

(『昭和定本日蓮聖人遺文』570頁)と示し、他の日蓮遺文にもこの数字は示されている。

- (20) 千葉県夷隅地域には、「千部題目講」という題目を数多く唱える講中があり、地域の信仰形態となっていた(拙著前掲書)。
- (21) 七面山敬慎院蔵(身延町教育委員会編『身延山久遠寺史料調査報告書』2004年、185頁)。
- (22) 「妙法蓮華經提婆品第十二」『大正新脩大藏經』262.9.35c。
- (23) 「妙法蓮華經法師功德品第十九」『大正新脩大藏經』262.9.50a。
- (24) 「妙法蓮華經藥草喻品第五」『大正新脩大藏經』262.9.19b。
- (25) 「妙法尼御前御返事」弘安元年(1278)7月14日(『昭和定本日蓮聖人遺文』1572頁)。
- (26) 大阪府大阪市中央区蓮光寺蔵(筆者編『大阪読経山蓮光寺寺宝鑑』2000年、所収)。
- (27) 日蓮宗では、毎年11月1日から翌年2月10日まで日蓮宗加行所(荒行)が開設され、百日間の修行が行われている。ここでは、「木剣」という法具による加持祈禱の相伝がなされ、その祈禱本尊は鬼形鬼子母神像1軀となっている。

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Nenbutsu Leads to the Avīci Hell: Nichiren's Critique of the Pure Land Teachings

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The earliest writings of Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282) center on two issues: the errors of Hōnen's *Senchakushū* and the unique salvific power of the *Lotus Sūtra*. These were not independent themes; Nichiren began to preach and write in opposition to the spread of Hōnen's exclusive *nenbutsu* (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念佛) doctrine. In countering it, he staked out new intellectual territory that differentiated him from the Tendai of his day and helped shape his own, distinctive reading of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Nichiren's writings prior to his famous *Risshō ankoku ron* 立正安國論 (1260) have not garnered as much scholarly attention as his later essays and letters, but they contain some of his most detailed criticism of Hōnen's teaching. Here I will focus primarily on these early works to show how Nichiren's critique of Hōnen's Pure Land school laid the foundation for his own doctrine of exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* (prior scholarship includes Kawazoe 1955-56; Furuta 1958; Nakao 1974; and Asai 1976).

The Spread of the Exclusive Nenbutsu

In his *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū* 選擇本願念佛集 (Passages on [Amida Buddha's] exclusive choice of the nenbutsu as according with his original vow; hereafter, *Senchakushū*), the Pure Land teacher Genkū-bō Hōnen 源空房法然 (1133-1212) famously argued that benighted people living now in the Final Dharma age (*mappō* 末法) can no longer achieve liberation through precept observance, meditation, and study, which depend upon the exertion of "self-power" (*jiriki* 自力) or one's own abilities; rather, one should set aside these traditional disciplines and instead rely wholly on the transcendent "Other-Power" (*tariki* 他力) of Amida Buddha's compassionate vow that all who place faith in him and invoke his name will be born after death in his pure land, said to lie far away in the western quarter of the cosmos. Others before Hōnen had maintained that the chanted *nenbutsu* was particularly

suiting to the limited capacity of sinful persons in the latter age, but he was the first to insist that all other practices be rejected in its favor. By Nichiren's time, about two generations after Hōnen, initial efforts by the religious and secular authorities to suppress the exclusive nenbutsu movement had largely subsided, and in eastern Japan, Hōnen's followers were building a patronage base among Bakufu warriors. Judging from Nichiren's observations, their advance came at no small cost to traditional Buddhist practices and institutions. Under the influence of Hōnen's disciples, he wrote, people were now cutting the fingers off of statues of Śākyamuni Buddha and reshaping them to form the mudrā of Amida, and converting halls that enshrined Yakushi Nyorai to Amida halls. Chapels dedicated to the Japanese Tendai founder Saichō 最澄 (766/767-822) and other Tendai patriarchs were allowed to fall into disrepair, while lands once designated for their support had been confiscated and offered to halls newly erected for nenbutsu practice. On Mt. Hiei itself, the ritual copying of the *Lotus Sūtra*, carried out for more than four hundred years, had been replaced by the copying of the three Pure Land sūtras, and the annual lectures on the teachings of the Tiantai founder Zhiyi 智顛 (538-597) had been supplanted by lectures on the writings of Shandao 善導 (613-681), whom Hōnen had claimed as a patriarch of his new Pure Land school (Risshō Daigaku Nichiren kyōgaku kenkyūjo [hereafter Risshō] 1988, vol. 1, pp. 12, 223, 322-23).

