On the Ten Worlds

It is said that if persons of the two vehicles do not free themselves from the threefold world, then the Ten Worlds that make up the realm of phenomena will lack in number.

Question: If one does not understand the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, is it possible for one to free oneself from transmigration in the six paths of existence, or transmigration with differences and limitations, and gain birth in the land of transmigration with change and advance?

Answer: Persons of the two vehicles have already cut off the illusions of thought and desire and have no further cause to be reborn in the threefold world. Therefore why should they be reborn in a land in the threefold world? Thus we know that persons of the two vehicles will never be reborn in the six paths.

Hence the second volume of The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra states: “There are three types of persons who are born in the land of transmigration with change and advance: persons of the two vehicles who follow the Tripiṭaka teaching; persons of the three vehicles who follow the connecting teaching; and persons in the thirty stages of bodhisattva practice as set forth in the specific teaching.”

Persons in these three categories have all cut off the illusions of thought and desire and are able to be born in the land of transmigration with change and advance. They will never again be reborn in the impure lands of transmigration with differences and limitations, transmigration in the threefold world.

Objection: The Hinayana teachings speak only of the six paths that are the product of the mind. They do not discuss the six paths that are possessed by the mind. Therefore persons of the two vehicles are unable to make the six worlds manifest in themselves or to describe how these worlds are a possession of the mind. How then can they cut off the illusions of thought and desire that are associated with the six worlds and remove themselves from the six paths?

The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, “In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras...” But by these words, “heavenly and human beings and asuras,” it is referring to the persons of the two vehicles who follow the teachings of the sutras that precede the Lotus Sutra and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra; to the bodhisattvas of the three teachings; and to those who follow the teaching of the fifth period, the perfect teaching. These are surely persons who have not yet fully cut off
the illusions of thought and desire, are they not?

Answer: The principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is the most profound doctrine of the Lotus Sutra, the very heart of the teachings of this school of ours. In the sutras that were preached in the forty and more years preceding the Lotus Sutra it was kept secret and never revealed.

But in the sūtra teachings set forth in those forty and more years, we find numberless ordinary mortals who were able to cut off the illusions of thought and desire, reach the stage where they are free of outflows, and attain the unconditioned state represented by the two types of nirvāṇa. Bodhisattvas as countless as particles of dust were able to overcome the general and specific types of illusion and to quickly transcend the bonds that tie them to the two categories of transmigration.

Although in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra the Buddha, speaking of the sutras preached in the preceding forty and more years, says, "I have not yet revealed the truth," still we must allow that in these sutras that preceded the Lotus, persons of the three vehicles were able to gain benefits. And although in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says that he is "honestly discarding expedient means," in another passage [Śāriputra] says that he "saw how the bodhisattvas received prophecies that in time they would attain Buddhahood."

These passages indicate, do they not, that through the teachings set forth in the sutras preceding the Lotus, it was possible to gain a certain amount of benefit?

In the sutras that precede the Lotus, however, there are two matters that are not discussed. There is no discussion of the true Buddha of perfect endowment, nor is there any discussion of the fact that the Buddha attained enlightenment in the infinitely remote past. Therefore even bodhisattvas who have advanced as far as the stage of near-perfect enlightenment are still attached to the idea that the Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in the recent past. In this sense, bodhisattvas and persons of the two vehicles are the same as those in the realms of heavenly and human beings, prevented by doctrines that mislead them from once and for all cutting off the illusions of earthly desires and the realm of birth and death. This is why the Buddha says, "I have not yet revealed the truth."

But it is quite wrong to insist that because the principle of the mutual possession of the six worlds is not revealed in these sutras, one therefore cannot remove oneself from the six worlds through such sutras.

If there is mutual possession of the six worlds, there must be mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. Through the provisional teachings, one can understand that the differences that distinguish the six worlds from one another are the product of the mind. And when one meditates on these products [the six worlds and their differences] of the mind, then one cannot fail to [eliminate the illusions of thought and desire and] understand that the four noble worlds, whether upper or lower, are attainable. [In this sense, therefore, one can, through the sutras that precede the Lotus, remove oneself from the six worlds.]

A third objection is raised, as follows: The arguments you have outlined would seem to be quite in accord with reason. But if we examine the order in which the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime were put forward, we see that unless and until the wisdom associated with the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra and the observation of the mind is brought into play, then the state of the Buddha of perfect endowment can never be attained. Therefore, persons of the provisional teachings still remain in the state of ordinary mor-
tals and can never gain even the fruits of the provisional teachings that you mention.

The non-Buddhist teachers appeared in the five regions of India and pronounced four inverted views. In order to refute these four inverted views, the Thus Come One appeared in the world and set forth the principles of suffering, non-substantiality, and so on. He did this in order to dispel the confusion created by the non-Buddhist teachers.

