THE aim of this memorial is to inquire into the causes that bring about such disasters to the nation as major earthquakes, strong winds that blow out of season, serious famines, great outbreaks of epidemics, or major military uprisings, and the steps to be taken in dealing with them.

The Golden Light Sutra states: "[The four heavenly kings said to the Buddha], 'Though this sutra exists in the nation, the ruler has never allowed it to be propagated. In his heart he turns away from it, and he takes no pleasure in hearing its teachings. He neither makes offerings to it, honors it, nor praises it. Nor is he willing to honor or make offerings to the four kinds of Buddhists who embrace the sutra. In the end, he makes it impossible for us and the countless other heavenly beings who are our followers to hear this profound and wonderful teaching. He deprives us of the sweet dew of its words and cuts us off from the flow of the correct teaching, so that our majesty and strength are drained away. Thus the number of beings who occupy the evil paths increases, and the number who dwell in the human and heavenly realms decreases. People fall into the river of the sufferings of birth and death and turn their backs on the road to nirvana.

"'World-Honored One, we, the four heavenly kings, as well as our various followers and the yakshas and other beings, observing this state of affairs, have decided to abandon this nation, for we have no heart to protect it. And it is not we alone who cast aside this ruler. All the great benevolent deities who guard and watch over the countless different regions of the country will also invariably reject him. And once we and the others abandon and desert this nation, then many different types of disasters will occur in the country, and the ruler will fall from power. Not a single person in the entire population will possess a heart of goodness; there will be nothing but binding and enslaving, killing and injuring, anger and contention. People will slander each other or fawn upon one another, and the laws will be twisted until even the innocent are made to suffer. Pestilence will become rampant, comets will appear again and again, two suns will come forth side by side, and eclipses will occur with unaccustomed frequency. Black arcs and white arcs will span the sky as harbingers of ill fortune, stars will fall, the earth will shake, and noises will issue from the wells. Torrential rains and violent winds will come out of season, famine will constantly occur, and grains and fruits will not ripen. Marauders from many other regions
will invade and plunder the nation, the people will suffer all manner of pain and affliction, and no place will exist where one may live in safety."

The Great Collection Sutra says: "Though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practiced the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom, if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, then all [the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned] will be entirely wiped out, and his country will become the scene of three inauspicious occurrences. . . . After his life has come to an end, he will be reborn in the great hell."

The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: "Great King, when a nation becomes disordered, it is the spirits that first show signs of rampancy. Because the spirits become rampant, all the people of the nation become disordered."

It also says: "Great King, now when I use the five types of vision to clearly perceive the three existences, I see that in their past existences all the rulers served five hundred Buddhas, and that is the reason that they were able to become emperors and sovereigns. And that also is the reason that all the various sages and arhats are born in their nations and bring great benefits. But if a time should come when the good fortune of these rulers runs out, then all the sages will abandon them and depart. Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise."

And in the Benevolent Kings Sutra [the Buddha addresses King Prasenajit in these words]: "Great King, the region where my teachings now hold sway consists of one billion Sumeru worlds with one billion suns and moons. Each of these Sumeru worlds comprises four continents. In the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, there are sixteen great states, five hundred middle-sized states, and ten thousand small states. In these states, seven types of fearful disasters may occur. All the rulers of these states agree that these are indeed disasters. What, then, are these disasters?

"When the sun and moon depart from their regular courses, when the seasons come in the wrong order, when a red sun or a black sun appears, when two, three, four, or five suns appear at the same time, when the sun is eclipsed and loses its light, or when one, two, three, four, or five coronas appear around the sun, this is the first disaster."

"When the twenty-eight constellations do not move in their regular courses, when the Metal Star, the Broom Star, the Wheel Star, the Demon Star, the Fire Star, the Water Star, the Wind Star, the Ladle Star, the Southern Dipper, the Northern Dipper, the great stars of the Five Garrisons, and all the many stars that govern the ruler, the three high ministers, and the hundred officials—when each of these stars manifests some peculiar behavior, this is the second disaster."

"When huge fires consume the nation, and the people are all burned to death, or when there are outbreaks of demon fire, dragon fire, heavenly fire, mountain god fire, human fire, tree fire, or bandit fire—when these prodigies appear, this is the third disaster."

"When huge floods drown the population; when the seasons come out of order and there is rain in winter, snow in summer, thunder and lightning in winter, and ice, frost, and hail in the sixth month; when red, black, or green rain falls; when mountains of dirt and stones come raining down, or when it rains dust, sand, or gravel; when the rivers and streams run
backward; when mountains are afloat and boulders are washed away—when freakish happenings of this kind occur, this is the fourth disaster.