It is worth noting that, almost from the outset, Hōnen's followers singled out the *Lotus Sūtra* for attack. According to the 1205 Kōfukuji petition, some among them claimed that persons who embraced the *Lotus Sūtra* would fall into hell, or that those who recited it in hopes of achieving birth in Amida's Pure Land — an extremely common practice — were guilty of slandering the Mahāyāna (Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 34).⁽¹⁾ Nichiren records that the Pure Land teachers of his time actively discouraged people from reciting or copying the *Lotus Sūtra* to benefit deceased relatives, saying that not one person in a thousand could be saved by such practices (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 191), and also disparaged the sūtra by saying that practicing

the *Lotus* is like a small boy trying to wear his grandfather's shoes; or that the *Lotus* is like last year's calendar or like a stout bow and heavy armor, which are useless to someone without physical strength; or that forming a karmic connection with the *Lotus Sūtra* will prevent one's birth in the Pure Land (ibid., pp. 12, 117, 194). Such comments level specifically against the *Lotus* the criticism of *rijin gemi* 理深解微 ("the principle is profound but [human] understanding is limited"), which Hōnen had borrowed from the Chinese master Daochuo 道綽 (562-645) to assert that traditional disciplines were beyond the capacity of deluded persons of the *mappō* era (*Anle ji* T 47:13c8; *Senchakushū*, T 83:1b12-13, 2a22). Not only was the *Lotus Sūtra* the central scripture of the influential Tendai school and also widely revered in the larger religious culture, but, at least since the mid-Heian period, its practice had been closely linked to Pure Land aspirations. We see this, for example, in liturgical programs — common in Tendai monasteries, independent religious societies, and personal practice regimens — in which *Lotus* recitation was conducted in the morning and the nenbutsu chanted at night (Shioda 1955; Kiuchi 1978). *Ōjōden*, *setsuwa*, and dedicatory prayers all testify that the *Lotus Sūtra* was often copied and recited with the aim of birth in Amida's Pure Land. Given this longstanding close association, it is not surprising that some among Hōnen's followers should see pointed rejection of the *Lotus* in particular as a necessary step in establishing the nenbutsu as an exclusive practice.

The spread of the exclusive nenbutsu had troubled Nichiren since his youth. His first extant work, the *Kaitai sokushin jōbutsu gi* 戒體即身成佛義 (Essence of the precepts and the meaning of realizing buddhahood with this very body), written when he was twenty-one, draws on traditional Tendai *Lotus* and esoteric teachings of the interpenetration of the dharmas to attack the *Senchakushū* for teaching aspiration to a buddha land apart from one's own body and mind, a position that Nichiren saw as contravening both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sūtras (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 11). Nichiren's objections were reinforced during his studies at Mt. Hiei and other temples in the capital region (see

his *Nenbutsusha tsuikō senjōji*, *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 2258-72). When he took up residence in Kamakura, around 1255, he turned his attention to a sustained critique.

Nichiren had carefully examined both the *Senchakushū* itself and Hōnen's source texts. He was well aware of, and occasionally drew upon, earlier criticisms of this work, such as the Kōfukuji petition, Myōe's *Saijarin*; Jōshō's *Dan Senchaku*; and Kōen's *Jōdo ketsugi shō*. But in his estimation, these earlier rebuttals were inadequate, "like a little rain falling in a time of severe drought, which leaves trees and grasses more parched than ever, or a weak force dispatched against a powerful enemy, who is only emboldened thereby" (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 90). In pursuing what he deemed to be the heart of the *Senchakushū*'s error, Nichiren countered its doctrine with the chief hermeneutical strategy that Hōnen himself had employed in establishing his claim for the sole efficacy of the nenbutsu in the Final Dharma age: creative use of a comparative classification of the Buddhist teachings (*kyōhan* 教判).

