

On the Relative Superiority of the True Word and Tendai Schools



QUESTION: On what sutras and treatises does the True Word school base its teachings?

Answer: The Mahāvairochana Sutra, the Diamond Crown Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, and *The Treatise on the Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*. The True Word school bases itself on these three sutras and one treatise.

Question: Of the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, which is superior?

Answer: In the relative comparison of seven or eight sutras, the Lotus ranks highest, and of the seven or eight, the Mahāvairochana is lowest.

Objection: This is most surprising! From early times to the present, no one has ever maintained that the True Word teachings are inferior to the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher Kōbō, when he put forth the doctrine of the ten stages of the mind, accordingly ranked the Lotus Sutra third from the True Word teachings [which he ranked top]. And Kakuban in his commentary declared that the Lotus Sutra is not even worthy to be a sandal-tender for the True Word teachings. Following the opinion of these authorities, the world at large has therefore agreed in regarding the esoteric teachings as superior and the exoteric teachings as inferior. This view of yours that the esoteric teachings rank at the sev-

enth level is strange indeed!

Answer: You may well be startled by this “strange” assertion that the True Word teachings are to be ranked at the seventh level [but I have my reasons for saying so].

Thus, in the “Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha states: “Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” And [in the “Peaceful Practices” chapter] he says: “Among the sutras, it [the Lotus Sutra] holds the highest place.” These passages mean that the Lotus Sutra is superior to all the other sutras. (This is the first reason.)

Next, in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, the Buddha states: “Then I preached the twelve divisions of the correct and equal sutras, the teaching of great wisdom, and the Flower Garland teaching of the ocean-imprint meditation.” And the same sutra also states: “Truly it is profound, profound, profound!”

The meaning of these passages is that, in comparison to the other sutras, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra is superior, for among the profound teachings it is the most profound of all. However, it serves simply as preparation for the Lotus Sutra, something

preached at a time when the capacities of living beings had not yet reached full maturity. Therefore it is inferior to the Lotus Sutra, which represents the revelation of the truth. (This is the second reason.)

Next, volume nine of the Nirvana Sutra states: "When this sutra was preached, it was as though the crop had brought great profit to all people and they all felt safe and secure, for they could now see that living beings possess the Buddha nature. The prediction had already been made in the Lotus Sutra that the eight thousand voice-hearers would attain Buddhahood, a prediction that was like a great harvest. Thus, the autumn harvest was over and the crop had been stored away for winter [when this Nirvana Sutra was preached], and there was nothing left for it."

Volume one of *The Annotations on "The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra"* states: "The doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai school holds that, although both the Lotus Sutra and the Nirvana Sutra are comparable to the same flavor, the Nirvana Sutra is nevertheless inferior to the Lotus Sutra."

This passage means that the Nirvana Sutra is comparable to the flavor of ghee [the finest of the five flavors] and the Lotus Sutra is comparable to the flavor of ghee. But though they are both comparable to the same flavor, the Nirvana Sutra is inferior while the Lotus Sutra is superior. The Nirvana Sutra is inferior to the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra, which serves as preparation for the Lotus Sutra. But because the Nirvana Sutra is comparable to the flavor of ghee, it is superior to the Flower Garland Sutra. (This is the third reason.)

Next, the Flower Garland Sutra, because it is the sudden teaching expounded at the start of the Buddha's preaching life, is superior to the Wisdom sutras. But it is inferior to the Nirvana Sutra, which is comparable to

the flavor of ghee. (This is the fourth reason.)

Next, the Susiddhikara Sutra states: "If one still does not achieve success [through the Susiddhikara Sutra], recite the Great Wisdom Sutra seven times [or a hundred times] through." This passage indicates that, while the Great Wisdom Sutra is inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra, it is superior to the Susiddhikara Sutra. (This is the fifth reason.)

