REGARDING the proper way to preach the doctrine, you should leave aside for the moment The Nembutsu Chosen above All. In general, you should begin by citing the passage in the second volume of the Lotus Sutra in which the Buddha states, "Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children." Make certain your listeners understand that Shakyamuni is our father.

What kind of Buddha is this parent of ours? The three thousand and more volumes of the non-Buddhist classics speak in great detail of the two concepts of loyalty and filial piety, and they state that loyalty is a principle that derives from that of filial piety. Thus the non-Buddhist texts can serve as a first step toward the sacred writings of Buddhism, for the gist of these teachings is not at variance with what is found in the Buddhist texts. All these texts make clear that, although some persons are exalted and some humble, some of high social rank and some of low, all should treat their parents with proper filial piety.

Shakyamuni Buddha is our parent, and all the sacred teachings of his lifetime are sutra texts that he, the parent, has bestowed on his children in order to instruct them.

In the realm of heaven, in the palaces of the dragon kings, and in India there are countless and boundless numbers of sutras, but in China and Japan we possess only five thousand or seven thousand sutra volumes. With regard to these various sutras, it is not up to us to put forth our private opinions as to which came first and which later, which are superior and which inferior. It is unlikely that the wisdom of people living in this latter age of ours can surpass that of the scholars, great teachers, and persons of outstanding virtue of earlier times, and therefore we would do well to rely on the judgments that they have handed down.

The Flower Garland school speaks of the five teachings or the four teachings, the Dharma Characteristics and Three Treatises schools speak of the teachings of the three periods and the two storehouses of doctrine, or of the three turnings of the wheel of the Law. But in contrast to these stand the words pronounced by the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra when he declared, "The World-Honored One has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth," a clear declaration from his own golden mouth.

This pronouncement of the Buddha has made it clear that the teachings as a whole fall into two categories. It is as though in worldly affairs the parents
should leave two wills, a former one and a latter one, for their heirs, or perhaps the custom of leaving a former will and a latter will in worldly affairs derives from these golden words of the Thus Come One. In any event, what in the end determines if one is being filial or unfilial toward one’s parent, the Buddha, is this question of whether one follows the earlier or the later will of the Buddha.

If you set forth your argument in this manner, people are likely to understand and agree with what you have said. Then you had better point out the following.

The sutras upon which the various schools are founded, such as the three Pure Land sutras of the Pure Land school, belong to the group of temporary teachings the Buddha expounded in the first forty and more years of his preaching life. The World-Honored One, who is our loving father, stated, “In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth.” Does he mean by this that we should adhere to the sutras preached in these forty and more years? Or does he mean for us to turn our attention to the statement in the Lotus Sutra that he “has long expounded his doctrines and now must reveal the truth”? People of discernment should give judicious thought to this matter!

At this point you should pause a moment to observe the reaction of your listeners. Then ask them whether the Buddha, who thinks of all living beings as his own offspring, is likely to instruct them to set aside the truth and adhere instead to an untruth that he himself has described as belonging to a period when “I have not yet revealed the truth.”

And if we are to change our allegiance instead to the Lotus Sutra, does this mean that we are to set aside the various sutras preached in the previous forty and more years and do so, or does it mean that we are to do so while at the same time continuing to adhere to those earlier sutras and to pronounce the words “Namu Amida Butsu”?

When we examine this question, we should beware of making judgments based merely upon the private opinion of an ordinary mortal, whether such judgment happens to be correct or not. Rather we should heed the words pronounced by the Buddha, who is our father.

The Buddha himself has clearly said, “Honestly discarding expedient means, I will preach only the unsurpassed way.” The term “expedient means” is the same as that used in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra in the passage immediately preceding the Buddha’s statement “I have not yet revealed the truth.” In that passage he says, “Preaching the Law in various different ways, I made use of the power of expedient means.” Hence every single word and phrase of the three Pure Land sutras and the other sutras expounded during the first forty and more years of the Buddha’s preaching life is without exception included among the expedient means referred to by the Buddha as “the power of expedient means.”

If this is so, then any person who fails to set aside these earlier sutras preached in the first forty and more years and turn instead to the Lotus Sutra, whether judged filial or unfilial by worldly standards, is in fact a person of utmost unfilial conduct with regard to the Law of the Buddha.

Therefore in the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the second volume of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha states, “Now this threefold world is all my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. . . . But though I teach and instruct them, they do not believe or accept my teachings.” People who fail to set aside the sutras preached in the preceding forty and more years and attempt to employ them in conjunc-
tion with the Lotus Sutra are refusing to heed the words of three persons, their sovereign, their teacher, and their parent.