"When huge winds blow the people to their death, and the lands, the mountains and rivers, and the trees and forests are all at one time wiped out; when great winds come out of season, or when black winds, red winds, green winds, heavenly winds, earthly winds, fire winds, and water winds blow"—when prodigies of this kind occur, this is the fifth disaster.

"When heaven and earth and the whole country are stricken by terrible heat so that the air seems to be on fire, when the hundred plants wither and the five kinds of grain fail to ripen, when the earth is red and scorched and the inhabitants all perish—when prodigies of this kind occur, this is the sixth disaster.

"When enemies rise up on all four sides and invade the nation, when rebels appear in the capital and the outlying regions, when there are fire bandits, water bandits, wind bandits, and demon bandits," and the population is subjected to devastation and disorder, and fighting and plundering break out everywhere—when prodigies of this kind occur, this is the seventh disaster."

In the Lotus Sutra [the heavenly king Vaishravana, protector of the world, said to the Buddha, "I will also shield and guard those who uphold this sutra], making certain that they suffer no decline or harm within the area of a hundred yojanas."  

The Nirvana Sutra says, "You should understand that wherever this wonderful sutra of the Great Nirvana is propagated, that land is made of diamond, and the people who live there are like diamonds."

The Benevolent Kings Sutra states, "This sutra constantly emits a thousand beams of shining light, and insures that for a thousand ri around the seven disasters will not occur."

It also says: "Evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit, will in many cases appear before the ruler, the crown prince, or the other princes, and take it upon themselves to preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, will listen to and put faith in such doctrines, and proceed to create regulations that are perverse in nature and that do not accord with the rules of Buddhist discipline. In this way he will bring about the destruction of Buddhism and of the nation."

Taking these passages into consideration now, we see that the Lotus Sutra says it will "make certain that they suffer no decline or harm within the area of a hundred yojanas," the Benevolent Kings Sutra says that "for a thousand ri around the seven disasters will not occur," and the Nirvana Sutra says, "You should understand that...that land is made of diamond, and the people who live there are like diamonds."

Question: Now we receive reports that this land of ours is beset by various kinds of disasters. From the eighth month of the eighth year of Kenchō [1256] until the second month of the second year of Shōgen [1260], various disasters such as major earthquakes, strong winds that blow out of season, widespread famines, and great outbreaks of epidemics occurred one after another and continue even today, until it almost seems as though the entire population of the nation will be wiped out. Many people have offered prayers in an attempt to alleviate these various calamities, but they appear to have had no effect.

The Lotus Sutra, in which the Buddha declared, "Honestly discarding expedient means [I will preach only the unsurpassed way]," the truth of which
was testified to by the Buddha Many Treasures and all the other Buddhas when they put forth their tongues,\textsuperscript{12} states that no decline or harm will come to those “within the area of a hundred yojanas”; the Nirvana Sutra, the Buddha’s final words delivered in the grove of sal trees, states that “that land is made of diamond”; and the Benevolent Kings Sutra says that “for a thousand ri around the seven disasters will not occur.” But all these passages would seem to be mere lies, would they not?

Answer: If I may be allowed to state my humble opinion on this matter, I would like to suggest a possible reason why, although the various Mahayana sutras cited above exist in this nation, prayers have no effect and these disasters arise in the country.

The passage from the Golden Light Sutra states, “Though this sutra exists in the nation, the ruler has never allowed it to be propagated. In his heart he turns away from it, and he takes no pleasure in hearing its teachings. . . . [And it is not] we, the four heavenly kings [alone who cast aside this ruler]. All the great benevolent deities . . . will also invariably reject him. [And once we and the others abandon and desert this nation], then many different types of disasters will occur in
the country.”

The Great Collection Sutra says, “If he [the ruler of the state] sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, . . . his country will become the scene of three inauspicious occurrences.”

And the passages from the Benevolent Kings Sutra declare that the ruler will “[create regulations that are perverse in nature and that do] not accord with the rules of Buddhist discipline. In this way he will bring about the destruction of Buddhism and of the nation.” And they also say that “once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise.”

If we consider the meaning of these passages, we will see that, although the Lotus Sutra and the other Mahayana sutras may exist in the nation, the four kinds of Buddhist believers all reject and turn away from them in their hearts, and feel no desire to listen to their teachings or offer alms to them. Therefore the benevolent deities who guard and protect the country and all the sages will desert and abandon that country and it will be without benevolent deities or sages to protect it. That is why the disasters occur.