Next, the Susiddhikara Sutra states: "Among the teachings concerning the three divisions,¹ this sutra is king." This passage indicates that, while the Susiddhikara Sutra is inferior to the Great Wisdom Sutra, it is superior to the other True Word sutras, the Mahāvairochana Sutra and the Diamond Crown Sutra. (This is the sixth reason.)

For the reasons indicated above, we may say that the Mahāvairochana Sutra ranks at the seventh level, six levels down from the Lotus Sutra. And if we compare it with the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, it may be said to rank eighth.

Next, with regard to the fact that the Great Teacher Kōbō with his doctrine of the ten stages of the mind ranked the Lotus Sutra third from the top: Annen in *The Meaning of the Teaching and the Time* criticizes the manner in which these ten stages of the mind have been set forth and accuses the author of five errors.

First, he states, this ranking is erroneous because it goes against *The Commentary on the Meaning of the Mahāvairochana Sutra*. Second, it is erroneous because it goes against the Diamond Crown Sutra. Third, it is in error because it goes against the Protection Sutra. Fourth, it is in error because it goes against *Mind Aspiring for Enlightenment*. And fifth, it errs in going against the view of the various teachers of Buddhism.²

With regard to these five errors, the

supporters of Kōbō's view are unable to present any convincing argument, but are obliged to remain silent. Thus it becomes evident that this view, that the Lotus Sutra ranks third after the True Word teachings, is a gross error and constitutes a slander of the Law.

Next, with regard to Kakuban's assertion that the Lotus Sutra is not even worthy to be a sandal-tender for the True Word teachings. This view, set forth in his *Rules of Rites for Revering the Buddha's Relics*, is a mere personal opinion of the author that lacks any proof to support it. Therefore it may be regarded as pure slander of the Law.

Next, with regard to the fact that the world at large agrees in regarding the esoteric teachings as superior and the exoteric teachings as inferior. This is wholly because people put faith in the view of Kōbō and do not put faith in the Law, or the Buddha's teaching, itself. But if people would take into account the Reverend Annen's criticisms of the five errors in Kōbō's view and cease to put faith in his assertions, then how can they go on thinking that the esoteric teachings are superior?

In what sutra is it stated that the esoteric teachings are superior and the exoteric teachings inferior? Though there is no proof whatsoever to support such a view, the world at large accepts it.

Objection: The Mahāvairochana Sutra and similar sutras were preached by the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana of the center, a Buddha of the Dharma body without beginning and without end. In the Dharma-realm Palace,³ in the highest heaven in the world of form, and in the Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, he expounded the True Word teachings for the sake of the bodhisattvas.

The Lotus Sutra was preached by Shakyamuni, a Buddha of the manifested body, at Eagle Peak, who expound-

ed it for the sake of those of the two vehicles. It is sometimes said that Shakyamuni is a transformed body of Mahāvairochana. He gained enlightenment by receiving sanction from Mahāvairochana and being instructed in the meditation on the syllable *om*,⁴ at the hour of dawn he then attained Buddhahood.

If the Thus Come One Mahāvairochana had not existed, how could Shakyamuni ever have attained Buddhahood? For the reasons just stated, therefore, it is obvious that the True Word sutras must be superior to the Lotus Sutra.

Answer: [The Buddha tells us] to "rely on the Law and not upon persons."⁵ Therefore one must ask upon what sutras preached by the Buddha these assertions of yours are based.

The Mahāvairochana Sutra was preached by Shakyamuni in the form of Mahāvairochana Buddha. Therefore, in the first volume of the Golden Light Sutra and the first volume of the Sovereign Kings Sutra, Shakyamuni is identified as the Buddha "of the center." Likewise, the first volume of the Diamond Crown Sutra speaks of "Shakyamuni Buddha of the center." Because Mahāvairochana and Shakyamuni are [two different names of] the Buddha of the center, we may say that the Mahāvairochana Sutra was preached by Shakyamuni, or we may say that it was preached by Mahāvairochana.