True and Provisional

Kyōhan represent attempts to order the whole of the Buddhist teachings in the service of particular visions or models of the Buddhist path. Hōnen's model takes as its starting point the limitations of human capacity in the Final Dharma age. He drew on the claims of earlier, Chinese Pure Land masters for the superior accessibility of Pure Land practices in this deluded era. Daochuo had distinguished between the teachings of the Path of the Sages (*shōdōmon* 聖道門), which stress pursuit of liberation through self-power, and the Pure Land teachings (*jōdomon* 淨土門), which encourage reliance on the Other-Power of Amida Buddha's compassionate vow. Tanluan (476-542) had similarly distinguished between the ways of "difficult practice" (*nangyō* 難行) and "easy practice" (*igyō* 易行) by which bodhisattvas in training might attain the stage of non-retrogression. And Shandao had divided practices leading to birth in Amida's Pure Land into "sundry practices" (*zōgyō* 雜行), or those not directly connected to Amida, and "main practices" (*shōgyō* 正行) or those based on the Pure Land sūtras, especially the chanted

nenbutsu. Uniting these distinctions into a schema of progressively narrowing selection and rejection, Hōnen argued that Amida himself had singled out the chanted nenbutsu as the sole practice according with his original vow, and that it should now replace all teachings of the Path of the Sages, difficult practice, and sundry practice categories (*Senchakushū*, T 83:1b5-6c9). No matter how doctrinally sophisticated these latter teachings might be, Hōnen asserted, because benighted people living now in the *mappō* era lacked the ability to practice them, they were in effect soteriologically useless. He argued that if Amida truly intended to save all beings, he would not have made that salvation contingent upon on acts that only a few people could perform, such as studying sūtras, commissioning stūpas, or keeping the precepts, but solely upon the chanting of his name.

Nichiren countered using the same weapon of doctrinal classification. But where Hōnen had begun with the issue of human capacity, Nichiren took as his basis the distinction between true and provisional teachings, which in his understanding had been established by the Buddha himself. According to the traditional Tendai classificatory system, Śākyamuni Buddha had for forty-two years preached provisional teachings (*gonkyō* 權教) in accordance with his listeners' varying capacities, revealing only partial or expedient truths; not until the last eight years of his life did he preach the true teaching (*jikkyō* 實教), perfectly unifying all partial truths within itself and opening the possibility of buddhahood to all beings.⁽²⁾ The *Lotus* was the sūtra of which the Buddha himself had said, "In these forty years and more [before preaching this sūtra], I have not yet revealed the truth," and, "Frankly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed Way" (*Wuliangyi jing*, T 9:386b1-2; *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T 9:10a19). The nenbutsu, Nichiren argued, belonged to a lesser category of provisional Mahāyāna and did not represent the Buddha's final intent. He likened it to the scaffolding erected in building a large stūpa: once the stūpa (the *Lotus Sūtra*) has been completed, the scaffolding (the *nenbutsu*) should be dismantled (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 35). It was a grave mistake, he said, to dismiss the *Lotus*

Sūtra as suited only to advanced practitioners, when the Buddha had in fact preached it for all beings. As for it being "too profound," the degree to which a teaching can benefit people depends upon its depth; now in the Final Dharma age, Nichiren insisted, only the true teaching can save ignorant and evil persons perpetually submerged in the sea of birth and death. "Scholars who say that [the *Lotus*] is not for ordinary worldlings should fear violating the Buddha's intent," he said (ibid., p. 67). And as far as ease of practice is concerned, he argued, nothing could be easier than embracing the *Lotus Sūtra*, which clearly states that a single moment's faith and rejoicing in its message surpasses the merit of carrying out provisional teachings for countless kalpas (ibid., pp. 108-9).

In the understanding of premodern exegetes, sūtras were not simply teachings *about* metaphysical or soteriological principles but actually embodied the very principles they express and therefore enabled their devotees to realize those principles through practice. Put in these terms, for Nichiren, the difference between true and provisional was very simple: Only the true teaching allows all beings to become buddhas. Many Mahāyāna sūtras teach the emptiness and interpenetration of the dharmas, the ontological basis upon which all can in principle realize buddhahood. But according to the Tendai classification schema, this basis remains theoretical or incomplete in the provisional Mahāyāna, which denies the possibility of buddhahood to persons of the two so-called Hīnayāna vehicles, *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, who seek to escape the wheel of birth and death in personal nirvāṇa. For Nichiren, the realization of buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles (*nijō sabutsu* 二乗作佛) stood synecdochally for the buddhahood of all: "If others cannot attain buddhahood, then neither can oneself," he insisted. "But if others can attain buddhahood, then oneself can do so as well" (ibid., p. 70). And, as he often noted, the *Lotus Sūtra* explicitly extends the possibility of buddhahood not only to persons of the two vehicles but also to other categories of persons said to struggle under heavy soteriological hindrances: women (represented by the Nāga princess) and evil men

(represented by Devadatta).