Question: What causes the people of this country to reject and turn their hearts away from these Mahayana sutras and to feel no desire to offer alms to them?

Answer: The Benevolent Kings Sutra says: “Evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit, will in many cases appear before the ruler, the crown prince, or the other princes, and take it upon themselves to preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, will listen to and put faith in such doctrines, and proceed to create regulations that are perverse in nature and that do not accord with the rules of Buddhist discipline.”

The Lotus Sutra states: “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. . . . These men with evil in their hearts . . . will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking ill of us, saying, ‘These are men of perverted views who preach non-Buddhist doctrines! . . . Evil demons will take possession of others.’”\textsuperscript{13}
If we consider the matter in the light of these passages, we will see that evil monks fill the country and preach doctrines that lead to the destruction of the nation and the violation of the Buddhist Law. The rulers and the four kinds of Buddhist believers who live in that nation, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, listen to and put faith in their words. Therefore they reject and turn their hearts away from these Mahayana sutras.

Question: These evil monks who fill the country and preach doctrines that lead to the destruction of the nation and the violation of the rules of Buddhist discipline—do they appear among the disciples of the Buddha, or do they appear among the followers of non-Buddhist doctrines?

Answer: The Benevolent Kings Sutra says: “Those persons who should uphold and guard the three treasures of Buddhism will on the contrary become the destroyers of the three treasures, just as it is the worms that are born from the body of a dead lion that will feed on the lion’s flesh. It will not be the non-Buddhists [but in most cases the Buddha’s own disciples who will destroy this Buddhist Law of mine].”

If we go by this passage, those who destroy the nation and the Buddhist Law will come from among the disciples of the Buddha.

Question: These evil monks who destroy the correct teaching—do they destroy it with a teaching that resembles the correct teaching, or do they destroy it with an evil teaching?

Answer: The Hinayana teachings are used to destroy the provisional Mahayana teachings, and the provisional Mahayana teachings are used to destroy the true Mahayana. These teachers and their disciples are unaware that they are committing acts that slander the Law and destroy the nation. Therefore they carry out these actions that violate the rules of Buddhist discipline and destroy the nation, and as a consequence will fall into the three evil paths of existence.

Question: What is your proof of this?

Answer: The Lotus Sutra says: “[The evil monks of that muddled 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 Nirvana Sutra states: “After I have entered nirvana, there will be hundreds, thousands, countless numbers of living beings who will speak slander and fail to have faith in this Great Nirvana Sutra. And the persons of the three vehicles will do likewise, hating and despising this unsurpassed Great Nirvana Sutra.”

The monk Superior Intent spoke slanderously of the bodhisattva Root of Joy and hence fell into the three evil paths; the layman Thinking of Buddha and the others attacked the bodhisattva Never Disparaging and called down on themselves the flames of the Avīci hell. These persons all failed to distinguish between Mahayana and Hinayana or the provisional and the true teachings and hence met this fate. Even foolish people understand that it is an offense to commit the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins. Therefore they are not quick to commit acts that bring about the destruction of the nation or the destruction of the Buddhist Law.

Thus the Benevolent Kings Sutra says, “The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, will listen to and put faith in such doctrines.” The Nirvana Sutra states: “There may be those who commit the four grave offenses or are guilty of the five cardinal sins, and who, though aware that they are guilty of serious faults, from the beginning have no trace of fear or contrition in
their hearts or, if they do, give no outward sign of it.”

As these passages demonstrate, those who slander the Law fail to realize in full how their acts affect others and proceed to commit grave faults, bringing about the destruction of the nation and the destruction of the Buddhist Law.

Question: If this is so, then is there someone in this country who is using the provisional teachings to attract the attention of the people and bring about the obliteration of the true teaching?

Answer: Just so.

Question: What is your proof?

Answer: The proof is in The Nembutsu Chosen above All written by the Honorable Hōnen. I will just quote some passages from it so you can compare them with the sutra passages cited above and see plainly where the error lies. But if proper steps are taken to remedy the situation, I believe the country can be restored to peace and safety.

_Nembutsu Chosen above All_ states: “Regarding the passage in which the Meditation Master Tao-ch’o distinguished between the Sacred Way teachings and the Pure Land teachings and urged people to abandon the former and immediately embrace the latter, first of all, there are two kinds of Sacred Way teachings: one is the Mahayana and the other is the Hinayana. Within the Mahayana there are various categories such as the exoteric and the esoteric teachings, the provisional and the true teachings. But from the point of view of the treatise _The Collected Essays on the World of Peace and Delight_, only the exoteric Mahayana and the provisional Mahayana are taken into consideration, and these require countless kalpas of religious practice before one can attain enlightenment. Judging from this, we may assume that the esoteric Mahayana teachings and the true Mahayana teachings are both included in the Sacred Way. If that is so, then the eight present-day schools—the True Word, Zen, Tendai, Flower Garland, Three Treatises, Dharma Characteristics, Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra, and Summary of the Mahayana—all are included in the Sacred Way that is to be abandoned.