Furthermore, Vairochana is an Indian name that denotes the being known in our country as Dainichi (Great Sun). When Shakyamuni is referred to by the name Vairochana, it indicates that Dainichi, or Mahāvairochana, is just another name for Shakyamuni.

Moreover, the being referred to as Rochana in the old translations of the sutras is the same as that referred to as Vairochana in the new translations. Therefore we know that the being

referred to in the new translations as Vairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body, is in fact the same as that referred to in the old translations as Rochana, a Buddha of beneficence.⁶

It follows, therefore, that the being you speak of as “Mahāvairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body,” cannot even compare to the Lotus Sutra’s reward-body Buddha of self-enjoyment,⁷ much less can such a being compare to the Lotus Sutra’s Thus Come One of the Dharma body!⁸

The Buddha of self-enjoyment and Buddha of the Dharma body revealed in the Lotus Sutra are totally outside the realm of the True Word teaching and therefore its followers cannot understand them. As [Miao-lo] said, “They fail to distinguish between the Dharma body and the reward body and have no correct understanding of the three bodies of the Buddha or the two bodies of the Buddha,”⁹ and for that reason the True Word teaching is criticized by the Tendai school.

Thus, in the new translation of the Flower Garland Sutra, we find the Buddha sometimes designated as Shakyamuni and sometimes as Vairochana. From this we know that Dainichi, or Mahāvairochana, is simply another name for Shakyamuni. How could it be taken to refer to a different Buddha?

Next, with regard to your assertion concerning the Buddha of the Dharma body preaching the Law, in what sutra is this described?

The Great Teacher Kōbō in his *Comparison of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism* puts forward the doctrine of the Buddha of the Dharma body preaching the Law on the basis of the Lankāvatāra Sutra. But the Lankāvatāra Sutra was preached by Shakyamuni and embodies the provisional teachings set forth at a time when he had “not yet revealed the truth.”¹⁰ Thus it cannot begin to compare with what is set forth by the Lotus Sutra’s Buddha of limitless joy.

Though you describe it as “the Buddha of the Dharma body preaching the Law,” it cannot be anything so very wonderful.

Furthermore, the Buddha of the Dharma body cannot preach the Law [since he is the Law itself]. The Buddha of the reward body is divided into two categories [for he refers either to the Buddha of self-enjoyment, who never preaches the Law, or the Buddha of beneficence, who preaches the Law]. But you fail to understand this. Therefore, when you speak of “Mahāvairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body, preaching the Law,” you must be referring to a being who corresponds to the Lotus Sutra’s Buddha of beneficence [of the reward body category].

Next, regarding your assertion that Mahāvairochana is a Buddha without beginning and without end, [in the Mahāvairochana Sutra this Buddha refers to a time] “long ago when I sat in the place of meditation and conquered the four devils.” And again it describes him as having “conquered the four devils, freed himself from the six paths of existence, and fully attained the understanding of the wisdom of all-penetrating wisdoms.” These statements indicate that at a certain point in time Mahāvairochana conquered the four devils and for the first time attained Buddhahood. How, then, could he possibly be viewed as a Buddha “without beginning”?

Moreover, the sutra does not say how much time has elapsed since this being attained Buddhahood. That is because the Mahāvairochana Sutra belongs to the category of provisional teachings. Only in the Lotus Sutra, the sutra of the true teaching, is it stated that this event took place at a time described as numberless major world system dust particle kalpas in the past.

Next, you speak of the Mahāvairochana Sutra being preached in the Dharma-realm Palace, but is it located

in the highest heaven in the world of form? If not, where is it? Whether it be in the highest heaven in the world of form or the Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, in the view of the [Tendai] Lotus school, these are places where the Buddha expounds the specific teaching, and so they are not of great importance.

Again, you say that the Mahāvairochana Sutra was expounded for the sake of the bodhisattvas. But if so, that is no great feat. The Flower Garland Sutra was expounded solely for the sake of the bodhisattvas, and yet from the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra it is no more than an expedient that leads to the Lotus Sutra.