Thus, to dispel the non-Buddhist view that such a thing as the self exists, he took up the position of non-self, setting aside fire, as it were, and going along with water. People therefore assumed that if they adhered firmly to this concept of non-self, they could cut off the illusions of thought and desire and free themselves from the six paths, but this was in fact the source of their misunderstanding. Thus they maintained the view that both body and mind must be wiped out. These [non-Buddhist and Buddhist views] correspond to the two views, namely, that life ends with death and that the self is permanent, expounded in sutras such as the Great Collection Sutra.

There are, for example, non-Buddhist believers who have not yet freed themselves from outflows but who believe that they have attained the way. From the point of view of the wisdom that is free of outflows, however, they have not in fact emerged from the threefold world of unenlightened beings. To suppose that one can emerge from the threefold world without doing so through the Buddhist teachings is to make a baseless assumption.

The persons of the two vehicles who follow the teachings of Hinayana are similar in nature. When the Buddha preached the Hinayana teachings at Deer Park, these persons set aside the non-Buddhist view that the self exists and adopted the view that the self does not exist. For the next forty and more years, however, they failed to change their opinion, but continued to inhabit the thatched hut of the Hinayana teachings, never for a moment setting foot outside.

Again, in the case of the bodhisattvas of the Mahayana teachings, though they were told how the Ten Worlds are the product of the mind, the doctrine of the mind’s possession of the Ten Worlds was not revealed to them. Or in some cases they cut off the body and mind associated with the nine worlds and embraced the idea of advancing to the highest world, that of Buddhism. Because they did so, they supposed that they could cut off the three categories of illusion, remove themselves from transmigration with change and advance, and instead gain birth in the land of Tranquil Light. But in supposing they could wipe out the nine worlds, they were falling into the view that life ends with death, and in supposing that they could advance and climb up to the world of Buddhism, they were falling into the view that the self is permanent. To suppose that one can eliminate the permanently abiding body and mind associated with the nine worlds is to be confused and misled as to the true nature of these nine worlds.

Again the Great Teacher Miao-lo states, “But if we speak of the observation of the mind, it does not accord with the principles.”

The meaning of this passage of commentary is that the Hinayana method of observation of the mind does not accord even with the principles of the Hinayana teaching.

And the ninth volume of T’ien-t’ai’s Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra says, “Those who follow the seven expedient means will never reach complete and final extinction.”

This passage of commentary means that bodhisattvas who follow the first
three teachings of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings\textsuperscript{14} will in truth never attain Buddhahood.

But, although in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra the Buddha says, “I have not yet revealed the truth,” it would appear that persons of the three vehicles can attain the way. And though in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha says he is “honestly discarding expedient means,” elsewhere in the sutra [Śāriputra] says that he “saw how the bodhisattvas received prophecies that in time they would attain Buddhahood.”

In the T‘ien-t‘ai school three standards of comparison are set forth. In the second standard, that which deals with the time when the Buddha’s instruction begins and when it reaches completion, there are persons who first established a relationship with the Lotus Sutra in the distant past.\textsuperscript{15} In order to guide them to the Lotus Sutra, in the sutras that precede the Lotus it is allowed that such persons can to some extent attain the way by practicing the three vehicles. But what they have in fact attained is only the stage of maturity in the three stages of sowing, maturing, and harvesting. This view represents that of the theoretical teaching.

When this view is compared to that of the essential teaching and that of the observation of the mind, one sees that it does not accord with the true principles, but is merely a position temporarily allowed. If we judge it in terms of the true principles, we see that such persons have failed to understand the original enlightenment attained by the Thus Come One in the far distant past and have no knowledge of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, and therefore they can never transmigrate beyond the six paths.

Hence the commentary says, “Such persons are outside the vehicle of the perfect teaching and therefore are called non-Buddhists.”\textsuperscript{16} And in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha declares, “Good men, [the Thus Come One observes how among living beings there are] those who delight in lesser teachings, meager in virtue and heavy with defilement.”\textsuperscript{17}

From this we can see that both the sutra and the commentary are perfectly clear on the principle involved here.

Answer: Your objection would seem to be based on a strict adherence to your personal view but it is not in accord with principle. The reason is that the teachings of the Thus Come One are designed to fit the capacities of the hearers and are not put forward for no reason at all. Therefore he devised the four teachings of method, including the sudden teaching, and the four teachings of doctrine, including the Tripiṭaka teaching, to fit persons of eight different types of capacity. It is wrong to assert that such teachings bring no benefit at all to those who embrace them. Hence the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra says, “Therefore the way [enlightenment] living beings gained was not uniform but differed in different cases.”

To be sure, the same sutra later says, “They will in the end fail to gain unsurpassed enlightenment.” But although it makes this admission, this does not mean that the three doctrines [of the four noble truths, the twelve-linked chain of causation, and the six pārami-tās] and the doctrines of the four stages of Hinayana enlightenment are of no benefit at all. It is simply a difference between those who attain enlightenment immediately and those who become enlightened only after spending many long kalpas in the process. It is not a fact, as you assert, that no one can in any sense gain the way through such methods.