“The Dharma Teacher T’an-luan in his _Commentary on 'The Treatise on Rebirth in the Pure Land'_ states: ‘I note that Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna’s _Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra_ says, ‘There are two ways by which a bodhisattva may reach the state of avaivartika, or non-retrogression. One is the difficult-to-practice way, the other is the easy-to-practice way.’”

“The difficult-to-practice way is the same as the Sacred Way teachings, and the easy-to-practice way is the Pure Land teachings. Students of the Pure Land school should first of all understand this point. Though they may be people who have previously studied the Sacred Way teachings, if they wish to become followers of the Pure Land teachings, they must discard the Sacred Way and give their allegiance to the Pure Land teachings.”

Hōnen also says: “Regarding the passage in which the Reverend Shan-tao distinguished between correct and sundry practices and urged people to abandon the sundry and embrace the correct: Concerning the first of the sundry practices, that of reading and reciting sutras, with the exception of the recitation of the Meditation on the Buddha Infinite Life Sutra and the other sutras that preach rebirth in the Pure Land, the embracing, reading, and recitation of all other sutras, whether Mahayana or Hinayana, exoteric or esoteric, is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . Concerning the third of the sundry practices, that of worshipping, with the exception of worshipping the Buddha Amida, the worshipping or honoring of any other Buddha or bo-
dhisattva, or any deity of this world, is to be regarded as a sundry practice. . . . In the light of his statement, I declare that one should abandon such sundry practices and concentrate upon the practice of the Pure Land teachings. What reason would we have to abandon the correct practices of the Pure Land teachings, which insure that out of a hundred persons all one hundred will be reborn in the Pure Land, and cling instead to the various sundry practices and procedures, which could not save even one person in a thousand?  

Followers of the way should ponder this carefully.”

Hōnen further states: “In The Chen-yüan Era Catalog of the Buddhist Canon we find it recorded that, from 600 volumes of the Great Wisdom Sutra to the Eternity of the Law Sutra, the exoteric and esoteric sutras of Mahayana [the great vehicle] total 637 works in 2,883 volumes. The phrase [from the Meditation Sutra] ‘reading and reciting the great vehicle’ should be applied to all these works. You should understand that, when the Buddha was preaching according to the capacity of his various listeners, he for a time taught the two methods of concentrated meditation and unconcentrated meditation. But later, when he revealed his own enlightenment, he ceased to teach these two methods. The only teaching that, once revealed, shall never cease to be taught, is the single doctrine of the Nembutsu.”

Finally, in a concluding passage, Hōnen says: “If one wishes to escape quickly from the sufferings of birth and death, one should confront these two superior teachings and then proceed to put aside the teachings of the Sacred Way and choose those of the Pure Land. And if one wishes to follow the teachings of the Pure Land, one should confront the correct and sundry practices and then proceed to abandon all of the sundry and devote one’s entire attention to the correct.” (All the passages quoted above are from Nembutsu Chosen above All.)

When we consider the situation now, we find that the people of this country, both those of high and low station, put profound faith in the Honorable Hōnen and are much taken by this book of his. Hence, when the ignorant priests and lay believers see the words “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” in his book, they think it means to “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” all the sutras, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly gods and benevolent deities other than the three Pure Land sutras and the Buddha Amida. They no longer feel moved to give alms to or embrace these other Buddhas and sutras, but on the contrary turn their hearts away from them. As a result, the Buddhist institutions founded by the great teachers of old and designed to insure the protection of the nation fall into ruin, but no one is moved to guard them or keep them in repair. And since no one is moved to guard them or keep them in repair, the sound of almsgiving and sutra recitation is no longer heard there and the benevolent deities who formerly gave their protection, because they can no longer taste the flavor of the Law, abandon the nation and depart, and the four ranks of sages no longer appear.

The present situation is just as the Golden Light and Benevolent Kings sutras describe: “Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise,” and, “We, the four heavenly kings, . . . have decided to abandon this nation. . . . And once we and the others abandon and desert this nation, then many different types of disasters will occur in the country.” Is it not Hōnen who is referred to in the passages “evil monks, hoping to gain fame and profit . . .” and “In that evil age there will be monks with perverse
wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked...”?