In the passage above, when the Buddha speaks of teaching his children, he is speaking of the words of instruction given by a teacher and a parent, and when he speaks of instructing, he is speaking of the commands or edicts handed down by a ruler. The Buddha was the most worthy ruler, the wisest teacher, the most worthy father in the entire continent of Jambudvīpa. Therefore anyone who adheres to the sutras preached in the preceding forty and more years and refuses to change his allegiance to the Lotus Sutra, or who changes his allegiance to the Lotus Sutra but at the same time neglects to set aside those earlier sutras, is refusing to obey the words of his father, that father who combines within himself the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent.

Such a person does not deserve to live in the world. And the sutra tells us what fate awaits such an unfilial person when it says, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra, ... When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avīci hell.” Even if a person does not go so far as to slander the Lotus Sutra, if she or he fails to embrace its teachings, that person is committing an act of unfilial conduct. And those who are guilty of unfilial conduct are most certainly destined to be reborn in the evil paths of existence. Therefore the Buddha has declared that they will enter the Avīci hell.

And how much more is this true of those who cling determinedly to the sutras preached prior to the Lotus, and who not only refuse to transfer their allegiance to the Lotus Sutra but go so far as to say, as did Shan-tao, that “not even one person in a thousand” can be saved by works such as the Lotus Sutra, or, like Hönen, insist that one should “discard, close, ignore, and abandon” all such works! How could they possibly escape falling into the Avīci hell? And the same fate, needless to say, awaits their disciples and lay supporters.

With regard to the passage already quoted in which the Buddha states that “though I teach and instruct them, they do not believe or accept my teachings,” there are two kinds of filial piety involved. If we are asking whether a person is, in worldly terms, behaving in a manner that accords with filial piety, we can get the answer by consulting persons who are conversant with the non-Buddhist writings. But if it is a question of whether one is filial or unfilial in terms of the Buddhist writings, then even though he may be a Buddhist scholar, if he is a scholar of the latter age who accepts the doctrines of scholars who fail to recognize the true teaching and instead espouse the provisional teachings, who knows what fate will await him in his next existence? And how much more is this so of ordinary people who live in the latter age!

The thirty-fourth volume of the Nirvana Sutra states: “Those who are reborn in human form will be as few as the particles of earth that can be placed on top of a fingernail, while those who fall into the three evil paths of existence will be as numerous as the particles of earth in the worlds of the ten directions. Those who commit the four grave offenses or the five cardinal sins or who slander the Nirvana Sutra will be as numerous as the particles of earth in the worlds of the ten directions, while those who refrain from committing the four grave offenses or the five cardinal sins or who take faith in the Nirvana Sutra will be as few as the particles of earth that can be placed on top of a fingernail.”

The sutra is saying that, in this latter age, those who commit the five cardi-
nal sins or who slander the Law will be as numerous as the particles of earth in the worlds of the ten directions. However, if we look around us today, we would have to say that those who commit the five cardinal sins are as few as the particles of earth on top of a fingernail, while those who refrain from doing so are numerous as the particles of earth in the worlds of the ten directions. What the sutra is saying, therefore, would seem to be untrue.

But, examining the passage more closely, we may ask ourselves whether those who fail to obey the dictates of filial piety are not in fact the same as those who commit the five cardinal sins, whether such conduct may not be in the category of offenses similar to the five cardinal sins.8

If we look at it in this manner, we see that, although the rulers of former times upheld the correct doctrine and worked to propagate the true doctrine, the rulers of today support the provisional doctrines and pay respect to a doctrine that only seems to be correct. Thus they are less and less supportive of the temples of the correct doctrine, which function as places of worship where prayers are offered to the guardian star of the ruler, while building more and more temples dedicated to the provisional doctrines or to erroneous doctrines in every province of the country.

To the eyes of foolish persons it may appear as though Buddhism is in a very flourishing state. But to the eyes of the Buddha, the gods, and persons of wisdom it is obvious that the temples of former times that honor the correct doctrine are bit by bit dwindling in number. This is first of all an indication of unfilial conduct, since the temples of one’s worthy parents are being abandoned, and second, it is an indication that the Law is being slandered. If this is so, then we must conclude that Japan at the present time is a country where one and all are guilty of engaging in unfilial conduct and slander ing the Law.

This country is the domain of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, and he has no doubt given orders to his chief ministers of the left and right, the great heavenly king Brahmā and the devil king of the sixth heaven. Just as the sea refuses to be the repository of dead bodies, and as a mountain rich in treasure hates the presence of warped trees, so the Buddha has commanded that these slanderers of the Law in this country be dealt with.

This is what you should say to your listeners.

Someone may perhaps pose objections, asking why these sutras preached in the earlier forty and more years continue to command attention if, as stated previously, they ought to have been abandoned.

You should then reply by stating that when a tower is being erected, one builds a scaffolding around it, but when the tower is completed, the scaffolding is torn down and done away with. This analogy is implied in the passage of commentary in volume two of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* that says, “Now if the great teaching is expounded, then the expedient means teaching will be superseded.” “Wonderful” [as in the title “Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law”?] means that it supersedes or cuts off other teachings. To supersede means that, once this sutra has been expounded, then the teachings of the various sutras preached previously are terminated and brought to an end. This is what is meant by the Buddha’s words “honestly discarding expedient means.”