Thus there are also those who acquire the three insights and the six transcendental powers, or bodhisattvas
who are capable of manifesting their physical forms everywhere. Though they may not practice the threefold contemplation in a single mind and thereby cut off the three categories of illusion that originate in the same single mind, they have already acquired the wisdom to analyze all into non-substantiality and can cut off the illusions of thought and desire. Therefore how could they fail to remove themselves from the twenty-five realms that make up the threefold world?

Hence the commentary states, “If when I [the Buddha] encounter living beings I should cause them to practice the lesser vehicle, I would be guilty of stinginess and greed, but such a thing would be impossible. I would merely be allowing them to remove themselves from the twenty-five realms of the threefold world.”^18

This passage, one should understand, says that such a thing “would be impossible,” but it does allow that one can remove oneself from the threefold world. It is simply that such persons have not perceived the non-substantiality that is beyond comprehension and have therefore been unable to manifest the wisdom associated with that non-substantiality beyond comprehension. But one cannot deny that they have to some small degree given rise to an understanding of non-substantiality. If one argues that they have not, through the wisdom of non-substantiality, been able to cut off the illusions of thought and desire, then this is not the same as the view held by Chih-tsang of K’ai-shan-ssu temple that real voice-hearers were not present at the assembly of the Lotus Sutra?

The point is even clearer when we consider that this sutra, the Lotus, says that it is honestly discarding provisional teachings and preaching the one true teaching that is pure and perfect. And speaking of the voice-hearers who had gained benefit through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus, it says, “[All were arhats whose] outflows had come to an end, who had no more earthly desires.”^19 And it also states, “[Because if there are monks] who have truly attained the status of arhat, then it would be unthinkable that they should fail to believe this Law.”^20 And it further says, “When they have gone three hundred yojanas along the steep road, [he] conjures up a city.”^21 If the voice-hearers referred to here had been no different in any way from ordinary people, then it would have been impossible for them to have gone even one step, much less the full five hundred yojanas of the steep road described in the text.

Again, the Lotus Sutra states: “[After I have entered extinction, there will be other disciples who will not hear this sutra and will not understand or be aware of the practices carried out by the bodhisattvas, but who], through the blessings they have been able to attain, will conceive an idea of extinction and enter into what they believe to be nirvana. At that time I will be a Buddha in another land and will be known by a different name. Those disciples, though they have conceived an idea of extinction and entered into what they take to be nirvana, will in that other land seek the Buddha wisdom and will be able to hear this sutra.”^22

This passage, referring to persons who have already attained the stage of enlightenment known as arhat, but were not present at the assembly when the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra, shows that they have entered the nirvana of no remainder and have been reborn in the Land of Transition, where they will hear the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. If this is true and they have already been reborn in the Land of Transition, then how can one say that they have not yet cut off the illusions of thought and desire? That is why T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo in their
commentaries refer to such persons as those who "will hear this sutra in another land."  

And again, referring to the bodhisattvas of the sutras that were preached prior to the Lotus, the Buddha says in the Lotus Sutra, "So when these living beings see me for the first time and listen to my preaching, they all immediately believe and accept it, entering into the wisdom of the Thus Come One."  

From this we should understand that the bodhisattvas of the sutras preached prior to the Lotus have cut off the three categories of illusion and entered into the Buddha wisdom. Therefore the commentary says, "The Buddha wisdom shown at the beginning and that at the latter time are alike in representing the principle of perfect and immediate enlightenment."  

Another commentary also says, "Therefore if we examine the first sutra and the last sutra, we see that in meaning they are both concerned with the Buddha wisdom."  

If all these various passages from the sutras and commentaries are meaningless, then we must assume that the assurances of truthfulness contained in the Buddha's pronouncement about honestly discarding provisional teachings, about the "one great reason" [for which the Buddhas appear in the world], or the statement "The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law... all that you [Shakyamuni Buddha] have expounded is the truth!"—all these pronouncements are invalid. But surely the words "all that you have expounded is the truth" are meant to apply to the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, are they not?  

If they are not, then the supernatural powers shown by Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the emanations of Shakyamuni from the ten directions when they extended their tongues upward to the Brahma heaven, the assurances given by the Buddhas of the three existences that the sutra is true and free from any falsehood—all these are mere empty froth and bubbles!  

However, with regard to your point that Hinayana followers fail to understand that both the idea of the permanence of the self and the idea of the annihilation of life by death must be discarded, it is true that, in comparison to the Mahayana teachings, the understanding of Hinayana followers is similar to that of non-Buddhist believers. But this does not mean that it is without any benefit at all.  

Again, you have cited the passage in Words and Phrases that says, "Those who follow the seven expedient means will never reach complete and final extinction," and the passage that states, "But if we speak of the observation of the mind, it does not accord with the principles." But these simply mean that, in comparison to the great benefits to be gained through the perfect and true teaching, the benefits gained through the seven expedient means are inferior in nature and in this sense are described in the commentaries as "never reaching complete and final extinction" and as "not according with the principles."  

