SOMEONE asked me the following question. Is it true that, even though members of the clergy or lay believers may not understand the exact meaning of the text of the Lotus Sutra, if they accept and uphold the entire sutra, or one volume of it, or the four most important chapters, or the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter, or just one phrase of the sutra; if they themselves read the sutra or copy it, or if they get others to read or copy it; or, if they neither read nor copy it, but just face the sutra, press their palms together and bow in obeisance, or make offerings of incense and flowers; or, if they do not do any of these things, but see others doing these things and have just a slight feeling of rejoicing in their hearts or are happy that the Lotus Sutra is being spread throughout the country—is it true that, if they carry out even one of these acts, they will not be held accountable for their worldly offenses, but will be aided by the benefits of the Lotus Sutra and, like the sages who have reached the first of the four stages of enlightenment in the Hinayana teachings, will in each of their future existences be reborn in the human or the heavenly realm, and will not fall into the evil paths of existence? And, is it true that, constantly reborn in the human or heavenly realms, they will eventually gain complete enlightenment into the Lotus Sutra, attain rebirth in one of the pure lands of the ten directions, or, should they remain in this present world, attain Buddhahood in their present form? Please explain to me in detail about this matter.

I would answer as follows. I do not have a complete understanding of the text, but judging from what is expressed in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras and the commentaries by T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo, if people happen to put their faith in the Lotus Sutra and do not in any way slander it, then they will not, as a result of other offenses they might commit, fall into the evil paths of existence.

But if they should encounter an evil friend who has only a slight understanding of the provisional teachings and who, pretending to be very knowledgeable, declares in a plausible manner that the Lotus Sutra is ill fitted for people of our capacities; and if they believe in his words and cease in their hearts to delight in the Lotus Sutra, and instead put their trust in some other teachings, never again for the remainder of their lives returning to their faith in the Lotus Sutra, then they will most likely fall into the evil paths of existence.

Question: I have some doubts regarding what you have said. I do not know whether it is true or not, but
some wise person has made the following comment. According to the Lotus Sutra, once in the past, major world system dust particle kalpas ago, there was a Buddha named Great Universal Wisdom Excellence. When this Buddha was still an ordinary mortal, he had sixteen sons who were princes. When their father, the king, attained Buddhahood and expounded the sacred teachings of his lifetime, the princes, his sixteen sons, left the household life and became disciples of the Buddha. After Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha had finished preaching the Lotus Sutra and had entered into a state of meditation, the sixteen princely sons, who were now śrāmaneras, in the presence of the Buddha took turns discoursing upon the Lotus Sutra. And of the unknowable thousands or tens of thousands who listened to their expositions, some immediately gained understanding and reached a stage where they would never regress in their progress toward full enlightenment.

There were also some who, though they had formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra by hearing it, had only a poor understanding of its teachings. These persons were not able to reach the stage of non-regression. For a period of major world system dust particle kalpas, they remained as they were, undergoing the four forms of birth and transmigrating through the six paths of existence. Only when the Thus Come One Shakyaṃuni appeared in the world and preached the Lotus Sutra were they able to reach the stage of non-regression. Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, and Ānanda were persons of this kind.

And there are others who are even less firm in their faith and who were unable to gain enlightenment even when Shakyaṃuni was in the world. It may well be that they must wait until countless kalpas in the future before they can do so. Though this is not entirely certain, it seems that we too, perhaps, are among those who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through the sixteen princely sons of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha.

According to T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, the persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through these sixteen princely sons correspond to those who attain the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth or the stage of perception and action. Persons who reach the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth or the stage of perception and action have understood the meaning of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, have carried out the ten meditations, and have gained a thorough grasp of the meaning of the Lotus Sutra. In addition, persons who rejoice even for a moment on hearing the Lotus Sutra, and those who rejoice when word of the Lotus Sutra has been passed along to them by fifty persons in succession,2 are, according to the interpretation of T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo, equal to those at the initial stage of rejoicing, the first of the five stages of practice carried out by those who have reached the stage of perception and action. In other words, they are by no means persons with only the shallow understanding of ordinary mortals.

But what of us, the people of this latter age, who have formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through no more than a single word or a single phrase and have no understanding of the sutra as a whole? How can we hope to escape transmigrating through boundless kalpas as numerous as the sands of countless worlds? For us, the principles are very profound but our understanding is slight. That is, the teachings of the sutra are extremely profound and our capacities are in truth too shallow.

It is much better, therefore, that we simply recite the name of Amida, and when in our next life we are reborn in
his Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the west, where we can attain an understanding of the non-birth and non-extinction of all phenomena and gain the stage of non-regression, and when we hear the Thus Come One Amida and the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World’s Sounds and Great Power preaching the Lotus Sutra there, we can then attain full enlightenment. For, according to the original vow made by Amida, whether people are wise or unwise, good or bad, observers of the precepts or breakers of the precepts, if they so much as once recite his name, then when they are on their deathbed, the Thus Come One Amida, in accordance with his original vow, will invariably come to welcome them to his Pure Land.

It would seem, then, that, when people in this present world set aside any bond they may have formed with the Lotus Sutra and instead strive for rebirth in the Pure Land, they do so because they hope to escape transmigrating through boundless kalpas as numerous as the sands of a million or a thousand worlds and to quickly gain a full understanding of the Lotus Sutra.

If persons who do not have the basic capacity needed to understand the Lotus Sutra nevertheless spend their spare time while in this impure world of ours devoting themselves to the Lotus Sutra, never once reciting the Nembutsu, or the name of Amida, they will only discover how difficult it is to gain enlightenment through the Lotus Sutra and will not establish any cause leading to rebirth in the land of Perfect Bliss. They will have gained neither objective, and in this sense, could be called persons who have no real comprehension of the Lotus Sutra, could they not?

Moreover, from what you have just said, it would seem that, if one forms even a slight bond with the Lotus Sutra, then at least one will not fall into the three evil paths of existence. But this does not assure that one will escape from rebirth in the six paths of existence. According to the Nembutsu doctrine, however, though one may have no clear understanding of the principles involved, if one recites the name of Amida, one will be reborn in the Pure Land. From this it would appear, would it not, that recitation of the name of Amida is far more effective than faith in the Lotus Sutra?

Answer: You have put the case very well, and since your information comes from a person of wisdom, it is no doubt quite reliable. But if you have reported the words of the wise person in an accurate manner, then certain questions arise. You say that persons who have formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence are, according to the interpretation of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo, in general persons at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth or at the stage of perception and action. But it would be more accurate to say that they have reached the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. Moreover, they are persons who have abandoned a great doctrine and instead chosen lesser doctrines, that is, those who have discarded the Lotus Sutra and shifted their faith to the provisional teachings. But later it will be seen that they have fallen into the evil paths of existence, because they are persons who have slandered the Lotus Sutra and cast it away. Even though one may have an understanding of the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, if one slanders the Law, then one will continue to transmigrate in the evil paths of existence for major world system dust particle kalpas or kalpas as numerous as the sands of countless worlds.

Also, you say that persons who rejoice when word of the Lotus Sutra has been passed along to them by fifty
persons in succession, and those who rejoice even for a moment on hearing the Lotus Sutra, are equal to those at the initial stage of rejoicing, the first of the five stages of practice carried out by those who have reached the stage of perception and action. Are you then saying that, when we people of this latter age rejoice on hearing the Lotus Sutra, we cannot be said to be among those who “rejoice even for a moment on hearing the Lotus Sutra”? You say that, according to the interpretation of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo, persons who rejoice on hearing the Lotus Sutra are equal to those in the first of the five stages of practice carried out by those at the stage of perception and action. Are you saying, then, that their other interpretation equating such persons with those at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth should simply be discarded?

To sum up, after examining your discourse on doctrine in some detail, I am afraid I must say that it constitutes a slander of the Law. This is because, in declaring that the Lotus Sutra is not suited to the capacities of people of this latter age such as ourselves, you are in effect saying that, with regard to all the people living in this latter age, so long as they remain in this impure world, it is of no use to them to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. If that is so, then among all the people of this latter age, there will be those who have already put their faith in the Lotus Sutra but who, on hearing your words, will forthwith discard the sutra. And there will be others, who have not yet begun to practice the Lotus Sutra but thought to do so, who will now abandon that idea. Also, if you cause people to cease feeling joy on hearing the Lotus Sutra, this too will constitute a slander of the Law. And if all persons become in effect slanderers of the Law, then no matter how earnestly they may recite the Nembutsu, they will never be able to attain rebirth in the Pure Land.

Again, you say that by reciting the name of Amida one can gain rebirth in his land of Perfect Bliss. But what sutra or passage in the treatises or commentaries can you point to as proof to support such an idea? You must have some very convincing passage in the sacred writings that you can offer as proof. If not, then the doctrine you have described is unworthy of belief.