Chia-hsiang expressed the same idea, saying that when the sun rises, the stars fade from sight. Thus, since the sutras preached prior to the Lotus are the scaffolding around the tower, they are dismantled after the tower is completed. They may be brought into use.
once again when the tower is undergoing repair, but afterward they will once again be dismantled.

This is the procedure followed by all the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future when they preach the teaching.

A layperson may raise objections by pointing out that the Great Teacher Jikaku established the Hall of the Constant Active Meditation [on Mount Hiei for the practice of the Nembutsu].

You should reply that adherents of the Buddhist scriptures at times read the non-Buddhist texts. They do so not in order to attain the way but so as to acquire greater learning. Young boys in training in the temples of Mount Hiei or Ōjō-ji recite the verses of The Dharma Analysis Treasury, but they do not do this as a means of attaining the way.

Denguō and Jikaku made a thorough study of the doctrines of all eight schools of Buddhism and read all the various sutras. They did so because they regarded it as a step in the process of coming to understand how the Lotus Sutra represents the ultimate of all such teachings.

Another layperson may then ask why you yourself do not recite the Nembutsu. You should reply by pointing out that the Great Teacher Dengūō rejected the two hundred and fifty precepts [of the Hinayana teaching]. He did so in order that they would not become confused in his time with the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment embodied in the Lotus Sutra.

These days the various schools of Buddhism carry out many different types of practices. But nowadays people tend to concentrate on the Nembutsu practice alone and speak slanderously of the Lotus Sutra. Thus gold becomes easily confused with mere stones, you should explain, and that is why you do not recite the Nembutsu.

During the first twelve years of his preaching life, the Buddha avoided any mention of the concepts of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. For the same reason, in the non-Buddhist observance known as the Cold Food Festival, one avoids any mention of fire or anything of a red color. Or for the same reason, if there is a country known for its lack of filial conduct, one who honors the ideal of filial piety will not even pass through it. These all follow the same principle.

You should therefore cease arguing time and again about Nembutsu Chosen above All and proceed just as I have described.

You say in your letter that you were invited to preach the doctrine in a private hall dedicated to the Buddha and that you conducted yourself fittingly. However I consider it, this remark of yours strikes me as very peculiar.

The reason is this. You are not only a priest, but one who preaches the finest doctrine in the entire continent of Jambudvīpa. Even if you were in the presence of a bodhisattva who had attained near-perfect enlightenment, you would have no reason to be concerned whether you conducted yourself “fittingly” or not.

Moreover, the gods Brahmā and Shakra preside over the domain of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who is our father, and have been entrusted with the care of priests like us who preach the correct teaching. Vaishravana and the others who make up the four heavenly kings are simply the guardians and gatekeepers of these gods, Brahmā and Shakra, and the rulers of the four continents are mere retainers to Vaishravana and the other heavenly kings.

And [the ruler of] Akitsushima, this island country of Japan, cannot compare even to the retainers of the wheel-turning kings of the four continents. The ruler of Japan is simply the chief
of this island country. To speak as you do of being "summoned" by persons who serve that ruler, of appearing before those "in high position," and of conducting yourself "fittingly" is, however I consider it, in the end an insult to me, Nichiren!

It would seem that Nichiren's disciples, after journeying to the capital, at first were careful not to forget their purpose, but later, led astray by the heavenly devil, they lost their senses completely. That is the way Shō-bō was acting. You had better beware that you do not act the same way and incur the anger of heaven.

So you have gone to the capital, and before much time has passed you are changing your name, a piece of utter nonsense. No doubt you have also changed your way of speaking and acquired the accent of the capital. Like a mouse that has changed into a bat but in fact is neither bird nor mouse, you are now neither a country priest nor a priest of the capital. You are behaving just like Shō-bō.

You should just go on speaking like a country person—otherwise you will only sound ridiculous. And as for changing your name to Sonjō, the characters of which are the same as those of the personal name of the Retired Emperor of Oki—it is all too absurd!

And then, as is well known, the prayers conducted by the eminent priests of our time, men of the True Word and Tendai schools, do not produce favorable results. I have pointed this out many times in the past. This year the True Word teachers in Kamakura are continuing ceremonies begun last year designed to change the sex of a baby in the womb and bring about the birth of a male child. Ryūben and others take unending pride in their efforts in this direction. And over seven or eight hundred True Word teachers have carried out all the great ceremonies and secret rituals handed down by Tō-ji temple and the Tendai school, but these have produced no effect. The priests of the Zen and Precepts schools joined in the ceremonies, but this did not help.

I stated my opinion that such ceremonies would be unsuccessful, which so angered the participants that they threatened me, but of course all their efforts proved fruitless.

If they cannot even get an answer to prayers concerning some petty matter in this present existence, how can they hope to do so concerning the all-important existence to come?