For the fourth time objections are posed: If we consider the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime in the light of the observation of the mind set forth in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, then their true nature is as easily perceived as a mango held in the palm of one's hand. That is to say, when the great doctrines of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are expounded, then the great doctrines set forth in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus are cancelled out. When the great doctrines of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra are expounded, then both the theoretical teaching and the teachings of the sutras that precede the Lotus are cancelled out. And when the
great doctrine of the observation of the mind is expounded, then the essential teaching, the theoretical teaching, and the teachings of the earlier sutras are all cancelled out.

Such is the nature of the sacred teachings set forth by the Thus Come One, namely, that they overcome delusions step by step, beginning with doctrines that are shallow and moving forward to those that are profound.

But the Thus Come One did not preach for the sake of one person alone. If he had not expounded the great way in order to dispel delusion, it would be difficult for anyone to escape from the realm of birth and death.

The sutras preached prior to the Lotus contain eight types of teaching. Of the four teachings of method, the sudden teaching is set forth in the Flower Garland Sutra, and the gradual teaching in the sutras of three flavors, while the secret teaching and the indeterminate teaching are found throughout the sutras of the first four flavors.

Of the four teachings of doctrine, the Tripitaka teaching is found in the Āgama sutras and the Correct and Equal sutras, the connecting teaching in the Correct and Equal sutras and the Wisdom sutras, and the specific and perfect teachings are found throughout the sutras of the first four flavors with the exception of those preached in Deer Park.

These eight types of teachings were each of them designed for persons of different types of capacity, and therefore they differ in the particular doctrines they contain. The Buddhas who set forth the four teachings of doctrine are different from one another, and persons of one particular capacity who receive the teachings designed for them know nothing about the Buddhas of the teachings designed for other types of persons. Therefore the commentary says, “Each living being sees only the particular Buddha appropriate to him standing alone before him.”

It is perfectly clear that beings in the human and heavenly realms are to observe the five precepts and the ten good precepts, that those of the two vehicles are to embrace the four noble truths and the twelve-linked chain of causation, and that bodhisattvas are to practice the six pāramitās, and after three asamkhyya kalpas or a hundred major kalpas, or after kalpas equal in number to dust particles or more numerous than them, or after countless asamkhyya kalpas, they may achieve enlightenment, while in the case of bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching, “the first time they conceive the desire to do so, they can attain enlightenment.”

Thus there is a difference in the teachings directed to people of different capacities. Because there is a difference in the teaching, there is also a difference in the practice to be carried out. And because there is a difference in the practice, there is a difference in the fruits or results attained. Thus we know that beings of different capacities are not alike in the benefits that they gain.

In the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, however, the Buddha declares, “The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings.” Thus, living beings of the eight different types of capacity and the four evil paths all become like the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, possessing all five types of vision, possessing in one world all the Ten Worlds and in the Ten Worlds all the hundred worlds.

When we stop to consider the sutras preached prior to the Lotus from this standpoint, we see that the Buddhas depicted in them do not possess within their own world [of Buddhahood] the worlds of the two vehicles, and that the persons of the two vehicles do not pos-
sess the world of the bodhisattva. Thus human and heavenly beings in the threefold world have no hope of ever attaining Buddhahood. They do not realize that the cutting off of illusions carried out by beings of the two vehicles or by bodhisattvas is tantamount to the cutting off of their own illusions. They recognize that the wisdom possessed by beings of the three vehicles or the four vehicles\(^{37}\) can free such beings from the four evil paths. But they imagine that all these different worlds are separate from one another and do not realize that they are all a single entity.

In the sutras preached in this early period, it was supposed that persons of the two vehicles simply cut off the illusions of thought and desire within their own two worlds of voice-hearer and cause-awakened one. It was not realized that, in doing so, they also cut off the illusions of thought and desire within their own six lower worlds as well. And the same error applied, too, in the view of bodhisattvas expounded in those sutras. It was supposed that bodhisattvas endeavored to cut off the three categories of illusion within their own bodhisattva world, but it was not realized that, in doing so, they also cut off the three categories of illusion within their own six lower worlds and the worlds of the voice-hearer and cause-awakened one.

But once one gains enlightenment into the truth, then one will understand that the beings of one world are the beings of the Ten Worlds, and the beings of the Ten Worlds are the beings of one world. Thus, if the illusions of thought and desire are not cut off in the six lower worlds, then they can never be cut off in the worlds of the two vehicles.

Though this is the case, the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra takes measures to correct the view that the first nine of the Ten Worlds are all separate from one another, making clear the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds as a step to enable one to become a Buddha of perfect endowment. Thus it does not disdain the limited benefits gained by those who followed the sutras preached before the Lotus. Hence the Lotus speaks of those “whose outflows of the threefold world had come to an end,”\(^{38}\) who “have gone three hundred yojanas,” or who “see me for the first time.”

Again the persons of the two vehicles who are depicted in the sutras prior to the Lotus as having entered nirvana have not in fact cut off the illusions of thought and desire and hence have not freed themselves from the six lower worlds. But since the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is designed to show that persons of the two vehicles can actually attain Buddhahood, it says, “in that other land...[they] will be able to hear this sutra.” And since the Lotus Sutra has already stated that “in that other land...[they] will be able to hear this sutra,” we know that in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus there was no such thing as a Land of Transition.

