story, Shakyamuni identifies the king as himself in a previous existence and Asita as Devadatta. He is now the teacher of the man who once taught him. The “Devadatta” chapter thus provides an answer to the question posed in the Meditation Sutra.

141. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16. In the “Peaceful Practices” chapter, or the last chapter of the theoretical teaching, the Buddha had yet to teach of his enlightenment in the remote past.

142. Source unknown.

143. *The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, written by Kobo.

144. These are practices designed to eradicate the illusions of thought and desire.

145. *The Annotations on the Flower Garland Sutra* divides the manifested body into superior and inferior.

146. *The Treatise of Five Hundred Questions*.

147. In the time of T'ien-t'ai, the esoteric teachings of the True Word school had not yet reached China. Shan-wu-wei brought them from India in 716, shortly after the birth of Miao-lo.

148. When Dengyo went to China, he studied chiefly T'ien-t'ai's teachings based on the Lotus Sutra. When he returned to Japan, however, he also brought some esoteric teachings with him. For this reason he is referred to as the patriarch of esoteric and exoteric Buddhism, since his introduction of esoteric texts preceded that of Kobo.

149. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.

150. That is, they do not reveal the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment in the distant past as explained in the Lotus Sutra.

151. In his *Treatise on the Lotus Sutra*, Vasubandhu asserted the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all other sutras from ten viewpoints. “The seeds without peer” is the first of them.

152. The Womb Realm mandala, described in the Mahavairochana Sutra, and the Diamond Realm mandala, described in the Diamond Crown Sutra.

153. From the preface to *A Clarification*

of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine. I-hsing (683–727) assisted his master Shan-wu-wei in translating the Sanskrit version of the Mahavairochana Sutra into Chinese and compiled his oral teachings as *The Annotations on the Mahavairochana Sutra*.

154. The island of Ezo here refers to Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands. This poem is by an anonymous poet from the ninth volume of *A Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry*. In the Japanese text, only the first words of the poem are quoted.

155. In his *Treatise on the Ten Stages of the Mind*, Kobo classified the various Buddhist teachings as corresponding to ten stages of the mind's development and ranked the Lotus Sutra eighth, the Flower Garland Sutra ninth, and the esoteric teachings tenth or the highest.

156. The translation has been expanded in explanation of technical terms used. In his *Treatise on the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra*, Chia-hsiang, more commonly known as Chi-tsang (549–623), asserted that the Lotus Sutra was inferior to the Wisdom Sutra.

157. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

158. The twenty-five bodhisattvas of the Pure Land school protect all who worship Amida Buddha. The twelve hundred honored ones refer to Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other beings represented on the two True Word mandalas.

159. The seven schools refer to the six schools (see Glossary) and the True Word school.

160. The Queen Mother of the West is a legendary goddess in China. It is said that the peaches in her garden bear fruit every three thousand years. The udumbara flower is said to bloom once every three thousand years to herald the appearance of a gold-wheel-turning king in the world.

161. The governor of P'ei, or Liu Pang, and Hsiang Yü took advantage of the confusion following the death of the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty to raise troops and overthrow the dynasty. Thereafter, the two engaged in a protracted struggle for power. This ended in the victory of Liu Pang, who founded the Han dynasty in 202 B.C.E.

162. The Minamoto clan, led by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), waged a long campaign to wrest political power from the Taira clan. The Taira were finally

defeated at Dannoura, and Taira no Mune-mori (1147-1185), the last head of his clan, died in the battle. Minamoto no Yoritomo subsequently established the Kamakura shogunate.

163. The garudas are gigantic birds in Indian mythology that are said to feed on dragons. Anavatapta, or Heat-Free Lake, located north of the Snow Mountains, contains cool, clear water that removes all sufferings. The lake is said to be inhabited by the dragon king.

164. See six difficult and nine easy acts in Glossary.

165. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

166. The Dharma Characteristics school divides all of Shakyamuni's teachings into three periods. The teachings in the third period reveal the Consciousness-Only doctrine and refute extreme attachment to the doctrine of emptiness. Included in the third period are the Profound Secrets, Lotus, Flower Garland, and Nirvana sutras.

167. Nirvana Sutra.

168. Reference is to Buddhist teachers on whom one can rely, as explained in the Nirvana Sutra and elsewhere. They are the four ranks of voice-hearers, the last of which is the most advanced stage of arhat. T'ien-t'ai, in his *Profound Meaning*, related the four ranks to the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

169. Nirvana Sutra.

170. *Profound Meaning*.

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

172. *A Collection of Orally Transmitted Teachings*.

173. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

174. On "The Words and Phrases."

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

176. The Ten Stages Sutra is a separate translation of the "Ten Stages" chapter of the Flower Garland Sutra.

177. The great vehicle refers to the bodhisattva way.

178. "This chapter" refers to the "Chief Wise" chapter of the Flower Garland Sutra.

179. *A Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism*. The following quotation is from the same passage.

180. In the time of the Daishonin, China was ruled by the Sung dynasty. "Spend three years traveling . . ." refers to the Chinese priest Fa-hsien's journey to India. Deploping the lack of Buddhist scriptures

in China, he traveled overland in the late fourth century to India, where he studied Sanskrit and the Buddhist canon.