Question: You say that these disasters have arisen because *Nembutsu Chosen above All* has been propagated throughout the country. Were there then no disasters in the country before this book came into existence?

Answer: No, there were disasters at that time too. They occurred because there were persons who violated the five constant virtues and destroyed the Buddhist Law. Yu-wen Yung of Chou and Wei Yüan-sung were examples.18

Objection: If we were to say that the disasters occurring in our present age are due to the fact that the five constant virtues are being violated, then we need not necessarily blame them on the propagation of *Nembutsu Chosen above All*, need we?

Answer: The Benevolent Kings Sutra says: “Great King, in future ages the kings of the various small countries and the four types of Buddhist disciples19 [will of their own initiative commit faults of the type that bring about the destruction of their own nation]... Evil monks... [preach doctrines that lead to the violation of the Buddhist Law and the destruction of the nation. The ruler, failing to perceive the truth of the situation, will listen to and put faith in such doctrines], and proceed to create regulations that are perverse in nature and that do not accord with the rules of Buddhist discipline.” It also says, “And he will not permit the making of Buddhist images or the building of Buddhist stupas.” It further says, “Then the seven disasters are certain to arise.”

The Golden Light Sutra states: “He neither makes offerings to it [the sutra], honors it, nor praises it... Then many different types of disasters will occur in the country.” The Nirvana Sutra speaks of those who “hate and despise the unsurpassed Great Nirvana Sutra.”

Do these passages not refer to the kind of people who say that giving alms to, worshiping, or praising any Buddhas or sutras other than Amida are all mere “sundry practices”?

Objection: Those disasters that occurred in the country before the introduction of Buddhism—how can they have been caused by persons who slandered the Law?

Answer: In the period before the introduction of Buddhism, the country was ordered according to the five constant virtues, but this was as though from far off one were observing Buddhist vows in ordering the country. In violating the norms of propriety and righteousness, one was in effect violating the five precepts laid down by the Buddha.

Question: What is your proof?

Answer: The Golden Light Sutra says, “All the good teachings that exist in the world derive from this sutra.”

The Lotus Sutra states, “If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or occupations that sustain life, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law.”

In the Universal Worthy Sutra it is stated, “To use the correct Law to order the country and not to lead the people astray with erroneous views, this is called the third act of repentance.”

The Nirvana Sutra states, “All of the non-Buddhist scriptures and writings in society are themselves Buddhist teachings, not non-Buddhist teachings.” *Great Concentration and Insight* says, “To have a profound knowledge of this world is itself Buddhism.” And in *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight”* we read, “First the teachings on rites and music were set forth, and later the true way was introduced.”

*An Extensive Commentary on the Universally Bestowed Bodhisattva Precepts*21 states: “The Buddha dispatched three
persons to give instruction to China. Using the five constant virtues, they prepared the way for the introduction of the five Buddhist precepts. In ancient times, the chief minister asked Confucius, ‘Were the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors sages?’

“Confucius replied, ‘No, they were not sages.’

“Then the chief minister asked, ‘Are you a sage?’

“‘No,’ replied Confucius.

“‘Then who is a sage?’ asked the chief minister.

“Confucius replied, ‘I have heard that in the western region there is a sage named Shakyamuni.’”

Examining these passages, we see that in the time before the introduction of Buddhism, the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors used the five constant virtues to order the country. King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, King Chou of the Yin, and King Yu of the Chou violated the norms of propriety and righteousness and brought about the downfall of the state. In doing so, they were as though from far off violating the vows one takes to uphold the Buddhist precepts.

Question: If what you say is true, then why do persons who put their faith in the Mahayana sutras such as the Lotus Sutra or the True Word sutras encounter such disasters?

Answer: The Golden Light Sutra says: “The laws will be twisted until even the innocent are made to suffer.” The Lotus Sutra states, “They would bring unexpected disaster on him.”

Judging from these passages that have just been quoted, such practitioners of the Lotus Sutra and True Word teachings have not yet reached any very profound level of practice, their minds are still weak in faith, and though their mouths recite the words of the sutra, they do not yet understand their meaning; they recite them only for the sake of fame or gain. The sins they have incurred in previous existences through slander of the Law have not been fully wiped out, and though outwardly they appear to practice the Lotus Sutra, inwardly their hearts are devoted to Nembutsu Chosen above All. Such persons do not understand the causes that bring about disaster, and therefore it is difficult for them to escape such disaster.

Question: If that is so, then among those who put faith in Nembutsu Chosen above All and slander the Law, are there any who do not meet with such disaster?