When the True Word school was first being introduced to China, the leaders of the school stole the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life set forth by T'ien-t'ai and made it a part of the True Word doctrine. With this as the basic principle of the school, they then added on the mudras and mantras, which are subsidiary, and treated these as the focus of the school, disdaining the T'ien-t'ai school as an inferior teaching. This was the origin of their slandering of the Law.

Before the T'ien-t'ai school had been introduced to Japan, it was not realized in this country that the teachings of the Flower Garland, Dharma Characteristics, and Three Treatises schools are in fact slanders of the Law. But after the Great Teacher Dengyō propagated the perfect teaching of the T'ien-t'ai or Tendai school, it became known that these other schools constituted slanders of the Law.

Thus the followers of the True Word school and the other schools of our time, seven schools in all, are in fact slanderers of the Law. Hence there is no reason to expect that, when they offer prayers regarding some serious matter, such prayers will be effective.

As for the followers of the Tendai school, although the doctrine of their
school is the correct one, they have come to regard themselves as identical with the other schools that are erroneous and no longer realize the correctness of their own teaching. They are like persons who are confused as to which direction is east. Such persons consequently cannot tell which direction is west, and in the end are unable to determine any of the ten directions correctly.

The doctrines of non-Buddhist religions derive originally from Buddhism, and yet such non-Buddhist doctrines are used as a weapon against Buddhism. Likewise the various schools of Buddhism I have been discussing derive from the Lotus Sutra, and their followers study the teachings of the Tendai school, and yet they try to wipe out the Tendai school.

The followers of the Tendai school, unaware of the fact that their own school represents the true doctrine, act in such a way as to destroy their own school and bring disdain upon themselves. Without realizing that this is what they are doing, they lend aid to the other schools and hasten the downfall of their own.

If persons who are followers of the Lotus school fail to chant the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but instead constantly chant Namu Amida Butsu, then they are destroyers of the Lotus Sutra.

The followers of the non-Buddhist teachings, for example, claimed to honor the three treasures, but with regard to paying honor to the Buddha, one of the three treasures, they chanted the words Namu Maheshvara, or Devotion to Maheshvara. The disciples of the Buddha, considering this to be a false faith in the three treasures, chanted the words Namu Shakyamuni Buddha, or Devotion to Shakyamuni Buddha. This was how Buddhist and non-Buddhist followers were distinguished one from the other.

The formula Namu Amida Butsu is based on the daimoku of the sutras upon which the Pure Land school is founded. If persons who in their hearts consider themselves votaries of the Lotus Sutra nevertheless chant the words Namu Amida Butsu, then onlookers are going to assume that they are believers in the Nembutsu doctrine and will suppose that they have abandoned their faith in the Lotus Sutra.

The three thousand priests of Mount Hiei, failing to understand this fact, act in such a way that the imperial authority ceases to support their school and they themselves bring about the destruction of Mount Hiei. Thus, although they offer prayers to the three treasures, as a matter of course their prayers have no effect.

This is what you should point out to your listeners.

One of your listeners may express doubts, asking whether in fact in the commentaries of T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyō it is stated that persons such as himself who know little about the Lotus Sutra or the other various sutras are destined to be reborn in the evil paths of existence.

You should reply by citing the passages in volume three of Profound Meaning and volume three of The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,” and the Lotus Sutra passage that declares the sutra supreme among all the sutras preached in the past, present, and future.

The Great Teacher Dengyō, berating fourteen men who were leaders of the six schools of Buddhism, states in the last volume of his Clarification of the Precepts: “Just as in the Ch'i dynasty of China we heard of Hui-kuang, the arrogant superintendent of priests, so now in our own country we see these six superintendents of priests. How true was [the Buddha’s prediction in] the Lotus Sutra that the situation would be much worse after his passing.”
And he reprimanded the four schools, the Flower Garland, True Word, Dharma Characteristics, and Three Treatises schools, by stating in his *Clarification of the Schools Based on T'ien-t'ai's Doctrine*: "The True Word school that has recently been brought to Japan deliberately obscures how its transmission was falsified in the recording [by I-hsing, who was deceived by Shan-wu-wei], while the Flower Garland school that was introduced earlier attempts to disguise the fact that it was influenced by the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai. The Three Treatises school, which is so infatuated with the concept of non-substantiality, has forgotten Chia-hsiang's humiliation, and conceals the fact that he was completely won over to the T'ien-t'ai teachings by Chang-an. The Dharma Characteristics school, which clings to the concept of being, denies that its leader Chih-chou was converted to the teachings of the T'ien-t'ai school, and that Liang-pi used those teachings in interpreting the Benevolent Kings Sutra."

T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyō were of the opinion that followers of the True Word and the other schools that make up the seven schools we have been discussing, even though they may be quite correct in their observance of the precepts and their practice of meditation, are nevertheless guilty of slandering the Law and hence most certainly cannot escape being reborn in the evil paths. And how much more is this true, needless to say, of followers of the Zen and Pure Land schools!