And from this we know that in fact in these sutras there is no such thing as a Land of Actual Reward or a Land of Eternally Tranquil Light either. In order to show that bodhisattvas can attain Buddhahood, the Land of Actual Reward and the Land of Tranquil Light are temporarily postulated as existing. But since the world of the bodhisattva contains the worlds of the persons of the two vehicles, if persons of the two vehicles cannot attain Buddhahood, then bodhisattvas cannot attain Buddhahood either, for bodhisattvas will not have fulfilled their vow to save innumerable living beings.

If persons of the two vehicles lose themselves in the concept of non-substantiality and endeavor to annihilate their own existence, then bodhisattvas
also must lose themselves in the concept of non-substantiality and endeavor to annihilate their own existence. If ordinary mortals cannot escape from the six paths, then persons of the two vehicles cannot escape the six paths.

Since these sutras do not even make clear the existence of the Land of Transition, which is an inferior realm, they of course do not make clear the existence of the Land of Actual Reward or the Land of Tranquil Light, which are superior realms.

If through these sutras one could actually cut off the illusions of thought and desire, then why would the sutras not make clear the existence of a Land of Transition? And if through these sutras bodhisattvas could in fact reach the Land of Actual Reward or the Land of Tranquil Light, then why could persons of the two vehicles not reach the Land of Transition?

When these sutras speak of how bodhisattvas can free themselves from ignorance, they are postulating the existence of a Land of Actual Reward and a Land of Tranquil Light, though in such sutras these two kinds of lands do not in fact exist. In such sutras, the Land of Actual Reward and the Land of Tranquil Light are merely shown as phantom lands within the Land of Sages and Common Mortals. Thus when the Lotus Sutra speaks of those who “have gone three hundred yojanas,” it does not mean that such persons have actually freed themselves from the threefold world.

The theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra simply expounds the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds in terms of one who has gained enlightenment for the first time. It does not necessarily make clear the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds as it appears to one who has been in a state of original enlightenment from the beginning. Therefore in the theoretical teaching the members of the great assembly who receive instruction and the Buddha of perfect endowment who delivers the instruction are all beings who have gained enlightenment for the first time. And since this is the case, how can they avoid falling into the erroneous view that enlightenment is something that they did not possess originally but have now acquired?

One should understand that when the Buddhas of the four teachings of doctrine become Buddhas of perfect endowment, they do so in terms of the views expounded in the theoretical teaching. Therefore in the theoretical teaching, practitioners are ignorant of the Buddha who has been enlightened since time without beginning. Therefore the theoretical teaching lacks a revelation of that which is without beginning and without end, and does not possess any such outlook. It also lacks the principle of the body and mind that are constantly abiding and are without beginning.

When the Buddha says [in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra], “These phenomena are part of an abiding Law,” he is speaking of that which in the future will be constantly abiding, not that which has been constantly abiding since past times.

Unless and until the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is revealed in terms of what has always been in existence from the beginning, then there can be no world of Mahayana bodhisattvas that has existed from the beginning. From this you should understand, therefore, that persons of the two vehicles in the theoretical teaching have not yet cut off the illusions of thought and desire, and bodhisattvas in the theoretical teaching have not yet freed themselves from illusions about the true nature of existence. And ordinary mortals in the six paths do not dwell in the six worlds that have existed from the beginning. Thus emancipation attained by these
people exists in name only but not in actuality.

Therefore when we come to the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find that, speaking of the bodhisattvas of the sutras prior to the Lotus and of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus, who are supposed to have freed themselves from illusions about the true nature of existence, it says, "fifty small kalpas... seem [to the members of the great assembly] like only half a day." The reason the time seems to them so short is that they fail to realize that, in the case of the Buddha who has been enlightened since the far distant past, the Buddha of perfect endowment described in the "Life Span" chapter, time is neither long nor short but transcends the duality of long and short.

The sort of cutting off of illusions that characterizes the teachings of the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is similar to the non-Buddhist practice of cutting off illusions with an outflows-ridden teaching. As soon as one ceases to practice it, illusions will arise again. The root and origin of illusions is a failure to understand the Buddha who has been enlightened since the far distant past.

Therefore Maitreya, who has cut off the first forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance, fails to recognize any of the multitude of beings as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who have emerged from the earth, the four kinds of practitioners who, with regard to the practices set forth in the essential teaching, have asked the Buddha to expound the teaching, have praised the teaching, have attained immediate benefit from it, and have formed a bond with it.

If Maitreya had already cut off at least a portion of the ignorance that is without beginning and had realized at least a portion of the essential nature of phenomena that pervades the Ten Worlds and is without beginning, how could he fail to recognize bodhisattvas who had attained the stage of near-perfect enlightenment? Or even if he did not recognize bodhisattvas in the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, how could he fail to recognize practitioners who had attained immediate benefit from the Buddha's teaching and those who had formed a bond with it?

But when Maitreya says, "In this whole multitude there is not one person that I know," this is the clearest kind of proof that in fact he has not yet cut off the three categories of illusion.