As I have stated earlier, persons who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra, though they may have no very clear understanding of the sutra, will nevertheless escape falling into the three evil paths of existence. As for gaining emancipation from the six paths of existence, this may be difficult for certain persons of little understanding. But if, as a result of encountering an evil friend, they should be persuaded to cease feeling joy on hearing the Lotus Sutra, then the Lotus Sutra can have no power to save them.

Question: I am very surprised to hear what you say. This is because the wise person I talked to insisted that the Lotus Sutra is not suited to the capacities of ordinary people in this latter age, and I supposed that that was true. But now, if one goes by what you have said, it would appear that, though one may recite the name of Amida, if one is guilty of causing others to disbelieve the Lotus Sutra, then one cannot hope to gain rebirth in the Pure Land, and moreover will fall into the evil paths of existence. This is a very serious matter indeed.

Further, you say that the persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, because they slandered the Law, continued to transmigrate in the six paths of existence. But you also say that they were at the stage of shallow insight known as the stage of hearing the
name and words of the truth. And you say that those who rejoice even for a moment on hearing the Lotus Sutra, and those who rejoice when word of the Lotus Sutra has been passed along to them by fifty persons in succession, are at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth or that of perception and action. In just what passage in the commentaries is this interpretation to be found? I would like to know the exact reference.

Also, you say that persons who have little understanding of the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra but who put faith in the sutra, unless they are persuaded by evil friends to cast aside the Lotus Sutra and shift their allegiance to the provisional teachings, will not, as a result of bad karma from other worldly faults, fall into the evil paths of existence. What proof can you offer for such an assertion?

Finally, you ask what passage can be cited to support the assertion that ignorant people who recite the Nembutsu can gain rebirth in the Pure Land, though I am sure you know already and are only asking the question for effect. The three Pure Land sutras, the Two-Volumed Sutra and the others, and the commentaries on the sutras by the Reverend Shan-tao and others, explain all this very clearly. Why should there be any doubts about the matter?

Answer: With regard to those persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra through the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, they were slanderers of the Law because they had abandoned a great doctrine and instead chosen lesser doctrines, and were at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. This is not simply my own opinion. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai in volume three of his Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra states: "Though they heard the preaching of the Law, they did not as yet understand it. In the ages that followed, they encountered their teachers, but even [when Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the world], they remained in the status of voice-hearers. These are the persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra at the time of the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence." And the Great Teacher Miao-lo, explaining this passage, states in volume three of his Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra": "They had not yet entered the five stages of practice [carried out by those at the stage of perception and action], and are known simply as those who have formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra." The passage means that those who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra in the time of the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence are at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth.

Again, in volume six of his Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai says of these persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra at that time: "Both those who took faith and those who slandered the Law are capable of attaining enlightenment, just as those who have fallen to the ground can use the ground to help them rise to their feet again. It is like the case of the monk Superior Intent who, though he slandered the monk Root of Joy, was nevertheless able later to gain salvation without fail." This passage means that persons who formed a bond with the Lotus Sutra in the time of the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence had to wait for a period of major world system dust particle kalpas because they had slandered the Law. They were comparable to the monk Superior Intent, who slandered the monk Root of Joy.

Regarding persons who rejoice when word of the Lotus Sutra has been passed along to them by fifty persons
in succession, one interpretation holds that they have reached the initial stage of rejoicing, the first of the five stages of practice carried out by those at the stage of perception and action. According to another interpretation, however, they have only reached the stage that precedes this, the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. Volume ten of On “The Words and Phrases” states: “Those who attended the preaching assembly and heard the Lotus Sutra must belong to the initial stage of rejoicing, the first of the five stages of practice. But those who rejoice on hearing word of the Lotus Sutra passed along by fifty persons in succession invariably belong to the stage that precedes this.” The meaning of this passage is that those who were the first to hear the preaching of the Lotus Sutra in the assembly belong without question to the initial stage of rejoicing, the first of the five stages. But those who hear word of the sutra passed along by fifty persons in succession belong to the stage that precedes the initial stage of rejoicing, that of hearing the name and words of the truth.

With regard to persons who carry out the five practices mentioned in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, those who carry out four of them, namely, to embrace, read, recite, and copy the Lotus Sutra, refers to those who practice for their own benefit. Of the nine types of persons described in the Nirvana Sutra, the first four types are persons who do not have any real understanding of the teachings. Those who carry out the fifth of the five practices listed in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter, that is, those who expound the Lotus Sutra, are persons who practice for the benefit of others. The latter five of the Nirvana Sutra’s nine types represent persons who have an understanding of the teachings. Volume ten of On “The Words and Phrases,” speaking of those who carry out the five practices listed in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter, says: “They have not yet completely entered the five stages of practice [that belong to the stage of perception and action].” And it also says: “They are not to be regarded as completely at the stage of ordinary practitioners.” According to these passages, though persons carrying out the five practices listed in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter could be interpreted as carrying out the five stages of practice that belong to the stage of perception and action, they could also be interpreted as being at the preceding stage, the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. If we go by these passages of interpretation, when ordinary mortals who are at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth and have no real understanding of the teachings rejoice on hearing the Lotus Sutra, they will enjoy the same benefits as those who rejoice for even a moment on hearing only one verse or one phrase of the sutra, and those who rejoice on hearing word of the Lotus Sutra passed along by fifty persons in succession.

The evil karma incurred by persons who have no faith in the Lotus Sutra but slander the Law is described in detail in the “Simile and Parable” chapter, and the offense committed by those who slander persons who uphold the Lotus Sutra is described in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter. The benefits gained by those who have faith in the sutra are described in the “Distinctions in Benefits” and “Benefits of Responding with Joy” chapters. To slander the Law means to turn one’s back on the Law. To rejoice in the sutra means to follow and abide by the Law. Though people may have no deep understanding of the meaning of the Lotus Sutra, if they even for a moment declare that the sutra is worthy of veneration, then are they turning against
its teachings or following and abiding by them? And the sutra fully describes, does it not, the benefits to be gained by uninformed persons in this latter age who give with joy even a small amount of alms to the sutra.

Furthermore, certain teachers of other schools of Buddhism refer to the Lotus Sutra's description of little boys at play [collecting sand to make a Buddha tower], or of persons who rejoice on hearing one verse or one phrase of the sutra, or on hearing word of it relayed by fifty persons in succession, asserting that these are actually activities worthy of the sages of superior capacity who are described in the sutras preached before the Lotus. But the passages of commentary by T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo just cited make clear that such an interpretation constitutes a slander of the Law. Thus, when such teachers propound interpretations of that kind, declaring that persons who carry out such activities are displaying capacities of a superior type, they are merely misleading the ordinary people of this latter age, who are already prone to create evil karma. And in doing so, they are going against their own expressed aim [to save such ordinary people], are they not?

For this reason, the Great Teacher Miao-lo, in speaking of persons who rejoice on hearing word of the sutra passed along by fifty persons in succession, states: "Probably those who are mistaken in their understanding fail to realize how great is the benefit gained even by a beginner [in the practice of the Lotus Sutra]. They assume that benefit is reserved for those who are far advanced in practice and disparity beginners. Therefore, the sutra here demonstrates its power by revealing that though their practice is shallow, the benefit that results is profound indeed." This passage means that the Buddha was afraid that persons who did not understand the Lotus Sutra correctly would assert that the sutra was preached solely for the sake of persons of wisdom and skill who are diligent in religious practice, those who are of superior capacity and understanding. Therefore he made clear that ignorant persons of this latter age, those of inferior capacity and understanding, by performing a rather shallow act such as rejoicing on hearing of the Lotus Sutra, can gain benefits that are greater than those of the great men and sages of superior capacity who practiced the teachings set forth in the sutras expounded in the preceding forty and more years of the Buddha's preaching life. Hence he described the benefits to be received by those who rejoice on hearing word of the sutra passed along by fifty persons in succession.

Therefore T'ien-t'ai in his commentaries rates believers in ascending order as followers of non-Buddhist teachings, Hinayana believers, and those who follow the provisional Mahayana teachings, and stresses that the benefits enjoyed by the lowest group of Lotus Sutra believers are greater than those enjoyed by any of the other groups. The ascetic Agastya poured the Ganges River into one ear and kept it there for twelve years, and the ascetic Jinu drank the great ocean dry in a single day. But these ascetics of the non-Buddhist teachings with their supernatural powers were a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times inferior to persons at the three stages of worthlessness set forth by the Âgama sutras of Hinayana teachings, namely, persons at the stage of ordinary mortals who do not possess even one supernatural power. Likewise, Shâriputra, Maudgalyâyana, and the other Hinayana followers who had acquired the three insights and the six transcendental powers were a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times inferior to those ordinary persons who practice even one verse or one phrase of the
Mahayana sutras such as the Flower Garland Sutra, the Correct and Equal sutras, or the Wisdom sutras, although they have not yet cut off the three categories of illusion and do not possess a single supernatural power. And great bodhisattvas who practice the teachings of the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, or Wisdom sutras so thoroughly that they have reached the stage of near-perfect enlightenment are a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand times inferior to those ordinary people of this latter age who have formed even a slight bond with the Lotus Sutra, although they have not yet cut off the three categories of illusion and have committed all manner of evil. All this is made clear in the commentaries written by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai.