That is the reason why T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* is so outspoken in condemning the teachings of Bodhidharma. However, the followers of the Tendai school these days not only declare that one may attain the way through the teachings of the other schools, but go so far as to seize upon the religious practices of these schools and make them a part of their own practice. What should we think of this situation?

The people of the present age may in particular have questions about the True Word school. If so, you should reply in the following manner. Point out that in Japan there are eight schools of Buddhism, and that the True Word teachings are divided into two large branches, the Tō-ji branch and the Tendai branch.

The Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, and Flower Garland schools, and the True Word school based at Tō-ji temple all belong to the category of Mahayana. But although in their practice of meditation and wisdom they follow Mahayana principles, they observe the Hinayana precepts administered by Tōdai-ji temple. Thus in the matter of precepts they belong to the Hinayana. They are persons who reject the Mahayana and choose the Hinayana. After all they are Hinayana followers.

The True Word teaching of Mount Hiei, on the other hand, follows the precepts of perfect and immediate enlightenment as taught by the Tendai school and does not have any True Word precepts at all. This teaching may thus be described as a True Word school that in the matter of the precepts has converted to those of perfect and immediate enlightenment as taught by the Tendai school. And yet the chief priests and other eminent priests of Mount Hiei, though calling themselves adherents of the Tendai school, go along with the True Word teaching by relegating their own Lotus school to an inferior position. Thus all the persons of Mount Hiei are guilty of slandering the Law, and hence their prayers are ineffective.

Question: Can you cite any evidence to show that, in the Tendai school, while the term Tendai Lotus school was used, the term True Word
school was deliberately avoided?

Answer: In The Regulations for Students of the Mountain School (written by the Great Teacher Dengyō), in the section entitled “Regulations for Annually Appointed Students of the Tendai Lotus School” (one document) it is stated: “Annually appointed students (assigned by the Late Emperor of Kashiwabara) to propagate the teaching of the Tendai Lotus school: As a rule, those annually appointed to the Lotus school of Tendai shall, beginning with the ninth year of the Kōnin era [818], reside on Mount Hiei. They shall remain there without leaving the monastery for a period of twelve years and shall carry out the two disciplines. As a rule those who are engaged in the concentration and insight discipline as a rule those who are engaged in the Vairochana discipline.”

The first volume of The Documents pertaining to “A Clarification of the Precepts” states: “Request for Permission regarding the New Lotus School” (one document), submitted by the shramana Saichō . . . two persons for the Flower Garland school, two persons for the Tendai Lotus school.” And it also says, “Two persons to carry out the Tendai disciplines. (One shall be assigned to read the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the other to read Great Concentration and Insight).” These passages indicate that the True Word school was regarded as something contained within the Tendai school.

A supplementary ruling dated the fifteenth day of the sixth month of the first year of the Kashō era [848] reads: “With regard to the petition submitted by the Dharma Teacher Transmitter of the Lamp Ennin, who, as indicated earlier, journeyed to T'ang China to receive the teachings: He respectfully states that, concerning the introduction of the Tendai school to our country . . . in the twenty-fourth year of Enryaku [805] . . . In the twenty-fifth year [806] permission was granted to the Tendai school to receive two duly appointed persons annually, one to practice the True Word discipline and one to practice the concentration and insight discipline. . . . The reason for this is that the two disciplines of the Tendai school, the concentration and insight discipline and the True Word discipline, were revered and sanctioned by Emperor Kammu.”

Thus we see that on Mount Hiei, while the term Tendai school was used, the term True Word school was deliberately avoided. The Tendai school was regarded as the bones, while the True Word was the flesh.

In this latter age, however, the relations between the two schools, the Tendai and True Word, have become strained, and the bones and flesh have gone separate ways. The chief priests of Mount Hiei seem to favor the True Word teaching exclusively and thus have become boneless, while most of the ordinary priests favor the Tendai school and have become persons without flesh, as it were.

Because these disputes over the Buddhist teachings have arisen, they have led to controversies over secular matters as well. Mount Hiei is no longer peaceful, and it often causes turmoil in the capital. But these are grave matters that are better kept to yourself. I have not yet revealed this teaching, but you should have a clear understanding.

The Nembutsu school has likewise turned its back on the Lotus Sutra and relies instead on the three Pure Land sutras, making Amida Buddha its object of veneration and treating Shakyamuni Buddha with contempt. The teachers of the True Word school regard Mahāvairochana as all-important and similarly disdain the Thus Come One Shakyamuni.

With regard to the precepts, there are the two different categories of
Mahayana precepts and Hinayana precepts, but in all cases one honors Shakyamuni Buddha as the source of the teachings and the other Buddhas as merely testifying to their worth. And in the same way, although there are various different schools of Buddhism, they all ought to pay reverence to Shakyamuni.