When we come to the revelation of the essential teaching, we see that the teachings put forth in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus and in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus are defined as doctrines that accord with the minds of others [and not with the Buddha's own mind]. Bodhisattvas who follow such teachings are relegated to the realms of heavenly or human beings or asuras, beings who are described in the Lotus Sutra as those who "will become attached to the five desires and be caught in the net of deluded thoughts and imaginings," or are referred to in the passage that reads, "Because of the befuddlement of ordinary people..." The commentary also refers to them when it says that "when the Buddha sat in the place of meditation, he did not gain a single truth."

Thus we know that when the Buddhas of the Tripiṭaka and connecting teachings are represented as having cut off the illusions of thought and desire, and when the Buddhas of the specific and perfect teachings are represented as having cut off illusions about the true nature of existence, none of them in fact have actually cut off illusions of thought and desire or illusions about the true nature of existence. And when the Buddha seems to say that they
have, he is merely speaking in a manner that accords with the minds of others. Though the beings whom he has instructed suppose that they have cut off the three categories of illusion, they have in fact not cut them off at all.

In replying to my earlier objections, you say that I am endorsing the theory of Chih-tsang of K’ai-shan-ssu temple that real voice-hearers were not present at the assembly of the Lotus Sutra. But in your own argument are you not seconding the opinion of Fa-yün of Kuang-che-ssu temple, who held that when the Lotus Sutra was preached, there were in fact real voice-hearers present?

T’ien-t’ai, however, has demonstrated that both these views are false. Chih-tsang concluded that in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus there were no real voice-hearers, while Fa-yün held that in the Lotus there were. But both views leave room for doubt and criticism.

T’ien-t’ai states, “In the sutras preached prior to the Lotus there were voice-hearers, but in the Lotus itself, there were none. In the deluded minds of the persons who were receiving instruction, there were voice-hearers, but in the view of a person of outstanding virtue [such as the Buddha] there were no voice-hearers.” In this passage, he shows that objections of the type you put forth represent the kind of relative standpoint typical of the sutras preached prior to the Lotus and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus. But from the standpoint of the essential teaching of the Lotus, such objections are invalid [and cannot be used to prove that in the earlier sutras persons of the two vehicles were able to free themselves from the threefold world].

Again you have said that the passage by T’ien-t’ai that reads, “Those who follow the seven expedient means will never reach complete and final extinction,” and that by Miao-lo that reads, “But if we speak of the observation of the mind, it does not accord with the principles” simply mean that, in comparison to the great benefits gained through the perfect teaching, the benefits gained through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus are inferior in nature and in this sense are described as “never reaching complete and final extinction” and as “not according with the principles.”

But how then do you interpret the passage in Miao-lo’s Diamond Scalpel that reads, “If one concentrates solely on the pure aspects of the essential nature of things, one will fail to conform even to the truth of things propounded by the Hinayana teaching. What then will become of the principle of the Buddha nature?”

This passage of commentary about failure “to conform even to the truth of things propounded by the Hinayana teaching,” however, should under ordinary circumstances not be cited, as it pertains to a teaching of the greatest secrecy.

You have said that the passage in the Lotus Sutra that reads, “The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law . . . all that you have expounded is the truth!” shows that, in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus, it is admitted that one may attain the way through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus. This establishes the principle that one may in fact attain the way through such sutras.

But this passage is simply saying that, in comparison to the sutras preached prior to the Lotus, the theoretical teaching of the Lotus represents an exposition of the truth. The theoretical teaching, however, does not reveal the fact that the Buddha gained enlightenment in the far distant past. It therefore belongs to the realm in which the Buddha has “not yet revealed the truth.”

Therefore in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, when Bodhisattva
Great Adornment and the other bodhisattvas say that persons have gained various benefits in the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life, the Buddha replies by saying that he has “not yet revealed the truth.”

Again, in the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Maitreya voices doubts, saying, “When the Thus Come One was crowned prince, you left the palace of the Śākyas and sat in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gayā, and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. Barely forty years or more have passed since then.”

But the Buddha replies, “In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Śākyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gayā and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood.”

When the Buddha says it has been an infinitely long time “since I in fact attained Buddhahood,” he is indicating that everything contained in the teachings that precede the “Life Span” chapter represent a time when he had “not yet revealed the truth.”

Therefore volume nine of The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” says, “In the passage [of Words and Phrases] that begins with ‘the seven expedient means of earlier times’ and continues to ‘the truthful [words of the Thus Come One],’” the provisional teachings known as the seven expedient means may seem to represent only the provisional teachings of the earlier period. But when we compare these to the doctrine on attainment of Buddhahood set forth in the essential teaching, we know that in both the provisional doctrines and in the [relatively] true doctrines [of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra], the Buddha was speaking in a manner that accords with the minds of others.”

From this passage of commentary we can clearly understand that the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra belongs to the category of teachings in which the Buddha speaks in a manner that accords with the minds of others. Regarding the passage in the “Life Span” chapter that reads, “All that I preach is true and not false,” T’ien-t’ai in his commentary states, “As far as living beings of the teaching of perfect and immediate enlightenment are concerned, of the two types of teachings, the theoretical teaching and the essential teaching, one is true, and the other, false.”