181. Asanga is said to have ascended to the Tushita heaven and there inherited the teachings from Bodhisattva Maitreya.

182. See p. 226.

183. To the five cardinal sins (see Glossary) are added killing a monk of high virtue and killing a teacher.

184. On "The Words and Phrases."

185. This refers to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, which occurred in 1271.

186. One of the Chinese versions of the Nirvana Sutra, translated by Fa-hsien.

187. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in *Profound Meaning*.

188. Possibly a rephrasing of a passage in *Outstanding Principles or A Clarification of the Precepts*.

189. The story of King Chao and Su Yu appears in *The Record of the Lineage of the Buddha and the Patriarchs*. The traditional date for the introduction of Buddhism to China is C.E. 67.

190. Twenty-four persons in succession: See Glossary under twenty-four successors.

191. The government authorities themselves belong to the first group of lay people who persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

192. *On the World of Peace and Delight*.

193. *Nembutsu Chosen above All*.

194. *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

195. *The Essentials of the One Vehicle Teaching*. Here Eshin, a Tendai priest, uses the "perfect teaching" to refer to the Lotus Sutra.

196. A rephrasing of a passage in *On "The Profound Meaning"*. The three teachings are the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, and the specific teaching, which indicate the provisional teachings.

197. Lotus Sutra, chap. 11.

198. The fivefold bodies of the Law refer to the fivefold merit that represents the true and pure nature of a Buddha: precept body, meditation body, wisdom body, emancipation body, and knowledge-of-emancipation body.

199. The Buddha in his manifested body is said to be sixteen feet high. For eight errors and eight winds, see Glossary.

200. Later commentators identify the "Zen master of Yeh and Lo" with Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen in China. T'ien-t'ai, however, does not mention him

or any other contemporary figure by name.

201. Standard Zen histories hold that, when Shakyamuni held up a flower before the assembly at Eagle Peak, no one could fathom his meaning. Mahakashyapa alone understood, and the Buddha wordlessly transferred his teaching to him. Mahakashyapa in turn handed the teaching to Ananda, from whom it was transferred eventually to Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch who had come to China from India. Bodhidharma is considered to be the founder of Zen in China. Hui-neng (638–713) was the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen.

202. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan, Mononobe no Moriya, a powerful minister, opposed it. Prince Shotoku and another minister Soga no Umako supported the new religion. They fought and the Soga faction won; Moriya was killed in 587.

203. This simile appears in chapter 27 of the Lotus Sutra. See one-eyed turtle in Glossary.

204. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

205. Ibid.

206. Ibid., chap. 5.

207. Ibid., chap. 26.

208. Ibid., chap. 28.

209. Ibid.

210. Aryadeva and Aryasimha are usually listed as the fifteenth and the twenty-fourth, respectively, of Shakyamuni's twenty-four successors. When Shakyamuni is counted, there are twenty-five leaders of the lineage in all.

211. *Profound Meaning*.

212. Lotus Sutra, chap. 20. This passage means that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging expiated his past offense of slandering the Law by being subjected to persecutions on account of the Law, and that he thereby attained Buddhahood.

213. "Poison" here is likened to the cause of enlightenment.

214. The wording of the original has been expanded for clarity in this paragraph.

215. This story appears in *Great Perfection of Wisdom* and elsewhere. In his past existence, Shariputra was practicing the bodhisattva way, when a Brahman begged for his eye. Shariputra gave it to him, but the

Brahman was so revolted by its smell that he dropped and crushed it. Seeing this, Shariputra withdrew in despair from his practice.

216. The first two of the ten objects of meditation formulated by T'ien-t'ai in *Great Concentration and Insight*. Through meditations on these ten objects, one aims to realize the limitations of the nine worlds.

217. This passage is discussed in *The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra*. The three obstacles are earthly desires, karma, and retribution.

218. According to the Nirvana Sutra, the medicine that the old physician prescribed did harm to the people. To save their lives, the new physician persuaded the king to use stringent measures to prohibit the use of the medicine.

219. The original Japanese sentence could also be construed to mean, "The Nirvana Sutra clearly states that the Buddha personally entrusts his teaching to the ruler [for its protection], saying that evil persons should be subdued with bows and arrows."

220. This indicates the country that is filled with people who conceive no desire to seek the Buddha way.

221. *On the Nirvana Sutra*.

222. His statement appears in *The Mirror on the Meaning of the Middle and the Extreme*. Portions of this lost work of the Dharma Characteristics priest Tokuitsu are cited in Dengyo's *Essay on the Protection of the Nation*.

223. The source of this quotation has not been identified. Saicho is another name for Dengyo.

224. Kumarajiva accepted an invitation from Yao Hsing, king of the Later Ch'in dynasty, and came to the capital, Ch'angan, in 401. There he engaged in the translation of numerous Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese.

225. A similar statement is found in *A Personal Commentary on Matters concerning Prince Shotoku*, a work by Kenshin, a thirteenth-century priest of Horyu-ji temple. Jogo is another name for Prince Shotoku.

226. This refers to the story of Bodhisattva Ever Wailing. See Ever Wailing in Glossary.