It is the worms born from the body of the lion that will devour the lion. The teachings of the Buddha cannot be destroyed by non-Buddhist teachings. It is forces within Buddhism itself that will destroy the way of the Buddha—this is a prediction left us by the Buddha himself.

Within Buddhism, the Hinayana teachings will overthrow the Mahayana, the provisional Mahayana will overthrow the true Mahayana. In such cases, the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana will act as would non-Buddhist forces attacking the truth of Buddhism. But there will be other times when not the Hinayana or provisional Mahayana, but those dedicated to the Lotus Sutra of the true Mahayana themselves will act in such a way as to overthrow the Lotus Sutra, and this will be a very serious matter indeed.

It is Mount Hiei that will decide whether the teaching of the Buddha is destroyed or not. And is it because Mount Hiei has destroyed the teaching of the Buddha that foreign nations are now attempting to destroy our country? Mount Hiei wiped out the correct teaching, and therefore the great heavenly devil appeared in Japan and took possession of persons such as Hōnen and Dainichi. He then used these persons as a stepping stone, thereby entering the bodies of the ruler and his ministers, and from there taking possession of all the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei. For this reason, discord arose between the Buddhist leaders and their lay supporters, and the prayers and supplications of the former are no longer effective. And because their prayers were not effective, the three thousand priests of the mountain assembly were abandoned by their lay supporters.

The ruler and his ministers may perhaps question the scholars of the True Word teaching of the Tendai school, asking, “Is the ultimate truth taught by the Nembutsu and Zen schools the same as the True Word teaching of the Tendai school?”

Then the eminent priests, who in name are followers of the True Word teaching of the Tendai school but have no real understanding of their teaching, possessed by the heavenly devil, reply, “The ultimate truth of the Zen school is the ultimate truth of the True Word teaching of the Tendai school. The Nembutsu of Amida is the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra.”

The followers of the Nembutsu and Zen schools, likewise inspired by the heavenly devil, are much cleverer than the priests of the True Word teaching of the Tendai school. When asked such a question, they reply, “Absolutely not! Zen teaches an ultimate truth that far transcends the True Word teaching of the Tendai school!”

Or perhaps they may say, “The various teachings of Buddhism are profound in meaning but our understanding as ordinary beings is slight. Such teachings and our innate capacities are not suited to one another; we can never hope to attain the way through them!”

Because they reply in this manner, the scholars of the True Word teaching of the Tendai school find themselves deprived of the support of the ruler and his ministers and their other lay supporters, who no longer put faith in their teaching. In their present existence they fall into the realm of hungry spirits, feeding on the flesh of their companions. They rage at the Buddha and the gods, curse their lay support-
ers, and year after year bring about disaster. On occasion they burn down the great lecture hall that houses as the object of veneration Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, he who took on living form in order to save them; or again they destroy Bodhisattva Maitreya, who will likewise take on living form for their sake. In their madness they go so far as to act as though they were the sworn enemies of Shakyamuni, the lord of teachings, or contrive to impede the appearance in the world of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future.

They commit terrible offenses such as have never been described in the sutras and treatises. And these terrible offenses are the fault not only of the three thousand priests of Mount Hiei, but of the court nobles and the warrior families as well.

This entire land of Japan from the ruler on down to the common people, no one excepted, is guilty of slandering the Law. Therefore the great heavenly king Brahmā, along with the heavenly king Shakra and the Sun Goddess, has instructed the sages of neighboring countries to take measures to correct this slandering of the Law.

It is like the case of the lay priest Taira no Kiyomori who, though a mere subject of the ruler, attempted to bend the ruler’s laws to his own will and who went so far as to burn down the shrine of the god Mountain King and the Great Buddha Hall.25 The Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, and the god Mountain King, lending divine aid to Minamoto no Yoritomo, the descendant of Minamoto no Yoriyoshi, instructed him to bring about the destruction of the Taira clan and to restore peace and safety to the nation.

Now the whole country without exception is acting as the enemy of the Buddha and the gods, and there is no one in Japan capable of bringing order to the nation. That is the reason, it would appear, that the great empire of the Mongols has risen up against us. It is similar to the case of China and Koryō. Though these are Buddhist countries second only to India in their Buddhist heritage, they have gone over to the teachings of the Zen and Nembutsu schools and therefore have been overthrown by the Mongols.

In religious matters our country of Japan is a disciple of these two countries. If these countries are overthrown, how can our own country hope to remain in peace and safety? All persons who think to aid their nation and who care about their families should make haste to prohibit the activities of the Zen and Nembutsu proponents as is indicated in the sutra texts. For if such sutra texts are correct, the Buddha and the gods no longer reside here in Japan. And though one may hope to call on them for aid, there is no easy way to do so.

All people of high or low rank in the world say, “Great Bodhisattva Hachiman makes the head of an upright person his dwelling. He will not dwell in any other place!”