But these days there are followers of the Nembutsu and other schools who claim their capacities are suited to the provisional teachings and do not take faith in the true teaching. They ought to feel ashamed, as the followers of the two vehicles did when the Buddha preached the Correct and Equal sutras and the Wisdom sutras, but they show no shame at all. What is worse, when there are clerics or lay believers who do no more than recite the “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds” chapter of the Lotus Sutra or the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter, or, out of filial piety, try to benefit their fathers and mothers by spending one day copying the sutra, these people attempt to interfere, saying, “The Reverend Shan-tao says that mixing devotion to the Lotus Sutra with the Nembutsu is a form of sundry practice. And he also says that, of a hundred persons who pursue such practices, only one or two can gain salvation, of a thousand who do so, rarely will three or five of them gain salvation, and perhaps not one in a thousand will be so lucky.” And the Honorable Hōnen, who is said to be foremost in wisdom, goes so far as to compare the followers of the Lotus Sutra to persons who wear their grandfather’s sandals or to a band of robbers. The teachers and disciples of the Nembutsu school who make such statements as these are calling down upon themselves the fires of the Avīci hell.

Question: You speak of these persons in the world today who attempt to turn others against the Lotus Sutra—may I ask what guise they take and what sort of language they use? They seem very frightening.

Answer: Earlier you reported to me the words that “some wise person” had spoken to you. These are precisely the sort of words used by an evil friend who is hoping to turn others against the Lotus Sutra. In this latter age, those who destroy the Lotus Sutra are persons who in their hearts believe they have understood all the sacred teachings preached by Shakyamuni Buddha in the course of his lifetime, but who in fact fail to distinguish between the provisional sutras and the true sutra. They equip themselves with the three robes and one begging bowl of a monk, perhaps retire to a deserted and quiet place, or perhaps are looked on by the people of the world as persons of superlative wisdom. They may wish to be known for their thorough understanding of the Lotus Sutra, and to be honored by the clerics and lay believers of the world as though they were arhats who have acquired the three insights and the six transcendental powers, and yet, as we see from the sutra itself, they destroy the Lotus Sutra.

Question: What proof can you offer to support these statements?

Answer: The “Encouraging Devotion” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: “There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us and will attack us with swords and staves, but we will endure all these things.” The Great Teacher Miao-lo comments on this passage in these words: “First,
there is a section that exposes people of mistaken views. This represents [the arrogance and presumption of] lay people." This passage indicates that men and women of the lay community, deceived by monks who follow the provisional teachings, will oppose the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

The passage in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter continues as follows: "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." The Great Teacher Miao-lo comments on this: "Next, there is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of members of the Buddhist clergy." This section indicates that, in the evil age that is the Latter Day of the Law, the various monks who follow the provisional teachings will harbor arrogant thoughts, believing that they are the ones who have truly understood the Law, and will act as enemies to those who practice the Lotus Sutra.

The sutra passage then continues in this manner: "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement, who will claim they are practicing the true way, despising and looking down on all humankind. Greedy for profit and support, they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. These men with evil in their hearts, constantly thinking of worldly affairs, will borrow the name of forest-dwelling monks and take delight in proclaiming our faults, saying things like this: 'These monks are greedy for profit and support and therefore they preach non-Buddhist doctrines and fabricate their own scriptures to delude the people of the world. Because they hope to gain fame and renown thereby they make distinctions when preaching this sutra.' Because in the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us, they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and householders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, 'These are men of perverted views who preach non-Buddhist doctrines!'" The Great Teacher Miao-lo makes the following comment: "Third is a section that exposes the arrogance and presumption of those who pretend to be sages." This sutra passage and Miao-lo's comment on it convey the following meaning. In the evil age there will be many monks who equip themselves with the three robes and one begging bowl and live in a deserted and quiet place, conducting themselves like Mahākāśyapa and the other arhats who have acquired the three insights and the six transcendental powers, respected and revered by the lay believers. When they speak one word regarding the doctrine, it seems like a golden word uttered by the Thus Come One himself. These monks will speak slanderously of those who practice the Lotus Sutra, addressing the rulers and high ministers and saying in an attempt to destroy them, "These are men of perverted views and their doctrines are erroneous in nature!"

Regarding these three types of persons, the slanders of the first group, the lay believers, are more easily borne than are those of the second group, the monks with their perverse wisdom. And the slanders of these monks are not as bad as those of the third group, the forest-dwelling monks dressed in their great robes, who are the worst of all.

These three types of persons are represented in the world today by those priests who adhere to the written words of the provisional teachings, or those priests who have little under-
standing but practice only Zen, believing the statement in various sutras and treatises that the truth is beyond the power of words to describe, or by the members of the lay community who put their trust in such priests. These people do not understand the distinction between the teachings of the sutras preached by the Buddha in the first forty and more years and the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, that is, between the provisional teachings and the true teaching. Therefore, when they read in the Flower Garland Sutra or in the Correct and Equal sutras or the Wisdom sutras that "the mind, the Buddha, and all living beings" are the same," or that "the mind itself is the Buddha," and that they will immediately go to pure lands of the ten directions or of the western region," and then read in the Lotus Sutra of "the true aspect of all phenomena" or that they will immediately go to the pure lands of the ten directions or of the western region," they do not realize that, though the words seem to be the same, the meaning is very different. Or they read the statement in the sutras and commentaries that the truth is beyond the power of words to describe, beyond the scope of the mind to imagine, and suppose that nowhere in the sacred teachings of the Buddha's lifetime is the truth or the enlightenment of the Thus Come One revealed, which is to give way to misguided beliefs. As a result, evil demons take possession of these three types of persons and cause them to do harm to the people of this latter age and bring ruin to the nation.

Therefore the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter reads: "In a muddied kalpa, in an evil age there will be many things to fear. Evil demons will take possession of others and through them curse, revile, and heap shame on us.... [The evil monks of that muddied age], failing to understand the Buddha's expedient means, how he preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate..." This passage means that, in that muddied and evil age, monks will fail to understand that the teachings they put their faith in are no more than an expedient means preached by the Buddha in accordance with what is appropriate. Thus when persons appear who clearly distinguish between the provisional teachings and the true teaching, these monks will revile them and attempt to refute their arguments. This is all because evil demons have taken possession of them, although they are not aware that this has happened.

Therefore, what the uninformed people of this latter age should most fear are not swords and staves or tigers and wolves, or persons who commit the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, but rather those monks who are equipped with three robes and one begging bowl, those benighted practitioners of Zen, and the lay believers who esteem monks who follow the provisional teachings and hate those who practice the true teaching.

For this reason, the twenty-second volume of the Nirvana Sutra states: "Have no fear of mad elephants. What you should fear are evil friends! Why? Because a mad elephant can only destroy your body; it cannot destroy your mind. But an evil friend can destroy both body and mind.... Even if you are killed by a mad elephant, you will not fall into the three evil paths. But if you are killed by an evil friend, you are certain to fall into them."

Regarding the meaning of this sutra passage, the Great Teacher Chang-an says: "Mad elephants merely inflict harm on others; they do not arouse evil in people's minds. But evil friends employ enticing words, deception and flattery, clever speech and an affable manner, and in this way cause others to do evil. And in leading them to
do evil, they are destroying the good minds that are in them. To destroy good minds is to kill people, that is, to cause them to fall into hell.”

This passage of commentary means that evil friends will employ enticing words, deception and flattery and speak in a clever manner, thereby gaining control over the minds of ignorant and uninformed people and destroying the good minds that are in them. And the passage from the Nirvana Sutra is meant to warn us that persons who slander the Law and are icchantikas are more to be feared than those who commit the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins. The term “icchantika” refers to those who speak evil of the Lotus and Nirvana sutras.

The Nembutsu followers in the world today, pretending to have a thorough knowledge of the Lotus Sutra, cite various causes and conditions and employ similes in their interpretation, hoping to make others think that they know the true meaning of the sutra. Then they say, “But this sutra is in fact so wonderful that it is beyond the capacity of us ignorant people of this latter age to fully comprehend.” Or they say, “Stout bows and heavy armor are of no use to a fainthearted man.” And the clerics and lay believers who lack wisdom in matters concerning the Buddhist teachings, hearing such words, take them for the truth. So they shift their loyalty to the provisional teachings, which can never lead to the attainment of Buddhahood. Though they have formed some slight bond with the Lotus Sutra, they turn their minds elsewhere, and when they see others practicing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, because they respond with no feeling of joy, they proceed, both the teachers and their disciples, to slander the Law.