The true aim of the Buddhas in making their appearance in the world is to enable the persons of the two vehicles to attain Buddhahood, for such persons would otherwise find it very difficult to do so. This is the "one great reason" for their appearance in the world.

Therefore *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says that the teaching that enables the persons of the two vehicles to attain Buddhahood is called the esoteric teaching, while the teachings that do not reveal how persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood are called the exoteric teachings.

If we look at the matter in this fashion, then the three sutras of the True Word teaching, because they say nothing of how the persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, should on the contrary be dubbed exoteric rather than esoteric teachings, while the Lotus Sutra, which does explain how the persons of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, should for that reason be called the esoteric teaching.

That is why the Lotus Sutra states that "this Lotus Sutra is the secret storehouse of the Buddhas,"¹¹ a statement that makes this fact quite clear. What,

then, do people these days mean when they say that the esoteric teaching [by which they mean the True Word teaching] is superior?

To be sure, there is a passage that says, "If one practices the exoteric teachings, after three great asamkhya kalpas have gone by, [one can attain enlightenment]."¹² But from the fact that it speaks of "three great asamkhya kalpas," it is evident that this passage, in speaking of the exoteric teachings, is referring to the Tripitaka teaching set forth in the four Āgama sutras. The term cannot be taken to refer to the provisional Mahayana teachings, much less to the true Mahayana teaching set forth in the Lotus Sutra.

Next, with regard to the assertion that Shakyamuni is a transformed body of Mahāvairochana and that he attained Buddhahood by being instructed in the meditation on the syllable *om*. This is based solely on what is stated in the Six Pāramitās Sutra. This sutra, consisting of ten volumes, was preached by Shakyamuni; it was not preached by Mahāvairochana. It embodies the provisional teachings expounded at a time when Shakyamuni had "not yet revealed the truth." Hence, the distinctive features attendant on the attainment of Buddhahood are those associated with the lord of the Tripitaka teaching, those conferred at the ceremony held after the Buddha's six years of painful practices.

The claim that T'ien-t'ai stole the doctrine of the five flavors, which is expounded in the Six Pāramitās Sutra, and made it a part of the teaching of his own school, is a charge made by the Great Teacher Kōbō, one that is wholly false and without basis. I say this because T'ien-t'ai in fact derived the doctrine of the five flavors from the Nirvana Sutra, not from the Six Pāramitās Sutra at all. The Six Pāramitās Sutra was not introduced to China until the fourth year of the Chen-yüan

era [788], or 190 years after the death of T'ien-t'ai, so how could T'ien-t'ai even have seen it? That completely false assertion is the work of the Great Teacher Kōbō.

All of the statements of the Six Pāramitās Sutra represent the teaching set forth when Shakyamuni had "not yet revealed the truth." It is utterly absurd to think one can use them to disparage the Lotus Sutra!

Objection: Whatever you may say, the fact remains that the mudras, mantras, and samayas are not described in the Lotus Sutra as they are in the Mahāvairochana Sutra. And in the degree to which they deal with the esoteric teachings in both theory and practice, the True Word sutras are superior.

Moreover, the three True Word sutras cannot be classified among the teachings set forth by Shakyamuni in the five periods of his preaching life. Therefore the Great Teacher Kōbō in his *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury*, citing *The Commentary on the Mahayana Treatise* as his proof, states that [the Buddha of] the Lotus Sutra still belongs to "the region of darkness," and he calls the Lotus Sutra "childish theory."

In view of all this, we must say that the Lotus Sutra is inferior and the True Word sutras are superior.

Answer: The mudras and samayas are all expounded in the provisional sutras; they are not discussed in the true teaching. Even if they are discussed [in the Mahāvairochana Sutra], what matters is the differences between and relative profundity of the provisional and the true teachings, the Hinayana and the Mahayana doctrines.

Hence, the fact that mudras are expounded in the Āgama sutras but are not necessarily expounded in the Lotus Sutra does not mean that the Lotus Sutra is incapable of expounding mudras or samayas. The Lotus Sutra does not expound them because it sees no need to do so.