But if in the world at the present time there is no upright person, then Great Bodhisattva Hachiman will have nowhere to dwell. Moreover, among the various teachings of the Buddha, the Lotus Sutra alone deserves to be called the upright sutra. If there is no votary of the Lotus Sutra, then Great Bodhisattva Hachiman will have no place to dwell, will he?

In Japan, however, I, Nichiren, alone may be called an upright person both in terms of secular society and among those who have withdrawn from the secular world. This is because I informed the late lay priest of Saimyō-ji that the Zen school is the invention of the heavenly devil, and later wrote a treatise26 appraising him of the situation. “All the people of Japan are destined to
fall into the hell of incessant suffering,” I told him. In past ages, has there ever been an example of anyone who spoke out in such an upright manner? And from this you can judge how things stand. If I spoke out in this case, would I be likely to speak deceivingly in matters of lesser importance?

A sage, it is said, speaks in unadorned language. Moreover, one who knows those things that have not yet made their appearance may be called a sage. Nichiren is thus in some sense a sage. But because I delivered my doctrinal pronouncements on these matters, I was driven from place to place twenty and more times and in the end was condemned to exile. I suffered numerous bodily injuries and many of my disciples were killed. This is worse than what was done to Pi Kan, and no less than what Wu Tzu-hsiu had to undergo. I have been treated as badly as Bodhisattva Āryadeva, who was killed by a non-Buddhist, or the Venerable Āryasimha, whose head was cut off by King Dammira.

If I am treated in such fashion and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman leaves my head, whose head will he dwell on? If this country does not heed Nichiren, what is to become of it?

Nichiren grieves at the thought of this—so you should tell your listeners. And tell them also that the priest Nichiren has this to say: If you would call the Buddha and bodhisattvas and the great benevolent deities back to this country, there is only one way to do so. You must abandon your support of every temple belonging to the Zen and Nembutsu schools, reprimand their priests, build a lecture hall on Mount Hiei, and install in it the spirit of Shakyamuni Buddha of Eagle Peak. There is no other way to call back the gods and persuade the Buddhas to come to the aid of this country!

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**Background**

This letter is considered to have been written in 1269 while Nichiren Daishonin was in Kamakura, and sent to a priest named Sammi-bō Nichigyō, a disciple of the Daishonin who had gone to Kyoto to study. While some theories hold that it was written earlier, that seems unlikely. Statements found in it such as “foreign nations are now attempting to destroy our country” and “the great empire of the Mongols has risen up against us” indicate it must have been written after Japan received a missive from the Mongol Empire demanding that Japan acknowledge fealty to the Mongol emperor and threatening a military attack if the demand was not met. That missive arrived in Japan during the first intercalary month of 1268.

The title *On the Proper Way to Preach the Doctrine*, taken from the letter’s first line, was given in later times. The recipient of this letter, Sammi-bō Nichigyō, was one of the Daishonin’s earliest disciples. A native of the Daishonin’s home region, Shimōsa Province, Sammi-bō at the time of this letter was residing in Kyoto, where he had gone to study Buddhist doctrines. He was esteemed among the Daishonin’s followers for his learning and debating skill. Such skill was evident in his victory over Ryūzō-bō, a priest of the Tendai school, in what is known as the Kuwagayatsu Debate of 1277.

However, Sammi-bō showed signs of arrogance and a desire for social status and recognition. It also appears that he at times ignored advice he received
from the Daishonin. In this letter, the Daishonin responds to Sammi-bō’s report that he had delivered a lecture at the Buddha hall of a court noble, giving Sammi-bō clear and stern instruction with regard to how to propound the teachings, and how to conduct himself as a disciple.

Later the priest was sent to Atsuhara to aid Nikkō in spreading the Daishonin’s teachings in the Fuji area, but discarded his faith during the Atsuhara Persecution. Sammi-bō appears to have died soon after that, as in several letters the Daishonin refers to his untimely death. For example, in On Persecutions Befalling the Sage, he writes, “There was something very strange about Sammi-bō... In time his wicked ambition led to treachery and, finally, to his doom” (I, p. 998). And in On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion he states, “The priest [Sammi-bō] Nichigyō’s death was indeed pitiful. I recited the Lotus Sutra and chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for him here in Minobu, sincerely praying to Shakuyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions to receive him on Eagle Peak” (I, p. 978).

As its opening line suggests, this letter explains how best to introduce the doctrines of the Daishonin’s teachings and offer responses in the context of debate with those representing the other Buddhist schools of the time. The Daishonin states that Sammi-bō should set aside discussion of Hōnen’s Nembutsu Chosen above All and begin by emphasizing the principle that one should rely on the Law rather than on persons. Progressing in accordance with what the Buddha has taught, he should then explain that Shakuyamuni is the Buddha who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, and the Lotus Sutra alone represents the truth among all of the sUTras expounded by the Buddha over his lifetime. To accept and believe in the Lotus Sutra, then, is to carry out true filial piety in the context of Buddhism. The Daishonin then instructs Sammi-bō how to proceed in refuting the Nembutsu school.