Answer: The forces of karma do not operate in fixed ways. There is what is called karma that manifests itself in one’s present existence. Describing such cases, the Lotus Sutra says that a person “will in his present existence be afflicted with white leprosy. . . . And he will suffer from . . . severe and malignant illnesses.” The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: “If persons destroy the teachings of the Buddha, they will have no filial sons, no harmony with their six kinds of relatives, and no aid from the heavenly deities. Disease and evil demons will come day after day to torment them, disasters will descend on them incessantly, and misfortunes will dog them wherever they go.” And the Nirvana Sutra states: “If there are those who fail to put faith in this sutra, when they approach the time of death, they will encounter a world troubled by disorder, armed strife will break out, or they will find themselves the victims of the tyranny of rulers or the quarrels and contentions of warring families.”

Regarding the second type of karma, that which manifests itself in one’s next existence, the Lotus Sutra says, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, . . . When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.” And the Benevolent Kings Sutra states: “If persons destroy the teachings of the Buddha, . . . when
they die, they will fall into the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals.”

I will omit here a description of the third type of karma, that which manifests itself in one’s later existences.

Question: What is the quickest way to put an end to these disasters?

Answer: One must quickly take measures to deal with those who slander the Law. If this is not done, then although endless prayers are offered, they will not put an end to these disasters.

Question: What measures should be taken to deal with them?

Answer: The measures are indicated in the sutras. In the Nirvana Sutra we read, “The Buddha said, ‘With the exception of one type of person, you may offer alms to all kinds of persons . . . [Persons of this one type] slander the correct teaching, and go on committing these grave acts . . . With the exception of this one group of people called icchantikas, however, you may offer alms to all others, and everyone will praise you.’”

From this passage it is clear that one should take measures to see that no alms are given to persons of this type. In addition, there are many other measures to be taken, but I do not have time to discuss them all here.

Question: If one takes severe measures of this kind to cut off the giving of alms to those who slander the Law, is this a blameful act or not?

Answer: The Nirvana Sutra states: “Now I entrust the correct teaching, which is unexcelled, to the rulers, the ministers, the high officials, and the monks and nuns. If anyone should vilify the correct teaching, then the rulers, the ministers, and the four kinds of Buddhists should reprimand him and bring him to order. [In doing so, they] are not guilty of any fault.”

Question: You yourself are a priest, and yet you are exposing the errors of other priests—is this not a blameful act?

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.”

When I read this passage, it seems to me that, in order to avoid being condemned as a “betrayal of the Buddha’s teaching,” I must not be fearful of how others may judge my actions, but must proclaim that the Honorable Hōnen and the followers of his teachings are destined to fall into the great citadel of the Avīci hell. If so, among the clerics and lay believers who heed and understand my argument, there will be some at least who have a change of heart.

But if, having once perused what I have written, they do not carry out the measures recommended in the passages I have quoted, then how can they escape the fate described in the Great Collection Sutra when it says: “Though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practiced the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom, if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, then all [the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned] will be entirely wiped out, and his country will become the scene of three inauspicious occurrences . . . After his life has come to an end, he will be reborn in the great hell.”

The passage in the Benevolent Kings Sutra states, “If a time should come when the good fortune of these rulers runs out . . . then the seven disasters are certain to arise.” And the passage in the Great Collection Sutra says that
“though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practiced the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom... all [the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned] will be entirely wiped out.”

In view of these passages, should one not set aside all other affairs and consider first of all why these disasters occur? If one does not do so, then more and more such disasters are bound to occur!

Such is my humble opinion. I leave it to others to accept or reject it.

**Background**

There is no record of the date of this writing, but a passage from the text reads, “Now we receive reports that this land of ours is beset by various kinds of disasters. From the eighth month of the eighth year of Kenchō [1256] until the second month of the second year of Shōgen [1260], various disasters... occurred... until it almost seems as though the entire population of the nation will be wiped out.” Since the period mentioned ends in the second month of 1260, it appears that Nichiren Daishonin produced this work shortly thereafter.

In the fourth month of that year the name of the era changed from Shōgen to Bunnō. In the seventh month of that same year, by then called the first year of Bunnō, the Daishonin submitted his treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* to the retired regent Hōjō Tokiyori, who was still the principal political authority in the nation. It can be assumed, then, that this current work was produced several months before that official treatise. Also, in the previous year (1259), the Daishonin had written another major treatise addressing the subject of the security of the land and its people, entitled *On the Protection of the Nation*.