So it is that these slanderers of the Law fill the whole country. When people hold Buddhist services, offering alms to the Lotus Sutra and saying prayers for someone who has died, these misguided priests who practice the Nembutsu and slander the Law come with their statements on how the Lotus Sutra is unfitted for the capacities of people of this latter age. Then the persons who are holding the memorial service, trusting in the truth of such assertions, do things that only make rebirth in hell more painful for the deceased parent or spouse or sibling for whose welfare they are praying, and the filial offspring who was holding the memorial service becomes an unfilial offspring and a slanderer of the Law. Those who heed the pronouncements of these teachers respond with joy to their erroneous doctrines and thus become followers of the devil. It would appear that people throughout this country of Japan are practicing the Buddha’s teaching, but in fact that they are not practicing the Buddha’s teaching at all.

At times perhaps a wise man may appear who understands the Buddha’s teaching, but the people of the country cast him aside, and the benevolent deities who guard and protect the land, because they can no longer taste the flavor of the Law, lose their power and brilliance and cease to benefit living beings. They abandon this country and go off to other lands. Then evil demons, seizing this opportunity, come in their place to fill the country, causing the earth to shake and ill winds to blow, bringing grief to the whole realm, and inflicting damage on the five kinds of grain. As a result, famine and drought arise, and demons take possession of the people’s five sense organs, so that their vital spirits are snatched away—this is how epidemics break out. All the inhabitants lose their good minds and many fall into the evil paths. All of this comes about because people put faith in the teachings of evil friends.
The Benevolent Kings Sutra states: "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."

This passage indicates that the evil monks of the latter age will come before the ruler and the high ministers and appear to advise them on how to insure the peace and safety of the nation, but in the end they will in fact bring ruin to the nation. They will seem to be propagating the Buddha's teaching, but on the contrary will destroy it. The ruler and the high ministers, lacking any deep understanding of the situation, will put faith in the words of the evil monks and thereby bring ruin to the nation and destroy the Buddha's teaching.

At such a time, the sun and moon will depart from their regular course, the seasons will become confused, summer will be cold, winter warm, and in autumn evil winds will blow. The sun and moon will take on a red color, and though it is not the first or the fifteenth day of the month, there will be eclipses of the sun or moon, or two or three suns will appear at the same time. Huge fires, great winds, and comets will appear, and famine and epidemics will break out. In bringing about the ruin of the nation and causing others to fall into the evil paths, there is nothing to surpass the harm done by evil friends.

Question: Earlier I repeated to you the words that a wise person spoke to me. And since this is a question that affects my life in the next existence, I wanted to hear your opinion as to whether I was given good advice or not. You have indicated that I should be very fearful of the doctrines expounded to me. But persons like myself who are utterly lacking in understanding—how are we to go about taking faith in the Lotus Sutra, how are we to determine what to believe in our innermost hearts?

Answer: It appears that you do not yet fully accept the words I speak to you. That is because, when I address you, you suspect that the heavenly devil Pāpiyas or some evil demon has taken possession of me and that I am simply trying to refute the beneficial doctrines taught to you earlier. You are in doubt because you take every clever person to be a wise man.

Question: If I have doubts, it is because I am an ignorant person. But if I doubt the words spoken to me by all persons of wisdom, then I will end up with nothing to believe in, and will merely live my life in vain, will I not?

Answer: In his dying instructions, the Buddha said, "Rely on the Law and not upon persons." This means that if what a person says is not in agreement with what is expounded in the sutras, one should not believe it, no matter how fine the person may be. And he also said, "Rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final." Because ignorant and uninformed persons cannot decide for themselves which of the sutras expounded by the Buddha in his lifetime of teaching were preached earlier and which were preached later, or which are shallow and which are profound, they should rely on the sutras that are complete and final.

But there are many sutras involved when we speak of those that are complete and final and those that are not complete and final. The Agama sutras
with their Hinayana teachings are not complete and final, whereas the Flower Garland Sutra, the Correct and Equal sutras, the Wisdom sutras, and the Meditation Sutra of the Pure Land teaching are complete and final. The various sutras expounded in the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life are, in comparison to the Lotus Sutra, not complete and final, whereas the Lotus Sutra is complete and final. When the Nirvana and Lotus sutras are compared with one another, the Lotus Sutra is complete and final, but the Nirvana Sutra is not complete and final. When the Mahāvairochana and Lotus sutras are compared, the Mahāvairochana Sutra is not complete and final, whereas the Lotus Sutra is complete and final. Therefore one should discard the sutras expounded in the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life and the Nirvana Sutra, and take as one’s teacher and guide the Lotus Sutra.

Look upon the Lotus Sutra as the ruler of the nation, as one’s father and mother, as the sun and moon, as the great ocean, as Mount Sumeru, as heaven and earth. And conversely, look upon the other sutras as the chief minister, as the high ministers, as the court nobles, as the common people, as the host of stars, the rivers and streams, the other mountains, the plants and trees. We ourselves are ignorant beings creating evil karma in this latter age, persons of dull capacity, who are incapable of readily accepting the Buddhist Law. The ruler of the nation is better able to help others than are the officials who serve under him; a father and mother show greater love and compassion for their children than do mere outsiders. The sun and the moon light up the darkness better than do the host of stars. And if the Lotus Sutra is not suited to the capacities of living beings of this latter age, then how could the other sutras possibly save them?

The Thus Come One Shakyamuni, the Thus Come One Amida, the Thus Come One Medicine Master, the Buddha Many Treasures, the bodhisattvas Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, Great Power, Universal Worthy, Manjushri—in fact, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are our compassionate fathers and mothers. And you should understand that the greatest expression of compassion with which they teach and convert living beings is to be found in the Lotus Sutra alone. And understand that the secret art by which evil persons, ignorant persons, persons of dull capacity, women, and those lacking in capacity may be saved is not revealed in the other sutras. The reason that the Lotus Sutra is superior to all the other sutras lies simply in this one point.

And yet scholars today, while praising the Lotus Sutra as the finest of all the sutras, insist that it is not suited to the capacities of people of this latter age, and everyone believes them! Such persons are in fact slanderers of the Law, are they not? In a word, you should have nothing whatsoever to do with them. For in the end, though one may destroy the text of the Lotus Sutra, cut it up, or tear it apart, one can never destroy its message. And although certain persons, because of secular offenses on the part of believers, may urge people to turn away from the Lotus Sutra, I do not believe that they will heed such advice. But you should understand that people may be tricked into turning away from the Lotus Sutra by the doctrines of the provisional teachings, which in some ways resemble those of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: A wise person has advised me, saying: “The Buddha expounded various sutras in the first forty and more years of his preaching life, and expounded the Lotus Sutra in the last eight years of his life. With regard to the attainment of Buddhahood, the earlier sutras are known as the difficult-
to-practice way, and the Lotus Sutra as
the easy-to-practice way. But with
regard to gaining rebirth in a pure land,
both categories of sutras are alike,
namely, an easy-to-practice way. By
reciting and copying the Lotus Sutra,
one may gain rebirth in one of the
pure lands of the ten directions, or in
the land of the Buddha Amida. Or, by
following the Meditation Sutra or oth-
ers of the early sutras and reciting the
name of Amida, one may gain rebirth
in his Pure Land. One simply follows
one or the other procedure, depending
upon what sort of capacities one pos-
sesses; it is not a matter to be wrangled
over. But reciting Amida’s name seems
to be a practice that anyone can easily
carry out, and in fact it is widely prac-
ticed in Japan. It is thus easier to prac-
tice than other procedures such as that
involving the Lotus Sutra.” What is
your opinion of such a view?

Answer: The doctrine you have out-
lined may be quite correct. Many peo-
ple in the world today seem to think it
reasonable. But I have my doubts about
it. I have already indicated my reason
for doing so. Ordinary people in this
latter age cannot depend upon others
just because they are said to be wise.
The people of our present age can
hardly hope to compare to the wise
persons of long ago. And thus, even
the words of someone who is looked
on as ignorant, if they are supported
by clear passages of proof in the sutras
and treatises, are by no means to be
scorned.