Nichiren explained the *Lotus Sūtra's* promise of universal buddhahood in terms of the mutual possession of the ten dharma realms (*jikkai gogu* 十界互具): all unenlightened beings of the nine realms from hell dwellers to bodhisattvas innately possess the buddha realm, and the buddha realm encompasses the nine realms of unenlightened beings. This principle, he said, was what qualified the *Lotus* as the "wonderful Dharma" (*myōhō* 妙法) (ibid., p. 10; see also 70, 73, 110, 124-25, 137-44, and 171-83).⁽³⁾ He employed it, not only to explain the *Lotus Sūtra's* teaching of universal buddhahood in concrete terms but also to undercut elements definitive of Hōnen's teaching, such as the notion of enlightenment as something to be anticipated in the next life, after achieving birth in Amida's Pure Land. Because the Pure Land sūtras do not teach the perfect interpenetration of the buddha realm and the nine deluded realms, Nichiren asserted, the buddha Amida depicted in these teachings is only a provisional Buddha, and the birth in the western Pure Land that they promise exists in name only. All the superior realms of buddhas and bodhisattvas mentioned in the various sūtras, such as Maitreya's Tuṣita heaven or Amida's Land of Peace and Sustenance, are merely provisional names; the "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter of the *Lotus* reveals that the true pure land is to be realized here in the present, Sahā world. "The originally enlightened Buddha of the perfect teaching abides in this world," he wrote. "... Thus wherever the practitioner of the *Lotus Sūtra* dwells should be considered the Pure Land" (ibid., p. 129). Nichiren also used the mutual possession of the ten realms to undercut the very distinction between self-power and Other-power on which the exclusive nenbutsu rested. Because it makes clear that the self contains the buddha realm and the buddha realm is inherent in the self, he said, the *Lotus Sūtra* encompasses both self-power and Other-power, even while transcending their dichotomy (ibid., p. 73).

In short, Nichiren's opposition to Hōnen's Pure Land doctrine rested on a distinction between the true teaching, which allows all to become buddhas, and provisional teachings, which do not.

This distinction would remain fundamental to his later criticism, not only of the Pure Land teachings generally, but also of other Buddhist forms.

Nichiren's Innovative Readings

Scholars approaching Nichiren from the standpoint of institutional history have sometimes suggested that, in his early criticisms of Hōnen's Pure Land school, Nichiren still identified with the older, *kenmitsu* Buddhist establishment (e.g., Ikegami 1976; Satō 1978). From a doctrinal standpoint, however, Nichiren by no means simply reasserted a traditional Tendai stance. Rather, in opposing the exclusive nenbutsu, he developed the true-provisional distinction in innovative directions that laid the basis for his own teaching of exclusive commitment to the *Lotus Sūtra*. Let us briefly consider three interrelated aspects of his interpretation.

(1) The *Lotus Sūtra* as the teaching for *mappō*

First, in order to counter Hōnen's claim that the chanted nenbutsu was uniquely suited to the particular soteriological demands of the *mappō* era, Nichiren appropriated a controversy, current in medieval Tendai circles, about whether or not provisional teachings lead to buddhahood. He remarks that "ordinary scholars of the Tendai school allow that some degree of attainment is possible" through the sūtras preached before the *Lotus*, suggesting that this represented the majority position in his day. However, Nichiren himself rejected it (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 125; see also his related group of early essays, pp. 144-57). In so doing, he drew on Zhiyi's likening of the process by which the Buddha instructed his disciples to sowing, cultivating, and reaping a harvest. For Nichiren, only the *Lotus Sūtra* plants the seed of buddhahood; the most that provisional teachings can do is cultivate the capacity of persons who have already received that seed by hearing the *Lotus Sūtra* in prior lifetimes. That is, in the final analysis, no one has ever attained buddhahood except through the *Lotus Sūtra*. To counter the assertions of Hōnen's disciples, Nichiren applied this claim specifically to the issue of