A survey of the three works mentioned above shows that *On the Protection of the Nation* presents an overall examination of the Buddhist teachings and a complete refutation of *The Nembutsu Chosen above All*; this work, *On Dealing with Disaster*, studies the basic cause for the disasters striking the country; and *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* combines and summarizes the two for an official presentation.

At the beginning of this writing, the Daishonin defines “the aim of this memorial,” which is to inquire into the causes that have brought about disasters in the nation and the steps to be taken to deal with them. But the addressee of this memorial is not mentioned. In the closing remark the Daishonin writes, “Such is my humble opinion. I leave it to others to accept or reject it.” From this it can be surmised that the memorial served as a draft for *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.

The following is a brief overview of *On Dealing with Disaster* with comparisons made to *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.

*On Dealing with Disaster* consists of seventeen pairs of questions and answers, preceded by a section introducing excerpts from various sutras. *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* contains ten questions and nine answers, the final question being actually an expression of resolve by the questioner that serves as a closing statement.

The first question raises the point
that, while disasters have been rampant and various kinds of prayers have been conducted to quell them, none of these has been effective. Citing sutra passages, the Daishonin answers that the ruler and the people have rejected the correct Buddhist teachings. Protective deities and sages have therefore abandoned the country, and as a result disasters have occurred one after another. This explanation of the cause for disasters is also expressed in the first question and answer of *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.

To the second question of this work—why the people have discarded the correct teaching—the Daishonin points out the influence of evil monks. He later specifically identifies Hōnen, founder of the Pure Land school in Japan. This accords with the third question and answer in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*. Prior to this, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching* presents abundant sutra passages that support the idea that the deities and sages have abandoned the nation. In the present work, this is done at the beginning of the text, before the first question.

Next, the third question asks whether these evil monks appear among the Buddha’s disciples, to which the answer is yes. The fourth is, will they destroy the correct teaching with a teaching that resembles it or with an obviously evil one? The Daishonin says they attack the correct teaching with inferior teachings that resemble it, and that such acts will lead to the destruction of Buddhism and the nation. Asked about doctrinal evidence, he cites sutra passages. This topic is not addressed in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.

Questions six and seven ask about the identity of these evil monks, to which the Daishonin answers that Hōnen is the prime example, and that Hōnen’s work *Nembutsu Chosen above All* represents the principal source of slander of the Law, points the Daisho-
nin supports by quoting extensively from that work. This explanation accords with the fourth question and answer in *On Establishing the Correct Teaching*.

Question eight asks, if *Nembutsu Chosen above All* is the primary cause of disaster, then why is it that disasters occurred even before its appearance, and the Daishonin attributes the cause to disregard of the five constant virtues, or humanistic principles, and attacks on Buddhism such as the abolition of Buddhism by a Chinese ruler. Question nine considers whether the present-day disasters have been caused by such disregard. In essence, the Daishonin describes Hōnen’s assertion that “giving alms to, worshiping, or praising any Buddhas or sutras other than Amida are all mere ‘sundry practices,’” as a violation of the five constant virtues. Question ten makes a similar inquiry about disasters that occurred before the introduction of Buddhism to China and Japan, which cannot be attributed to slander of the Buddhist Law. To this the Daishonin cites passages to indicate that violation of the five constant virtues essentially corresponds to the violation of the five precepts in Buddhism. Asked about documentary evidence, the Daishonin refers to passages from the sutras and commentaries. In one of them, Confucius is cited as talking about a sage. Asked who the sage was, the Daishonin cites Confucius as saying there is a sage in the west known as Shakyamuni.

Questions thirteen and fourteen concern why practitioners of the Lotus and True Word sutras also must face disasters arising from slander, and why, among slanderers, there are those who appear to escape disaster. In reply, the Daishonin first indicates that even the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra cannot completely avoid the disasters striking society, and also refers to personal conditions of karma, practice, and under-
standing. He then explains that the retribution for slanders may appear in this life or the next, or even later. On Establishing the Correct Teaching does not touch on the above points.

Following this, questions fifteen and sixteen address the action to be taken to deal with these disasters. The Daishonin says it is to put an end to slander of the Law, and the way to accomplish this is to stop offering financial support to Buddhist teachers and schools who slander the Lotus Sutra.

In response to this, the following questions are posed and answered: Is it not an offense to discontinue offerings to Buddhist priests? And is it not also an offense to denounce priests in such a manner? The Daishonin answers by citing sutra passages that call for just this sort of action in dealing with those who act against the Buddha’s intent, stating that it is not blameworthy to do so. On Establishing the Correct Teaching likewise recommends that no alms be given to such Buddhist schools and priests.