The Immeasurable Meanings Sutra
was preached as an introduction to the
preaching of the Lotus Sutra. Hence
careful calculation indicates that the
Buddha expounded the various sutras
in the first forty and more years of his
preaching life, beginning with the
preaching immediately after he attained
enlightenment and continuing up until
he began to preach the Immeasurable
Meanings Sutra on Eagle Peak, where,
as he said [in the Lotus Sutra], “con-
stantly I have dwelled.” The sutras
preached in that interval are the Flower
Garland Sutra, the Āgama sutras, the
Correct and Equal sutras, and the Wis-
dom sutras. The doctrines contained
in these are intended for persons who
follow the three vehicles or who fol-
low the five vehicles. With regard to
the period of time needed to attain
enlightenment through those vehi-
cles, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra
speaks of how the Buddha has de-
scribed “the many kalpas of practice
for bodhisattvas.” And with regard to
the distinction between sutras that were
preached in accordance with the Bud-
dha’s own mind and those preached
in accordance with others’ minds, it
makes clear that the sutras expounded
in the first forty and more years were
preached in accordance with the minds
of others. With regard to those sutras
preached in the first forty and more
years and the Lotus Sutra preached in
the last eight years, it indicates that,
although the same words are used in
both, the doctrines being set forth are
different; as the Immeasurable Mean-
ings Sutra says, “Although the words
and phrases are the same, the meaning
is quite different.” It is impossible to
believe, therefore, that these two cate-
gories of sutras differ on the matter of
attaining Buddhahood, but are the
same with regard to rebirth in a pure
land.

The Flower Garland Sutra, the Cor-
rect and Equal sutras, and the Wisdom
sutras, the ultimate and finest works of
the Mahayana teaching, which set forth
the doctrines of the sudden attainment
of enlightenment or the gradual at-
tainment of enlightenment, were all
preached at a time when the Buddha
had “not yet revealed the truth.” And
if even these major sutras are said to
have “not yet revealed the truth,” then
how much more is this so of the three
Pure Land sutras that describe the doc-
trine of rebirth in the land of Perfect Bliss? This is indicated not only by the sutras themselves, but by the period in which they were expounded [the first forty and more years of the Buddha's preaching life].

There can be no doubt, therefore, that, when the Flower Garland, the Correct and Equal, or the Wisdom sutras refer to rebirth by the grace of Amida, this is something set forth when the Buddha had "not yet revealed the truth." How, then, could the rebirth by the grace of Amida described in the Meditation Sutra alone not fall into the category referred to in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra as "beset by numerous hindrances and trials"? If one is to regard the process of rebirth in the land of Perfect Bliss described in the Lotus Sutra, a sutra preached in accordance with the Buddha's own mind, as identical with the process of rebirth in the land of Perfect Bliss described in the Meditation Sutra, a sutra preached in accordance with others' minds, and designate both of them as an easy-to-practice way, and furthermore to say that among such easy-to-practice ways, that described in the Meditation Sutra whereby a person recites the Nembutsu in order to gain rebirth is a particularly easy-to-practice way, this is to confuse the provisional teachings with the true teaching and to regard them as alike, an error that is tantamount to grave slander of the Law. As water accumulates drop by drop until it flows into the great ocean, as dirt piles up particle by particle until it forms a Mount Sumeru, so bit by bit does the whole country become filled with believers in the provisional teachings, for those who believe in the provisional teachings do not advance to the true teaching, and believers in the true teaching fall back into the provisional teachings. As a result, people will cease to feel joy in their hearts when they hear the Lotus Sutra. It will be as though the country had lost its ruler, as though people were bereft of their spirits. Mountain temples devoted to the Lotus Sutra and True Word teachings will fall into ruin, and the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, the dragon gods, and all the sages will desert the country and go away. Then evil demons will seize the opportunity to bring disorder to the land, ill winds will blow, the five kinds of grain will not ripen, disease and pestilence will spread abroad, and the population will be wiped out.

Until some seven or eight years ago, it was widely and irresponsibly asserted that practices other than the Nembutsu could never lead to rebirth in the Pure Land; that, as the Reverend Shan-tao had declared, "not even one person in a thousand"20 can be saved by such practices. And in his Nembutsu Chosen above All, Hōnen urged people to abandon such practices, and likened those who followed them to a band of robbers.

Then, in these last four or five years, someone appeared who preached a different doctrine, asserting that there are sutra passages to prove that those who urge others to chant the Nembutsu as advocated in Nembutsu Chosen above All are in fact guilty of slandering the Law, and that both the Nembutsu teachers and their lay followers are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

When this doctrine first appeared, the Nembutsu believers were uniformly perplexed, exclaiming, "Who are these evil persons, these heretics who insist that reciters of the Nembutsu will fall into the hell of incessant suffering?" But then they began to realize that there was much wisdom to support the claims that Nembutsu believers were fated to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. One by one, they proceeded to examine Nembutsu Chosen above All more closely. And, perhaps because they came to see that in fact it is a
work that slanders the Law, they rejected as evil its assertion that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved by other practices, and each of them came to accept the view that practices other than the Nembutsu can lead to rebirth in the Pure Land. But this was merely something that they proclaimed with their mouths. In their hearts and minds, they continued as before to believe that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved by such practices.

The lay followers of these Nembutsu proponents, untrained as they are in matters of doctrine, were unaware that the Nembutsu teachers in their inner hearts were slandering the Law. Deceived by pronouncements that practices other than the Nembutsu could lead to rebirth in the Pure Land, the lay believers became convinced that the Nembutsu proponents were not in fact slandering the Lotus Sutra and that it was wrong for the upholders of the Sacred Way teachings to accuse them of such slander.

In giving lip service to the view that other practices can lead to rebirth in the Pure Land, these Nembutsu proponents were committing a greater slander of the Law than those who openly declared that not one person in a thousand could be saved by such practices. They were making others believe that there was nothing faulty in their doctrine, while at the same time attempting to further the spread of reliance on the Nembutsu alone. In doing so, they were in effect carrying out the schemes of the heavenly devil.

Question: There are persons in the Tendai school who state that, when the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai examined the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra and the Lotus Sutra and compared the two, he had two reasons for expressing disapproval of the pre-Lotus Sutra works.

First was the fact that, in terms of the periods in which the sutras were preached, the pre-Lotus Sutra works belonged to the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life. In comparison to the Lotus Sutra, which was preached later, the pre-Lotus Sutra works are thus rough in nature, whereas the Lotus Sutra is “wonderful,” or subtle.

Further, in terms of the classification of the teachings, he declared that some teachings were to be labeled rough in nature and others, “wonderful.” Those elements found in the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras that pertain to the doctrine of perfect, immediate, and expeditious enlightenment he praised as “wonderful.” But those elements in the Flower Garland, Correct and Equal, and Wisdom sutras that pertain to the doctrine and the practices of persons of the three vehicles and require many lifetimes for the attainment of enlightenment he called the first three of the four teachings of doctrine and rejected as rough in nature.

Thus it would seem that he did not reject those elements pertaining to perfect, immediate, and expeditious enlightenment found in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, but regarded them as equal in nature to doctrines of that type found in the Lotus Sutra. What is your opinion on this?

Answer: I am not surprised that you are puzzled about this matter. From the time of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo down to the present, it has been a subject of dispute. Throughout the sixty volumes of T’ien-t’ai’s three major works and the various commentaries pertaining to the sutras of the five Mahayana periods, there is no passage that, speaking in terms of the classification of the teachings themselves, expresses disapproval of the perfect teaching set forth in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra. But when speaking in terms of the periods in which
they were set forth, the perfect teachings of the pre-Lotus Sutra works are all lumped together as a group and rejected.

With regard to this point, in Japan there have from past times been two opinions. One derives from the commentaries of the Great Teacher Chishō of Onjō-ji temple and holds that, in terms of the teachings themselves and of the period in which they were set forth, the perfect teachings of the pre-Lotus Sutra works are to be rejected. The Enryaku-ji, or Mountain, branch of the Tendai school [which opposes the Onjō-ji, or Temple, branch], however, holds that they are not to be rejected. Both parties cite various passages and commentaries to support their interpretation and advance various arguments, but so far no conclusion has been reached in the controversy.

Speaking in terms of our particular doctrinal line, however, I believe that these points of controversy can be quite satisfactorily settled. When the Great Teacher T‘ien-t’ai established the classification of the four teachings of doctrine, he followed four principles.

First he established that all four types of teaching of doctrine are to be found in the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra. Second, he compared the Lotus Sutra and the sutras preached prior to it and established that the perfect teaching found in the pre-Lotus Sutra works belongs to the same category as the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra, whereas the first three of the four teachings of doctrine in the pre-Lotus Sutra works are to be rejected as inferior.

Third, he reclassified the perfect teaching expounded in the pre-Lotus Sutra works, placing it in the category of the specific teaching, and thus rejecting it along with the first three of the four teachings of doctrine. He declared that the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra alone was to be designated the "pure perfect teaching." Fourth, he declared that, though the perfect teaching of the pre-Lotus Sutra works may be treated as belonging to the same category as the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra, it is only regarded as the same as the comparative myō, one of the two kinds of myō of [the perfect teaching of] the Lotus Sutra, but is not regarded as the same as the absolute myō.