The Lotus Sutra simply expounds the true intention of the Buddhas of the three existences and ten directions. It does not go into the details of their particular mudras or outward form. For example, because *The Dharma Analysis Treasury* describes how the world came into existence, while the Lotus Sutra does not, would one therefore conclude that the Lotus Sutra is inferior to *Dharma Analysis Treasury*?

Next, concerning your assertion that the True Word sutras deal with the esoteric teachings both in theory and practice. You claim that the Lotus Sutra deals with the esoteric teachings in theory, while the True Word sutras deal with the esoteric teachings both in theory and practice and are therefore superior—but in what sutra is it stated so?

Moreover, what do you mean when you speak of the "esoteric teachings in theory" in the Lotus Sutra? Among the theories or doctrines of the Lotus Sutra, are you referring to that set forth in the theoretical teaching, the doctrine of opening the provisional and revealing the true? If so, then this doctrine is far beyond the range of understanding of the True Word sutras. And as for matters of practice, the Lotus Sutra reveals that the Buddha in fact attained enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past. This is a matter of practice that is not mentioned anywhere in the True Word sutras.

The theories and practices dealt with in the True Word sutras are those pertaining to the provisional teachings, those set forth before the truth had been revealed. How, then, can you say that the True Word sutras are superior to the Lotus Sutra?

Next, with regard to your assertion that the True Word sutras cannot be classified among the teachings set forth in the five periods of the Buddha's preaching life. From times past this has been a matter of controversy.

*The T'ang Period Decisions*¹³ states that, since these sutras contain all the four teachings, they should be classified with the Correct and Equal sutras. *Meaning of the Teaching and the Time* [by Annen], however, states that, because they expound the "opening up and merging" of the three vehicles, the single flavor of the wisdom of all-penetrating wisdoms, they should therefore be classified with the Lotus Sutra.

Of these two views, that which classifies them with the Correct and Equal sutras is more appropriate. The assertion that, because they deal with the single flavor of the wisdom of all-penetrating wisdoms, they belong with the Lotus Sutra, may therefore be dismissed as wholly unreasonable.

The "opening up and merging" that Annen speaks of is one that pertains to matters of doctrine; it is not in any sense an "opening up and merging" that pertains to the persons who may attain enlightenment. So how could such sutras be classified with the Lotus Sutra? The type of "opening up and merging" that pertains to doctrine is discussed at length in the Correct and Equal sutras and the Wisdom sutras, but that does not mean that such sutras are to be regarded as equal to the Lotus Sutra.

If we examine the Mahāvairocana Sutra from beginning to end, we see that it deals entirely with the four teachings mentioned earlier, and therefore is best classified with the Correct and Equal sutras. Because it does not deal with the doctrine of opening the provisional and revealing the true, it cannot be classified with the Lotus Sutra.

It expounds none of the doctrines found in the Tripitaka teaching of Hinayana sutras, and therefore it cannot be classified with the Āgama sutras. It does not expound true wisdom or the non-substantiality of all things, and hence does not belong with the Wis-

dom sutras. What it deals with are the four teachings of the Mahayana and Hinayana doctrines, and so where else could it be classified if not with the Correct and Equal sutras?

Moreover, you can hardly claim that the True Word sutras cannot be classified among the teachings set forth by Shakyamuni in the five periods of his preaching life. That would imply that two Buddhas had appeared simultaneously in a single world, which is absurd. Nor is it conceivable that some outside Buddha would come to Shakyamuni's realm and presume to expound his teachings there.

Finally, with regard to the statement by the Great Teacher Kōbō, who cites *On the Mahayana Treatise* as his proof, that [the Buddha of] the Lotus Sutra still belongs to "the region of darkness," and that the Lotus Sutra is a doctrine of "childish theory." Such an assertion is totally preposterous.