mappō: People in the True and Semblance Dharma ages (*shōbō* 正法, *zōbō* 像法) could benefit from provisional teachings such as the nenbutsu because they had already formed a connection to the *Lotus Sūtra* in the past (*hon'i uzen* 本已有善). But people born in the Final Dharma age have not yet formed such a connection (*honmi uzen* 本未有善) and thus cannot benefit from the nenbutsu or other provisional teachings, no matter how earnestly they might practice them. Nichiren was not the first to see the *Lotus* as uniquely suited to the *mappō* era; the sūtra itself says that it is intended for an evil time after the Buddha's nirvāṇa, and Saichō also wrote that in *mappō*, the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* would spread (Hieizan senshūin 1989, vol. 2, p. 349). But Nichiren may have been the first to connect *mappō* with the idea of the *Lotus Sūtra* as the only teaching that implants the seed of buddhahood. In later years, he would identify the seed of buddhahood specifically with the sūtra's title or *daimoku*, Myōhō-*renge-kyō*, or *ichinen sanzen* in actuality (*ji no ichinen sanzen* 事の一念三千) (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, pp. 715; vol. 2, pp. 1480, 1731).

This concept of *mappō* as an era when people have not yet received the seed of buddhahood was in turn linked to Nichiren's assertive teaching method, which he developed in his early encounters with Hōnen's followers. Some among them evidently objected that preaching the *Lotus Sūtra* as he did to persons already committed to nenbutsu practice merely caused them to malign the *Lotus Sūtra* and thus fall into the evil paths. Nichiren countered that since those born in *mappō* for the most part have not yet formed good roots (i.e., a karmic connection to the *Lotus Sūtra*), they are likely to be reborn in the evil paths in any event. But if one forcefully preaches the *Lotus Sūtra* to them, even if they malign it, they will nonetheless form a "reverse connection" (*gyakuen* 逆縁) to it that will enable them to attain buddhahood at some future point (ibid., pp. 204-5; see also p. 68). Nichiren's writings from the 1250s do not yet employ the term *shakubuku* 折伏, but the logic underlying his choice of that approach to Dharma teaching is already present in his early arguments against Hōnen's followers.

(2) Countering slander of the True Dharma

Second, in asserting the true-provisional distinction in his argument against the exclusive nenbutsu, Nichiren redefined the offense of maligning the True Dharma (*hihō shōbō* 誹謗正法, or simply *hōbō* 謗法). This term occurs frequently in the Mahāyāna sūtras, where it typically means to speak ill of the Great Vehicle scriptures and was probably intended to deflect criticism from the Buddhist mainstream that the Mahāyāna was not the Buddha's teaching (Mochizuki 1954-63, vol. 5, pp. 4327d-28d). The *Lotus* itself warns in unforgettable terms about the horrific retributions in the Avīci Hell awaiting those who speak ill of the sūtra and refuse to take faith in it (*T* 9:15b28-16a9). Nichiren notes that exclusive nenbutsu teachers stoutly denied that they were maligning the *Lotus Sūtra* by discouraging its practice. On the contrary, they insisted, their point was simply that the *Lotus Sūtra* far surpasses the abilities of persons born in the present, deluded Final Dharma age; those who attempt to practice it will therefore only fail in their efforts and fall into the lower realms in their next rebirth. One would do far better to set aside the *Lotus Sūtra* in this life and instead chant the nenbutsu in order to be born after death in Amida's Pure Land, where conditions are more favorable, and gain the enlightenment of the *Lotus Sūtra* there (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, pp. 75, 133, 490). For Nichiren, this assertion was far worse than mere verbal abuse of the sūtra, as it turned people away from the one teaching able to rescue them from their grave soteriological hindrances. In opposition to arguments of this kind from Hōnen's disciples, he expanded the definition of Dharma slander to include not only verbal disparagement, as the term suggests, but rejection of the true teaching in favor of the provisional (see *ibid.*, pp. 37, 186-87, 256-72 *passim*, and 490). Herein, he said, lay the *Senchakushū*'s fundamental error. Hōnen had "taken the 637 scriptures in 2,883 fascicles of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the esoteric teachings, and all the other Mahāyāna sūtras preached by the Buddha in his lifetime...and relegated them to the Path of the Sages, difficult practice, and sundry practice categories, urging people to discard, close, put aside, and abandon them" (*ibid.*, p. 216).