When the sixty volumes of the Great Teacher T‘ien-t’ai’s major works are considered in the light of these four guidelines, then the doubts and difficulties will be satisfactorily resolved.

As to the particular passages that could be cited to support each of these points, I would like to keep them secret for the present, and indeed it would be troublesome to list them all here. I might add that there is no question but that, in comparison to the essential teaching section of the Lotus Sutra, the perfect teaching of the pre-Lotus Sutra works and the perfect teaching of the theoretical teaching section of the Lotus Sutra are both to be regarded as inferior.

When the perfect teaching of the pre-Lotus Sutra works is placed in the category of the specific teaching, [it is regarded as "rough" because] in terms of the classification of teachings, "The first three [of the four teachings] are designated as 'rough,' while the last one is designated as 'wonderful.'" When this approach is used, the perfect teaching of the pre-Lotus Sutra works is classified with what the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra calls a teaching that requires many kalpas of religious practice for attaining enlightenment.

It may also be noted that, in the commentaries of the Great Teacher Dengyō, he assigns the eight teachings set forth in the pre-Lotus Sutra works to the category of teachings set forth in the forty and more years when the Buddha had "not yet revealed the
truth.” He declares that, while the first three teachings are roundabout or circuitous in nature, the perfect teaching of the pre-Lotus Sutra works is by comparison a “direct way,” and the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra he calls a “great direct way.” For details I refer you to his writings.

Question: For persons who place their faith in the Lotus Sutra, what is the proper object of devotion, and what rules are to be followed in acts of worship and daily religious practice?

Answer: First, with regard to the object of devotion, one should inscribe the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, or one volume, or one chapter, or simply the daimoku, or title, of the sutra, and make that the object of devotion, as is indicated in the “Teacher of the Law” and “Supernatural Powers” chapters of the sutra. And those persons who are able to do so further should write out the names of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and the Buddha Many Treasures, or fashion images of them, and place these on the left and right of the Lotus Sutra. And if they are further able to do so, they should fashion images or write out the names of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the bodhisattva Universal Worthy and the others.

As for the rules to be followed in worship, one should always either sit or stand when in the presence of the object of devotion. Once one leaves the place of worship, however, one is free to walk, stand still, sit, or lie down as one wishes.

As a daily religious practice, one should recite the daimoku, Nam-myoho-reng-kyo. Those persons who are able to do so should further recite a verse or a phrase of the Lotus Sutra. As a supplementary practice, if one wishes, one may offer praise for Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, or the Buddhas of the ten directions, for all the various bodhisattvas or the persons of the two vehicles, the heavenly beings, the dragon deities, or the eight kinds of nonhuman beings [who protect Buddhism]. Since we live in an age when there are many uninformed people, there is no need for believers to attempt at once to practice the meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, though if there are persons who wish to do so, they should learn how to practice this type of meditation and carry it out.

Question: What benefits are to be gained by simply reciting the daimoku?

Answer: The Thus Come One Shakyamuni made his appearance in the world because he wished to preach the Lotus Sutra. But during the first forty and more years of his preaching life he kept the title of the Lotus Sutra secret. From around the age of thirty until he was seventy or more, he set forth teachings that would act as an expedient means leading to the Lotus Sutra; only when he was seventy-two did he for the first time reveal the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra. The daimoku of the Lotus Sutra thus far surpasses the titles of all the other sutras.

In addition, the two characters of myõõ of the daimoku contain within them the heart of the Lotus Sutra, namely, the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life set forth in the “Expedient Means” chapter, and the doctrine of the Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment in the far distant past set forth in the “Life Span” chapter.

When the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai preached Profound Meaning in ten volumes, he devoted the first volume to a general discussion of the meaning of the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo. In the second through the seventh volume, he presented a detailed description of the one character myõ, and in the eighth and ninth volumes he interpreted the three characters hõ, ren, and ge. In the tenth volume he ex-
plained the character kyō, stressing that this one character kyō contains within it all the sutras of the Flower Garland, Āgama, Correct and Equal, Wisdom, and Nirvana periods.

According to Profound Meaning, the two characters of myōhō express the doctrines of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and of the mutual identity of the mind, the Buddha, and all living beings. The ten volumes of Great Concentration and Insight express the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and of the three thousand realms, as well as the doctrine that the mind, the Buddha, and all living beings—these three things are without distinction. They reveal that all the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, the causes and effects of the Ten Worlds, the plants and trees of the ten directions, even the shards and rubble, are all without exception contained within the two characters of myōhō.

With regard to the Flower Garland, the Āgama, and the other sutras expounded in the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life, the daimoku, or titles, of the Hinayana sutras do not contain within them the benefits bestowed by the Mahayana sutras. And among the Mahayana sutras, the daimoku of those that expound the doctrine of rebirth in a pure land do not contain within them the blessings of attainment of Buddhahood. And though some of the sutras are referred to as “kings,” they cannot be called “the king among kings.”

Moreover, the Buddhas figuring in the various sutras do not have the power to confer the benefits bestowed by other Buddhas. To be sure, it is stated that the Buddhas are equal in their enlightenment and that one Buddha is the same as the other Buddhas. And that if one adopts the view that the Dharma bodies of the Buddhas are all equal, then one may say that one Bud-
dha is the same as another Buddha. But in reality, one Buddha does not possess the power to confer the benefits bestowed by all the other Buddhas.

In the case of the Lotus Sutra, however, all the sutras preached in the first forty and more years are included within this one sutra. The Buddhas of the worlds in the ten directions, who are all endowed with the three bodies, are one and all gathered there, for, as it is explained, all are emanations of the one Buddha, Shakyamuni. Therefore, this one Buddha is none other than all Buddhas, and all Buddhas are thus brought together within the two characters of myōhō.

For this reason, the benefits to be gained by reciting the five characters of Myoh-to-reno-kyo are great indeed. All the Buddhas, all the daimoku of the various sutras, are opened up and merged in the Lotus Sutra. One understands that it is myōhō that makes this opening up possible, and therefore one should recite the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: I consulted a wise person with regard to the doctrines you have been explaining. He agreed that of course the Lotus Sutra is superior to the other sutras. And people who have the capacity to do so can devote themselves to the practice of its teachings. But when one is addressing ordinary people in this latter age, if one takes no account of their capacities but merely speaks disparagingly of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and urges them to practice the Lotus Sutra, this may well cause them to abandon the Nembutsu, which they have practiced for so many years. And since they have not yet had time to practice the Lotus Sutra for any appreciable period, they will in effect end up with no practice at all, will they not?

Moreover, without inquiring into the capacities of the people you are addressing, you urge everyone to fol-
low the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. If in fact they put their faith in the Lotus Sutra, then well and good. But if instead they should speak slanderously of the Lotus Sutra, they will invariably fall into hell.

Even the Buddha, in the first forty and more years of his preaching life, did not preach the Lotus Sutra. This was because, as he himself said, “If I merely praised the Buddha vehicle, then the living beings, sunk in their suffering, [would be incapable of believing in this Law].” And if the capacities of living beings in Shakyamuni’s time were as limited as this passage indicates, then how much more limited must be the capacities of ordinary people in this latter age of ours? Therefore the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the Lotus Sutra records that the Buddha, addressing Shariputra, said, “Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom.”

What is your opinion regarding these points raised by the wise person I spoke with?

Answer: You have explained the objections raised by the wise person you spoke with. He is saying, in effect, that, when one addresses the ordinary people of this latter age, one must take their innate capacities into careful consideration. For if one fails to do so and goes recklessly ahead, one may cause them to speak slander, which one must not do.

If this is indeed what the wise person is saying, then I would advise you to reply as follows. He has quoted the passage that reads “If I merely praised the Buddha vehicle,” and that which reads “Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom.” But then ask him if he has not taken notice of the passage in the same sutra that tells how the bodhisattva Never Disparaging would address “whatever persons he happened to meet,” saying, “I have profound reverence for you,” and how he would continue to do so even when they attacked him with sticks of wood or tiles and stones.

Question: I find it very difficult to understand why, within the very same Lotus Sutra, there should be passages that so directly contradict one another. Could you explain in some detail the reason for this?

Answer: In the “Expedient Means” and other chapters, it would appear that the Buddha is carefully considering the capacities of his listeners in preaching the sutra. But in the “Never Disparaging” chapter, even though what is said may invite slander, the preaching of the sutra is done in a very forceful manner. Though both ways are contained within a single text, the former and the latter are as different from one another as water and fire.