The work known as *On the Mahayana Treatise* was written by Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, who was a follower of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. Why would a work by the follower speak disparagingly of the Lotus Sutra, which the teacher declared to be the foremost among all the sutras expounded in the course of his preaching life, and call it a doctrine of "childish theory"?

Moreover, there is in fact no such passage to be found in *On the Mahayana Treatise*. The teachings set forth in this work deal with the specific teaching, a doctrine expounded in the provisional sutras. This teaching cannot compare with the perfect teaching or with the true teaching, both embodied in the Lotus Sutra. How, then, could such a work be used to disparage the Lotus Sutra?

Furthermore, though this commentary quotes various sutras, it never once quotes the Lotus Sutra. This is because it is concerned only with the provisional teachings.

In the end, then, we must say that the Great Teacher Kōbō, in regarding the Lotus Sutra as inferior to the Flower Garland Sutra, was departing in a most flagrant manner from the Bud-

dha's true intention. His opinion should never be heeded! It should never be heeded!

Nichiren



Background

This letter consists of a series of five questions and answers, all aimed at refuting the position of the True Word school concerning the relative superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the True Word sutras. Nichiren Daishonin wrote it in Kamakura in 1270. The recipient is unknown. "Tendai school" in the title refers to the doctrines that T'ient'ai established based on the Lotus Sutra. The Tendai school in Japan was founded to spread these doctrines in Japan. But because the Tendai school had long since incorporated True Word teachings, the Daishonin is not referring to the doctrinal positions of the Tendai school of his own time.

The Daishonin begins by confirming the basic scriptures of the True Word school and pointing out that, among all the sutras, the Lotus Sutra ranks first, and the Mahāvairochana Sutra seventh or eighth. He assigns the following order to various sutras according to their teachings: First, the Lotus Sutra; second, the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra; third, the Nirvana Sutra; fourth, the Flower Garland Sutra; fifth, the Great Wisdom Sutra; sixth, the Susiddhikara Sutra; and seventh, the Mahāvairochana Sutra. If both the theoretical teaching and essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra are considered, then the essential teaching ranks first, the theoretical teaching second, and one is added to each subsequent ranking, putting the Mahāvairochana Sutra in eighth place.

Next, the Daishonin overturns the

assertion of Kōbō, the founder of the True Word school in Japan, that the Lotus Sutra ranks third while the Mahāvairochana Sutra ranks first. He cites five reasons set forth by Annen, a scholar of the Tendai school, as to why Kōbō's assertion is wrong. These explain how Kōbō's view goes against the teachings of various sutras and does not accord with the views of various Buddhist teachers. In addition, the Daishonin dismisses Kakuban's claim that the Lotus Sutra is not even worthy to be a sandal-tender for the True Word teachings, indicating it is a statement of personal bias with no basis in any sutra or commentary, and therefore constitutes a slander of the Law.

Throughout the remainder of the text, the Daishonin addresses and counters a number of misleading views set forth by teachers of the True Word school. He cites the sutra passage "Rely on the Law and not upon persons" as the standard of judgment. With regard to the contention of the True Word school that Mahāvairochana Buddha is the Buddha of the Dharma body, the Daishonin points out, citing both the old and new translations of the sutras, that this does not compare with the Buddha of the reward body or of the Dharma body described in the Lotus Sutra. Other arguments concerning Mahāvairochana Buddha are also refuted.

Regarding the contention of the True Word school that it is superior because it teaches mudras and mantras,

the Daishonin points out that these are devices associated with the provisional teachings, and they have no relation to the true teaching. Regarding the claim that the True Word teaching constitutes an esoteric teaching in both theory and practice, and that the Lotus Sutra is an esoteric teaching in theory only, he says that the Lotus Sutra contains the principle of opening the provisional and revealing the true, which far surpasses any theory or principle found in the Mahāvairochana Sutra, and that it embodies the practice associated with Shakyamuni Buddha's actual attainment of Buddhahood countless kalpas in the past, a practice unmatched by anything found in the Mahāvairochana Sutra.