Lumping the true teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* together with the categories of teachings to be abandoned, and instead advocating faith in the nenbutsu, a provisional expedient, amounted to maligning the True Dharma — in the *Lotus Sūtra*'s own words, the cause for rebirth in the Avīci hell. Nichiren was by no means the only Buddhist teacher to condemn the *Senchakushū* as a work that slanders the True Dharma, but he may have been unique in interpreting Dharma slander as the confusion of true and provisional. His critique of the Pure Land teachings — traditionally summed up in the phrase "nenbutsu leads to the Avīci hell" (*nenbutsu muge* 念仏無間)—was not mere abuse hurled against a rival doctrine but was grounded in the logic of the true-provisional distinction.

The spread of the exclusive nenbutsu, Nichiren argued, was turning all Japan into a country of Dharma slanderers. The calamities of his day, including epidemics, earthquakes, famine, and eventually, the Mongol threat, derived in his eyes from this error of rejecting the true in favor of the provisional. And this insight, he believed, morally obligated him to speak out in protest. In the months before submitting the *Risshō ankoku ron* to Bakufu authorities, his first public remonstrance against the *Senchakushū*, Nichiren wrote that for several years he had been pondering those passages from the *Lotus* and *Nirvāna* sūtras that speak of the need to defend the Dharma even at the risk of one's life (*ibid.*, pp. 117-18, 119). In later years, over the course of two exiles, attempts on his own life, and sanctions imposed on his disciples, Nichiren would develop an entire soteriology in which enduring persecution for the *Lotus*'s sake confirms the truth of the sūtra's prophecies, eradicates past sins, fulfils the bodhisattva mandate, repays one's moral debts, and guarantees the attainment of buddhahood. But before any of that transpired, his early opposition to the nenbutsu had already led him to conclude that, as a disciple of the Buddha, he must denounce slanders of the Dharma, whatever the personal cost.

(3) Nichiren's Lotus Exclusivism

Third, in opposing the doctrine of the *Senchakushū*, Nichiren

began to frame the practice of the *Lotus Sūtra* as an exclusive commitment. Unlike Hōnen's earlier critics, he did not reassert the mainstream position that different forms of practice are appropriate for persons of differing capacity. For most Tendai scholar-monks of his time, the distinction between true and provisional did not entail abandoning multiple practices. Rather, they maintained that, because the one vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* "opens and integrates" (*kaie* 開会) all other teachings within itself, any form of practice — whether esoteric ritual performance, sūtra copying, or nenbutsu chanting — in effect becomes the practice of the *Lotus Sūtra* when carried out with this understanding. This interpretative stance had supported the widespread participation of both monastics and lay people in multiple forms of religious devotion and informed the close association, mentioned above, of the *Lotus Sūtra* with Pure Land aspirations. But for Nichiren, the opening and integration of all teachings into the *Lotus Sūtra* meant that they lose their separate identity, just as the many rivers, emptying into the ocean, assume the same salty flavor and lose their original names (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 25). In other words, they are no longer to be carried out as independent practices.

Significantly, it was during the same, early period, around the mid-1250s, when Nichiren began promoting the chanting of the daimoku of the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Namu-myōhō-renge-kyō*, as a particularly accessible form of *Lotus* devotion, one that would become the definitive marker of his tradition. Nichiren would not fully develop the theoretical basis of daimoku practice for some years yet, but his later claim — that the daimoku contains all the primordial Śākyamuni Buddha's practices and resulting virtues and confers on its practitioners the benefits of the six *pāramitās* without having to practice them (ibid., p. 711) — grows out of his early understanding that the opening and integration of all teachings into the *Lotus Sūtra* negates their practice as independent forms.

Scholars have long seen Nichiren's daimoku as indebted to Hōnen's exclusive nenbutsu; both are simple invocations, accessible even to the illiterate, said to be uniquely suited to

human capacity in the Final Dharma age and able to save even the most ignorant and sinful (e.g., Ienaga 1990, pp. 71-81). However, the exclusive nenbutsu was by no means the only influence on Nichiren's daimoku practice. Although not widespread, the daimoku had been chanted long before Nichiren's time and had particular connections to Tendai esoteric ritual practice (Stone 1998; Dolce 2002, pp. 294-315). The model of the path underlying Nichiren's teaching also differs markedly from Hōnen's: Where the exclusive nenbutsu doctrine stresses religious fulfillment through birth in one's next life in Amida's Pure Land, where enlightenment can then be attained, Nichiren's thought retains a tantric matrix, in which, through faith and the chanting of the daimoku, enlightenment is realized with this very body, and the pure land is manifested in the present world. Nonetheless, in promoting the daimoku, Nichiren does seem to have taken from Hōnen the idea of a single, universally accessible form of practice, not dependent on wealth, learning, or monastic status. We could say that, even while criticizing the exclusive nenbutsu, he appropriated Hōnen's idea of exclusive practice and assimilated it to a *Lotus Sūtra*-specific mode, grounding it in what he understood to be the true, rather than the provisional, teachings.