The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai explains this by saying: “Shakyamuni, addressing persons of his time who in previous existences cultivated good roots, preached the doctrines of the lesser vehicle and assisted and protected them. But Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, addressing persons who in past existences did not cultivate good roots, expounded the doctrines of the great vehicle, forcing them to hear it, though it angered them.”

The meaning of this passage is as follows. In the case of persons who already possess good roots and are capable of gaining enlightenment in their present existence, it is proper to preach the Lotus Sutra directly. But if there are persons among the group who are likely to slander the Lotus Sutra when they hear it, then it is better for the time being to preach the provisional teachings as a form of preparation, and only later to preach the Lotus Sutra. As for persons who have not in the past acquired any particularly good roots and who in their present existence are incapable of taking faith in the Lotus Sutra, they are
likely for one reason or another to fall into the evil paths in their next existence anyway. Therefore one should preach the Lotus Sutra to them in a forceful manner, and when they speak slanderously of it, they will thereby create a reverse relationship with it.

According to the above passage of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, in this latter age the persons who are lacking in good roots are many, and those who possess them are few. Therefore, many people are doubtless destined to fall into the evil paths in their next existence. And if they are destined for the evil paths in any case, then one should preach the Lotus Sutra to them forcefully and thereby allow them to create a "poison-drum relationship" with the sutra. Hence there can be no doubt that this latter age is the proper time in which to preach the Lotus Sutra to all people, thus enabling them to create a reverse relationship with it by slandering it.

Moreover, the "Expedient Means" chapter describes how the five thousand persons of overbearing arrogance withdrew from the assembly. They did so after hearing the Buddha make the concise replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle, and when the Buddha was about to begin making the expanded replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle. At that time, the Buddha used his power to influence them in such a way that they rose from their seats and withdrew. Later, through the Nirvana Sutra and the four ranks of bodhisattvas, the Buddha made it possible for these persons to achieve enlightenment in their present existence.

On the other hand, in the Non-Substantiality of All Phenomena Sutra it is recorded that Bodhisattva Root of Joy, addressing the monk Superior Intent, forced him to listen to the Mahayana teachings, causing him to speak slanderously of such teachings [and thus create a reverse relationship with them]. With regard to these two differing incidents, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai explains that "the Thus Come One Shakyamuni was exercising the virtue of compassion in causing them to withdraw, while Bodhisattva Root of Joy was exercising the virtue of pity in forcing the monk to listen." 26

The meaning of this passage is that the Buddha was moved by compassion and for the moment put aside thoughts of the later happiness of the five thousand persons. He could not bear to see them slander the Lotus Sutra and suffer the pain of falling into hell, and therefore he inspired them to withdraw from the assembly. It was like the case of a mother who knows that her child is sick but cannot bring herself to inflict suffering on the child, and therefore does not treat the child quickly with moxibustion. In the case of Bodhisattva Root of Joy, he was moved by pity. He did not mind that the person he was addressing would suffer pain for a time, but thought only of that person's eventual happiness. Therefore he forced the person to listen to the Mahayana teachings. It was like the case of a pitying father who, seeing that his child is ill, is not deterred by the fact that the child may undergo temporary suffering but is concerned only for the child's eventual welfare. Therefore he applies the treatment of moxibustion.

When the Buddha was in the world, for the first forty and more years of his preaching life he kept the Lotus Sutra a secret. Even the bodhisattvas who had reached the stage of near-perfect enlightenment or those who had achieved the level of non-regression did not know even the title of the sutra. Furthermore, with regard to the "Life Span" chapter, during the eight years in which the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra, the very title of the chapter was kept secret and only re-
vealed in the latter part of the period. Therefore, one may wonder why one should go about so energetically preaching the Lotus Sutra to ordinary people in this latter age.

In his commentary, the Great Teacher Miao-lo explains this by saying, "The people who lived when the Buddha was in the world had the innate capacity to gain enlightenment, and therefore the Buddha took their capacities carefully into account when he preached to them. But in the case of persons of the latter age, one preaches the truth to them directly so that they can form a relationship with it."\footnote{27} The meaning of this passage is as follows. When the Buddha was in the world, there were many persons who were capable of attaining the stage of non-regression during the Buddha’s lifetime. Therefore he did not immediately set forth the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra, for fear that his listeners might slander them, but instead gradually nurtured their capacities and after that preached the Lotus Sutra. In the period following the demise of the Buddha, however, there are few persons who have the capacity to attain enlightenment and many who can only form a relationship with the sutra by hearing it directly. Therefore it is best in most cases simply to preach the Lotus Sutra to them. There are many examples such as those above-mentioned.

Many of the teachers in the latter age cannot judge the capacities of their listeners. When one cannot tell the capacities of one’s listeners, it is probably best just to preach the true teaching to them in a forceful manner. Thus the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai in his commentary says, "If people's capacities cannot be judged, one can best avoid error by preaching the teachings of the great vehicle to them."\footnote{28} The meaning of this passage is that, when one cannot tell what people’s capacities are, one will not go wrong if one preaches the doctrines of the great vehicle to them.

There is also another approach in which one carefully determines the capacities of the persons of a particular age and preaches the Law to them in an appropriate manner. Thus if the people of a particular country are all believers in the provisional teachings and speak slanderously of the true teaching, stubbornly refusing to accept it, then one should preach the true teaching to them in a rebuking and censorious manner. But whether this approach is appropriate or not will depend upon the times.

Question: Among the Buddhist teachers of China, there are some who give all their attention to the provisional Mahayana sutras and do not attempt to deal with the true sutra. What is the reason for this?

Answer: When the Buddha appeared in the world, he spent the first forty and more years of his preaching life expounding the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana sutras, and only after that did he preach the Lotus Sutra. [In the “Expedient Means” chapter] he states, “If I used a lesser vehicle to convert even one person, I would be guilty of stinginess and greed, but such a thing would be impossible.” By this, the Buddha means that, if he had only expounded the pre-Lotus Sutra works and had not preached the Lotus Sutra, he would have been guilty of the error of stinginess and greed.

Later, when he preached the "Entrustment" chapter, he extended his right hand and three times patted the heads of the bodhisattvas who had gathered from throughout the major world system and from four hundred ten thousand million nayutas of lands in the eight directions and instructed them, saying, “In the future you must preach the Lotus Sutra. If there are persons who do not have the capacity to accept it, you should expound some of the other profound doctrines from...
the sutras I preached in the previous forty and more years, nurturing their capacities in this way, and thereafter preach the Lotus Sutra."

Still later, in the Nirvana Sutra, he repeated this message, saying, "After the Buddha has entered extinction, there will be four ranks of bodhisattvas who will preach the Law. And there will be four standards to follow with regard to the Law. But if in the end these bodhisattvas do not propagate the true sutra, then you should know that they are in fact manifestations of the heavenly devil."

Therefore, in the period of five hundred to nine hundred years following the demise of the Thus Come One, Bodhisattva Nāgarjuna and Bodhisattva Vasubandhu appeared and widely propagated the sacred teachings of the Thus Come One.

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu at first wrote a work entitled *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*, representing the doctrines of the Hinayana Sarvāstivāda school, in which he set forth the doctrines preached by the Buddha over a period of twelve years in the Āgama sutras. He made no attempt whatever to elucidate the Mahayana teachings. Next, he wrote *The Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra*, *The Commentary on "The Summary of the Mahayana,"* and other works in which he discussed the provisional Mahayana teachings expounded by the Buddha in the first forty and more years of his preaching life. And last, he wrote *The Treatise on the Buddha Nature, The Treatise on the Lotus Sutra,* and similar works in which he outlined the true Mahayana teachings. The career of Bodhisattva Nāgarjuna followed the same general pattern.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, a Buddhist teacher of China, classified the teachings of Shakyamunī's lifetime into the distinct categories of Mahayana and Hinayana and provisional teachings and true teaching.

With regard to the other Buddhist teachers, they explain to a certain extent the meaning and principles of the teachings, but their views are not clearly expressed or lack sufficient passages of proof to support them. Among the scholars, translators, and Chinese teachers of the latter age, there are those who distinguish clearly between the Mahayana and the Hinayana teachings, but within the Mahayana teachings they do not distinguish between the provisional Mahayana and the true Mahayana. Or, though in their words they may seem to be making such a distinction, in their hearts and minds they cannot free themselves from their attachment to the provisional Mahayana teachings. The situation is like that described [in the "Expedient Means" chapter] when it says: "If bodhisattvas who never regress, their number like Ganges sands, [with a single mind should join in pondering and seeking], they could not understand it either."

Question: Among the Chinese Buddhist teachers there were persons such as the Great Teacher Tz'u-en who was said to have been a reincarnation of the Eleven-faced Perceiver of the World's Sounds and could emit rays of light from his teeth. Or like the Reverend Shan-foo, who was said to have been a reincarnation of Amida Buddha and could produce Buddha figures from his mouth. And there were many other teachers in the world who could manifest supernatural powers, bestow blessing, or enter meditation and attain enlightenment. Why did these persons fail to distinguish between the provisional sutras and the true sutra and to make the Lotus Sutra the basis of their teaching?