The ninth volume of On “The Words and Phrases” comments on this as follows: “Therefore one should understand that what is truth in the theoretical teaching is falsehood when seen in the light of the essential teaching.”

It has already been established that the theoretical teaching is false and there is no need to discuss that point here. But with regard to the words in the Lotus Sutra that read, “All that you [Shakyamuni Buddha] have expounded is the truth!” it is correct to say that, when compared with the essential teaching, the theoretical teaching may be termed false. But when we come to discuss the truth or falsehood of all the teachings preached at the Lotus Sutra assembly, it may be said that both the essential teaching and the theoretical teaching are true.

Thus, for example, when in the theoretical teaching [Sāriputra] understood on hearing the doctrine preached, there were those who were slow to realize the truth and understood only after hearing the parables or learning of their past relationship with Shakyamuni. And yet in terms of the
whole assembly at which the Lotus Sutra was preached, it cannot be said that they failed to hear and understand the truth. Therefore they are included among those who awakened to the Buddha's preaching.

Volume nine of *On “The Words and Phrases”* states, “With regard to the expedient teachings, both the teaching on the cause of Buddhahood and the teaching on the effect of Buddhahood are false. When, in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the teaching on the cause of Buddhahood is revealed, the teaching on the effect of Buddhahood in the essential teaching of the sutra has yet to be put forth; thus there is one truth, but there is one falsehood. When the essential teaching is revealed, both types of teaching may be deemed true.”

This passage of commentary means that, before the essential teaching is revealed, the theoretical teaching, when compared to the essential teaching, still deserves to be called false. But once the essential teaching has been revealed, then the cause of Buddhahood expounded in the theoretical teaching is seen to be none other than the effect of Buddhahood as expounded in the essential teaching. Like the moon in the sky and the moon reflected in water, they are part of a single inherently existing Law, and both the essential teaching and the theoretical teaching are revealed as constantly abiding throughout the three existences of past, present, and future.

That which enables all living beings to gain enlightenment for the first time is what is known as the perfect cause set forth in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. And the original enlightenment of all living beings is what is known as the perfect effect set forth in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. This is what a passage of commentary means when it says, “One practices the one perfect cause and achieves the one perfect effect.”

Thus when we discuss these matters of doctrine, we must realize that, unless and until the essential teaching is revealed, it is impossible through the sutras preached prior to the Lotus or through the theoretical teaching of the Lotus to free oneself from the six paths. How then could one ever free oneself from the nine worlds [and enter the tenth, that of Buddhahood]?

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**Background**

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this document in 1259. The preceding year, he had pored over the contents of the sutra repository at Jissō-ji temple in Iwamoto of Suruga Province. On the basis of his survey, he authored *On the Protection of the Nation*, one of his major works, in 1259. The following year he completed and submitted his treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* to Hōjō Tokiyori, the de facto leader of the Kamakura government.

The theme of this current writing differs from those mentioned above from the same period, which focus broadly on the state of the nation, the cause of disasters, and how to address slander of the correct Buddhist teaching. Entitled *On the Ten Worlds*, this writing compares and contrasts the perspective and principles of the Daishonin's Buddhism with those of the T'ien-t'ai tradition of China and the Tendai school in Japan. It is not addressed to a particular believer, but
seems to have been intended as reference material for future works.

The Daishonin opens by citing an assertion of the Tendai school that, if persons of the two vehicles, voice hearers and cause-awakened ones, do not free themselves from the threefold world, then the two of the Ten Worlds that represent their respective conditions of life could not exist, leaving only eight of the Ten Worlds.

Addressing the theme set forth in this opening statement, the current writing consists of a series of questions or objections and answers. But, unlike other works in which the Daishonin employs a question and answer format to answer a hypothetical questioner, in this case the questions and objections represent the standpoint of the Daishonin, and the answers the doctrinal standpoint of the Tendai school. There is no answer provided to the fourth and final objection; it is in effect a statement of conclusion.

In response to the statement that only eight of the Ten Worlds would exist if persons of the two vehicles were unable to free themselves from the threefold world, the Daishonin presents the following perspective: While the Tendai school acknowledges that persons of the two vehicles can free themselves from the threefold world through the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, the truth is that, without an understanding of the principles of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds set forth in the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra and the Buddha's original enlightenment in the remote past revealed in the essential teaching (latter half) of the sutra, neither persons of the two vehicles nor bodhisattvas would be able to cut off their illusions of thought and desire. Therefore, they would be unable to free themselves in reality from the threefold world or the six paths of existence.

In summary, the answers counter this challenge by presenting the Tendai school's position that even in the teachings propounded by the Buddha before the Lotus Sutra, because they were preached in a manner that accorded with the listeners' individual capacities, people are able to benefit to some degree or attain a certain measure of enlightenment from these teachings. Therefore, persons of the two vehicles and bodhisattvas, through these teachings, are able to free themselves from the six paths.