While True Word priests contend that the Mahāvairochana Sutra cannot be classified among any of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime, the Daishonin responds that such a teaching could not be called Buddhism, and goes on to classify the Mahāvairochana Sutra as a sutra of the Correct and Equal period among the Buddha's teachings. Finally, the Daishonin refutes Kōbō's claim that the Buddha who expounded the Lotus Sutra belongs to the "region of darkness" and that the Lotus Sutra itself amounts to a work of "childish theory." While Kōbō cites as proof of his

contention Nāgārjuna's *Commentary on the Mahayana Treatise*, the Daishonin affirms that no such statement appears in this work.

In closing, a brief explanation of the three bodies of the Buddha may be helpful in understanding the text. Among the three bodies, the Dharma body, which represents the Law, or truth, a Buddha has realized, is foremost. The reward body, or the wisdom that is equal to the Law, which a Buddha has acquired as the result of practice, ranks second. And the manifested body, the form in which the Buddha appears in the world to teach living beings, is regarded as third. Further, the Buddha of the reward body is characterized as having either the body of self-enjoyment, which never preaches the Law, or the body of beneficence, which preaches the Law. The Lotus Sutra's Buddha of self-enjoyment is also called the Buddha of limitless joy. While the Lotus Sutra reveals that the three bodies exist in one Buddha, other sutras view them as being separate and distinct. "Mahāvairochana, a Buddha of the Dharma body," is equated with the Law itself and cannot preach the Law. In contrast, "the Lotus Sutra's Thus Come One of the Dharma body" is endowed with all three bodies and appears in the world in order to preach the Law.

Notes

1. The three divisions are the Buddha division, the Lotus division, and the Diamond division into which the honorable ones such as Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Womb Realm of the Mahāvairochana Sutra are grouped. The above three divisions represent respectively the great insight, the great compassion, and the great wisdom of the Buddha. The Diamond Realm of the Diamond Crown Sutra also has its version of the three divisions (which are actually part of its five divisions). However, the Susiddhikara Sutra, which includes

both versions of the three divisions, is king among the three True Word sutras.

2. The first, fourth, and fifth reasons in this paragraph are explained in *On the Relative Superiority of the Lotus Sutra and the True Word Teachings* (p. 274).

3. The abode of Mahāvairochana Buddha.

4. A syllable regarded by esoteric Buddhism as a mystic formula.

5. Nirvana Sutra.

6. "Buddha of beneficence" refers to the Buddha of the reward body who

appears in accordance with the desires of human beings, and who enables them to enjoy the benefits of the Law. In contrast, "Buddha of self-enjoyment" refers to the Buddha of the reward body who enjoys the benefits of the Law himself as the result of his practice. In other words, these two kinds of Buddha represent the two aspects of the reward body.

7. "The Lotus Sutra's reward-body Buddha of self-enjoyment" refers to the Buddha of limitless joy revealed in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Actually, he is the Buddha endowed with the three bodies of the Dharma body, reward body, and manifested body, who, while dwelling in the boundless joy of the Law, preaches the Law to all living beings.

8. "The Lotus Sutra's Thus Come One of the Dharma body" refers to the eternal Law without beginning and without end that is the source of all the Buddhas, and

also to the eternal Buddha who is one with this Law.

9. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* "The two bodies of the Buddha" in the quotation means Buddha of self-enjoyment and Buddha of beneficence.

10. Immeasurable Meanings Sutra.

11. Lotus Sutra, chap. 14.

12. *The Rules of Rituals pertaining to the Five Esoteric Ones*, one of the esoteric scriptures.

13. A reference to one of several different lists of answers given on different occasions by Tao-sui, Kuang-hsiu, Wei-chüan, and other eminent priests of the T'ien-t'ai school in T'ang-dynasty China to questions submitted by Dengyō, Enchō, and other priests of the Japanese Tendai school. *The T'ang Period Decisions* is a list of Kuang-hsiu's answers to thirty questions submitted by Enchō.