Answer: The ascetic Agasty, a non-Buddhist believer, poured the Ganges River into one ear and kept it there for twelve years. The ascetic Vasu transformed himself into the heavenly being
Because from past times they have had very close connections with the provisional sutras and have never looked into the true sutra, or perhaps because they have been led astray by the devil and have thus become able to display supernatural powers. But whether they are correct or incorrect in their views is to be judged solely on the basis of the doctrines they expound. It is not to be decided on the basis of whether or not they have keen capacity or can display supernatural powers.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the fifth month in the first year of the Bunnō era [1260], cyclical sign kanoe-sanu

Written at Nagoe in Kamakura

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Background

This work was designated one of the ten major writings of Nichiren Daishonin by Nikkō, the Daishonin’s successor. Written in Kamakura and dated the twenty-eighth day of the fifth month in 1260, its recipient is unknown. Within two months after completing this writing, the Daishonin completed On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land, another of the ten major writings, and submitted it to Hōjō Tokiyori, the retired regent who still held the reins of power in the shogunate.

This work, like On Establishing the Correct Teaching, is written in a question and answer format, and refutes the doctrines of the Pure Land, or Nembutsu, school that deny the effectiveness of the Lotus Sutra in leading people to Buddhahood. The Daishonin criticizes the Nembutsu and other major schools of his day for failing to make distinctions between the Hinayana, provisional Mahayana, and true Mahayana teachings, and states that they are opposing the true Mahayana teaching, that is, the Lotus Sutra. He then points to the superior benefit that derives from reciting the daimoku, or title, of the Lotus Sutra, which he identifies as the wonderful Law, or the Law that leads one directly to Buddhahood.

This work consists of fifteen questions and answers, which can be summarized as follows: (1) The first question: Even though clergy and laity may not possess the slightest understanding of the Lotus Sutra, will they still receive any benefit from practicing it? The Daishonin answers yes, so long as they do not give way to slander or abandon faith in the Lotus Sutra; if only they continue to practice, he says, they will not fall into the evil paths of existence.
(2) The questioner, citing the words of a wise person, asserts the position of the Pure Land school that the Lotus Sutra is a very profound teaching that is beyond the understanding of the people of the Latter Day of the Law, and therefore it cannot enable them to attain Buddhahood. The Nembutsu, the questioner asserts, can enable even persons of the lowest capacity to attain rebirth in the pure land of Amida Buddha simply by reciting that Buddha’s name. In answer, the Daishonin directly overrules this assertion, indicating that it is not based on the sutras and that, because it may cause people to abandon the Lotus Sutra, it constitutes a slander of the Law.

(3) The questioner asks for scriptural proof of the above assertions. In answer, the Daishonin refers to the principles of the Lotus Sutra and cites the commentaries of T’ien-t’ai and Miao-lo. He makes clear where in the sutra the grave effects of slander are shown and explains the benefit to be gained by those of the lowest capacity who rejoice upon hearing word of the Lotus Sutra. Assertions by other schools that the Lotus Sutra is suited exclusively for those of higher capacity are overthrown. Particularly, the claim of the Nembutsu school—that the capacities of the people of this age are suited to the provisional teachings and not to the Lotus Sutra—is described as a cause for falling into the Avīci hell because it contradicts the Lotus Sutra.

(4) To the question of what sort of persons are trying to turn people against the Lotus Sutra, the function of evil friends is described—those who profess to understand the entirety of the Buddha’s teachings yet fail to make a distinction between the provisional sutras and the true sutra, the Lotus Sutra. (5) Asked for scriptural proof, the Daishonin cites the passages from the sutras and commentaries to further clarify the nature of those who slander the Lotus Sutra and act as evil friends.

(6) The questioner acknowledges a degree of understanding, but expresses doubt about his own capacity to take faith in the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin asserts that this doubt stems from doubt about him and belief that anyone who can mount a clever argument must be wise.

(7) The questioner expresses his fear of rejecting words of wise persons and spending his life in vain. To this, the Daishonin cites the Buddha’s dying admonition to “rely on the Law and not upon persons,” and the Buddha’s instruction to rely on sutras that are “complete and final” and not on those that do not meet this standard. He goes on to conclude that only the Lotus Sutra is complete and final in every sense. It is the only sutra, he says, that contains the ultimate principle of compassion that can lead all people in the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood.

(8) The questioner cites the words of a wise person who regards the Nembutsu practice as easier than that of the Lotus Sutra. Citing the passage from the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra that reads, “But in these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth,” the Daishonin refutes the sutras preached prior to the Lotus Sutra, or the provisional Mahayana sutras, including the Pure Land sutras. (9) The questioner raises the objection that T’ien-t’ai declared both the perfect teaching of immediate enlightenment of the pre-Lotus sutras and that of the Lotus Sutra to be “wonderful,” or subtle, in contrast to the other three of the four teachings of doctrine that were regarded as “rough.” Explaining T’ien-t’ai’s classification in more detail, the Daishonin makes clear that, in the final analysis, T’ien-t’ai designated the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra as superior.

(10) The nature of practice and the
object of devotion in the practice of the Lotus Sutra is described. (Though this object is not identified specifically here, later in *Questions and Answers on the Object of Devotion* the Daishonin identified it as “the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra.”) (11) The superiority of the benefit obtained by those who chant the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is described. (12) The questioner again raises the concern that one should consider the capacity of the listener before teaching the Lotus Sutra, citing the Buddha’s statement in the “Simile and Parable” chapter, “Do not preach this sutra to persons who are without wisdom.” The Daishonin counters this by pointing to the case of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging in the “Never Disparaging” chapter, in which the bodhisattva continues to bow in obeisance to all people, saying, “I have profound reverence for you,” no matter how they slander or attack him.

(13) In resolving this apparent contradiction within the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin explains that these two approaches—that of gradually leading people to the Lotus Sutra and that of teaching it directly to all even though it may anger them—are meant respectively for those who have developed some good roots through their past existences and those who have not. Citing T’ien-t’ai, he explains that those living in the Latter Day of the Law are those without good roots, and therefore it is an age in which the sutra should be taught directly, “in a forceful manner.” This may cause people to slander the sutra, but the connection they form with it, a reverse one, will enable them to attain Buddhahood eventually.

(14) Among the various Buddhist scholars and teachers, the Daishonin points out, T’ien-t’ai thoroughly and accurately classified all the Buddhist sutras into Mahayana and Hinayana, provisional and true, clarifying the superiority of the Lotus Sutra over all the other sutras. (15) Though some Buddhist teachers enjoy wide respect for their supernatural powers, if they do not spread the true sutra, they are possessed of devils. The standard for evaluating the correctness of Buddhist teachers is the doctrines they expound, not the supernatural powers they display.

**Notes**

1. The “Expedient Means” (2nd), the “Peaceful Practices” (14th), the “Life Span” (16th), and the “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds” (25th) chapters.

2. See continual propagation to the fiftieth person in Glossary.

3. According to T’ien-t’ai, the stage of ordinary practitioners refers to the five stages of practice carried out by those at the stage of perception and action and to the ten stages of faith, the lowest of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

4. The little boys cited here are described in the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter of the sutra.


6. The stories of Agastya and Jinu, both Brahmanist ascetics, are mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra.

7. “The three stages of worthlessness” belongs to the stage of ordinary mortals, or the early stage of practice carried out by those who are still ordinary mortals.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. The Flower Garland Sutra reads, “The mind, the Buddha, and all living beings—these three are without distinction.”

12. A summary of some sutras such as the Sutra of the Meditation to Behold the Buddhas.

13. A summary of the three Pure Land sutras.


15. A summary of a passage from the “Medicine King” (23rd) chapter.

17. Wheat, rice, beans, and two types of millet. Also a generic term for all grains, which is the meaning here.

18. Nirvana Sutra. The Buddha's statement in the next sentence is also that of the Nirvana Sutra.

19. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. Shakyamuni says in this sutra, "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth."


21. "The five Mahayana periods" refers to the period of the Flower Garland Sutra, the period of the Correct and Equal sutras, the period of the Wisdom sutras, the period of the Lotus Sutra, and the period of the Nirvana Sutra. According to one account, the sutras of the five Mahayana periods are the Flower Garland Sutra, the Great Collection Sutra, the Larger Wisdom Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, and the Nirvana Sutra. T'ien-t'ai selected these as the five chief Mahayana sutras in The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra.


23. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

24. Ibid., chap. 20. The following sutra passage also appears in the same chapter.


26. Ibid.

27. On "The Words and Phrases."