The Daishonin, in raising his objections, takes the strictly contrasting position that, only if one bases oneself on the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, can one achieve genuine emancipation from the six paths, and attain Buddhahood. In making his point, the Daishonin quotes from the works of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, the patriarchs of the T'ien-t'ai school.

Notes

1. In this work, the portions introduced as questions or objections represent Nichiren Daishonin's viewpoint, and the portions introduced as answers represent the viewpoint of the T'ien-t'ai or Tendai school.

2. The thirty stages from the eleventh to the fortieth of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice—the ten stages of security, ten stages of practice, and ten stages of devotion.

3. The full quotation is as follows: "In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shākyas, seated himself in the place of meditation not far from the city of Gayā and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment."

4. The Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, and the specific teaching, the first three of the four teachings of doctrine.
5. The “fifth period” refers to the Lotus and Nirvana period of the five periods established by T’ien-t’ai. The “perfect teaching” here refers to the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

6. “The two types of nirvana” refers to the nirvana of remainder and the nirvana of no remainder. See nirvana of no remainder in Glossary.

7. The general type of illusion refers to illusions of thought and desire, and the specific type of illusion to illusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand and illusions about the true nature of existence.

8. A reference to the two kinds of transmigration—transmigration with differences and limitations and transmigration with change and advance—that are mentioned earlier. For each of them, see Glossary.


10. Ibid., chap. 3.

11. “The observation of the mind” means to perceive the ultimate truth inherent in one’s own life through the practice of meditation. Here, “the observation of the mind” refers to practice of the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which Nichiren Daishonin set forth to make it possible to perceive the truth inherent in one’s life, that is, to attain Buddhahood.

12. The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”

13. “Those who follow the seven expedient means” refers to (1) the voice-hearers and (2) cause-awakened ones of the Tripitaka teaching; (3) the voice-hearers, (4) cause-awakened ones, and (5) bodhisattvas of the connecting teaching; (6) the bodhisattvas of the specific teaching; and (7) the bodhisattvas of the perfect teaching. See also seven expedient means in Glossary.

14. The Tripitaka teaching, connecting teaching, and specific teaching.

15. This refers to those who heard the sixteen sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence preach the Lotus Sutra, as related in chapter seven of the sutra. The sixteenth son was Shakyamuni in a previous existence.

16. The Commentary on Bodhisattva Precepts Established by T’ien-t’ai, a work by Ming-k’uang, a priest of the T’ien-t’ai school.

17. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.


20. Ibid., chap. 2.

21. Ibid., chap. 7.

22. Ibid.


24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.


27. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

28. Ibid., chap. 11.

29. The “three flavors” refers to the flavors of cream, curdled milk, and butter, three of the five flavors. These three flavors correspond respectively to the Ågama sutras, the Correct and Equal sutras, and the Wisdom sutras.

30. Two of the four teachings of method (see Glossary). The “first four flavors” in this sentence are the first four of the five flavors—milk, cream, curdled milk, and butter. These four flavors correspond to the Flower Garland Sutra, the Ågama sutras, the Correct and Equal sutras, and the Wisdom sutras, which were preached prior to the Lotus Sutra.

31. “Those preached in Deer Park” refers to the Ågama sutras.

32. Great Concentration and Insight.

33. In the case of bodhisattvas of the Tripitaka teaching.

34. In the case of bodhisattvas of the connecting teaching.

35. In the case of bodhisattvas of the specific teaching.

36. Flower Garland Sutra.

37. The “four vehicles” refers to the three vehicles of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas plus the vehicle of Buddhahood. Vehicle means teaching.

38. The actual passage in the first chapter of the Lotus Sutra does not contain the words “of the threefold world.”

39. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

40. An “outflows-ridden teaching” refers to the kind of teaching that leads to rebirth in the threefold world, which is characterized by outflows, or illusions.

41. Lotus Sutra, chap. 15.

42. Ibid., chap. 16.

43. Ibid. “Because of the befuddlement of ordinary people, though I live, I give out word I have entered extinction.”

44. Words and Phrases.

45. A summary of the passage from
ON THE TEN WORLDS

Words and Phrases.

46. The attempt described in this passage to concentrate only on "the pure aspects of the essential nature of things" contradicts the teaching of the Lotus Sutra that three thousand realms exist in a single moment of life. To put it another way, good and evil, truth and falsehood, ignorance and enlightenment, pure and impure—all exist in the essential nature of things. Realizing this is the enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, Miao-lo says, if one carries out Buddhist practice in order to realize only "the pure aspects," one will fail to perceive even the Hinayana truth of non-substantiality, let alone the Mahayana truth of the Buddha nature.

47. Lotus Sutra, chap. 16.

48. A reference to the first passage of the "Life Span" chapter in which the Buddha states, "Good men, you must believe and understand the truthful words of the Thus Come One."

49. Words and Phrases.

50. "The moon in the sky" represents the essential teaching and "the moon reflected in water" represents the theoretical teaching.

51. On "The Profound Meaning."