Conclusion

In his later writings, Nichiren spoke of his early critique of the nenbutsu as mere preparation for his polemics against the esoteric teachings, which he had come to see as his most pressing task (Risshō 1988, vol. 1, p. 838; vol. 2, pp. 1090, 1133). Nonetheless, his early rebuttals of the Pure Land school exerted a formative influence on his later thought and conduct. In countering Hōnen's nenbutsu doctrine, Nichiren established a conceptual framework — centered on the distinction between true and provisional — within which he would develop his own doctrine of exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*. That conceptual framework also committed him to an adversarial path of rebuking "slander of the Dharma" that would eventually pit him against the entire religious establishment and the government that patronized it,

provoking the repeated persecutions that marked his tumultuous career.

At the same time, Nichiren's early opposition to the nenbutsu led him to reject features of the larger religious culture — not only the nenbutsu itself but engagement in multiple practices and even the soteriological goal of birth in Amida's Pure Land, the most commonly sought-after postmortem destination, regardless of one's school or lineage affiliation. His stance of Lotus exclusivism endowed his fledgling community with a unique identity that allowed it to survive him and emerge as an independent movement. With Nichiren, the idea of exclusive practice ceased to be an exception limited to Hōnen's lineage and became established as an alternative mode within Japanese religion.

Endnotes

- (1) Notes: Mujū 無住 (1226-1312) also mentions nenbutsu devotees who threw copies of the *Lotus Sūtra* into the river or asserted that persons who recited it would fall into hell (Watanabe 1966, pp. 86-87).
- (2) For the complex Tiantai/Tendai doctrinal classification system known as the "five periods and eight teachings" (*goji hakkyō* 五時八教), see Chappell 1983. Within the "five periods," Nichiren took the sūtras of first four periods as "provisional" and those of the fifth period, the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa* sūtras, as "true." In his later writings, Nichiren went beyond the traditional Tendai *kyōhan* in developing his own interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* centered on the origin teaching (*honmon* 本門) or latter fourteen chapters of the *Lotus*, and especially the daimoku as its heart, ideas codified by later followers as the "fivefold comparison" (*gojū sōtai* 五重相對).
- (3) The mutual possession of the ten realms expands into the three thousand realms in a single thought-moment, or *ichinen sanzen* 一念三千, which Nichiren saw as both the ontological basis for realizing buddhahood and the all-encompassing timeless reality of the primordially awakened Śākyamuni Buddha revealed in the "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter of

the *Lotus Sūtra*. Especially in his early writings, however, Nichiren addressed *ichinen sanzen* primarily in terms of the mutual possession of the ten realms.

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SESSION III

The Lotus Sutra and 'Culture'

法華經と文化

**UNIVERSAL AND INTERNATIONAL
NATURE OF THE LOTUS SUTRA**

**Proceedings of the Seventh
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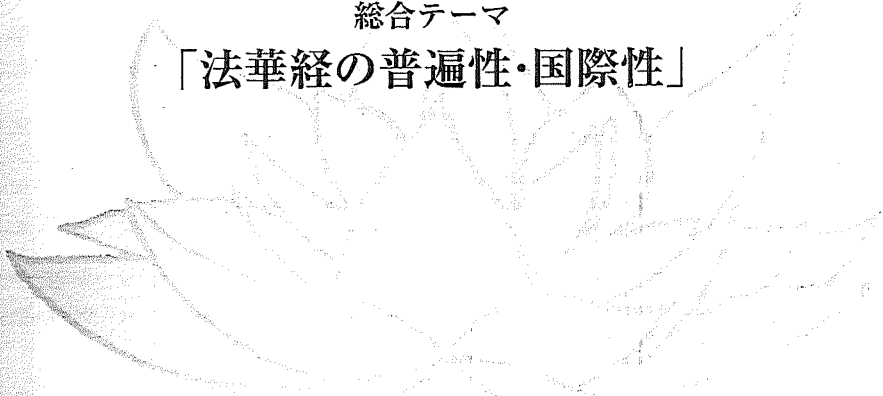
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for
Celebrating the 140th Anniversary
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