In the latter portion of this letter, the Daishonin refutes the errors of the esoteric tradition within the Tendai school at Mount Hiei, which confused the provisional Mahayana sutras with the true Mahayana sutra, the Lotus Sutra, going against the teachings of its founder, Dengyō. The priests of Mount Hiei, the Daishonin points out, had fallen into slander of the Law by recognizing as valid the teachings of the Nembutsu and Zen schools. As a result, they are bringing about the destruction of the nation. The Daishonin, on the other hand, has shown himself to be a sage by speaking directly about what steps ought to be taken to protect the nation, and predicting the calamity that would come about if his advice went unheeded.

Notes
1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 3.
2. Ibid., chap. 2.
3. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.
4. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
5. Ibid., chap. 3.
7. A summary of The Nembutsu Chosen above All.
8. The Dharma Analysis Treasury describes conduct considered similar to, or in the same category as, the five cardinal sins. For example, destroying the buildings and facilities of the Buddhist Order may result in the dispersion of its members; hence it amounts to the sin of causing disunity within the Buddhist Order. Destroying a stupa dedicated to a Buddha, because that stupa is believed to house the Buddha’s body, is equivalent to the sin of shedding the blood of a Buddha.
9. "Constant active meditation" is a type of meditation in which, for a period of ninety days, a practitioner spends time concentrating on Amida Buddha, reciting his name, and walking around his image.

10. In China the three-day Cold Food, or Han-shih, festival was observed around 105 days after the winter solstice. During the festival, people ate only cold or pre-cooked food, as heating by fire was forbidden.

11. Here "the capital" means Kyoto, then the imperial seat.

12. Shō-bō was Nichiren Daishonin's disciple, but abandoned his belief in the Daishonin's teachings around the time of the Izu Exile in 1261 and eventually turned against the Daishonin.

13. The given name of Emperor Goto-ba, also called the Retired Emperor of Oki, was Takahira, an alternative reading of the characters used to write "Sonjō."

14. Ryūben (1206–1283) was an eminent priest of the Tendai school. He won the confidence of the government authorities and performed rituals of the esoteric teachings for them.

15. In the Nirvana Sutra, there is a passage to the effect that all of the non-Buddhist scriptures and writings in society are themselves Buddhist teachings, not non-Buddhist teachings.

16. In his lecture on the Mahāvairochana Sutra Shan-wu-wei maintained that the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra were equal in terms of principle because both sutas revealed the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, but that the Mahāvairochana Sutra was superior to the Lotus Sutra because in terms of practice the former contained descriptions of mudras (hand gestures) and mantras (mystic formulas). I-hsing noted this assertion of Shan-wu-wei in The Annotations on the Mahāvairochana Sutra.

17. Fa-tsong established a classification of the Buddhist sutas, dividing them into five groups according to their level of teaching: the Hinayana teaching, the elementary Mahayana teaching, the final Mahayana teaching, the sudden teaching, and the perfect teaching. This system of the five teachings was modeled on T'ien-t'āi's classification of the five periods.

18. While giving a lecture, Chia-hsiang was refuted by a young priest of the T'ien-t'āi school.

19. The Dharma Characteristics school concentrates its study on the dharmas, or elements of existence. It aims to clarify the ultimate reality by analyzing the aspects and characteristics of things and phenomena. It maintains that all phenomena arise from the ālaya-consciousness, and that nothing can exist without the ālaya-consciousness.

20. Chih-chou (678–733) was the third patriarch of the Dharma Characteristics school, who lived in P'u-yang and wrote a commentary on the Brahmā Net Sutra on the basis of T'ien-t'āi's teachings. Liang-pi of Chi'ing-lung-szu temple interpreted the Benevolent Kings Sutra, the concluding sutra to the Wisdom sutas, following T'ien-t'āi's view.

21. The Regulations for Students of the Mountain School consists of three sections, each forming an independent document, which were submitted respectively to Emperor Kammu.

22. A reference to Emperor Kammu (see Glossary).

23. The concentration and insight discipline means to study the Lotus and other sutas and T'ien-t'āi's work Great Concentration and Insight and carry out T'ien-t'āi's meditative practices such as the four forms of meditation. The Vairochana discipline means to recite and study the sutas of esoteric teachings.

24. Ennin is another name for the Great Teacher Jikaku. "Transmitter of the Lamp" was the second highest in the system pertaining to the rank of priests.

25. The Mountain King is the guardian deity of Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei, the head temple of the Tendai school. The Great Buddha Hall is a hall of Tōdai-ji, the head temple of the Flower Garland school in Nara, in which the great Buddha image is enshrined.

26. On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land, submitted by the Daishonin to Hōjō Tokiyori, also known as the lay priest of Saimyō-ji, who was the retired regent but still the most powerful figure in Japan's ruling clan.