Notes

1. A reference to three of the six pāramitās, or practices, required of Mahayana bodhisattvas to attain Buddhahood. See six pāramitās in Glossary.
2. “Three inauspicious occurrences” refers to the three calamities: warfare, pestilence, and famine.
3. Prasenajit, the king of Kosala. See Prasenajit in Glossary.
4. The Metal Star, the Broom Star, the Fire Star, and the Water Star refer to Venus, comets, Mars, and Mercury, respectively. Little is known about the Wheel Star and the Ladle Star. The Demon Star, the Wind Star, and the Southern Dipper are parts of the twenty-eight constellations. The Northern Dipper is the Big Dipper, and the great stars of the Five Garrisons are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury. “All the many stars that govern the ruler…” refers to an outlook prevalent in ancient China. See also twenty-eight constellations in Glossary.
5. Demon fire refers to fires of unknown origin attributed to the anger of demons. Dragon fire means fires ascribed to the wrath of dragons, who were thought to be able to change water into fire at will. Heavenly fire was said to be caused by the wrath of heaven, and mountain god fire—possibly a reference to volcanic eruptions—by the wrath of mountain gods. Human fire refers to fires caused by human error or negligence. Tree fire probably indicates forest fires, and bandit fire means fires set by invaders.
6. According to the lunar calendar in use at the time in Japan, the sixth month corresponds to the last month of summer.
7. Black, red, and green winds refer to winds that stir up and convey clouds of sand, while heavenly and earthly winds correspond to tornadoes or cyclones. Fire winds indicate hot winds in the dry season, and water winds refer to rainstorms.
8. Wheat, rice, beans, and two types of millet. Also a generic term for all grains, which is the meaning here.
9. Bandits who do evil amid the confusion of disasters caused by fire, water, and wind, respectively. “Demon bandits” is said to mean evil beings such as yaksha demons and rākṣas demons, or villains who act like these fearful demons.
11. Ibid., chap. 2.
12. Many Treasures Buddha says in chapter eleven of the Lotus Sutra, “Shakya-muni, World-Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth!” Chapter twenty-one describes the Buddhas extending their tongues to the Brahma heaven in testimony to the truth of the Lotus Sutra.
14. Ibid.
15. Chapter twenty of the Lotus Sutra says, “The four kinds of believers who at that time constantly disparaged this bodhisattva [Never Disparaging]... They are in this assembly now, Bhadrapāla and his group, five hundred bodhisattvas; Lion Moon and her group, five hundred nuns; and Thinking of Buddha and his group, five hundred laymen.”
16. Shan-tao says in his *Praising Rebirth in the Pure Land*, "If people practice the Nembutsu continuously until the end of their lives, then ten persons out of ten and a hundred persons out of a hundred will be re-born in the Pure Land. . . . However, not even one person in a thousand can be re-born there through any other sundry practices."

17. "Concentrated meditation and unconcentrated meditation" refers to the sixteen types of meditation that are described as practices leading people to re-birth in the Pure Land. In the first thirteen types of meditation, one concentrates one's mind on the splendor of the Pure Land and the features of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. These are regarded as "concentrated meditation." The other three types of meditation can be carried out even if one's mind is not focused. Therefore, they are called "unconcentrated meditation."

18. Yu-wen Yung is Emperor Wu (r. 560–578), the third ruler of the Northern Chou dynasty in China. Out of a desire for fame and profit, Wei Yuan-sung, a Buddhist priest, began to associate with a group of Taoists and eventually returned to lay life. His memorial to the throne was instrumental in influencing Emperor Wu to enact laws designed to abolish the Buddhist religion.

19. A reference to the four kinds of believers—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.


21. A work by Annen (b. 841), a priest of the Tendai school.

22. Confucius, his disciple Yen Hui, and Lao Tzu. *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* says: "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 Kāshyapa appeared as Lao Tzu. Since the sutra is speaking from the point of view of India, it refers to China as 'that land.'"

23. Because King Chieh (c. 17th–16th century B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Hsia dynasty, perpetrated various atrocities, he was overthrown by his enemies, and the Hsia dynasty perished. King Chou (c. 11th century B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Yin dynasty, enslaved by his love for his consort Ta Chi, misgoverned the country. He was destroyed by King Wu of the Chou dynasty. King Yu (d. 771 B.C.E.), the last ruler of the Western Chou dynasty, doted on his favorite, Pao Su, to the detriment of his official duties, leading to the downfall of his dynasty.

24. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.

25. Ibid., chap. 28.

26. Ibid., chap. 3.